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ANNOUNCING "MILLENNIAL MESSAGE"

You will doubtless be interested as well as curious by the receipt of this month's enclosure—"Millennial Message"! We would like you to examine and read it with sympathetic interest, for it may be the first of a regular series of such papers, designed and published especially as a means whereby all who so wish may take part in the spreading of the Truth message. There are so few who are fluent of tongue; so many, especially among the sisters, who have the love of Truth in their hearts and very often a pretty good knowledge of it in their heads, but just do not know how to get it out; and they at times bemoan the fact that when an opportunity does come their way, they feel they cannot do justice to it.

Well now, here is one answer. Keep a few copies of "Millennial Message" always by you, and when that opportunity comes, just hand a copy to the one with whom you are talking, with the suggestion that it be read with care and interest. You can pass them to friends, neighbours, tradesmen at the door, colleagues in daily business; you can enclose them in letters, distribute them from house to house, have some at the meeting room for any who happen to come in; you can even leave one in your library book and trust that the next reader will find it and read it. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

"Millennial Message" will contain articles outlining the chief principles of our faith, reports of any interesting public lectures delivered in this country, comments on current events from the "Truth" standpoint, foreviews of the coming Age of blessing such as will help to "bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." It will stress, too, the necessity for true repentance and acceptance of Jesus before the blessings of life can come to the individual, both now and in the coming Age, for this is very important. The promises of God are not just an offer of "pie in the sky", as one friend of the writer is fond of alleging against orthodox Christian belief. Men must come into harmony with God in God's own way, and the proclamation of that fact is part of our message too.

So, dear brethren, your co-operation is earnestly invited. This effort will not continue unless it is well supported, for fairly large quantities must be printed to bring the price to a level within the reach of the friends generally. The decision as to future issues rests upon the zeal with which this first issue is taken up—and your suggestions and criticisms will be welcomed for consideration when the next issue is being planned. It is hoped that classes will

take fairly large quantities for their organised public work and that individual brethren will take such smaller quantities as they feel they can use profitably, for which purpose these prices have been fixed to suit all requirements.

1/3 per doz.; 4/6 for 50; 7/6 per 100; all post paid.

For 1,000 and upwards: If ordered before 31st January will be sent direct from the printers and the price then will be

50/- per 1,000 up to 4,000.

45/- per 1,000 for 5,000 upwards.

If ordered after 31st January they will be sent from stock at Welling, involving extra handling and carriage, and the price then will be

65/- per 1,000 up to 4,000.

60/- per 1,000 for 5,000 upwards.

We are particularly anxious to dispose of as many as possible before 31st January to avoid having to hold a large stock and will be glad therefore if all who can do so will order during this month.

The friendly co-operation of all who are desirous of extending the influence and power of our message is warmly invited to help make "Millennial Message", in time, a real "Truth" newspaper that will proclaim abroad in no uncertain tone the glorious gospel that has been committed to us. And if any brethren who are themselves unable to share in the distribution wish to help others who have the desire, but not the means, so to do, their donations will be appreciatively acknowledged and used for that purpose.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A word of thanks is due to all those friends who during the last three months indicated their wishes regarding the publication of a tune book to suit the "Bible Students Hymnal". The matter is now to be considered by the original sponsors of the project in the light of the replies that have been received and announcement as to the outcome made in due course in these columns.

* * * * *

Preparations for the Whitsun Convention at Birmingham and the August Convention at London are proceeding. It is expected that details of both these gatherings will be available in the February B.S.M., and in the meantime the friends are asked to remember both of these arrangements at the Throne of Grace, that discretion and sound judgment be given to those who have the matters in hand, and that they might execute their tasks in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

THE SUPREME GRACE

Part 1.

A Series of Studies in
I Cor. 13. 13.

"Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." So run the closing verses of that matchless Chapter in which the master-mind of the great Apostle splits up the pure white beam of Love into its component rays of service and experience, as these things befall us all in the common round of life.

It scarcely needs here to be said that nearly every version, other than the Authorised Version, has substituted the word *love* for *charity*, and made the statement of Paul to say that "Love" is the greatest of these three—and, surely, as one gifted pen has also written, it is indeed the greatest thing in the world. Most Christian people approve the change of word, for, in the usage of to-day, charity does not now mean what once it did. In an earlier day it stood for kindness, sympathy, tolerance towards a little less favoured comrade in the strife—an attitude greatly resembling that of which Paul speaks in the former verses of this Chapter. "*A favour, sir, of your charity*" carried with it no such sting as it would to-day. In these more commercialised days it speaks too strongly of the stigma of pauperism, the dreaded processes of poor-law relief, or the soul-less Institution which sunders man and wife; or again, the whining cry of the ragged mendicant; or the tune-less air of the kerbside supplicant. It reminds too vividly of lost self-respect, and bedraggled dignity; of an indigence that unmans a man and makes of him a cringing fawn.

And yet it is a pity that this once noble word has lost its savour, for though in some senses our word Love may to-day stand nearer to the Greek original, and may be much the better word to express desirable relationship between man and man, even the word Love must take on the sense of charity in all the relationships between God and man. "*Charis*"—from which comes charity—in the Greek really means Grace, Favour, Beneficence, and all God's relationships towards human-kind, even to the best of men, are based on Grace unmerited. That refreshing Grace comes to us all in so many ways and under so many circumstances, that in each differing circumstance it needs a different term to describe it. Sometimes it reaches us as compassion, again as pity, again as mercy, as succour, as relief, and so many other forms of Divine good-will that it thus becomes as many-hued

and as diversified as Love itself. Indeed it really is Love itself, expressed to meet our varied needs—an outflow from the very heart of God, which, to the unfallen Sons of Light may rightly be defined as Love, but which to the fallen sons of men can more rightly be described as charity, as Love en-clothed in compassionate tenderness.

In the sphere of human experience every expression of this Love—when shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit—may require, according to the circumstance, a different name by which to define it, for, as Paul says, it will show itself at times as forbearance; at others as longsuffering, at still others as tolerance, as hopefulness, as kindness, etc., etc., in both word and deed. Each occasion of loving word and deed is a "grace"—a gracious word, a gracious act—in its own self, yet, winsome as it is, it is nothing more than one constituent element of the all-embracing master-grace—of the supreme grace of Love itself.

Love is not just merely any one of these things alone, it is the sum of all of them combined. Like light, Love is a composite quality. A beam of light, passed through a crystal prism, will come out, separated into its component hues, red, yellow, orange, etc.—all the colours of the spectrum or the rainbow arch. So, in like manner, Love in its passage through a human heart into the sphere of human experience will come through broken down, or, rather, separated out, into a wide array of human qualities, of both natural and spiritual kind, and which, on the one hand, may range from a mere forbearance to exact due recompense from an enemy, to the most intense and reverential esteem, on the other, for the sacredness of the blessed and holy Name, with all the wide range of sanctified experience that lies between these two extremes.

Or to illustrate it another way, Love could be likened to the indefinable fragrance wafted from the exotic heart of an old-world garden, where every one of a hundred floral gems contributes its quota to the fragrant ensemble, yet finding, as one winds one's way along its paths, each one, in turn, standing out a little from the rest. While we know that the enchanting bouquet of the whole is made up of the aroma of every single bloom, yet we would also know that a nearer proximity to this or that would separate out its own particular odour from all the rest. We could thus in-breathe and appre-

ciate the distinctive fragrance of the humble mignonette, or of the lowly violet, with as much delight as we would that of the stately lily or the up-standing rose.

Thus as we would find that each floral gem was needed to contribute its own quota to the fragrant "whole", so in the same way we will find that it will require every gracious and considerate act or word, expressed to either friend or foe, to add its own aroma to the delightful bouquet of Love. But while we can thus say that the sum total of the whole garden of sanctified experience is the incomparable attribute of Love, we must also say that it is incumbent to separate out its contributory elements in accordance with each circumstance of life, into its forbearance and tolerance towards an enemy, its profound respect and high esteem for one of like precious faith, and its impassioned veneration and reverence for the great and holy Name.

Obviously we could not feel so deeply moved towards an enemy as we would towards a brother in the Lord, or as we would towards our gracious Lord Himself, yet notwithstanding that, there is a sphere and circumstance where each emotion may reach the fullness of the cup, both in degree and kind.

The act of reverential devotion before the Lord may be to Him as the fragrance of Sharon's rose, but even so, there may be also in the surrendering

of a claim of lawful vengeance into His hands, the odour of the sweet violet.

It is because the daily round and common task in the garden of our life covers such wide ranges of circumstance that it is so essential for us to know and understand that the all-embracing attribute must be separated out into its many constituents and elements. Only thus can we hope to comprehend this master-grace for what it is.

"Within my hand I gently hold the Garden's Queen, a rose—

The softly sighing summer wind about it faintly blows,

And wafts its fragrance out upon the evening air,
And as I gaze

. my heart within me cries,

Thou Lovely Rose of Sharon, may I ever dwell with Thee,

So closely that the fragrance of Thy Love shall cling to me!

Oh, fill me with the spirit of Thy sweet humility. That all shall see and know, dear Lord, that

I have learned of Thee,

And let mine earthly pilgrimage, until its blessed close,

Each day and hour bear witness,

"I've been dwelling with the Rose."

(To be continued)

LOOKING FORWARD

The second year free from the shadow of hostilities in this land has dawned. We do not know for how long this respite will last; it is true that apart from the cessation of active military operations against this country there is little to mark the difference. Food, clothing and housing are still major problems which show no sign of being solved at an early date. Nevertheless circumstances are such as to make it easier for the active proclamation of the Christian gospel, and it is encouraging to many to see the signs that the brethren generally, despite the onset of advancing years in many instances, are measurably awake to the opportunities and looking around for the ways and means whereby they may serve. It used to be said that there would be a "dark night wherein no man can work" at the end of the Church's experience in the flesh. Whether that be so or not, it is evident that it is possible to labour in the Master's vineyard at the present time. Whether we call it sowing or reaping, or do not trouble ourselves about defining our labours at all, but just do with our might what our hands find to do, the fact remains that we can render service that will not only continue the Age-old work of proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom "for a

witness", but—and this is more important, supremely important—will also assist materially in our own spiritual development. We must not get so absorbed in our evangelistic work as to forget that *that* is the real end to which we are called and toward which all our outward works must contribute.

Our great object in this witness must be to make the Bible better known and better understood. The details of its interpretation can be safely left until afterwards; in the majority of cases people to-day have little or no knowledge of, and consequently no real faith in, the Bible, and until we can establish that faith in their hearts it is impossible to really convince them regarding the approaching Kingdom. Now we know that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" and it follows therefore that whatever means can be employed to tell people something about the Word of God and its connection with everyday life is an avenue to "hearing", and that in turn will become an avenue to "faith". Our printed matter need not always stress the Kingdom to the exclusion of all else; it must always stress the Bible as the Word of God, a sure guide in these days of world distress.

The Thousand Years

Outline notes on the twentieth
chapter of Revelation

The Book of Revelation, a record of visions and voices made apparent to the Apostle John by the Holy Spirit, on the little Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, contains many dramatic passages, but few so dramatic as that in which the seer beheld an angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand, by means of which he proceeded to bind Satan, the Devil, cast him into the abyss, and shut him up so that he could deceive the nations no more until the thousand years of the Millennial Age should be fulfilled. The correct understanding of this twentieth chapter of Revelation is the key to a right view of the Millennial Age. The Divine restraint which is to be put upon the Devil and the power of evil is the essential preliminary to the evangelical work of that Age, and culminates in the reconciliation to God of "whosoever will", their entrance into everlasting life, and the final condemnation of the incorrigibly wicked.

This chapter presents that aspect of the Millennial Age which has to do with the moving of Divine power against Satan for the overthrow of his rule, the restraint of the outward practice of evil in the world, and the exaltation of the true Church, the faithful Christians of this present time, to association with Jesus Christ in the governmental work of the Age. It includes the time at the end of the Age when the restraint on the practice of evil is relaxed in order to permit mankind, after their period of Divine education and evangelisation, to make their choice between good and evil. Satan attempts to regain his former power; he is unrepentant. He, and all who follow him, are destroyed as being incapable of reformation, and with their destruction the last shadow of evil flees away, and the Age comes to an end, being merged into the everlasting kingdom of the Father.

It is well known that only in this chapter does the Bible state the duration of the Millennial Age—one thousand years. There is no doubt, however, that the belief is well founded, and that the figure is intended to be taken literally. It was the fixed opinion of antiquity that the Messianic Age was to endure for one thousand years, and that the Divine Plan would then reach its consummation so far as this earth was concerned. When John used the term—and he uses it six times in this chapter—it was as an expression well known to, and understood by, both Jews and the early Christian believers. In fact the Greek term is the equivalent of our word "Millennium" and the passages would

be equally accurate if translated to read ". . . and bound him for the duration of the Millennium", ". . . and they lived and reigned with Christ throughout the Millennium" and so on. Its duration is also given as one thousand years in various apocalyptic books, notably the Book of Jubilees, written about 100 B.C. (Jub. 23; 27) and 2 Enoch, written about the time of Jesus (2 Enoch 22-23). These books reflected the Jewish belief of their own times; it is known that the Jews back so far as 300 B.C. believed in the thousand year reign of righteousness, and the most reasonable conclusion to which we can come, on the basis of John's use of the term in the Book of Revelation, is that this understanding originated with one of the Hebrew prophets speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and although not incorporated in any of the written prophecies which remain to us in the Old Testament, was nevertheless preserved through the centuries until, again under supervision of the Holy Spirit, it was included in John's record to serve as a definite declaration for all time. It is on this basis that belief in the thousand years is built.

What is meant by the "binding of Satan"? The Old Testament promises, relating to this time, that "nothing shall hurt or destroy" (Isa. 11. 9; 65. 25), "God will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25. 7) indicates that the practice of outward evil is to be restrained, and that Satan—who, despite all modern views to the contrary, is a very real, powerful and malignant personality—will be rendered incapable of deceiving and enslaving humanity. Through the ages of human history he has been permitted to work his fell designs on earth, and the world has in consequence become a world of suffering. Now, in the heyday of his power, he will find himself suddenly unable to influence so much as one single human being, and for the whole duration of the Millennium he will be alone—with his evil.

There has been much confusion of thought in Christian circles regarding this chapter, but the difficulties disappear when it is seen that the Millennial Age itself is *the great Day of Judgment*, that the true Church, the Christians of the present time, are exalted to "reign with Christ" at the *beginning* of the thousand years, and that the rest of the dead are restored to earthly life *during* the

thousand years for the completion of their probationary term of life's experience. Appropriately enough, therefore, the First Resurrection, that of the Church, takes place when Satan is bound and the Millennial Kingdom inaugurated. "*And I saw thrones—and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*" (Rev. 20. 4.) The next thing in order is the General Resurrection, and here verse 5 has for fourteen centuries been responsible for a serious departure from the Apostolic teaching. The verse runs "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*" On the authority of this text, it has been widely held since the Fifth Century that the resurrection, and, therefore, the final judgment, takes place, not at the beginning, but at the end of the Millennium. This leads in turn to further confusion, for if the dead are not to return until the Millennium is ended, it follows that only the living nations at the time of Christ's Advent can share in the glories of His Millennial reign, and there can be no question of an opportunity of conversion for all men—only to those who happen to be living when the Kingdom is established, or who may be born subsequently; and this is the general view of those evangelical Christians who do believe in the Millennium. It seems clear, however, that this clause has no rightful place in the Scriptures. It first appeared in the 5th century, and is not to be found in any earlier manuscript. The Vatican 1160 and the Sinaitic, both of the 4th century, omit the clause, and so does the Syriac Peshito (2nd century). The best authorities on the Greek text reject it as an interpolation, pointing out that its construction and metre are different from the rest of the text, and that it breaks the sense and symmetry of the passage. The reason for its apparent insertion in the text of the Alexandrian manuscript in the 5th century is not difficult to perceive. It had been a feature of Jewish belief for centuries that there was to be a "resurrection of the just" at the beginning of the Messianic Age, and a resurrection of the wicked, which generally meant the Gentile nations, at its end, for their condemnation and punishment. This belief was carried over into Christianity, and although not authorised by Apostolic teaching, lingered in the minds of many. It is very probable that this clause was originally a marginal comment made by some reader, who thought it necessary to add this item of popular belief to John's account of the First Resurrection, and was afterwards copied into the text by a later transcriber who failed to distinguish between the text and the comment. It seems evident, then, that this clause should be rejected, and with this deletion the passage becomes clear. Verses 1—6 constitute

a description of the overthrow of Satan and the exaltation to glory of the Church. The following four verses, 7—10, go on to explain that this is not the last phase of the Devil's activities. At the end of the Millennium he is loosed from his restraints, attempts to stage another rebellion against God, and goes out to deceive the nations. His time is short; the rebellion fails, and utter destruction overtakes the rebels and their leader.

This is the end of the Millennial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. During the Age, evil having been restrained, men have had opportunity to appreciate and enter into heart harmony with the Divine principles of life. By its end there will be no longer any excuse for ignorance or failure to measure up to the standards of life required by God, for all will have had abundant opportunity to come to Christ in true conversion, and to attain that state of mental, moral and physical perfection which will enable them to keep the Divine laws without failure. The removal of the Divine restraint on evil must come, for God will have men living righteous lives on a completely voluntary and willing basis, not because they have no power or ability to do otherwise, and this will at once constitute a test of loyalty. Those who turn again to sin thereby demonstrate that they are unworthy of life, and that further prolonging of life is useless in their case; so God leaves the sinner to his way, and the end of that way is death. This is the principle which is symbolised by the allusion in these verses to the rebels going up against the citadel of God, and meeting with sudden and utter destruction.

Verses 11—15 take us back to the beginning of the Age. The prophet now has his mind turned to the Millennial throne of the Messiah, familiar to all Jews from the descriptions in the Book of Enoch, and to all Christians by the parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25. 31). The basis of both pictures is the 7th chapter of Daniel, where the throne of judgment is set, and the nations gathered before it for judgment, the later Jews realising that although Daniel saw God Himself upon that throne, the executive power on earth is actually to be wielded by God's Messiah. The dead are brought back from the grave to participate in this judgment, and at its end death and Hades—the death state—are cast into the fiery lake, Gehenna, destruction. This corresponds to Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15 to the effect that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and that then Christ will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, that "God may be all in all". This passage, then, is a strong argument for the fact that the judgment is to take place during the entire Age, and that final sentence is pronounced at its end.

THE SUNDIAL OF AHAZ

THE STORY OF A DIVINE SIGN
AND A KING'S HEALING

"Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down." (Isa. 38. 8.)

This is another of those Old Testament incidents which seem to set at defiance the known laws of Nature and hence receive more than the usual meed of criticism from sceptics and "modern" Bible scholars. In reaction to this, many studious Christians of the traditional school have sought to explain the account along lines of scientific explanations of the miracle, always on the basis of the Authorised Version translation.

It was in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign that the apparently fatal illness gripped him, and the word of the prophet Isaiah came to him "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isa. 39. 1). And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, for he was a devout man, and he had worked hard for the good of his people of Judah, and his work was not yet finished. There was more in Hezekiah's grief than appears on the surface, too, for as yet he had no son, and the promised seed, Christ, could come only through his line. It seemed as though God intended to abandon His own purpose and the glory of Israel never come at all. So Hezekiah prayed that he might live.

His prayer was answered. He heard that fifteen years were to be added to his life. Isaiah was commissioned to give him a sign that the Lord would both heal his sickness and deliver the city from the army of Sennacherib, which was at the time threatening Judah, for this was before the celebrated destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem. (Isa. 38. 6-7 and 36. 1 and 37. 36.) According to the parallel account in 2 Kings 20. 8-11, Hezekiah was given the choice of two signs. Either the shadow of the "sundial of Ahaz" was to go down ten degrees, or it was to return back ten degrees. Hezekiah chose the latter. It was a light thing, said he, for it to go down ten degrees; it did that every day anyway; "nay, let the shadow return back ten degrees".

And the shadow went back!

This sounds like a most amazing happening. It would seem to the ordinary man that the only way in which the shadow on a sundial could return would be for the sun to reverse its course and appear to traverse the sky from west to east, which, since it is the earth that moves, and not the sun, would

imply that the earth had changed its direction of rotation and was turning backwards. On this basis the commentators of the nineteenth century endeavoured to demonstrate that such a thing did actually happen in the days of Hezekiah. A distinguished astronomer, E. W. Maunder, in the early years of this century produced elaborate calculations to support this view.

Before discussing the nature of the miracle, however, let us examine the story itself, and particularly the language used, and let us try to reconstruct for ourselves the scene of which Hezekiah's sick-bed formed the centre-piece on that memorable day.

Hezekiah lay sick in his palace. There is still much that is not known about the Jerusalem of his day, but the position of the palace of the Kings of Judah is definitely established. It lay a little to the south of the Temple, facing the Mount of Olives, which rises from the opposite side of the deep valley of the Kedron. From where Hezekiah reclined he could see the Mount directly before him and the Temple towards his left. Somewhere nearby, near enough for him to witness the "sign", was the "sundial of Ahaz".

Nowhere else in the Bible is there any mention of an instrument for measuring time. Until the days of Daniel, over a century later, there are no indications that the children of Israel divided the day into hours. One is justified therefore in looking a little more carefully at this expression "the sundial of Ahaz".

Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was a great admirer of foreign innovations, as is evidenced by the account in 2 Kings 16, and he might very well have acquired a sundial for his palace grounds were such things in existence in his day. The earliest known sundials are of Greek manufacture and date back only so far as the sixth century B.C., two hundred years later than the time of Ahaz. The Roman engineer Marcus Vitruvius, the author of a celebrated work on architecture and mechanical inventions, written in the time of Augustus Cæsar, a few years before Jesus was born, says that the sundial was invented by Berossus, the Chaldean priest (*Arch.* 9. 9); and Berossus lived only about 250 B.C. Herodotus, the Greek historian (440 B.C.), states that the sundial was invented by the Babylonians (*Hist.* 2. 109), whilst in Homer's "*Odyssey*" (900 B.C.) there is an obscure reference to a means of observing the revolutions of the sun in use in Syria (*Odys.* 15. 402), it is just poss-

sible therefore that Ahaz could have possessed a sundial.

It is when the word "sundial" is examined that a totally different complexion is put upon the account. The Hebrew is *maalah*, which denotes an ascent by means of steps or stages, and is used for "steps" or "stairs" in the Old Testament. The *steps* of the altar in Exod. 20. 26, and of Solomon's throne in 1 Kings 10. 19, and 20, and the *stairs* of 2 Kings 9. 13 and Ezek. 40. 6 are "*maalah*". So, likewise, are the majestic words in Amos 9. 6. "It is he that buildeth his *stories* in the heavens" where "*stories*" refer to the stages or terraces of the Babylonian *ziggurats* or temple towers, reared up into the heavens. And this word "*maalah*" is also translated *degrees* in the accounts of the miracle. The A.V. translators are guilty of an inconsistency here, for both "*degrees*" and "*sundial*" are from the same Hebrew word. Rotherham translates 2 Kings 20. 11 "*And he caused the shadow on the steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz, to go back ten steps*" and Isa. 28. 8 "*Behold me; causing the shadow on the steps, which hath come down on the steps of Ahaz with the sun, to return backwards ten steps*".

The "sun-dial" of Ahaz, therefore, was in reality the "*steps*" or stairs of Ahaz. What stairs were these?

Nehemiah (3. 15 and 12. 37) speaks of "stairs that go down from the city of David". Jerusalem was built on several hills with two deep valleys—those of the Kedron, and Gay-Hinnom (Gehenna), intersecting them, and there were various flights of stone steps built up the sides of these valleys. It is known that one such staircase descended the slope from the King's Palace eastward down to the Horse Gate in the city wall (Neh. 3. 28; 2 Chron. 23. 15; Jer. 31. 40) and another ascended from the Horse Gate up to the south side of the Temple. By means of these two stairways the King possessed what amounted to a private way to the Temple, and there is one rather obscure passage in 2 Kings 16. 18 which indicates that Ahaz made some alteration to one of these stairways. It seems then that the stairs leading down from the Palace to the Horse Gate are those to which reference is made in Isaiah.

Now these steps, running roughly eastward down the slope, with the lofty buildings of the Palace at the top between them and the afternoon sun, were shrouded in shadow every afternoon. As soon as the sun had passed the zenith at midday, the shadow of the Palace roof would fall upon the topmost step, and thereafter as the sun sank toward the west, so the shadow would grow longer and creep down the stairs to the end. That is the shadow that had gone

down ten of the steps ("degrees" in the A.V.) at the time of the sign. It must have been about the middle of the afternoon. Hezekiah had lain there many afternoons watching the shadow of his father's house creep down those stairs until at length, as it reached the Horse Gate at the bottom, the sun sank below the horizon behind his palace, the daylight rapidly faded and the short Palestinian twilight gave way to black night. So is the fate of my father's house, he must have thought bitterly; I am to die childless; there will be none of my line to reign after me on the throne of the Lord in Judah; all the promises made to the fathers will fail; there can never be a son of David to become David's Lord. God hath forgotten to be gracious.

And then he saw the sign! Josephus makes it plain in his account of the circumstances (*Ant.* 10. 2, 1) that the shadow had gone down ten steps of the staircase and then returned. What had happened? What was it in this inexplicable phenomenon that convinced Hezekiah that God was with him and would heal him?

It is not necessary to suppose that God interfered so much with the normal course of Nature as to halt and reverse the onward progression of the sun through the sky. Less spectacular and unlikely causes would have produced the effect. Under certain climatic conditions clouds of minute ice crystals can form at a great height in the upper reaches of the air; the apparent result as seen from the earth is the appearance of a band of light passing through the sun, and two additional suns, one on either side of the true sun. This effect, which is known as *parhelia*, or "mock sun", is due to the refraction of the sun's light as it passes through the prismatic ice crystals on its way to the earth. If now a cloud, at a much lower altitude, should obscure real sun and the western "mock sun" over a certain district, the only light reaching that district is from the eastern "mock sun" and the effect is as if the sun had receded eastwards by a certain fixed amount (always equal to one and a half hours of our time). Two occasions when this actually happened are on record; one was on 27th March, 1703, at Metz, in France, when the shadow on the sundial of the Prior of Metz was displaced by one and a half hours. The other occasion was on the 28th March, 1848, over parts of Hampshire when the same effect was observed.

Now this is a perfectly logical scientific explanation and the miracle could very well have been due to this cause, except for one consideration. Hezekiah had been at great pains to put down Baal worship, the constant curse of Israel, and to restore the worship of Jehovah. The sun was the visible symbol of Baal. Such a phenomenon as is described

above would be probably interpreted by those who witnessed it as a manifestation of the power and interest of Baal. The credit for the sign, and consequently for the cure of Hezekiah's sickness, would have been given, not to the God of Israel, but to Baal. Much of Hezekiah's own good work would have been undone. For this reason it is unlikely that God would use the sun as an instrument for effecting the "sign".

Is there then another possible means by which the miracle could have been performed, more in keeping with the majesty and power of God and more indisputably attributable to Him? The fact that as Hezekiah looked down his staircase the Temple of the Lord was in full view upon his left, at the summit of Mount Moriah, suggests that there is.

The shadow of the palace lay ten steps down the staircase. Only the return of the sunlight could remove it—or a light brighter than sunlight! Every Israelite knew that there was such a light; the holy "Shekinah", that supernatural light that shone from between the cherubim in the Most Holy, that had been the guide of Israel in the wilderness in those long ago Exodus days, a "fire by night", one that had been seen on rare occasions when God had cause to manifest His majesty and power in visible form. That fierce light, brighter than the sun at noonday, had flashed out from the Tabernacle to slay Nadab and Abihu when they offered "strange fire" before the Lord (Lev. 10. 2); it had flooded the camp at the time of Korah's rebellion (Num. 16. 42-45); it had filled Solomon's Temple at its dedication. Isaiah saw it once in vision when he received his commission of service (Isa. 6. 1). Is it possible that as Hezekiah gazed still upon the staircase, waiting for the sign that the Lord had promised him, the wondrous glory of the Shekinah did indeed blaze out from that sanctuary on the hill, blotting out the brightness of the sun itself, lighting all Jerusalem with its radiance? The shadow on the steps would have vanished in an instance, and the whole scene, the Palace Gardens, the stairs themselves, the city wall and the Horse Gate far below, the Mount of Olives on the opposite side of the valley, stand out in sharp relief vividly delineated in that blinding white light. If this is indeed what happened on that memorable day, what possible doubt could remain in Hezekiah's mind? More convincing by far than any natural celestial phenomenon, this message from the sanctuary was as the appearance of God Himself.

All Jerusalem must have seen it. All Jerusalem must have interpreted it aright. The *Shekinah* came forth only for destruction or blessing. Hezekiah was a good king, a God-fearing man. It could only

mean that he would recover, that he would live to play his part in the fulfilment of Divine promise, that there would yet be a son to sit upon the throne of the Lord after him, that the destiny of Israel would yet be achieved. The news would travel quickly, and before long all Judea would know what had happened, and that the King's life had been prolonged for fifteen years.

So the wonderful story concludes with Hezekiah going up to the Temple to sing his songs of praise to the stringed instruments, all the days of his life, for his deliverance and for the marvellous happening (Isa. 38. 20). Fifteen songs did he compose, and named them "songs of the steps". They appear to-day in the Book of Psalms as Psalms 120 to 134, and they are headed "songs of degrees" by the A.V. translators. (The ascription of some of them to David is incorrect.) For ever afterwards they were used in the Temple ceremonies, and to-day we use them still, a memorial of that day when the Lord turned back the shadow that was over the house of Israel, and His glory was seen in Jerusalem.

The first list of appointments in connection with Bro. J. T. Read's pilgrim trip in this country will appear in the February B.S.M., and it will be appreciated if readers will endeavour to acquaint all non-readers within their knowledge and reach of the details.

* * * *

The new illustrated folders have already won favourable comment from the friends and it is hoped that they will be the precursors of many more of the same type. The green and black title page and the photographic reproductions present a very attractive appearance and well maintain the dignity that should attend our presentation of the message. Details are on the back page of this issue—Nos. 201 and 202, 1/3 per doz., 7/6 per 100.

* * * *

The programme for the Easter Convention at Warrington has been drawn up and the following brethren will (D.V.) address the gathering: Bros. W. Batcheller (London); W. F. Fox (Yeovil); F. Linter (Stockport); S. Philip (Warrington); J. T. Read (Chicago, U.S.A.); S. Smith (Manchester); D. P. Vaughan (London); C. T. Ward (Kettering). Accommodation will have to be chiefly in hotels and even then the problem is rather acute, and the friends are therefore asked to notify their requirements as early as possible, to Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, avoiding requests for single bedrooms if reasonably possible.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

An essay on the relation between present fears and future hopes.

If it were possible to question the political leaders of every nation concerning the desire of their particular country, the replies would doubtless be as varied as their language and colour. It is difficult to visualise any arrangement which would harmonise with all the expressed desires of such leaders; if, however, it were possible to question the "man in the street" of every nation concerning his desire, it might be found that the "four freedoms" of the Atlantic Charter would satisfy him to some degree. These freedoms are, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of religious thought.

It is obvious that men are in need of freedom, but we, as Bible Students, realise that the bonds which hold them are those of sin, degradation and death, and whilst we know that God has a plan for their deliverance from these evils, there is no expressed desire on the part of the nations to be delivered from this bondage. Can we see then, any way in which God's plan of salvation will bring the "desire of all nations"?

Take, first, "freedom from fear". The pictures of Isaiah chapters 35 and 65 give us a vision of such freedom. It is suggested that chapters 34 and 35 should be read as one, showing, first, Divine anger against all nations, followed by the return to Zion of the ransomed of the Lord. If we do thus read we notice that some of the symbols therein are used in both chapters, and a consideration of these reveal the change which is to take place to free men from fear. In Isa. 34. 13 and 14 (Moffatt) we read that "*thorns thrive where once were palaces; nettles and thistles fill the forts; there jackals prowl, there quarter ostriches, wild cats hunt with hyenas, and demons call to demon; there vampires settle, to make themselves a home*".

This seems to symbolise the conditions which will exist on earth when human government breaks down, when men's hearts are failing them for FEAR, but in verse 4 of chapter 35 (Moffatt) the message is "*tell men with fluttering hearts, 'Have courage, never fear'*". What is it that brings this freedom from fear. Verse 7 says "*the jackals' and hyenas' lair shall turn to pasture for your flocks, and reeds and rushes shall be flourishing where once the ostrich quartered*". The same type of wild animal is used again in chapter 65, symbolising the perverted dispositions of fallen men, but they are depicted as

lying down with those animals which portray the gentler traits of character. "*Wolves and lambs shall browse together, lions shall eat straw like oxen, none shall injure, none shall kill*." Thus will the Kingdom of Righteousness bring freedom from fear.

The second freedom, freedom from want, will also come as a result of the reign of the Lord. In Isa. 65. 17 we read that God is to create new heavens and a new earth, and that as a result of this (verse 21) "*they shall build houses and inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards and enjoy the fruit; the houses they build, others shall not inhabit, what they plant other men shall not enjoy*". This, and many similar scriptures, applies primarily to Israel, but the promise is, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. Even as Israel and Judah under the wise rule of Solomon "*dwelt confidently, every man under his vine or fig tree*," so under the wiser reign of the greater than Solomon, all the world shall "*sit every man under his vine and fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid*". (1 Kings 4. 25; Micah 4. 4.)

The need for the third and fourth freedoms, freedom of speech and expression and freedom of religious thought, arises largely as a result of the oppression and repression practised by dictatorial rulers and governments, and because of religious intolerance and hatred manifested for centuries in many lands. The only way in which these liberties can be restored will be by the removal of the oppressors and intolerant religious leaders, and in this connection we are reminded of Isa. 14. 4-7 and 58. 6 (Moffatt). "*How the tyrant is hushed, his mad rage hushed! The club of the godless the Eternal has crushed—the rod of oppression that smote the nations in a passion, blow after blow, that enslaved races in a fury, and never let them go. Now the whole world lies at peace, bursting into song*". "Is not this my chosen fast, the Lord, the Eternal, asks; to loosen all that fetters men unfairly, and to relax its grip; to free poor debtors from their bonds and break what binds them?" But with the relaxing of all the fetters which at present prevent freedom of speech and religious thought, there would arise a veritable hubbub of confused, volcanic vociferation, unparelled in human history. How then, will come to pass the fulfilment of Romans 14. 11? "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." The spirit of worship is

strong in every human being; men must worship or look up to a being or power higher than themselves; so Mohammed of the Arabs, Brahma and Buddha of the Hindus, Confucius of the Chinese and all the heathen gods, as well as the carved images of idolatry, and even the totem-posts of the primitive races, are endued with a mystic power which raises them to the supernatural.

There is, however, to be a manifestation of Divine power which will, we believe, convince all men of the supremacy of the "Eternal". Ezekiel 38 describes in graphic terms a mighty intervention on God's part, as a result of which, He says, "*So will I magnify myself, and hallow myself, and make myself known before the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am Yahweh.*" (Ezekiel 38. 23 Rotherham.) Then, surely, men will, without persuasion or coercion begin to turn to the Lord, to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

In quoting and commenting upon these scriptures, we have sought to demonstrate, very briefly, that the desire of all nations will come as a result of the establishment of God's kingdom, yet these passages have not touched upon the vital need of men, viz., deliverance from the bondage of sin and death.

We see then, that the blessings which God has in store for mankind constitute much more than the "desire of all nations". What then is the purport of this statement in Haggai 2. 7? It occurs in the record of the reconstruction of the temple at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, and in verse 9 we read that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, and *in this place will I give peace* saith the Lord". Now the temple which Zerubbabel built was much inferior to that built by Solomon, so this statement must refer to some other structure, or have some deeper meaning. The words of Zech. 4. 6-10 reveal to us that Zerubbabel is a type of Christ, so the words of Haggai 2 must refer to the new spiritual temple which Christ is erecting for God's dwelling place among men. Speaking of the time of its completion God says, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations," and then—*not* "the desire of all nations shall come"—*but*, as Moffatt puts it, "till the treasures of all nations are brought hither and my House here filled with splendour", or, as Leeser translated it "and the precious things of all nations shall come hither". Rotherham puts it "and the delight of all the nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory", and in a footnote suggests that the "delight" is the "desirable, precious things" of all nations. This surely changes the matter com-

pletely round. The blessings will not *come* to all nations, but rather the nations, having learned that the Eternal is the only true God, will *come* to the Temple, bringing their treasures (desirable, precious things) to Him, thus being in a condition to receive the blessings which will belong to all true worshippers of God.

What a change must yet be wrought in the hearts and minds of men, ere they will be ready to go up to God's house with all their treasures. At the present time the precious things of all nations are being poured out into schemes which will, eventually, prove futile and unprosperous. Men still believe that the peace of the world can be preserved by building bigger and better armaments. Whilst the leaders of the nations are labouring, in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, to hammer out a peace treaty which will satisfy the varied "desires" of all nations, the findings of the world's greatest scientists are being used to prepare weapons which will, by comparison, make the weapons of the last war look like fireworks. The world's best engineers are preoccupied in the development of machines of war suitable to combat the scientific marvels of atomic energy. The flower of youth in many countries is still being conscripted for military service, preparing not for construction, but for destruction. The clash between capital and labour is becoming sharper as masters and men unite each against the other in the great industrial wrestling matches being fought out in many countries. It would be wearisome to continue outlining the various ways in which men are spending their energies to attain their own ends, resulting all too often in bloodshed and death; but all these activities are dissipating the "desirable, precious things" of all nations in an abortive attempt to bring peace and prosperity. While many men are labouring earnestly and sincerely to bring about their ideals, such energies are bound to be poured out in vain whilst men are still cursed with hearts of stone, but when God's spirit is poured out upon all flesh, the desirable precious things of all nations will be poured out before the altar in the house of God.

The result of this will be, not merely the "desire of all nations", but peace and prosperity such as has not existed on earth since the perfection of Eden was forfeited by Adam and his bride. Ever since that time men as a whole have been drifting further and further from the worship of God, but we believe that the Eternal is calling a halt. The false gods which men have worshipped and trusted in increasingly with the passage of the centuries are crashing around them like Dagon before the Ark of God. Soon we believe the Second Adam with

His spiritual bride will bring men back to a condition in which they will be worthy to enjoy all that which was lost in Eden, and then the desirable precious things of all nations will be poured out, not

in an abortive flow of wasted energy, but in a surge of spontaneous love and good will, to the benefit of each and all, and to the glory of Him Who is worthy of all worship and praise.

THE EFFECT OF EVERY VISION

AN EXHORTATION
FOR OUR TIMES

"We see not our signs. There is no more any prophet, neither is there amongst us any that knoweth how long." (Psa. 74. 9.)

In those few words, beautiful even in their pessimism, there is summed up all the despair and all the hopelessness of a generation that had lost its youthful enthusiasm. In the early flush of youth they had eagerly embraced all the good promises of the prophets and looked forward with earnest longing to the day when those golden words would be fulfilled in dazzling reality. They had dreamed dreams and seen visions, and in all those dreams and all those visions they had pictured themselves as the favourites of God, called and chosen by Him to be His associates in the day upon which He would arise to rule the nations. They ardently desired a rule of righteousness upon earth and the overthrow of evil. They loved the Name of the Lord and they wanted to see that beloved Name cleared of the misunderstandings and false charges that had clustered about it. They had given themselves to God and He had accepted them for His own, to be a covenant people and a light to the nations, and life had become a different thing to them. Of course it was unthinkable that they should ever change their attitude! They had but to wait in the joy of this new-found relationship and when the day of deliverance dawned their dearest hopes would be gratified.

But the years went by and a new and unknown factor emerged. Life was found to contain so much more than was imagined in those early days when the plans and promises of God had been so eagerly embraced. There was disappointment and disillusionment lying in wait to test faith and endurance; the insidious suggestion that more complete knowledge would reveal the instability of the foundation upon which those earlier golden visions had been built; the realisation that many of the fond expectations had not materialised; and, perhaps worst of all, the onset of old age with its weakening of the natural powers and increasing difficulty of retaining the intellectual understanding of earlier years. What wonder that these things manifested themselves in a growing impatience with the enthusiasm of such prophets as remained in the land and a peevish insistence "there is no prophet; none there are who can tell us how long"?

We can sympathise with those disappointed Israelites of old, for we ourselves face a very similar situation. Things have turned out so differently from what was expected and some begin to doubt the certainty of earlier years. There was so much zeal and energy expended in those days, so much time and money given to a work that seemed worth while, so much organising and building, and what has it all come to? Was it so much a work of the Lord as was thought . . . ?

Nay, who are we that we presume to question the wisdom of the Great Shepherd? Shall the thing formed say of Him that formed it "Why hast thou made me thus?" Shall the servant say to his Master "Why doest thou this?" It is true that we are told to say, when we have done all that we can, "*we are unprofitable servants*," but nowhere are we told to stop serving Christ and to say "*this is unprofitable service*". We may not have perceived every aspect of the Divine Plan with unquestioned accuracy, but then a great many Christians throughout the Age have been in that same position. If we have grown weary of deferred hopes it is not because our Lord has grown weary of us. Neither is it necessarily that we are inconstant or changeable; more probable that we are uncertain.

Perhaps it was inevitable. How impossible it would have been in those early days to describe the world as it is now, a world of travel and radio and atomic energy; a world where less than five per cent. of the people go to places of worship; a world where science—cold, passionless and inhuman—has been enthroned as God and Lord! How difficult it would have been to outline in detail the many events that must needs occur, the process of development that has had to take place in the affairs of the nations before the Kingdom can come! Surely it was Divine Love as well as Divine Wisdom that kept closed a portion of the veil concealing the future, though revealing enough to inspire the minds and awaken the enthusiasm of those who were to go out as heralds of the Kingdom; that withheld from their minds a mass of detail which could not in any case become a live issue for another two generations.

The prophets have not failed us. The Holy Spirit is still active in the work of God, quickening

the minds of His people and showing them visions of things yet to come as the time becomes due for those things to be understood. The drama of world history has stepped up its pace many times over in these last years; the succession of events is more rapid, the significance of each world crisis of greater moment, the possibilities of each situation more far-reaching. We see with our own eyes that of which our fathers in the faith told us, the breaking-up of a world order preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son. We see the progressive lining up of all world forces under the banners of one or other of two great powers. We see the land of promise and prophecy slowly becoming caught between the spheres of influence of those two Powers as in a pair of giant pincers. We hear the growing demand of Jacob that he be

restored as of right to his ancient inheritance. We perceive these things and we know what they portend. When the faint hearted children of Israel came to Ezekiel with their complaint "the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth" the Lord gave him a word for them. We can take that word to heart, for history has repeated itself. "Tell them therefore, thus saith the Lord God, **THE DAYS ARE AT HAND, AND THE EFFECT OF EVERY VISION.**" Let us give more earnest heed to the sure word of prophecy, for now, in the world's Saturday night, it speaks with clear voice of the things that are yet to be, and as we see those things unfold on the screen of world history, we shall know of a surety that our faith has been well founded and that to us belongs the word "He that *endureth to the end*, the same shall be saved".

The Holy City and the River of Life

A glimpse at John's vision in Rev. 21 & 22

The vision of the new Jerusalem, the account of which concludes the Book of Revelation and the Bible, is a symbolic representation of the final phase, the consummation, of the Divine Plan. John saw a wonderful city descending out of the heavens to settle everlastingly upon the new earth created by God to take the place of that old earth which had passed away. This city was to become the dwelling-place of God, where He would dwell with men, and into it there should nothing defiling ever enter; only those that were accounted worthy of everlasting life. From the city there flowed a "River of Life", having "Trees of Life" growing upon its banks, and from this water and food of life the sinsick nations of the world were to derive sustenance and healing. The vision closes with a gracious invitation to all men, that they come and partake of the water of life freely.

This is not a vision of Heaven, as so many have supposed. Its essential basis is the coming of Divine government to the earth and the presence of God to be with men. It foreshadows the restoration of Edenic conditions upon earth, for the connection of this River and these Trees of Life with the Genesis story is too plain to be ignored. It pictures the time when this rebellious earth has become fully reconciled to God and, to use Paul's words in Rom. 8. 21 "The creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God". The Church of Christ has already (in the 20th chapter) been exalted to Heaven and eternal association with Christ the Lord; the 21st and 22nd chapters tell of the corresponding completion of the Divine Plan

for the earth, a completion which is to be effected during the Millennial Age.

John's introductory synopsis of the vision (chap. 21. 1-8) records the words he heard from heaven "*Behold the tabernacle (dwelling-place) of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*" It is sometimes suggested that this chapter records two separate descents of the Holy City to earth; this is not likely. It is more probable that John prefaced his account of the actual vision with a short summary and then in verse 9 addressed himself to the vision in detail.

The city as it appeared to John was square in outline, surrounded by a high wall of gleaming green jasper, the golden buildings set in terraces, one above another so that at the centre its height appeared to be as great as the width. This square form symbolised the justice and righteousness of the new Divine government, and its intimate connection with the heavenly powers was shown by its towering up to the skies. The wall rested upon twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles, and at each of the twelve lofty gateways there was posted a guardian angel. The number twelve had particular significance to the ancients, for they pictured the sun as issuing forth from twelve successive portals in the heavens in turn, as month succeeded month, and this, with the division of the day into twelve hours, invested the number

with the idea of earthly or material completeness and universality. Hence the twelve gateways, facing three each to north, south, east and west, symbolised the universal invitation to all peoples of earth to enter the Holy City; "Whosoever will, let him come" (Rev. 22. 17). "In this mountain will the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." (Isa. 25. 6.) The twelve foundations bearing the names of the Apostles stood for the universal appeal of the Gospel upon which the City is built. The height of the wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, indicated the full comprehensive nature of the Kingdom, that it will contain all of God's earthly perfected creation; nothing will be left outside.

The first function of the Holy City is to cleanse the nations. God is pictured as dwelling in the centre of the City, seated upon His Throne, His Son Jesus Christ beside Him, for the purpose of "wiping away all tears" from the eyes of men (Rev. 21. 4 and 22. 3-5), and bringing healing to all. This work is denoted by the spectacle of a River of Life, seen by John to proceed from the Throne and issue forth from the city to flow through the country outside. The A.V. verse division of chap. 22. 1-2 is unfortunate and obscures the true sense. Rightly expressed, the passage reads "*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street of it (the city). And on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" The term "street" means a broad highway, and "tree of life" is a generic term referring, not to one single tree, but to the species generally. John saw this broad highway extending outward from the city and the river flowing along its centre, the sides of the river being flanked with trees of life bearing twelve varieties of fruit. This is much like the vision seen by Ezekiel when he saw the river of life issuing from the Millennial Temple and flowing out to the east country, the trees of life on its bank also being for food and healing (Ezek. 47. 1-12). This "street" corresponds to the "Highway of Holiness" spoken of by Isaiah in his 35th chapter "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it (overlook it or miss finding it); for he shall be with them". This "Highway of Holiness" is the symbolic road along which mankind will be invited and exhorted, during the Millennial Age, to travel, toward harmony and reconciliation with God through faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of Him as Saviour.

"*And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*" (21. 24.) These are the peoples to whom are addressed the words in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. 25. 34). When the evangelical work of the Millennial Age has been completed and all who are capable of recovery have become reconciled to God and attained human perfection, they are depicted as being the perpetual citizens of the Holy City. Every man will be a king, for God created man lord of the earthly dominion, and all men will share in the task of administering this earthly dominion in harmony with Divine laws. Hence all are "kings" and all will bring the glory and honour of sinless manhood into it.

Here the veil is drawn. The Holy Scriptures do not take us beyond the end of the Millennial Age to talk in detail of the "ages of glory to follow". Of the condition and life of the redeemed through the everlasting years they say nothing. We are shown the Plan of God for this earth at its triumphant conclusion, sin and evil banished forever, irreclaimable evil doers destroyed, the Church of Christ exalted to the heavens, and all the nations fully converted to God and enjoying His munificence on the restored and perfected earth. "*Not a stain of sin mars the peace and harmony of a perfect society.*" For the further glories of revelation, of knowledge and of activity that must assuredly be the lot of all the redeemed we must wait, until the time shall come; but we can wait in full assurance that as Isaiah predicted (Isa. 32. 17) "*the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*".

Some of our friends will remember Brother K. Langfeld, now of Dresden, Germany, who laboured in this country thirty years ago, and has kept in touch with some of our brethren ever since. Brother Langfeld was in Dresden when that city was destroyed in February, 1945, but survived unscathed and word has now been received from him expressing his continued faith in the Truth and the coming of the Kingdom, and his joy at getting again into touch with his British friends. We shall be happy to give his address to any who would like to send him a word of cheer and encouragement in the present difficult circumstances. Brother Langfeld tells us that the brethren in Dresden (which is in the Russian Zone) are able to hold their meetings without let or hindrance.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

Leaning on the parapet, I watched the steam ferry-boat making its leisurely way across the river. A queer, ungainly looking craft it was, sitting squat and flat on the water, its two tall funnels standing up straight, one at each end of the motley load of vans, lorries and cars. For more than fifty years now it has plied to and fro between its two landing stages, never venturing up or down stream more than has been necessary to avoid other river traffic. As often as not it makes part of the journey floating sideways in the grip of the tide, which flows strongly at this point. Its paddle wheels make a great deal of noise and throw up a lot of spray, but the boat never gets up any considerable speed, for it is heavy and cumbersome and the distance it has to travel is so short.

A short, sharp blast echoed imperiously over the water. A small motor vessel, making its way down river, was warning the slow-moving ferry of its approach. The heavily laden craft hesitated, slowed down, its paddles whirling furiously first in one direction and then in the other as it manoeuvred and turned in the endeavour to leave a clear passage for the faster boat. The other vessel deviated slightly from its course and passed athwart the stern of the ferry; the sound of its engines came sharply upon the ear as it speeded up and soon it was but a speck in the distance, heading for the open sea. Now the ferry-boat was at the far landing stage, its paddles slowly revolving to hold it stationary there against the urge of the swiftly flowing tide.

And I thought to myself how many Christian organisations and institutions become like that ferry-boat. They pass continually backward and forward across the river of Truth at the point where they began their corporate work, unceasingly repeating the same round of activity and always maintaining the same outlook, their paddles constantly thrashing up the same water and fighting always against the flowing tide which would carry them to shores undreamed of and show them vistas of which they had not conceived. And when perchance there happens along a band of Christians not content to man a ferry-boat, but would travel down the ever widening and ever deepening river of Truth until it merges into the ocean of the fulness of Divine revelation, there is much ado to keep the institution with all its lading well clear of the venturesome rovers, lest there be a collision, and untoward consequences to vested interests.

There are so many to-day who want their religion and their Christian activity made safe for them. It is so easy to join the crew of the ferry-boat, to be very busy with the work of taking travellers

across the river and back again, day after day. But it is the pioneer, travelling the course of the river, who feels the upward lift of the heaving billows, senses the keen air and the fresh wind, and comes out into the open sea, upon the horizon of which he sees, dimly yet but ever growing clearer, the palaces and temples, the cliffs and mountains, of that glory land which is the world that shall be; the crew of the ferry-boat never see aught but the grimy buildings and smoky factories of the earthly city within which their whole lives are being spent.

Let us be pioneers, like those Pilgrim Fathers who set out to colonise America. "*The Lord hath yet more Truth to break forth from His Holy Word*" was the parting charge to them of their Pastor, John Robinson, as they left England, and in the power of that admonition they went forth to lay the foundations of a new world. "*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let his speak my word faithfully.*" Only so may our Christian witness be effective; no witness that is not based upon the best and deepest understanding of the Divine Plan that it is possible for us to attain can be expected to meet the needs and the problems of this generation; the catchwords and allusions that were intelligible to men and women generations ago mean nothing to their children to-day, and so it comes about that it is not only Truth that is progressive, but witness is progressive also. Let us see to it that our own vision of the coming Kingdom is that which is seen, not from the deck of a city ferry-boat, flat down on the muddy river waters, but from the bows of sea-going vessels, high up on the ocean billows, where sea and sky alike tell of the majesty and power of God in creation and revelation.

"Every man knows that the sun is the true light, feels it to be such, and without hesitation affirms it to be supreme. There is no debate as to whether the sun or the moon is the light of the world. Imagine a dark night, and an observer who has never seen the sun: a star suddenly shows itself, and the observer hails it with delight; presently the moon shines with all her gentle strength and the observer says 'This is the fulfilment of the promise; can aught be lovelier, can the sky possibly be brighter?' In due course the sun comes up; every cloud is filled with light; every mountain is crowned with a strange glory; every leaf in the forest is silvered; the sea becomes as burnished glass, a secrecy is chased from the face of the earth: under such a vision, the observer knows that this is the true light—the sovereign, all-dominating flame.

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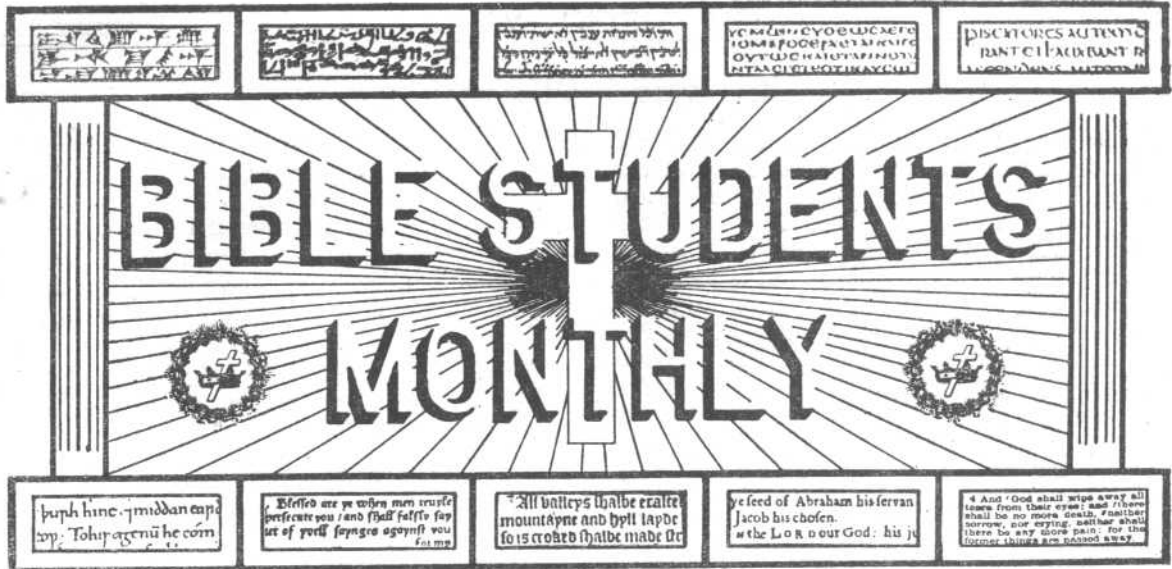
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BETWEEN OURSELVES

It would appear that at any one time only one person in a hundred is in process of reading a religious book. Considering that only three hundred years ago practically the whole of published literature was of a religious nature, and that the Bible at least was read daily in almost every household containing someone who could read, this represents a marked falling away. A Gallup Poll reported on 23rd December in the "News Chronicle" shows that novels and light fiction account for 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. of books being read against one per cent. of religious books. This of course is only one aspect of the drift away from religion and—this is important—religious habits of thought. It is not sufficient to deplore the fact; the problem is how so to produce and present Christian literature that it will attract the 99 per cent. who evidently find no appeal in it at present. We are accustomed to the Gospel story of the one straying sheep and the ninety-nine safely in the fold; the position appears to be the reverse in our day. The problem is one that confronts every Christian organisation and every Christian publisher. We are ourselves witnesses that our traditional forms of literature do not have the appeal that once they had. Yet there is little doubt that many, especially among young people, are ready for just such a message as Christians ought to be able to give. Perhaps some of our readers will comment on the problem. * * * *

Brother G. A. Ford asks us to express the Benevolent Fund Committee's appreciation of the many contributions made to the Fund by so many brethren during the year just ended, and to assure them of the relief and comfort this has enabled them to give to the less fortunate of Christ's little ones. Bro. Ford says "We recognise, as indeed, our Lord must, the beautiful spirit of brotherliness and the spiritual fruitage of character manifested by the gifts". A considerable quantity of food has been sent from America, Australia and New Zealand and has been re-packed into suitable smaller quantities and distributed as widely as possible to those known to be in need. * * * *

The programme for the Easter Convention at Warrington has been drawn up and the following brethren will (D.V.) address the gathering: Bros. W. Batcheller (London); W. F. Fox (Yeovil); F. Linter (Stockport); S. Philip (Warrington); J. T. Read (Chicago, U.S.A.); S. Smith (Manchester); D. P. Vaughan (London); C. T. Ward (Kettering). Accommodation will have to be chiefly in hotels and even then the problem is rather acute, and the

friends are therefore asked to notify their requirements as early as possible, to Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, avoiding requests for single bedrooms if reasonably possible. * * * *

No further details are yet available regarding the Whitsun Convention at Birmingham and the August Convention at Conway Hall, London, but it is expected that our March issue will contain items of interest in this connection. Bro. J. T. Read, of Chicago, will address both Conventions. * * * *

It is now generally known throughout the country that Bro. J. T. Read, of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Brooklyn, U.S.A., is to visit this country this year at the invitation of brethren in London and the Midlands. Brother Read is expected to arrive about the middle of March and will visit all centres which make request for his ministry. His first appointments, covering March and April, are listed elsewhere in this issue. Friends who would like to be included in the plans, but have not yet made application, are requested to do so without delay to Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry. No financial obligation is involved—we think that this fact is well known already. Our brother comes to us well reported for faithful ministry and we shall welcome him to this country in full confidence that his presence with us will result in spiritual uplift and a strengthening of the ties that bind us to our overseas friends. * * * *

"Jerusalem." The November issue of this little paper has come our way. It is the journal of the Jewish Christian Community, and contains some thought-provoking articles. That by Dr. W. Hodler on the "Outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh" is definitely worth reading and constitutes an interesting confirmation of our own conclusions upon the dispensational aspect of this matter. Abram Poljack suggests that world judgment began in 1914 and will continue for 40 years; with the first part of this statement, at any rate, few of us would disagree. There is the usual expectation shared by most evangelical Christians that the Second Coming is an imminent event to be expected in the near future; in our own fellowship many of us have convictions that would bring that momentous event into the present, but, whether present or future, we do well to be "as servants that wait for their lord". The paper is published on a voluntary basis and a copy can be obtained from "The Jerusalem Fellowship", 17, Higham Road, Tottenham, London, N.17.

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 1—Destruction from the North.

A. O. Hudson

He was, in all probability, director of the musical service at the Temple in the days of King Jehoiakim and just before the shadow of Babylon fell across the land. He was a prophet; the particular form of the title used, applied only to Haggai, Zechariah, and himself, appears to indicate that he held a definite prophetic office. He was not one of the wandering seers like Elijah, nor a layman like Nahum, but a priest or a Levite whose prophetic gift had been so far recognised by the ecclesiastical authorities that he was officially accepted as a prophet of God. His life therefore must have been spent in and around the Temple and its services.

He might have known Ezekiel and Daniel; the latter was a boy at the time. He must certainly have been acquainted with Jeremiah and the two men were probably close friends. They both lived at the same time, were probably of much the same age, and shared the same outlook on the things of God. They were both passionate for the righteousness of God and both waited longingly for the coming of His Kingdom. But whereas a great deal is known of the life of Jeremiah, from his youthful days in the reign of good King Josiah until we lose sight of him forty years later in Egypt, after the destruction of Jerusalem, nothing whatever is known of the life of Habakkuk. He comes upon the scene and delivers his prophecy, calm in its faith and resplendent in its presentation of the majesty of God, and passes out into the unknown. Whether he lived to witness the fall of the city twenty-five years after his prophecy, and was carried into captivity with his nation, or on the other hand had by then been laid to rest to await his reward at the Last Day, we have no idea. His prophecy is his history and his only monument.

Habakkuk was essentially a prophet of faith. He gave the Apostle Paul the inspiration for that greatest of doctrines, justification by faith. "The just man shall live by his faith" cried Habakkuk. Paul sensed the inner truth behind the words and carried them to an infinitely higher plane when he showed that the life enjoyed by the just man can only be received in Christ and through belief in and acceptance of Christ. Habakkuk's own personal faith is revealed from time to time in his prophecy, shining forth like illuminated gold and red initial letters on an ancient parchment. His sterling confidence in God's holiness and justice despite the

apparent triumph of evil (chap. 1. 12-13); his steadfast belief that God would perceive his standing on his watch, and reveal to him His plans (2. 1); his plea that God would preserve alive His work with His people in the intervening years between the early and the latter fulfilments (3. 2); his willingness to "rest" in death until the time of Israel's deliverance and glory at the end of the world (3. 16); and his determination to honour and praise the Lord despite the apparent utter failure of His promises (3. 17), all attest the deep-rooted faith which enabled this man clearly to see, not only the faults and shortcomings of his own people and the retribution that must surely come upon them in consequence, but also the Divine intervention which, at the end of time, would restore that people, repentant and purified, to its destined inheritance, destroy its enemies, and exalt righteousness over evil for ever.

It would be a matter of surprise, therefore, if such a man did not see, in prophetic vision, something of the circumstances attending the dawn of that great day, the day of the Messianic Kingdom. Sure enough, his words do convey some very definite foreviews of these circumstances, and stamp him as one of those prophets who "spoke" of the coming "Times of Restitution" to which Peter referred in his sermon to the people of Jerusalem (Acts 3. 21).

The prophecy of Habakkuk is a striking example of the manner in which "holy men of old" were led to a perception of things relating to the "last days" only after they had been prepared for that perception by an understanding of the presence of sin in the world and the cause of that sin. In these three short chapters there is a whole process of development which must be repeated in the life of every Christian disciple who would understand intelligently "what his lord doeth". Habakkuk was first led to supplicate God on account of the injustice and apostasy which was rampant in his own day. "Why does God permit such evil?" was his question. "*How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear; even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save?*" (Chap. 1. vs. 2.) The answer of God when it came to him was not one of reassurance. True, it showed that God was not heedless, and that the wicked would not escape retribution, but it also showed that retribution was to come in the form of an invasion of the land by the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation", under

Nebuchadnezzar, and that the land would be destroyed and laid desolate. Habakkuk, filled with dismay at the drastic nature of the remedy, approached God once more and appealed to His holiness and righteousness, that He would remember His promise and purpose with the children of Israel, and not permit them to be utterly destroyed by the heathen. There was apparently no immediate answer to this plea, and it was then that Habakkuk rose to the heights of faith and took his stand upon the watch tower to await further instruction from God, instruction which he knew would come, because he knew that God was faithful.

His faith was honoured, and the message came through to him. It was a message of woe and condemnation against the persecutors of Israel. It was to be for a long time; as with Daniel not many years later, the vision was for the "time of the end" but at that time it was to speak plainly and not lie. And then, at the end of the message, God appeared to the prophet upon the throne of His holiness in the glory of His heavenly Temple, just as He did to Isaiah (Isa. 6. 1), and gave this faithful servant of His a vision of the "end time" set against the background of the Exodus incidents. Under those vivid symbols there appears a dual picture of the great Time of Trouble that is to close this Gospel Age and usher in the Millennial Kingdom; a picture that shows, first, God's working in the affairs of men during the "Time of the End", the period during which the kingdoms of this world are disintegrating and breaking down in face of the imminent Kingdom of Christ, and second, arising to intervene in that short and final phase of human resistance to the incoming Kingdom which is called "Jacob's Trouble", the invasion of the Holy Land by the forces of "Gog and Magog". And perceiving the final glorious outcome, Habakkuk closes his prophecy with an expression of his own confidence in his awakening from the "rest" of death when that day shall have come, and all God's promises should certainly be fulfilled.

So his first complaint serves but to awaken him to a consciousness that all is not well with man's world; it is sunken in sin and iniquity. "*Why dost thou . . . cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me . . . therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous*" (Chap. 1. vs. 3-4).

Habakkuk's complaint was fully justified. The reforms instituted by King Josiah had lapsed very soon after his death. His son Jehoiakim, a young man of twenty-five, had no reverence for God and was much more interested in political bargaining with Egypt. He appears to have been a "modern"

ruler surrounded by a "smart set" which had but scant respect for older and wiser counsellors such as Jeremiah, the men who saw quite plainly to what this state of affairs must lead. In consequence public morality declined, injustice and oppression flourished, unbridled commercialism forced the observance of the Sabbath into virtual disuse, and the Temple of God was neglected. The nation had repudiated its covenant with God—the covenant entered into at Sinai upon their organisation as a nation—and in accordance with the terms of that covenant, national disaster must surely follow.

Verses 2 to 4 record Habakkuk's prayer. Verses 5 to 11 tell of God's answer to that prayer. It is a message of condemnation and judgment; prophetic, because the events of which it spoke were yet future. "*Behold ye among the nations . . . and wonder . . . for, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs*" (1. 5-6). Within a very few years the word was fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar with his armies invaded and ravaged Judah, captured or slew successive kings and many of their godless princes and nobles, and took the people captive into Babylonia. For nineteen years or more he continued those raids until at length the Temple was burned, Jerusalem destroyed, and the land utterly desolated. The historian rightly attributed this great disaster to the people's neglect of the things of God, and their mocking His messengers "till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36. 14-20).

The description of the Babylonian invaders struck fear into the prophet's heart. Neither he nor his people knew much about the Babylonians. They had but recently, under Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, become a power in world affairs. The Assyrians had been known and feared, but Nineveh had been destroyed forty years before, destroyed by these very Babylonians, and the once-dreaded names of Sennacherib, Sargon and Shalmaneser were dreaded no longer. But this was a new menace. "*They are terrible and dreadful . . . their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves . . . their horsemen shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to the prey . . . they shall come all for violence . . . they shall scoff at kings, and princes shall be a scorn . . .*" (1. 7-11). No wonder that the heart of Habakkuk failed him at the terrible prospect and he betook himself again to God, praying this time, not for judgment against the unrighteous, but mercy upon the wayward.

Verse 11 requires re-translating. It should be rendered rather "Then he sweeps by like a wind, he, the guilty, whose might is his god". An apt description of Nebuchadnezzar, the man who said

later "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom and by the might of my power?" (Dan. 4. 30). The keynote of this prophecy is the triumph of Divine influence over the material might of man: it commences with the growth of Babylonian world dominion, the "head of gold" of the world-image (Dan. 2. 38) and its decline to ultimate destruction, and it concludes with the greater world-empire of the end of this Age and that empire's utter overthrow by Divine intervention at the time of Christ's Kingdom upon earth.

Now Habakkuk (in vss. 12-17) comes before God in supplication that Israel might not perish utterly. He reminds God of His own glory and power, and of His infinite righteousness. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die . . . thou hast ordained them for judgment . . . established them for correction" (vs. 12). Because God is, and because He is the God of Israel, and His promises are bound up in Israel, it is unthinkable that the nation should die. The Babylonians were "ordained" or appointed for "judgment" and "correction" upon the faithless nation, but not to exterminate it utterly. That is Habakkuk's first reaction. But then there comes another thought to his mind. Is not the Lord violating His own principles by inflicting evil in order to purge from evil? Is He doing evil that good might come? "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil . . . wherefore lookest thou upon them (the Chaldeans) that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he, and makest men as the fishes of the sea . . . They take . . . them with the angle . . . in their net . . . in their drag . . . and are glad" (1. 13-15). In this wonderful picture the prophet alludes to the helpless condition of his people, as fish in the sea, swept up by the nets and drags and torn away from their native habitat without strength or power to resist. Can this be the will of God, God Who is pledged to destroy all evil, God Who said to Moses that He would fill the earth with His glory? (Num. 14. 21). Had the Lord indeed given the earth over to destruction and all people on it to slavery and death? These all-conquering hordes had subjugated Assyria and the northern peoples, they held Damascus and the land of Israel to the north of Jerusalem, they ruled Moab and Edom and the desert tribes to the south. Only Judah and the coastlands were left, and now it seemed as if they were to be swallowed up also. What was to become of all God's promises? The heavens were dark unto Habakkuk and the Lord seemed very far away, almost as if He had forgotten His people, and yet the prophet knew within himself that such a thing

could not be. But the prophetic message, so full of tragedy and disaster, was trying his faith to the uttermost, and he broke out in the anguish of his heart with the despairing cry which closes the first chapter, "Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?"

* * * * *

But it was at this crisis that Habakkuk's faith inspired him to take his stand upon the watch tower and hearken diligently for the Divine message; and from this point that his prophecy expands into increasingly glorious stages of revelation, taking him far beyond the events of his own days and showing him that which was to come upon his people "at the end of the days". Next month's chapter will tell of his experiences.

AFTERWARD

- "God's ways are equal: storm or calm,
Seasons of peril and of rest,
The hurtling dart, the healing balm,
Are all apportioned as is best.
In judgments oft misunderstood,
In ways mysterious and obscure,
He brings from evil lasting good,
And makes the final gladness sure.
While justice takes its course with strength,
Love bids our faith and hope increase:
He'll give the chastened world at length
His afterward of peace.
- "When the dread forces of the gale
His sterner purposes perform,
And human skill can naught avail
Against the fury of the storm,
Let loving hearts trust in Him still,
Through all the dark and devious way;
For who would thwart His blessed will,
Which leads through night to joyous day?
Be still beneath His tender care;
For He will make the tempest cease,
And bring from out the anguish here,
An afterward of peace.
- "Look up, O Earth; no storm can last
Beyond the limits God hath set.
When its appointed work is past,
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.
Where sorrow's ploughshare hath swept through,
Thy fairest flowers of life shall spring,
For God shall grant thee life anew,
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.
Hope thou in Him: His plan for thee
Shall end in triumph and release.
Fear not, for thou shalt surely see
His afterward of peace."

Liberty - the Heritage of the True Church

[Reprinted by request from the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom" of May, 1931]

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—Gal. 5. 1.

Changes, events, and circumstances in these days have caused many of God's people to re-examine and search the Scriptures to discover what are the foundation principles of Christian liberty, fellowship, and unity. Let us come to the Scriptures, and from them learn the truth about this as well as every important matter of faith and practice. The final test of the Christian is that of love, and the spirit of division and sectarianism cannot be retained if the Divine approval is to be secured.

True liberty is the first great blessing entered upon when one becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fetters of bondage are broken, and real liberty, freedom from the bondage of the guilt and power of sin, is begun (Rom. 5. 1, 6. 12-14)—liberty of conscience, which requires freedom to examine both sides of a matter pertaining to our Christian life and service. Indeed, it is a duty to so act so far as circumstances and ability permit. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him." (Prov. 18. 13.)

Christian liberty signifies freedom from sectarianism, from bondage to sects and parties of men. Sectarianism is that spirit and disposition to divide and separate God's people by setting up creed fences, or by fixing certain bounds and limits, and by applying tests of fellowship and of church membership such as have no authorisation in the Divine Word. Thus sectarianism is a separation from the true Church, where alone there is true Christian liberty.

The first danger against which St. Paul warned the Church was sectarianism; and he was evidently heeded at the time at least, for no great sects of Paulites or Apollosites developed. But, as usual, the great enemy, thwarted in one direction, moved to the opposite extreme, and attempted to insist upon a oneness very different from what our Lord or the Apostles ever taught. This attempt was to have every recognised member of the Church think exactly alike, on every minute of Christian doctrine. This attempt finally developed into Papacy, where every matter of doctrine was decided by the popes and councils; and every man who desired to be considered a Church member was obliged to accept such decisions fully, and to profess that such

decisions were *his* belief, *his* faith; whereas they were not his in any sense but that of adoption. They were generally either blindly received or hypocritically professed with mental reservations. This was not at all the oneness urged by St. Paul. He urged a oneness of heart and mind, and not a thoughtless, heartless, or hypocritical profession. He urged a oneness such as naturally results from the proper exercise of the liberty which we have in Christ—to search and believe the Scriptures, and to grow in grace and in knowledge, every man being thus fully persuaded in his own mind, and firmly rooted and grounded in the one faith as set forth in the Scriptures.

There are seven things associated with the attainment and enjoyment of Christian liberty, unity, and fellowship. Any additions to or subtractions from these will, proportionately, mar or destroy these priceless gifts.

We mention, first, because it embodies all the others, that of believing in Christ and continuing in His Word: "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my Word, then ye are my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". (John 8. 31, 32.)

The second is that of receiving the Spirit. The Galatian Christians were in danger of becoming enslaved again in bondage, through certain teachers who had come among them and who were teaching them that some additional qualifications were necessary in order to enjoy the full liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. To warn them against this false teaching and to recover from from this error, the Apostle wrote: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3. 1, 2.)

The third important thing is that of receiving evidence of Divine Fatherhood. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (sonship), whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8. 15.)

The fourth is that of experiencing the "one baptism". "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death?" (Rom. 6. 3.)

The fifth is that of becoming members of the one Body—the Church. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body." (1 Cor. 12. 12, 13.)

The sixth is that of being begotten into one hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Pet. 1. 3, 4.)

The seventh is that of entering into the enjoyment of a like precious faith. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1. 1.)

Those who have experienced the blessings associated with these seven lines of thought are bound together by the bonds of fellowship and unity. This blessed liberty, fellowship, and unity can be maintained only by earnest endeavour, through the Spirit. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4. 1-3.) It will require earnest endeavour because Satan has his counterfeit of these and is ever seeking to lead away from the true, to the false. This blessed unity, fellowship, and liberty will require making use of all the gifts of the Spirit possible. "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature and fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4. 8-13.)

These seven foundation truths are all that are necessary to enjoy this blessed fellowship, unity, and liberty. The Apostle mentions them altogether. "One Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4. 2-6.)

The Apostle's words may be summarised as follows:

- (1) The Author of unity—"One God and Father".
- (2) The Centre of unity—"There is one Lord".
- (3) The door of unity—"There is one baptism".
- (4) The kinship of unity—"There is one Body".
- (5) The nature of unity—"There is one Spirit".
- (6) The goal of unity—"There is one hope of your calling".
- (7) The creed of unity—"There is one faith".

The endeavour to compel all men to think alike on all subjects culminated in the great apostasy and the development of the great Papal system; and thereby the "Gospel", the "one faith", which Paul and the other Apostles set forth, was lost—buried under the mass of uninspired decrees of popes and councils. The *union* of the early Church, based upon the simple Gospel and *bound only by love*, gave place to the bondage of the Church of Rome—a slavery of God's children, from the degradation of which multitudes are still weak and suffering.

The value of true liberty amongst the Lord's people cannot be overestimated. It becomes a part of their very life. It was because, under a wrong conception of union, this spirit of true liberty was crushed out of the Church shortly after the Apostles fell asleep in death that the "Dark Ages" resulted, with all their ignorance, superstition, blindness, persecution, etc. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century was but a re-awakening of the spirit of liberty . . . liberty to think inside the foundation lines of the doctrines of Christ; liberty to believe as much or as little more, in harmony with this, as the mental conditions and circumstances will permit, without being branded as a heretic or persecuted by brethren, either in word or deed. . . .

Let all who are the Lord's people, and who have tasted of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, see to it that they stand fast in that liberty, and as soon as an attempt is made to restrain it, if not sooner, let them get out completely from all the bondages of human systems, that they may stand firmly and loyally with the Lord, our Redeemer, our Instructor, our King.

Christian unity is not simply the holding together of those who see eye to eye in all the minutiae of doctrine and of particular kinds and methods of service; not the holding together simply of those who are co-operating with one human and necessarily imperfect channel for service; and not necessarily the making use of those gifts (teachers) who hold to one particular human channel. Rather, the unity that should exist in the Body of Christ is especially designated by the Apostle as a unity of

the Spirit: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 3). This spirit is seen in its perfection as we note the mind or disposition of Christ as He manifested it to the Father, to His disciples, and to the world. In this respect we note that it was a dependent, submissive, prayerful, and loyal spirit in its relation to His Father, and a gentle, self-sacrificing, and cross-bearing spirit in its relation to men.

True Christian fellowship can never be withdrawn from any of those who recognize and experience the blessings associated with the seven basic principles laid down by Paul. Those who are in fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, are our brethren—ours to love, ours to serve, and ours to lay down our lives for. The fear of what man may do, or what of misunderstanding and ostracism may come because of obeying this law of love, this new commandment, will not deter the faithful from serving or laying down their lives for the brethren.

A careful review of the history of the Church reveals that the methods of the Adversary have often been to direct the attention of the Lord's people away from Christ, its true Head, to some human arrangement—either to an individual, fellow mortal, self-constituted head, or to some human concern, man-made organization, etc.,. Such person or organisation is set up as the Church's spiritual teacher and guide in her life and service. As such procedure is emphatically in violation of the Apostolic teaching, the Holy Spirit does not operate in or teach through such teachers, and the result is that the professing Church has been repeatedly overrun with false teachers and teachings, subversive of the truth, and general apostasy and departure from the faith have come in. It was in order that His followers should be on guard against such perils that Jesus admonished, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Those who profess to be teachers were to be proved by the infallible word of Christ and the Apostles. That false teachers would arise in the Church, who would pervert the truth, was foretold. The Church therefore is not blindly to accept whatever any teacher may set forth, but should prove the teachings of those whom they have reason to believe are God's messengers, by the one infallible standard, the Word of God. "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8. 20). Thus while the Church needs teachers, and cannot understand God's Word without them, yet the Church individually—each by himself and for himself, and himself only—must fill the important office of judge, to decide, according to the infallible standard, God's Word, whether the teacher be true or false, and whether the claimed

teacher is a true teacher by Divine appointment. What is the standard of God's militant host? Let us hear and remember. It is Christ. This is the only standard of God and the only standard of that warrior band which musters in this wilderness world, to wage war with the hosts of evil, and fight the battles of the Lord. Christ is the standard for everything. To have any other would only unfit us for that spiritual conflict to which we are called. Our theology is the Bible. Our church organisation is the one Body, formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and united to the living and exalted Head in the heavens. To contend for anything less than these is entirely below the mark of a true spiritual warrior.

Alas! that so many who profess to belong to the Church of God should so forget their proper standard, and be found fighting under another banner. We may rest assured it superinduces weakness, falsifies the testimony, and hinders progress. If we would stand in the day of battle, we must acknowledge no standard whatsoever but Christ and His Word, the living Word, and the written Word. Here lies our security in the face of all our spiritual foes.

It is ever the aim of Satan, as it is the tendency of our hearts, to lead us to stop short of God's mark in everything, and specially in the centre of our unity as Christians. It is a popular sentiment, that "the blood of the Lamb is the union of saints," that is, it is the blood which forms their centre of unity. Now, that it is the infinitely precious blood of Christ which sets us individually as worshippers in the presence of God is blessedly true. The blood, therefore, forms the Divine basis of our fellowship with God. But when we come to speak of the centre of our unity as a church, we must see that the Holy Spirit gathers us to the Person of a risen and glorified Christ; and this grand truth gives character—high and holy character—to our association as Christians. If we take lower ground than this we must inevitably form a sect or an *ism*. If we gather around an ordinance, however important, or around a truth, however indisputable, we make something less than Christ our centre.

Hence, it is more important to ponder the practical consequences which flow out of the truth of our being gathered to a risen and glorified Head in the heavens. If Christ were on earth we should be gathered to Him here; but, inasmuch as He is hidden in the heavens, the Church takes her character from His position there. Hence, Christ could say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"; and again, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified

through the truth" (John 17. 16-19). So, also in 1 Peter, we read, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (Chap. 2. 4, 5). If we are gathered to Christ we must be gathered to Him *as He is*, and *where He is*; and the more the spirit of God leads our souls into the understanding of this, the more clearly we shall see the character of walk that becomes us. It is Christ's position which gives character to the position of the Church, and her position should ever give character to her walk. The more closely we adhere to Christ, and to Him *alone*, the stronger and the safer we shall be. To have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes, to keep close to Him, fast by His side, this is our grand moral safeguard.

Such separated ones possessing the spirit of true unity and of the love of Christ realise the leading of the Master to associate themselves together as brethren in the Lord and as ecclesias after the manner and example of the primitive Church, instituted

by Christ and the Apostles, who recognised no other authority or headship in the Church than that of the One Who said, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Such devout disciples of the Lord, endeavouring to get back to Apostolic simplicity, will be exercised by the spirit of tolerance and will not try to bring each other into bondage to one another's opinions and private interpretations regarding this or that non-essential issue or item of the faith; but will recognise the broad basis for Christian fellowship and unity as set forth above, namely, faith in the precious blood of Christ and consecration to the Divine will. If it was important for the disciples of the early Church thus to adhere strictly to the counsels that were issued by the Holy Spirit, then it is of equal importance that faithful disciples of Christ to-day shall heed those same counsels. They are to preserve the purity of the faith and to be exercised unto godliness, and undergo the transforming influence of the Spirit of Christ. Thus will they be prepared, in the near future, we trust, to hear the Master's welcome voice and share with all the faithful of the Age in the unspeakable joys, riches and glory of the Church Triumphant.

A. O. Hudson

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

"There was a certain man," said Jesus one day, "which had a steward." By no means an unusual statement to make; all rich men had stewards, servants who had been with the family for many years and could be trusted with the duties of the position. The office dated back to very early times, for Abraham himself had a steward, "Eliezer of Damascus" (Gen. 15. 2), and to that steward was entrusted the task of going five hundred miles into Aram-Naharaim to seek a suitable bride for Isaac, the son of Abraham. The responsibilities of the steward were heavy; he administered the whole of his master's estate, saw to his business matters, controlled the routine of the house, supervised the other servants, and had charge of the children until they came of age. (This latter fact is alluded to by Paul when he says in Gal. 4. 1-2: "The heir, as long as he is a child . . . is under tutors and *governors* until the *time appointed of the father*". The word "governors" is the one used elsewhere in the New Testament for "stewards"—*oikonomos*.)

But this particular steward, continued Jesus, was dishonest. He neglected his lord's interests and wasted his resources, so that at last he was required to make up his accounts and relinquish his position. And the unjust steward was afraid, afraid for the future. He had made no friends, none to whom he could turn in this hour of adversity; he had lived a

life of ease and self-indulgence and forgotten how to labour that he might sustain himself. He had been proud and haughty and now was appalled at the thought of living as a dependent upon the charity of others. "What shall I do?" he asked himself despairingly. "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." And in searching for a way out of his plight the baseness of his nature came to the top and he saw a way of making himself friends at the eleventh hour, friends who by reason of the obligation under which he would place them might at least give him food and shelter.

In order to understand the story aright we must examine its background. The setting is an agricultural one. The "debtors" who owed oil and wheat were evidently tenants of the lord's land and, as was the custom, paid their rent in kind—an agreed amount of the produce of the land. The previous expression of the steward, "I cannot dig," indicates the same thing; apparently the only manual work which was open to him in the particular community was agricultural. The scene of the story is in the country and not in the city. It would have been the steward's duty to adjudge equitable rents to the tenant farmers who leased the land, and the "hundred measures of oil" and "hundred measures of wheat" probably represented the yearly amount due. (In English measure these equalled approxi-

mately 750 gallons of olive oil and one thousand bushels of wheat.) It is sometimes suggested that the steward was executing a good stroke of business for his lord in that he secured payment of some apparently hopeless debts by offering a liberal discount for immediate settlement. Nothing of the kind! The steward, knowing he was shortly to leave his lord's service, was deliberately reducing the tenants' rents and altering the legal documents, the "leases", which stipulated the annual amount to be paid. The word rendered "bill" in "take thy bill, and write fifty" and again in verse 7, refers to such legal contracts, which were usual in Jesus' day, as in our own. There is no doubt that the steward had the legal right to adjust the rents when his lord's interests demanded it; but in this instance his action was dictated by his own interests and to his lord's hurt. It may have been legally permissible, but was morally unjustifiable. In this way he hoped to place these tenants under an obligation to him so that he might reasonably expect some consideration at their hands when his stewardship terminated. He evidently did not intend to work for his living if he could find someone to give him hospitality in return for services rendered!

"And the lord" (the steward's master) "commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely"—shrewdly, according to Weymouth and the Twentieth Century versions—"for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The master was broad-minded enough and sufficient of a "business man" himself, to admit that the unjust steward had shown his own self quite capable of sharp business deals when his own interests were involved. There is no indication that the notice of dismissal was rescinded; he was a rogue, albeit a clever rogue, and he had to go; but the master did at least commend him for his shrewdness as he went.

But Jesus did not commend the man. To think that He did do so is completely to misunderstand the parable, and waste a lot of time and ingenuity attempting to demonstrate that the steward was doing a legitimate and right thing. Jesus called him "the unjust steward", and Jesus, by His silence as much as by His sequel to the parable, pronounced His own condemnation upon this and all similar actions which are so often justified by the glib saying "business is business".

The story was ended. Turning now upon His disciples with a swift transition of thought, He said, perhaps with a vehemence greater than was His wont, "And yet I say unto you, make friends for yourselves out of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, those friends may receive you into everlasting habitations". The verse has been paraphrased a little in order to bring out its

meaning. Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, the language of Galilee—at any rate, "mammon" is an Aramaic word—and the account was written by Luke in Greek. This verse has suffered a little in the process and is not altogether easy to follow in the Authorised Version. The conjunction "and" (*kai* in Greek) often has the meaning of "and yet" or "and so" when rhetorical emphasis is involved, as in this case, and "of" is *ek*, "out of". "Mammon" is a word indicating worldly wealth or riches of any kind, and the expression "when ye fail" is more correctly rendered "when it (i.e., the mammon of unrighteousness) fails".

The disciples, then, were to do, not what the steward had done, but what he had not done. He had the "mammon of unrighteousness", worldly riches, power, and opportunity, entrusted to him, but he had not used it to make for himself true friends who could be relied upon to stand by him in the day of adversity. He had used it for his own selfish ends instead. Then when the day that it failed him came, he was compelled to resort to very questionable tactics to ensure his future comfort, with no real guarantee even then that his end would be achieved. Now that, said Jesus in effect, may be all very well for the world. They order their daily lives in that way and they fully expect to do such things or have such things done to them and they call it "business". In their own day and generation they are shrewder than the children of light; but it is a shrewdness that will avail them nothing in the day when this world, and the fashion of it, passes away. But I say to you, you whose lives are given over to a higher and a holier purpose, use the possessions, influence or worldly opportunities you may have in such fashion as to win for yourselves friends in the heavens, so that when that worldly mammon fails, as fail it must at last, you will be welcomed with joy into an everlasting home.

Whilst the disciples were thinking that out, Jesus drove home the principle which His story was intended to illustrate. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (vs. 10). The extent of our unfaithfulness to the exceeding great privileges and responsibilities which God intends His consecrated children to hold and administer in the coming Millennial Age is measured by the degree of their faithfulness toward God in the administration of such worldly "mammon" as we may be possessed of now. If we have not placed it all on the altar and henceforth used it in the interests of God and His Kingdom, then we are not likely to be any more faithful when the day for "greater works" has dawned. "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,

who will commit to your trust the true riches? How could we expect God to do so in such case?

"It is required of stewards," says Paul in I Cor. 4. 2, "that a man be found faithful". He was thinking of the stewards of his own day—perhaps even of this very parable, which must have been quite well known to him. We, the disciples of Jesus, are all stewards; and it is required of us all that we make good use of our stewardship while we have the opportunity, and not wait until the end of the day of grace before we commence thinking about it. The Parable of the Talents tells us that, as also the story of the rich young ruler who wanted to gain eternal life but not in a fashion that was going to cost him anything. And that story is repeated so often in these latter days. It is so easy to spend a few years in the first flush of enthusiasm for "the Truth", learning the doctrines of the faith and becoming familiar with the Holy Scriptures, accustomed to the routine of regular meetings and even perhaps the discharge of the duties falling to elders in the church, and then, having attained that stage, begin to devote increasing attention to a "career"—as if any earthly career matters to the child of God—or to success in business—as if any earthly business counts for aught in the sight of the Great King—or to any other of the hundred and one

earthly interests which the Devil is always so industriously placing in the pathway of the consecrated. Jesus, knowing all this, told His disciples "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts (desires) of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4. 19). How true are those words, exemplified in the lives of Christians who for a time did "run well" but failed at the last.

To-day more than ever we need to take this parable to heart. There has been so much disappointment and disillusionment. So many things expected have not come to pass. As with Peter and the others after the Crucifixion, there is a tendency to go back to the fishing-nets, and make the best of the world as it now is, hoping as we do so that we can fit into our place in the Kingdom when at length it does come.

And, of course—we cannot. Unless we have been constantly and tirelessly faithful in all respects to the unseen things whilst they remain unseen, we shall not see them when at length they become revealed to the watching ones, and faith is swallowed up in sight. If we do not make heavenly friends *now* by our use of the earthly mammon, we shall not be of those who, when *it* fails, will be received with joy into the everlasting habitations.

"HARPAZO"—"CAUGHT UP"

The most significant use of this word is in I Thess. 4. 17: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up* together with them in the clouds". This short note will not attempt to interpret the text but to indicate the meaning of the word as it is used in the Scriptures, leaving those interested to make use of the information given in their own studies of that chapter.

The meaning of *harpazo* in classical Greek is "to seize, to carry off by force, to claim for one's self, to snatch away". The word occurs about sixteen times in the New Testament and usually with one of those meanings. Thus we have in the words of Jesus:—

John 10. 12: "The wolf *catcheth* them."

Matt. 13. 19: "The wicked one *catcheth away* that which was sown."

Matt. 7. 15: "Inwardly they are *ravening* wolves."

Matt. 11. 12: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent *take it by force*."

John 10. 28: "No man is able to *pluck them out* of my Father's hand."

Luke uses the term twice:—

Acts 23. 10: "Commanded the soldiers to *take him by force* from among them."

Acts 8. 39: "The Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip."

John twice:—

John 6. 15: "... come and *take him by force* to make him a king."

Rev. 12. 5: "Her child was *caught up* to God, and to his throne."

Jude once:—

Jude 23: "Save with fear, *pulling them out* of the fire."

From all of these instances it is clear that the word is used in the sense of a sudden, forcible seizure or "snatching away" as a wild beast snatches its prey or soldiers take their prisoner. Paul must have had this in mind when he selected the word to describe an experience of his own, and, in another place, the glorification of the Church. He uses it in 2 Cor. 12. 2 and 4, where he speaks of himself as being "*caught up*" to the third heaven, and to paradise, and then again in I Thess. 4. 17 to describe the gathering of the living members of Christ's church to their Lord at His Second Advent. In these instances, the thought is that of a sudden transition from the earth to the heavens, "in the twinkling of an eye", as Paul says in another place.

? The Question Box ?

Q. "And they did not receive Him, because His face was set to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 51-55). Was it the evident intention of Jesus not to stay, but to go on to Jerusalem, that was the reason the Samaritans did not keep Him in their village, and if so, why did the disciples wish to call down fire on them?

A. All Palestinians looked alike in features and in dress, in that day, just as to-day, and there was no physical difference between Samaritan and Jew then, just as there is none between Palestinian Arab and Palestinian Jew to-day. It was the fact that the little band was headed for Jerusalem that betrayed their Jewish nationality. The racial animosity that smouldered between Samaritan and Jew overpowered the proverbial Eastern hospitality which normally was extended to all travellers at night, and caused them to refuse lodging to the pilgrims. It was not that the Samaritans wished to "speed the travellers on their way". Recognising this hostility, the disciples, imbued, we fear, with the spirit of retaliation, wished to call down fire from heaven to consume them, and so gave opportunity for a reproof which is often needed to-day as much as then: "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them".

* * * *

Q. "Love thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13. 5). Just what is the true meaning of Paul's statement?

A. The word used here for "thinketh" (*logizetai*) is a mathematical word meaning to compute, calculate, or reckon, hence to count or credit to one's account. A number of other texts illustrate its use, as 2 Tim. 4. 16: "All men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge", and a double occurrence in Rom. 4. 3-4: "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt". The thought therefore is that love does not keep account of evil so as to hold it against the evil-doer. It is not that, as one translation has it, love "takes no account" of evil, i.e., ignores it, but that love will not, as it were record evil done to it with a view to holding it against the evil-doer responsible. In other words, love is forgiving "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

BOOK REVIEWS

"The Man Who Did Not Sin" (Newman Watts). Uplift Press, 165 pp. cloth.

An intensely interesting story of the Millennial Age. A young atheistic scientist is restored to life two centuries after the Age has commenced, and the story tells of his resistance at first to the new order of things and finally his surrender to Christ. He is saved in times of disaster brought on by his own foolishness by one who in the old world had made his calling and election sure and is now reigning with Christ in the heavens. The inevitable "love interest" is finely drawn with the young scientist's ultimate realisation that in this new Age love for God takes the place of the old earthly loves. A book like this makes the details of the coming Age more real to the reader, even although much of it is necessarily supposition built on the details the Scriptures do give. Whilst not completely in line with our own views of the Millennium, it is sufficiently so to make the book a useful one for gift purposes, especially to people who will not read our more prosaic literature but might be reached through the medium of a tale. It is cloth bound with picture dust wrapper, and can be supplied from our Welling bookroom at 5s. 6d. post free.

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

March 23.—Forest Gate (London).

26.—Luton.

27.—Kettering.

29-30.—Midland Area.

31.—Yelvertoft.

April 1.—Warwick.

2.—Atherstone.

4-7.—Warrington (Easter Convention).

9-10.—Lymm.

11.—Bolton.

12-14.—Manchester.

15-17.—Manchester district.

19-20.—Dewsbury.

22.—Sheffield.

24-25.—Darlington.

26-27.—Gateshead.

28-30.—Gateshead district.

May 1-2.—Dundee.

3-4.—Glasgow.

5-6.—Glasgow district.

7-13.—Northern Ireland.

Dates after May 13th will be published in next issue. Friends who have not yet requested visits will be included if application is made to Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, but please write early if possible. Details of any of the above visits can be obtained from Bro. Walton.

THE SUPREME GRACE

Part 2—"Agapao" and "Phileo"

T. Holmes

A Series of Studies in
I Cor. 13, 13.

It is a great disadvantage to the English-speaking student of Scripture that the word which has been substituted for the older word *charity* has to stand as equivalent for two Greek words, of very dissimilar meaning. These two words, *phileo* and *agape*, were used to express two very different emotions, the nature of which are almost entirely obscured by our general use of the word *love* as the equivalent of both. While it is true that a few translators sometimes use the word "affection" as the equivalent of *phileo*, the small number of students having access to these more precise translations robs them of any special influence they might bring to bear upon the general conceptions clustering around the word "Love." To the general reader all affection is Love, and all Love is affection, the one thing being identical with the other, while the warmer word "affection" is accounted only a milder synonym for the more robust word "love". But such was not the case with the Greek Christian reader in the older days.

The word *agape* (with all its derivatives) is almost entirely a Christian word. It did not emanate from classical Greek sources. It was first coined by the translators of the Septuagint, and from that Jewish source passed into the Church's vocabulary, but in its passing from the old people to the new it took on depths and shades of meaning it never had before. Under the Holy Spirit's influence the writers of the Apostolic Church (Peter, John and Paul especially) used this inherited word to describe some of the deeper verities of the Christian's life and experience. In their Master's life and death they had seen an expression of something which this sordid world had never seen before. Martyrs unto death had been seen over and over again, in the annals of their ancestry, but in the case of Jesus it had been more than mere heroic faithfulness. There had been something more—a "plus factor", over and above fidelity. It was an influence that gripped, yet did not excite to combativeness or warlikeness. It laid hold on their "spirits" and tamed and sobered them so that they became different men. It inspired them with a mighty urge which made them dare and do great things, yet withdrew or curbed their inborn retaliatoriness and made them ready to suffer with meekness and without complaint when reviled or persecuted to the death.

Seeking to explain the amazing condescension of Him who had been rich, and Who for our sakes had

become poor, they said "He did it all because He 'loved' so amazingly"—amazing because it was so dis-interested, and so void of all self-gratification. In their strivings to give expression to all these newer hard-to-be-defined conceptions then running through their minds, the ancient word was laid under tribute, but in the usage its boundaries were stretched both in width and depth, so that it came to stand for wider things and deeper things than their fathers ever knew. It spoke to them of a Great Cause—a Redemptive Plan—and of the Holy One Who had devised that Plan, and of how that Redemptive Plan had gripped the Heart of the Holy One, and had prompted and inspired Him to place Himself with all His attributes at the service of that Plan. Hence they said God had "*agapao*" for this sinful sordid world. They said this same thing had gripped the heart of Him who had lived at God's right hand from the dawn of Creation's varied day, and had brought Him down to this vale of tears to live, to suffer and to die so that He also might advance the interests of that Redemptive Plan. And this prompting urge that had constrained both the Holy One and His Beloved Son to throw themselves into the Great Cause—with all that they had—was the ocean-wide and ocean-deep thing which inspired Apostolic writers tried and tried again to compress into the limits of a pint-measure word. They did their best—but what a task they undertook! Taking that older Israelite word, they stretched and stretched and stretched it yet again, and filled and filled and filled it yet again, with these newer thoughts and values that were filtering through from the higher world into the consciousness of sanctified minds. For them it came to stand for "Love of the Cause"—"Love for the Plan"—"Love for the prospect and means of eliminating Sin and Sorrow and Death".

Yes, indeed, *agape* is a Christian word, for not until much later times did classic Greek absorb it into its vocabulary, and even then with much less depth and width of meaning than its Christian foster-fathers had loaded it.

The other word (*phileo*) was the noblest word which classic Greek possessed in pre-Christian times to describe regard for the highest things. This is seen in some of its combinations, as for instance "*Philadelphos*" (lover of a brother), "*Philanthropia*" (lover of men), "*Philosophos*" (lover of

wisdom). But it can also be linked with baser things, as for instance "*Philarguroi*" (lover of money, "*Philautoi*" (lover of self) (2 Tim. 3-2). For the baser sort of love Greek literature had another word—or series of words—*Eros*, *Erastes*, and *Erastin*. But these were words which neither Jewish nor Christian writer ever adopted; they were too steeped in carnality and tainted with vice for their purposes. Because of this they let them all severely alone.

But they made the nobler word (*phileo*) more noble still. To the Greek who wrote and spoke of Philanthropy, the only men for whom he had any love to spare were those of his own kith and kin—blood brotherhood in some town or city-state. For the whole wide world of men of other blood or faith he had no love. To him Philanthropy was just family-love—the love of the national or city-family plus that of his own smaller domestic circle.

The Christian Church made this noble word leap over all national or racial barriers, and incorporate in its ample folds men of every nation who, by faith, had found entry into the Divine family. It could still represent the close natural attachment which a James could bear towards his brother John, but it could also expand itself sufficiently to permit Paul to link Rufus (believed to be a native of our own shores—and of royal birth) or even an Onesimus, a runaway slave, with himself in a holy brotherhood. Truly they made it a nobler word after adopting it.

It is around these two words with all that they denote, that the heart-gripping appeal of the Scriptures revolve. It all began in the heart of God in those bygone times when He was alone. He wanted a vast family upon which He could lavish His grace and generosity. Even the invasion of sin did not alter the gracious desire. He still wanted the family to be complete, and in consequence devised ways and means to bring the wanderers home. He sent His dearest Son to earth to tell wayward men of that desire, and to begin the work of drawing some of them with the magnetism of a Father's Love. God's own yearning Spirit laid its firm grip, first of all upon that worthy Son—and then through Him it laid firm hold upon "those that Thou hast given Me" and then through them, moved on to a wider field, and drew others to His appealing arms.

The Alexandrian Fathers coined a word to record the love of "the chiefest among ten thousand" for His Dove—"His fair One" in translating the Song of Songs. Of this word (which was created to translate the Hebrew word "*Ahabah*", Song of Solomon 4. 10), Thayer's Lexicon says: "It is noticeable that the word (*agapao*) first makes its appearance as a current term in the Song of Solomon; certainly no undesigned evidence respecting the idea

which the Alexandrian translators had of the 'love' in this Song".

That in itself gave to the word a noble birth—and as a mode of expression for the young lovers in Israel it stands on a pinnacle above all the love-literature of all lands in that early day; still, even with all that unparalleled glory at its birth it pales into a mere shadow before the splendour that shines through it as it is taken up and made the vehicle of expression between the altogether Lovely One and the beloved of His Heart.

Only when we can assess the depths of love which Jesus bears for His Church, and which the faithful in that Church bear to Him, can we even begin to realise how much the Divine Spirit has compressed into that one comprehensive word. Truly it stands for the binding-link of the whole Redemptive Plan—the yearning desire that first framed the Plan; and has caught up into it first one here, another there, and has constrained each and all to yield himself, with all that he is and has, to the furtherance of that Plan. And then, towards each one thus caught up into this "Love for the Cause", an appreciative affection has come forth from the heart of God.

Of Himself Jesus said "The Father loveth the Son"—(*agapao* love) because of what He was in the Redemptive Plan (John 3. 35), but He also said "The Father loveth (*phileo* love) the Son" because of a kindly act He had just performed (John 5. 20). Of His followers Jesus said "If any man love Me, he will keep My words and My Father will love (*agapesai*) him" (John 14. 23), yet He also said "The Father Himself loveth (*phileo*) you, because you have loved Me" (John 16. 27). Thus to the universal love to the Plan, God had intertwined affectionate love for the faithful contributor to the interests of that plan.

And this inter-twining act of God has been made the pattern and example for all the rest who come into that Plan. Love of the brethren—loving affection for those that serve faithfully and well, is enjoined upon the whole Household of God. Thus around these two words revolves the sacred mysteries of the great Plan of God—the mighty energising force that moves all the Redemptive machinery, together with that more personal link of warm-hearted affection, each for each, which binds each to each other one in the ties of the greatest family which time or eternity will ever know.

And yet, as has already been said, we have but one word in our standard text to stand as equivalent to these two mighty words. Surely there has been great disadvantage in that, but we will probe deeper into them another time.

(To be continued)

A. D. Hudson

BRETHREN OF "THE WAY"

A glimpse of early days

The earliest believers in Jesus Christ—before the time that the word "Christian" had been coined—adopted a charming term to describe their fellowship. They called themselves "brethren of 'the way'" and this expression occurs a number of times in the Book of Acts. It was a new way of life into which they had entered, a way that led to the Kingdom, a straight, narrow way that nevertheless was broader in its liberty and longer in extent than the bondage of Judaism which they had left. And because they found themselves to be fellow-pilgrims together, travelling as one company through the darkness of this world to the light of that which is to come, and because their Master Himself had told them "I am the Way," they took to themselves in utter simplicity and sincerity a word that expressed to the full the spontaneity and happiness of their communion. They were "brethren of 'The Way'".

The first mention of the name as such is in Acts 9. 2, where we are told about Saul, the persecutor of the infant Church, receiving authority that if he "found any of the way", he might "bring them bound to Jerusalem". This was within a few years of Jesus' death, when Saul was still a young man, and the Jerusalem Church under the guidance and teaching of the Apostles was growing rapidly in numbers. This name must have originated right at the beginning.

One wonders who first suggested it. What discussions there must have been in those first days over the question of a distinctive name for the new fellowship! The orthodox Jewish Church had its sects—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zadokites, and others lesser known. The political parties, Herodians, and Zealots, had a quasi-religious connection and might almost be counted as sects, too. The disciples had been known popularly as Nazarenes, but quite evidently they would not accept that name willingly themselves. And in the probably oft-times excited babble of discussion it might well have been the reflective, loving mind of John which inspired a suggestion winning immediate acceptance. "The Master said 'I am the Way'. Let us call ourselves 'brethren of the Way'".

The name evidently became known very quickly. When Paul arrived at Ephesus he found that "divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of the way" (Acts 19. 9), and a little later Demetrius the silversmith called his fellow craftsmen together and "there arose no small stir about

the Way" (Acts 19. 23). (Incidentally, it should be noted that in every case where the expression occurs, except in Acts 22. 4, it should be read "the way", not "that way". In the Greek the definite article, not the demonstrative, is employed.) The persecution of "the Way" which arose at Ephesus was only one of many, and when Paul returned to Jerusalem he found the same bitter prejudice against the Christian community. When the riot which led to his arrest was at its height, he stood on the castle steps and made his defence to the people. "I persecuted this Way unto the death," he cried (Acts 22. 4), speaking of his actions at the time before his conversion. And later on still, we find that Felix, the Roman governor, had "more perfect knowledge of 'the Way'" than had his predecessor Porcius Festus (Acts 24. 22).

The term died out eventually, being replaced by the more immediately descriptive word "Christian", which, we are told, originated in Antioch (Acts 11. 26). Perhaps there was a loss in the passing of the phrase. It was such a simple, refreshingly naive answer to give enquirers. "Who are you?" "We are brethren of 'the Way'". And it was in the simplicity of that bond that the early Church formed its first communal fellowship, having all things in common and parting to each as they had need; and so prospered in spiritual things.

Perhaps in this our day we have unconsciously followed the same leading which ended in the use of that name. We often call ourselves "brethren of the Truth". Said Jesus "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14. 6). There is surely a fitness here. Brethren of the Way at the beginning of the Age; brethren of the Truth at the end of the Age; both together, with all who have lived during the intervening centuries, "brethren of the Life", in the Age which is to come, when the "faithful in Christ Jesus" will be ushered into the presence of the Father with exceeding joy.

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—E. M. COULBOURNE.

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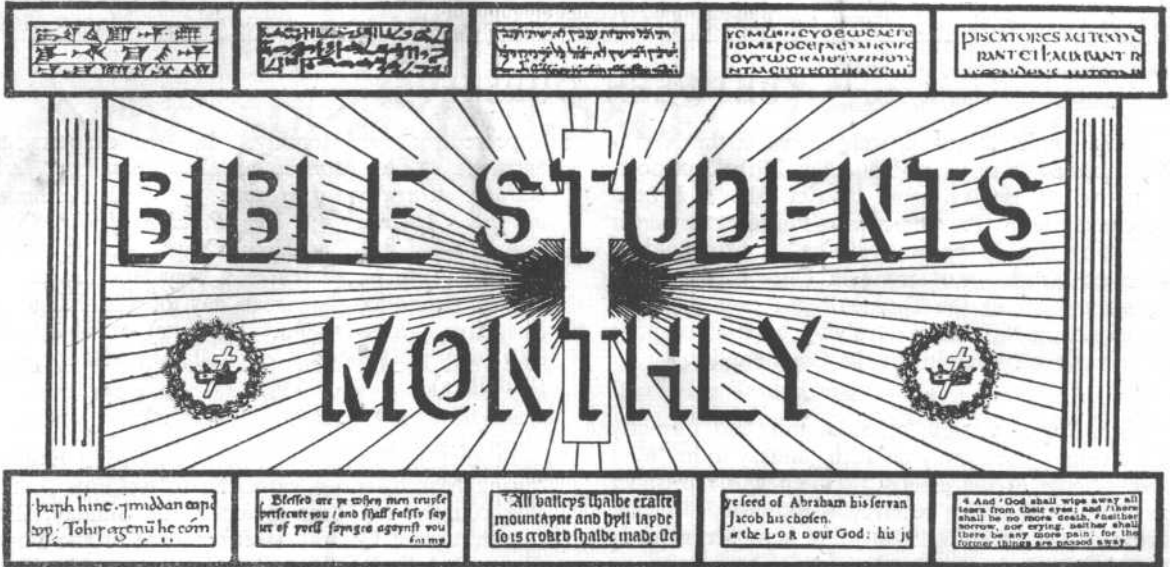
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MARCH, 1947

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Sister Annie S. Aitken, well known in the North-West, passed from us on Thursday, 19th December. A native of the Glasgow district, she had been associated with the Barrow-in-Furness class for something like 35 years. She had a firm hold of Revealed Truth; was strong in Faith in the Great Consummation of the Divine Plan; ever ready to participate in the duties devolving upon Class-life; and always very helpful in the Class studies.

* * * *

Sister Emily Castell, of Sidmouth, and formerly of London, passed away on 12th January in her 87th year. Some of the elderly brethren will remember her, our sister having received the knowledge of the Truth as far back as 1914. She kept her glorious hope bright and clear to the end. The funeral on 15th January was conducted by Brother W. F. Fox, of Yeovil.

* * * *

We would acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, an anonymous gift of £2 in January for the provision of free quantities of the paper "Millennial Message" to brethren unable to pay for them.

* * * *

A most encouraging response has followed the publication of "Millennial Message" No. 1, quite a number of the friends writing to express their good hopes for its future. At the time of writing nearly one half of the edition has been disposed of but for several reasons it is necessary that at least half of the remainder be taken up before the next number can be planned and put into stock. It will be a great help if brethren who can use more will write this month with their wishes, including those who desire quantities free, for distribution. The loving zeal of those brethren who have sent contributions to the "Free Literature" Fund is very deeply appreciated and has enabled quite a number to have supplies who otherwise could not have shared in the distribution. Next month it is hoped to print a few extracts from the letters of appreciation that have been received.

* * * *

Another useful booklet for spreading abroad our message of hope is now available in "The Millennial Gospel of Jesus", published this month. This is a 40-page booklet with art cover printed blue and black with photo reproduction illustrating the text "they shall build houses and inhabit them" and it covers about all that the New Testament has to say on the Millennium. It consists of a rearrangement of articles on the subject which recently

appeared in the Monthly. Its five chapters are entitled: "The Promise of Restitution"; "Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven"; "The Testimony of Two Apostles"; "The Parable of the Sheep and Goats"; "The Holy City", and it should afford any interested reader a very fair idea of our beliefs regarding the great day of the Kingdom. Post free prices are 8d. (12 cents) each; six for 3/6 (65c); 50 for 22/- (4 dollars); 100 for 40/- (8 dollars).

* * * *

Brother J. T. Read will (D.V.) arrive in England during March, and a gathering to welcome him to this country has been planned for Sunday, 23rd March, at the Central Meeting place of the Forest Gate Church, Bowling Club Pavilion, Aldersbrook Road, Wanstead, London, E.12. Brother Read will address the friends at 3.0 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. There will be a Prayer, Praise and Fellowship Meeting at 11.0 a.m., and a cup of tea will be provided between the sessions. The Hall is a few minutes ride from Manor Park Station (L.N.E.R.) by No. 101 bus, joining the bus on the same side of the road as the station entrance. A warm welcome awaits all who can attend and any further details may be obtained from Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * * *

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

- March 23.—Forest Gate (London).
 26.—Luton.
 27.—Kettering.
 29-30.—Midland Area.
 31.—Yelvertoft.
- April 1.—Warwick.
 2.—Atherstone.
 4-7.—Warrington (Easter Convention).
 9-10.—Lymm.
 11.—Bolton.
 12-14.—Manchester.
 15-17.—Manchester district.
 19-20.—Dewsbury.
 22.—Sheffield.
 24-25.—Darlington.
 26-27.—Gateshead.
 28-30.—Gateshead district.
- May 1-2.—Dundee.
 3-4.—Glasgow.
 5-6.—Glasgow district.
 7-13.—Northern Ireland.

Dates after May 13th will be published in next issue. Friends who have not yet requested visits will be included if application is made to Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, but please write early if possible. Details of any of the above visits can be obtained from Bro. Walton.

THE SUPREME GRACE

Part 3 - "More Than These"

A Series of Studies in
I Cor. 13. 13.

In order to lay sufficient emphasis upon the difference between the two words (*Agape* and *Phileo*) which, in our Authorised Version, are translated by the one word Love, attention will be directed to two episodes from the life of our Lord. In these incidents the differences come out very markedly and may help us later on to fix these things in their proper relationship to each other, as we seek to apply them to our activities in the Church, and to our service for the Lord generally.

The first of these incidents comes from the story of the great sorrow that invaded the little home in Bethany. This story opens with the statement that Lazarus was sick and that his sisters, realising that all efforts to restore him were without effect, sent, in their desperation, a messenger to Jesus to say "He whom Thou lovest is sick". To this urgent invitation Jesus replied "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby". (John 11. 1-4.) Then follows the specific statement that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus". The word here is derived from *Agape*. Now this strange answer of Jesus to the messenger—seeing that Lazarus did actually die, and that He Himself delayed His journey to His friends in Bethany long enough to permit him to die—shows that this incident had some relation to the work and Plan of God. It was permitted to happen "for the glory of God"—that is to say, it was intended thereby to draw attention to the work and honour of Almighty God. It was to be a vital incident in the outworking of the Plan of God, and would focus attention on a notable display of the mighty power of God. Additionally, it was intended to bring honour to Jesus as the Son of God. We thus find this incident set forth by John as the last of a series of seven signs, taken from the many mighty things that Jesus did, by means of which Jesus' Messiahship was intended to be established and set forth unmistakably before the Jewish priesthood and people. (John 20. 30.)

Amid the whole Jewish community there was no other family, in Jerusalem or outside, through which this most emphatic sign could be set forth. Jesus, in His own person (and God, acting through His Son), had such well-founded confidence in these three pious souls, that Heaven had no hesitation in using them—and Lazarus in particular—to enact

this arresting sign, so that the blame-worthiness of the faithless nation should be established beyond doubt or uncertainty. Only in this light can we explain the two days delay, and the unusual prayer of Jesus at the door of the tomb—"Father, I thank Thee that Thou *heardest* Me . . ." He had prayed about this episode previously and here He was putting the subject of His prayer to an open test.

Now, an episode like this was absolutely in line with the tenor of the universal Plan, because, in the first place, it furnished testimony to the claims of Jesus as the Messiah; in the second place, it provided a stone of stumbling to the Jews, and so contributed to their fall from grace; and thirdly, it bore testimony to the mighty power of God and His ability to raise the dead. Hence the fitting preciseness of the statement that "Jesus loved (with the *Agape* Love) Martha and her sister and Lazarus". This Love was "Plan-Love"—"Love because of the Cause"—because of the part they were to play in advancing that Cause.

But the sisters knew that there was more than this between Jesus and Lazarus. Hence, in their message they said to Jesus "He whom Thou lovest is sick". Here the word is "*Phileis*"—(from *Phileo*). Again, when the watching Jews saw His grief as He approached the tomb, they said among themselves "Behold how He loved him" (v. 36). Here the word is "*Ephilei*"—again from *Phileo*. The sisters already knew that Jesus loved Lazarus very tenderly, with an affection of great warmth and depth. Without doubt Jesus had sounded the depths of that pious heart, and had been drawn to Lazarus because of his fidelity to God, and undoubtedly there was great kinship of spirit between them in things pertaining to God. And thus, when Jesus saw and felt what death had meant to the stricken sisters, and what it had done for His dearly-loved friend, He could no longer restrain His sympathetic tears, even though He knew what He was about to do on his behalf.

Here the ties of mutual friendship linked together Jesus and Lazarus, each loving other because of mutual affinity, and, because both loved the way of God, and sought to walk therein, each in his own sphere and capacity, their "*phileo*" affection was of a sanctified nature. But it was an affection for each other as man to man. And yet it was just because of this that Jesus considered Lazarus worthy

of the part he would be called upon to play in the universal Plan as it then applied to that people at that particular time. On the part of Jesus, this confidence and trust in His friend's integrity was love of the *Agape* variety. It is a principle of Scripture in later days that brotherly affection should serve the interests of the *Agape* relationship, as Peter says "*Seeing that you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently*". (1 Pet. 1. 22.) Here, because "*Philadelphoi*" love is unfeigned it is to apply itself to the task implied in the word "seeing"—that is, to the girding up of the loins of their minds, and to exhorting all who call upon God as Father to be holy because He is holy. (v. 12-21.)

The second illustration of the difference between *Agape* and *Phileo* is taken from an experience beside the Sea of Galilee. Just before this episode occurred, Peter and his brethren had come to Galilee in obedience to the Lord's command, there to await His further instructions for future days. But days of waiting were proving long and tedious, and patience was wearing thin. Anticipating great events as Kingdom authority was established by their risen Lord, these days of waiting and frustration were tensing nerves almost to breaking point, and Peter, with his brethren, felt that they must find something to do, or nerves would crack. "I go fishing", said Peter, "I can't stand this any longer". "We come with thee" they replied. And to the old task they returned.

In the splash of oars, and throw of nets, they thought to find relief from the inertia that kills. But an observant eye was watching them. He saw them toil the long night through unsuccessfully, and then as they drew inshore a voice called through the morning gloom "Children, have you any meat?" Hearing of their ill-success the Stranger bade them cast again on the right of the ship and they should find. They did as He suggested, and the net was filled. Thus did the watchful Lord reveal Himself to the tired and disheartened crew.

A simple meal awaited them as they stepped ashore. Then when hunger was appeased, Jesus turned to Peter as leader of the little band, and pointing to the ship, the nets, the fish, said searchingly "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these" (things)? Instantly the ready tongue replied "Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee".

According to our Authorised Version rendering (John 20) Jesus addressed this same question three times, with some slight variation, to the conscience-smitten Peter, and three times Peter is stated to have protested his love. But in the Greek original

the colloquy is not quite so simple as that. Peter did not answer his Master's questions—instead he evaded them. He substituted the personal for the universal form of love in his replies. And then when Jesus came down to his own level of thought, poor Peter was deeply cut to the heart.

When Jesus put the question "Lovest thou Me more than these" to Peter, the very lay-out of the circumstances added emphasis to the questioning. Peter had been called in an earlier day to become a fisher of men—a task in line with the Divine Plan of the Ages. Now, in a moment of frustration he had gone back to win the harvest of the sea. "Simon, son of Jonas, to whom or what do you propose to dedicate your life? Do you wish to have part in My Father's Plan with Me? Do you desire to share with Me in the work that I have come to do?" Such was the gist of Jesus' questioning. To show "*Agape*" for Jesus meant so much more than merely showing affection for His Person. Naturally a Person such as Jesus could easily arouse affection in the heart of a follower, but to arouse determination to follow Him in the steps that God had outlined for Him in the Plan was another matter altogether. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me (*Agapas* me, *Greek*) more than these?" asked Jesus. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I (*Phileo*) dearly love Thee" was the reply. He says to him again a second time "Simon, son of Jonas, '*Agapas*' Me?" And Peter again makes reply, "Yes, Lord, THOU knowest that I '*Phileo*' Thee". Coming down to Peter's level now He says to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou '*Phileis*' Me—affectionately love Me?" Did Jesus really doubt Peter on that point after all? Perhaps this was masterly psychology on Jesus' part, for three times Peter had denied and now three times he had confessed. But it cut him to the heart. But even though Jesus had come down to the more lowly and personal level of Peter's mind, the resultant mandate was the same. "Feed My lambs." (v. 15.) "Tend My sheep." (v. 16.) "Feed My sheep." (17.) "You say you love Me, Peter; then love also what is Mine. I and My sheep are inseparable, therefore if you have love for Me, you must also have love for what is Mine, for that which has been placed by My Father in My care." Can we then wonder that it was Peter who gave us the phrase "Ye are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls". (1 Pet. 2. 25.) That conception had been cut into his very soul on the shores of the Galilean sea.

Once more we have the distinction brought out that *Phileo* is the love-link that binds the individuals together as brethren (or children) of a great family, while *Agape* is the tie that unites them all to the

service of a great Cause—the great objective that lies out and beyond even the calling and formation of the love-tied family.

To emphasise this distinction a little more we quote a parallel illustration given by Archbishop Trench in the Latin language. In his valuable book "Synonyms of the New Testament", Trench quotes from Cicero—a writer of classic Latin prose—to emphasise this distinction between "Agapao" and "Phileo". Writing to one acquaintance about the deep affection he entertained for another friend, Cicero says "Ut scires illum a me non *diligi* solum, verum etiam *amari*". Here "*diligi*" is equivalent to "Agapao", while "*amari*" corresponds to "Phileo". The English translation of this, as given by Trench, reads "I do not merely esteem (*diligi*—agapao) the man, but I love (*amari*—phileo) him". The quotation (in its English form) con-

tinues, "there is something of passionate warmth in the feeling with which I regard him". (This illustration and quotation is found also in Thayer's Lexicon, p. 653.)

As a supplementary illustration of the same thing, Trench also cites an extract from the funeral oration of Antony over the body of the murdered Cæsar. "I loved him (*ephilasate*—*phileo*) as a father; and I esteemed (*agapesate*—*agapao*) him as a benefactor. (This also is given in Thayer's Lexicon, p. 653.)

Thus we find that the same distinction is found in Latin as in Greek—and thus we repeat that it is greatly to our loss that we have but the one word in our Authorised Version rendering to translate these two potent words, which in the Greek original express the two phases of that mighty moving force, which, proceeding from the heart of God, will yet win sinful men to obey and love His Will.

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 2—On the Watch Tower.

Habakkuk's second message came to him after a time of waiting, a time spent on the "watch tower" in looking and listening for guidance and light. So it is with all who wish to know God's plans; it is necessary first that they come to a realisation of man's own folly and sin, that, to quote Paul in Romans 3. 12 "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" that men are held in the grip of evil powers and forces. But after there has been a time of quiet contemplation whilst this truth is sinking in there comes the assurance that things will not always be thus, that God is working to destroy the power of evil and that His judgments will certainly come upon the powers that have wrought evil. The theme of Habakkuk's second chapter is his realisation through his "watch tower" experience of the certainty of Divine retribution upon the evil forces of the world.

"I will stand upon my watch" he says, "and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"—more properly "what I shall say concerning my plea". The first requirement of prophetic insight is watchfulness. Those words allude to the watchmen of Israel, stationed on the city walls to perceive in advance the onset of untoward happenings, the approach of travellers, or the coming of dawn. "Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth" the Lord commanded Isaiah (Isa. 21. 6) and in obedience to that command the watchman looked and listened "diligently

with much heed". It was in consequence of his watchfulness that he saw the evidences of the downfall of great Babylon, and—abruptly changing the picture—the merging of earth's long night of sin into the morning of Millennial day. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem" says the golden tongued prophet again (Isa. 62. 6) "which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence . . . till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth". It was in the inspiration of these words that Habakkuk took up his stand in patient waiting on the Lord for the answer to his "plea", the suit that he had brought before God. And it is important to note that he watched, not so much to learn what God would say "unto" him, in the words of the A.V. of verse 1, but rather as in the margin, what God would say "in" him, that is, *through him to others*. It is the purpose of Divine revelation that it be passed on, and the prophet who by reason of patient watching has been entrusted with a knowledge of the Divine Plan is thereby obligated to make it known to those who need that knowledge. God will speak to men "in" him.

It was not a literal watch tower upon which Habakkuk took his stand. Like Daniel a little later, he was waiting upon God in prayer and supplication, perhaps in the silence of the desert, perhaps in the quietness of the Temple sanctuary, and because of his readiness to be the recipient of Divine revelation, God was able to use him. "And the

Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Hab. 2. 2-3.)

This is the first indication that Habakkuk's prophecy reaches beyond his own people and time, and touches the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. The prophet is bidden to write down the vision for the benefit of later readers, for its fulfilment is not wholly in his own day but is also in the "appointed time", an expression with which we are familiar in Daniel as betokening the day of Divine intervention for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. The message certainly did have a direct application in the prophet's own day, and was without doubt delivered orally to Israel at that time, but the writing down was equally evidently for the benefit of a future generation. "Now go" says the Lord to Isaiah (Isa. 30. 8) "write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the latter day. . . ." In these few words of God to Habakkuk we have evidence that a substantial part at least of the subsequent message is intended to apply to the day when God rises up to overthrow evil, and this conviction is heightened by the expression, later in the second chapter, to the effect that the earth is to be filled with Divine glory just as the waters fill the sea. That will not be fulfilled until the Kingdom is established.

The phrase "that he may run that readeth it" has to do with the ease or rapidity with which the enquirer may read that which has been written. Rotherham has it "that one may swiftly read it" and Leeser "that everyone may read it fluently". The "tables" (*luach*) were clay tablets, used in Babylonia for writing material. The soft clay, inscribed, by means of a stylus, with characters known as "cuneiform" (arrow-shaped) was baked until hard, and was thereby rendered practically indestructible. It may not have been without design that Habakkuk was told to write on "*luach*", imperishable tablets, instead of "*sepher*", the usual Hebrew term for book; for "*sepher*" in Habakkuk's day referred to parchments written with ink, and perishable. No such parchments have survived to our day, whereas plenty of clay tablets have been recovered. Perhaps this is an indication that Habakkuk's message was, as it were, to be preserved in permanent form, for God had purposed that nearly three thousand years after He had uttered it, there would be readers waiting to "read it fluently".

In verse 3 the prophet is warned that there will be misunderstanding and disappointment over the

apparent non-fulfilment of the prophecy. "*The vision is yet for an appointed time.*" The term is the same as that used in Daniel; "at the time appointed the end shall be" (Daniel 8. 19). Further occurrences in the Old Testament indicate that a definite, pre-ordained point of time is meant. Daniel was told several times that the full understanding of the vision could come only at the "time of the end", the time appointed for its fulfilment, and he was counselled to rest in patience for that day. This is the message to Habakkuk also. The two occurrences of "tarry" in verse 3 are two different Hebrew words, each having a distinct significance. The first means to linger or delay in coming, and the second to stay behind as though never to come. Thus the phrase is better rendered "though it *linger*, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not *fail to come*". To many in past days the vision has appeared to linger; the word comes to them as it did to those Israelites who complained in the days of Ezekiel that the days were prolonged and every vision had failed (Ezek. 12. 22-23) "thus saith the Lord God, the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision". So it is in these days when the Kingdom is imminent: for the message of the hour is "though it *tarry*, wait for it, because it will surely come".

The first clause of verse 4 "*His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him*" is rather obscure. It breaks the sense of the passage. There is a suggestion that it refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian invaders, contrasting him with Habakkuk, the just man who is living by his faith. The Septuagint gives a different thought altogether, one that is more in harmony with the context, and the fact that it is the Septuagint that is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews in Heb. 10. 37-38 gives this rendering an added authority. It runs "though he *tarry*, wait for him, for he will surely come and will not tarry. If any man should draw back my soul has no pleasure in him; but the just shall live by faith in me. But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, shall not finish anything . . ." etc. Here, surely is a picture of the man who, because the vision has apparently "tarried", draws back and "walks no more with him" (John 6. 66), and on account of that failure God no longer has, "pleasure" in him. The just man, the one who does not lose faith, goes onward and into life because of that faith and in the strength of that faith. It is his faith in the unseen things that sustains him when there is nothing seen that can give confidence. This understanding of the text is the one adopted in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a passage so stirring in its exhortation and so adaptable to this present time

in which we live, a time when the vision has apparently tarried and yet is now about to be fulfilled, as to deserve quoting in full:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he, that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but to them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Heb. 10. 35-39.)

Those words are redolent of supreme confidence, a confidence so well founded, so unshakeable that it stands in the New Testament as does the prophecy of Habakkuk in the Old, a beacon light shining to dispel the shades of doubt. The hope of the Messianic Age, when Messiah would reign as King over redeemed Israel and through them enlighten the nations, was the hope of every Israelite in the centuries between Habakkuk and Christ, and led many to be "in expectation" at the time of the First Advent. That hope was not fulfilled just as they expected. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" asked the disciples with rapidly fading hope as they realised that He was about to ascend to heaven and leave them (Acts 1. 6). The hope of the Millennial Age, when Christ would reign over all the earth, and through His glorified Church in the heavens as well as through restored and purified Israel on earth, not only enlighten but convert and reconcile to God "whosoever will" (Rev. 22. 17) of all nations was the hope of every member of the early Church from Apostolic times up to the close of the third century. But "hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. 13. 12) and when the failure of their chronological understanding in the fourth and fifth centuries revealed that the longed-for earthly Kingdom was not yet to be, there were many who did cast away their confidence. Although they had "done the will of God" they were not able to wait with patience for the fulfilment of the promise. So it was that the churches of that day began to listen ever more closely to men who belittled the glorious promise of an earthly restitution of all things, men who made light of the Divine calling of this Age to Christian discipleship in preparation for the administrative and missionary work of the next, and degraded the teaching of Jesus to an impassioned exhortation to "flee from the wrath to come". Their highest conception of Christian teaching was a call to escape the terrors of hell and achieve the blessings of heaven by unreasoning conformity to

the dogmas and decrees of the institutional Church systems.

To-day we have come back to the apostolic principles and we know that God is, in this Age, setting a premium upon faith. His purpose stands firm, His promise is sure, and in His own due time this earth will be filled with His glory. It is our part as disciples to hold fast to that conviction and wait in quiet assurance that the tarrying One will surely come. And by that faith men shall live.

The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans shows the intimate connection between faith and the revelation of God's righteousness, and quotes Habakkuk's words to support his argument. The revelation of that righteousness, he says, is "out of" faith, in consequence of faith, and it is "in order to" faith, it leads on to further faith (Rom. 1. 17) *as it is written* "the just shall live by faith". The entire epistle to the Romans is a progressive enlargement of this dominant theme; **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH!** Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4. 3) and so are we, *if we believe* (4. 24). By this avenue we come to a condition of freedom from condemnation and acceptance with God (5. 2) leading on by full surrender to Christ, to baptism into His death and a rising to walk with Him in newness of life (chap. 6). So the fleshly mind passes away and the spiritual mind takes control and we are joined forever to the company of Christ's brethren (chap. 8). From that position Paul goes on to show that Israel after the flesh must also tread the same path, leading to full acceptance with God, and in their turn live, by faith (chap. 9 to 11). So comes that great crisis in the outworking of God's Plan when "all Israel" has been saved through faith, and is ready to embark upon its pre-destined mission of enlightening the nations, who in their turn, during the Millennial Age, are also to be saved through faith. And it is precisely that climax in the affairs of Israel to which Habakkuk's prophecy also points. Where Paul perceived the culmination by means of theological reasoning, his predecessor saw it in prophetic vision.

Now even at this point Habakkuk was not quite ready to have the vision of the future revealed to him. God must now acquaint his mind with the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil. What a man soweth, that shall he reap. Consequently the remainder of chapter 2 is taken up by a "song of taunting", to use the Hebrew expression, in which the sin of Babylonians and the corresponding retribution is set out in five-fold form. That is the theme of our next instalment; and after that comes the great prophecy of the Last Days.

Some Thoughts on Baptism

A DOCTRINAL ESSAY

The word baptism is of Greek origin and is carried forward into the English language and always applied to the religious life of Jews immediately prior to the Christian era or to those who embrace Christianity. That the word means to dip or immerse cannot be denied, though treatises have been laboriously compiled endeavouring to prove the word to mean "sprinkle" rather than "immerse". The fact, noted in the Bible, that John was baptising near to Salim because there was much water there is sufficient proof of the word's meaning. But while the word is from the Greek and is not to be found in the O.T. it is usual for commentators to imply that baptism for the remission of sins is hinted at in the Mosaic washings. The connection is, however, remote, for while water was used, immersion was not practised and the trespasser washed *himself* as part of the purification, whereas baptism is always performed by another. Further, there are other baptisms mentioned in Scripture which have no connection with water immersion. It is an essential part of the teaching of baptism that the candidate cannot immerse himself. And most Christians prefer to hold that baptism, whether of water or of the Holy Spirit, whether into the body of Christ or into death is an act done for them. But though baptism is not found in the O.T., New Testament writers reason that two instances of baptism, as it were, are portrayed there—one in which the family of Noah was saved through water (though water was the destroying agent in the Flood and they were saved through being in the Ark), and where Israel, walled round with water and roofed by cloud at the Red Sea, were immersed into Moses. (1 Pet. 3. 20-21 ; 1 Cor. 10. 2.)

It is probably advisable to approach this subject by copious reference to Scripture, and in that approach forget the thoughts of commentators. To do this we need a concise statement of the initiation of baptism ; and so to commence our travel through an interesting and edifying tenet of Scripture we select Mark 1. 5 "*... and were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins*". Did the waters actually wash away their sins? Surely not! Did their confession of sins secure them forgiveness? Surely not! We should remember that at the time of John's mission the

only means whereby sin can be absolved and its penalty remitted (the atoning death of Jesus Christ) had not been achieved, though it was near fulfilment and we may well believe that John's work was in anticipation of coming redemption. The marginal rendering of one word in Mark 1. 4 will define the true work of John and make a link with the following atonement by Christ—"John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins". Thus his work was unto, or toward, or with a view to, the coming deliverance.

It was proper that those Israelites who regarded John as a prophet sent from God should acknowledge his office by answering his call. They would remember, or had heard of, the remarkable circumstances of his birth—that he was born as a consequence of Divine intervention ; and that as a sign to his priestly father of the surety of the fulfilment of the promise of a son, he became dumb until the child was born and named according to instructions. The miracles attending his birth were so well known that the people expected great things of him and said "What manner of child shall this be!" Clearly he was marked as a man of God before his birth ; and when thirty years later he begins his short-lived mission, the question of the priests and Levites "Who art thou?" is not to ask his name but to find out his rank and authority. The cry of John in the wilderness calling to repentance and baptism caused the people to muse in their hearts, were he the Christ or not (Luke 3. 15). Upon his confession that he was not Christ, their thoughts turn to two other prophesied characters of the O.T.—Elias and "that prophet". But he affirms that he is not either of these. They knew of the promise of Messiah ; they knew of the prophecy of the coming one like to Moses ; and they knew that Elias must first come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. If they could identify him they would satisfy themselves and those back in Jerusalem who had sent them to make enquiries. "Who art thou?" they say (John 1. 20-22). In answer, he tells them that he also is a prophesied O.T. character mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. Apparently they did not know of, or think of, this prophecy of the voice in the wilderness, the forerunner of Messiah. Here was a sign of the time. All were in expect-

tation, and by comprehending his mission they would realise that Messiah was to come very, very soon. What an answer to those who had sent them! But the questioners want further information—*"Why baptiseth thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet"* (John 1. 25). They assume that only a prophet of very high rank would call Israel to baptism, thus instituting something new to those Mosaic practices they were so trained in. But John does not answer why. They were always more concerned with *"Why teacheth thou"* than *"What teacheth thou"*. It is clear from John's words that as the forerunner of Messiah he had come to prepare a people for the Lord. Such a people being baptised and acknowledging their sins (thus admitting they were not satisfied with the clearance from sins made under the ceremonial law) would be the very people fit to accept the coming Messiah. Such was one of the objects of his baptising mission.

But that is not the only reason why John proclaimed baptism. Among the many who came to be immersed was one whom John knew himself unfit to immerse. John knowing his baptism was unto remission of sins is surprised that Jesus should ask to be immersed, and felt rather that he himself should be baptised of Jesus; but he yields to our Lord's request. We might think that of all men He should not be immersed if baptism is for or unto remission of sins. We might think that if He were not immersed He would the more stand out as the sinless one and so be manifest to Israel. (The suggestion of some, that He was immersed in order to be numbered with the transgressors does not deserve consideration.) How else could He be made manifest to Israel, for which purpose John had come baptising? (John 1. 31.) Strangely enough John says (v. 32) that prior to Jesus' immersion, He knew Him not; yet they were related and it is unthinkable that they had not previously met. Does John mean that up to that time he had not realised that the Jesus he knew so well, was in fact the One of Whom he was the forerunner? Yet, when Jesus presented Himself for immersion John must have said to himself "Of course, this is He". Or, does John mean that he assumed Jesus was *Messiah*, but did not know Him as the *Lamb of God* until the Holy Spirit abode on him? For we remember that many knew of glorious Messianic prophecies but did not realise the sufferings of Christ which must precede the glory. Be that as it may, John's instructions were that upon whom he should see the Spirit descending and remaining, he it was for whom he was seeking and thus he would be manifest to Israel. The descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven saying

"This is my beloved Son" sealed John's work and revealed the Son of God; and promptly next day he announces the Lamb of God, He Who would give true remission to those who by water baptism had confessed their sins.

In this connection we see a third reason why John came baptising—that He upon whom the descending Spirit remained, would baptise with the Holy Spirit. In this verse 33 we have reference to baptism not connected with water, but still the word has the thought of immersion. In fact, the more one considers the allusions to baptism the less do they suggest sprinkling. Nothing more is then said by John about the Holy Spirit, and only by reference to other Scripture and incidents in the early days of Christianity shall we be able to see its meaning. However, it will quickly be seen, that water immersion is momentary and that the other baptisms are each full of meaning and relate to the whole life of Christians. In fact, water baptism would have seemed fit to have fallen into disuse like the old sacrifices of the law, were it not that our Lord was immersed at the commencement of His ministry. Had our Lord not been immersed Christians would have thought baptism to have been exclusively Jewish and that they were not called upon to observe it. And here we must consider further why Jesus was baptised in water. Later in His ministry (Luke 12. 50) He said He had a baptism to be baptised with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished, and shortly after He had asked the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 20. 22) if they were willing to drink of His cup and be baptised with the baptism that He was being baptised with; and by this He was plainly showing that baptism related to His immersion into the will of God, which for Him meant baptism into death. And in this view of baptism we may reason that water baptism was an outward sign of the commencement of His great mission, and that His death on Calvary was the outward sign of its fulfilment. The sons of Zebedee would not at that time comprehend the full import of His question to them; (and maybe we do not to-day); but they said they were willing to be immersed with His baptism, and later they followed their Lord into death as faithful witnesses. The words of the apostle John in 1 John 5. 6 fittingly corroborate the thought that baptism in its fuller meaning referred to His whole life and death—*"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth"*. John clearly has in mind the beginning and end of our Lord's mission, and to maintain the true meaning of our Lord's baptism repeats the words "not by

water only, but by water and blood". And said he "It is the Spirit that beareth witness". Yes, the descending Spirit bore witness at His immersion and again bore witness that His baptism unto death fulfilled His mission by descending upon the waiting brethren at Pentecost. John further adds "*There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*". They agree in one eternal testimony to Him Whose life on earth was summed up in one word, "baptism". Thus we may see, that Jesus' baptism in water was not for the remission of sins like other Israelites, but was a beautiful portrayal of His immersion into the will of God.

This being one of the meanings of baptism, no Christians who are willing to follow their Lord would object to water immersion for themselves, for the servant is not above his Lord. They may of course reason that water baptism as a means of cleansing from sin could be applicable to themselves but never applicable to their Lord. True enough, but we must ever remember that water immersion does not remove sin—in fact, it cannot. Every Christian knows that forgiveness of sins ensues as a gracious gift of God upon their belief in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. We may, of course, in a manner of speaking refer to washing away of sins, as in Acts 22. 16, but we know in ourselves that the calling on the name of the Lord is the effectual means of cleansing, not the water immersion. So then, freeing our minds from all thoughts of remission of our sins by immersion, we can, as did our Lord, use water immersion as a symbol of our willingness to be immersed into the will of God. And, what a fine portrayal there is, in the fact of total immersion! But having said that, we must remember that water immersion is only a symbol, and the real immersion into the will of God is far more important than the symbol. We say this because it is probably true that many Christians in time past faithfully did the will of God as they saw it, but had not been immersed in water, and we cannot think that their standing before God is jeopardised by their lack of knowledge or compliance. But for ourselves, if we see it as a symbol and remember that our Lord Himself was immersed, we also should comply.

At this juncture we must return in our thoughts to the prophet John's words in John 1. 33 "*Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he that baptiseth with the Holy Spirit*". We have seen that these prophetic words began to be fulfilled when the Spirit bore witness by coming upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost. To these words of John should be linked the words of our Lord in Acts 1. 5

"*For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence*". Upon the phenomenal descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter rises to explain to his Jewish brethren that this is also in fulfilment of the prophet Joel's words and concludes his remarks by urging them to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus whereupon they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This cannot be a repetition of John the Baptist's call, for John made no appeal in the name of the Lord Jesus. But now that Christ had been crucified and raised from the dead there was "none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved", and it was manifest that any appeal to Jews to return to harmony with God should come through Him. In considering Acts 2. 38 it should not be assumed that water immersion is immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit—in fact there is no evidence as to when these 3,000 souls received this gift. In Acts 8 we read of Samaritans being baptised (for the invitation was no longer exclusively Jewish) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and yet they did not receive the Holy Spirit until the arrival of the disciples from Jerusalem, who prayed for them and laid hands on them. Can we suppose that the Holy Spirit would have been withheld from any true Samaritan convert to the faith, if the apostles had not intervened? It is difficult to assess the true position of Samaritans at that time. It seems that beholding miracles and hearing the words of Philip they believed and are baptised with speed and readiness—perhaps too readily, for baptism should not be hastily entered upon, and it appears that one of their number was not right before God. We leave them, as did Philip, who was called away by the Spirit to assist the eunuch of Candace, who with his inquiring mind and love of the Scriptures rings true. From the narrative (Acts 8. 36) we observe that the first mention of baptism comes from the eunuch himself. Upon requesting immersion they both go down into the water, clearly for total immersion. And here it should be remembered that verse 37 is not to be found in the three most dependable manuscripts. This may not seem of great moment for the question supposedly made to the eunuch seems appropriate. Yet it is far better to think that the eunuch (as should all other candidates) asked for immersion rather than Philip asked him and required him to make a declaration of faith before he would immerse him. The responsibility for immersion is the candidate's and we should believe that any Christian asking for baptism has by that request declared his faith. (The responsibility in the companion ordinance—the Lord's supper—is the partaker's, who should examine himself—1 Cor. 11. 28).

Another enlightening event in the practice of baptism among Christians is revealed in Acts 10 and 11. The story is vividly detailed by the writer, and readers may well think it to be a turning-point in God's dealings with those outside the Jewish nation. We should read the narrative carefully for some are anxious to read into the story that Cornelius was, if not a proselyte of the temple, at least a proselyte of the gate, and therefore to assume that the entry of Gentiles into equal standing with Jews commenced under the apostleship of Paul rather than of Peter. The thrice repeated vision to Peter and his plain words on the subject leave no doubt in unbiased minds that God was from then on dealing with Gentiles as never before. Particular notice must be made of some incidents in the story of Cornelius. First, that both Peter and he had visions, but whereas Cornelius complied with the angel's instructions immediately, Peter did not move in the matter until the vision had three times been given him. And we note that the devout Gentile is quick to respond to the heavenly call, but that the servant of God is slower to act, so ingrained in his Jewish mind are the traditions of Israel. But he acts at the request of the three men whom Cornelius sent, and still with the vision in his mind, goes back with his men to Cæsarea. Cornelius is clearly expecting them, and on Peter's arrival falls down to worship him. It is to Peter's credit that he will not permit anyone, even a Gentile, to worship him because he is a servant of God—a principle which those who regard themselves as the successors of Peter have yet to learn. Peter hears the story of Cornelius' vision and could not withstand the clear leading of heaven, and so he preaches Christ to the assembled enquirers. While he speaks the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles, thus evincing God's blessing and acceptance of their devotion and belief. Here we should note that the Holy Spirit was given to these Gentiles before they were baptised in water. This undoubtedly proves that the Holy Spirit baptism is not dependent upon water baptism; and that water baptism is a symbol; and that the Gentile immersion was not in response to John's call to baptism for the remission of sins. On Peter's return to Jerusalem, the story having preceded him, some still having Jewish bias contended with him, but when Peter rehearses the matter they hold their peace realising that by the gift of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles God had shown that they also were now acceptable with Him. Peter saw in all this, further fulfilment of our Lord's words (Acts 11. 16, Matt. 3. 11, Acts I. 5).

We cannot leave the Acts of the Apostles without another reference to those early days. We read in Acts 18. 24-26 of a Jew mighty in the Scriptures,

yet knowing only the baptism of John; and because the purpose of God had progressed beyond his knowledge two faithful brethren expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly. Surely they showed to him that the way of approach to God had changed through the coming, death and resurrection of Christ. The very next verses in ch. 19 show the lack of knowledge among some disciples at Ephesus. Although it was perhaps 17 years after Pentecost, they had not heard of the Holy Spirit and had been baptised with John's baptism. Briefly, the teaching of Paul's reply (v. 4) is that John's baptism is outdated by the coming of Christ. These Ephesians are then baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit.

These striking references in the Acts show the change in baptism since John's days—the practice of water baptism does not cease, but its meaning alters; and also there is the newer baptism of the Holy Spirit fulfilling our Lord's promises.

Later, when Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus, no doubt he would think of these twelve brethren when he said (Eph. 4. 5) that there was *one* baptism. What baptism does Paul mean? It is unlikely that he means water immersion, for of that subject he says very little. Surely he means that as concerns the Church there is but one baptism, even as there is one Body and one Spirit. By holding to these we shall keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In an earlier epistle he explains the relationship of the one baptism to the one Body—that the one Spirit has baptised us whether we be Jews or Gentiles into the one Body of Christ. Thus we shall see in 1 Cor. 12. 13 and other associated words by Paul, such as Gal. 3. 27, Col. 2. 12, and Rom. 6. 3, the full development of the Bible teaching on baptism. The story began with the immersing of Jews, who, confessing their sins, were preparing themselves for the first coming of Messiah, and it is retained in the Christian Church as a symbol of their willingness to be immersed into the will of God. And He who accepts this willingness of heart to do His will, baptises them with the Holy Spirit. This shedding forth of the Holy Spirit is the means whereby He sets the members in the body, or, in other words, baptises them into the body of Christ. And He noting those willing to be baptised with Christ's baptism, promises that if they are planted or immersed into His death they shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. These two are inseparable—he who is baptised into the body of Christ will also be baptised into His death. And in all these considerations we come to the full Bible meaning of the word baptism—that it means immersion in whatever province it is used by the inspired writers.

THRUST OUT OF THE KINGDOM

A lesson from past history.

"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13. 28.)

In those words Jesus closed the door of Kingdom power in the faces of confident men who had fondly imagined themselves certain of its privileges. How came it about that He could so definitely pass that judgment and deny them for ever a position to which they claimed to be the rightful heirs?

The Pharisees were the degenerate spiritual descendants of a once noble and influential reform movement. When the children of Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity, five hundred years before Christ, there arose in their midst a body of men known as the "Chassidim," distinguished for self-sacrificing consecration to God, insistence upon holiness of life and separation from the people of the land, and fervent expectation of God's Kingdom on earth when the righteous would be exalted and the wicked punished. During the dark days of Greek oppression the Chassidim, or Pharisees as they were afterwards called, became bulwarks of strength to the suffering people, and many of them suffered martyrdom in defence of their faith. It was largely in consequence of their efforts that knowledge of the prophets' teachings regarding the Kingdom was recovered and proclaimed.

But as time went on the Pharisees gradually came to a position of power and leadership in the nation, and then, like the Christian Church in the days of Constantine, they forsook their primitive simplicity and single-heartedness, failed to continue in progressive understanding of Divine revelation, and began to count as of supreme importance the letter of the Law and the "traditions of the fathers". Blinded by their own refusal to "walk in the light" they failed to recognise the evidences of the developing Plan of God revealed in Christ, and so, although so sure of their place in the Kingdom, that Kingdom was taken from them *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"*. (Matt. 21. 43). They lost that position, and did not know they had lost it. They had once been God's honoured instruments in the ministry of His Plan; they now became broken vessels, and God could find no further use for them. They opposed and denied the Truth due to be understood, persecuted and put to death the men who proclaimed that truth, and lost for ever any further share in either the understanding or the execution

of the Divine Plan, then, or in the future. Instead of becoming rulers in the Kingdom, they will take their place among its subjects and learn, in that day, the lessons they might have learned in their lifetime.

What was the cause of their failure? To what must we attribute that blindness which led them to know not the time of their visitation? It was largely the fault of over-confidence! Confidence is accounted a virtue, and for those who would serve God it is a virtue when the confidence is in God and in His power. But the Pharisees' confidence was in themselves, their own wisdom, their own power, their own righteousness, and they knew not that their wisdom was foolishness in God's sight, their power was weakness, and their righteousness as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64. 6). It was the wrong kind of confidence: They *"trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others"* (Luke 18. 9-10). They relied on their relationship to Abraham. *"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man"* (John 8. 33) and their knowledge of doctrine: *"whence hath this man letters, having never learned?"* (John 7. 15). And that attitude of mind led them to the terrible position where, like one of their number in Jesus' story, they stood each before God and addressed Him in tones of irreverent familiarity: *"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"* (Matt. 18. 11).

It was that presumptuous self-confidence, leading on to overwhelming pride, that begat in them the second great cause of their failure—uncharitableness. Secure in positions of worldly honour and often possessed of worldly affluence and wealth, they cared nothing for the material or the spiritual welfare of the people. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath day they were more concerned with the affront to their traditions regarding Sabbath keeping than the relief and happiness brought to some suffering soul. When the opening of the eyes of one born blind, on the Sabbath, made it imperative that the rulers take some official notice of this new prophet that had arisen, they sought by every means in their power to entrap the once-sightless man into an admission that would deny the Divine power that was in Christ. (Luke 9. 1-41.) It was this determined uncharitableness of the Pharisees that led them openly to deny the manifest power of the Holy Spirit and caused Jesus to utter those terrible words of

denunciation: "*He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of age-abiding judgment*" (Mark 2. 29).

These two failings—over-confidence and uncharitableness—produced in them a frame of mind which rendered them incapable of receiving new ideas. It was not merely that they *would* not receive Christ and His message; the condition into which their minds had set made it that they *could* not receive Him and accept His words. "*This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should . . . be converted, and I should heal them.*" (Matt. 13. 15.) In their early years they had believed in the progressiveness of doctrinal understanding, but not now. Their position and organisation could only be maintained by holding rigidly to the outworn creeds of the past and stifling every attempt to introduce new wine into the old bottles. Jesus drew attention to the impossibility of their receiving His message within the framework of their old system when he employed that very illustration (Matt. 9. 17). Once they had been "in the Truth" but now the clearer truth of the Kingdom at hand, and the King in their midst, had gone past them and left them behind. True, they held still to Moses and the prophets, and were faithful to the form of words which those men had spoken; but Moses and the prophets had spoken of Christ, and the Pharisees knew it not. True, they had the right foundation, the foundation of the Divine Plan as it had been revealed in earlier years. The doctrine they did have was good, so far as it went, but in Jesus' day it did not go far enough, for there was a deeper and a more spiritual revelation to be made to those who had hearing ears. They looked for another Moses and another David, and in their looking failed to see Christ, the One of Whom Moses and David both spoke.

It was not so with the "Ancient Worthies", the men who, said Jesus, would step into the places which these Pharisees had failed to attain. The patriarchs of old had confidence, but it was a confidence born of living faith in God and a humble dependence upon Him. Abraham showed that confidence when he offered Isaac, "*accounting that God was able to raise him up*". (Heb. 11. 19.) and Isaac manifested the same confidence in allowing himself to be bound for the offering, (Gen. 22. 9)—for the strong young man could easily have overpowered his aged old father and made his escape from the scene of sacrifice had he so desired. Isaac's faith, no less than Abraham's, was pleasing to God on that fateful day. Jacob's dying words manifested his own confidence in God's promise even although he had twice had to leave his native land and was to die in a

foreign country and see the Land of Promise no more; nevertheless "*Behold, I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers*" (Gen. 48. 21). Joshua, dying, revealed the calm maturity of a one-time violently zealous character when he told his followers "*Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you*" (Josh. 23. 14). Perhaps one of the grandest exhibitions of confidence on record is that of Job, who lost family, health, possessions, friends, all that makes life worth living, and then was able to say "*Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God*" (Job 19. 26). Through all his troubles—and they were many—he never lost faith. At last he received the reward of faith, for he was able to make that grandest of all declarations "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee*" (Job. 42. 5). It is by experience that we come to really know God, and therein is our confidence.

This confidence in God and in His good purposes begets the true spirit of charity towards others. If the love of God dwells in our own hearts it is impossible for us to do other than reflect some of that love to those around us. The uncharitableness of the Pharisees was because they had not love in their own hearts, and if we are uncharitable toward others the reason is the same. Abraham was kindly and hospitable to the three men who came to him in the evening—and he received a blessing, the promise of the Seed (Gen. 18. 10). The widow of Samaria shared what she had with the man of God although she was at the point of death—and she received sustenance throughout the famine and at its end the raising of her only son from the dead (I Kings 17. 10-14). Boaz was kindly and considerate towards the foreign maiden who sought his protection—and of him came Christ (Ruth 2. 12). These are but a few examples of the many cases where kindness, charity and love, built upon a foundation of complete confidence in God and a deep appreciation of His Plan of salvation, has led the individual into a very close connection with the outworking of that Plan, and assured for him a place in the administration of the Kingdom "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13.)

Finally, this outlook upon our walk with God and its application to daily life leads to true progressiveness in understanding. "New light" does not consist necessarily in the production of original and startling interpretations of Scripture requiring the immediate and total abandonment of all that has previously been believed. It does involve, very

often, a modification of previous conclusions in the light of greater and more accurate knowledge, or an amplifying of what has been seen in the past, so that it reveals more deeply and more gloriously the hidden mystery "now made known to the saints". Our progressiveness so far as matters doctrinal are concerned usually lies in the direction of re-stating the old truths in terms more easily understood by us to-day; in reasoning more logically and accurately than we have in the past on the basis of the fundamental principles which always stand without change. And the real progressiveness so far as we are concerned is not along lines of doctrine at all; it is along lines of Christian experience and growth. "God hath showed me," said Peter, "that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10. 28.) That is the progressiveness of understanding, of the head. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," said Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee." (Job 42. 5.) That is the progressiveness of experience, of the life. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine" cried Habakkuk in fervency of spirit "the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3. 17-18.) **THAT IS THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF FAITH**, of the

heart, and that is the condition to which we must all attain if we, too, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are to sit down in the Kingdom of God and serve with Christ in the bestowment of Divine blessings to all mankind. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" said Paul (I Cor. 8. 1). "Love never faileth, but knowledge . . . shall vanish away." (I Cor. 13. 8). Of all men in the early days of the Church's history Paul was most qualified to place these things in their proper relation to each other, and without hesitation at all he declared "The greatest of these is love".

Let us therefore, in our walk with God, endeavour to model our lives on the confidence, the charity and the progressiveness of the Ancient Worthies, men who "received a good report through faith". So doing, we shall inherit the Kingdom. We may, if we choose, ignore these things and rely upon our head knowledge, our outward influence and power, our good works and our much speaking, but if we do, and if these things occupy our lives and our thoughts to the exclusion of the kindly, beneficent, revealing, inspiring Holy Spirit of God, then the day will surely come, as it came to those Pharisees of old, that we hear the infinitely terrible—and, who can doubt it, infinitely regretful—words of our Lord "Ye shall see others sit down in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves—*thrust out*".



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. What is the meaning of "shutteth up his bowels of compassion" in I John 3. 17, "if any bowels and mercies" in Phil. 2. 1, and similar texts?

A. The word had a rather different meaning in Apostolic days to that which is its general usage to-day. Anatomically, it meant the vital organs, the heart, lungs and liver, and metaphorically was used to denote the tender affections, love, sympathy, kindness, etc. (much as to-day the *heart* is regarded as the seat of the affections). There are two instances where the word is translated in this manner, in 2 Cor. 7. 15, "His inward affection is more abundant toward me", and Luke 1. 78, "through the tender mercy of our God whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us". If the occurrences where it is translated "bowels" be examined it will be seen that in all instances save one (Acts 1. 18), the reference is to this inner feeling of compassion and tenderness (see 2 Cor. 6. 12, Phil. 1. 8, 2. 1, Col. 3. 12, Philemon 7, 12 and 20). The same word used in its verbal form, is rendered "moved with compassion" in Matt. 9. 36, 14. 14, 18. 27, Mark 1. 41, 6. 34; and "had compassion" in Matt. 15. 32,

20. 34, Mark 8. 2, 9. 22, Luke 7. 13, 10. 33 and 15. 20. In every case except the latter (the story of the prodigal son) the One thus moved to compassion is Jesus Himself. It is worth while to turn up all these texts in order to realise how full of meaning they become when their true import is understood.

There is a link, too, with the Old Testament. In the Levitical types the "inward parts" of the sacrifice, the heart and other organs, were offered up on the Brazen Altar "a sweet savour unto God", and it has often been pointed out that this symbolises the heart's best endeavours and affections, given to God. Now this same word translated "bowels"; *splagchna*, was the term used by the Greeks to denote this sacrifice of the inward parts of animals, having the same idea in mind. We can say therefore that the proof of our understanding of this element in the Tabernacle sacrifices lies here in the New Testament. The "inward parts" represent our hearts' best affections, manifested toward each other and to our Lord, offered up to our Heavenly Father in sincere consecration of life in His service and the service of His people.

"KOLASIS"—PUNISHMENT

One of the last arguments to which the fast diminishing band of believers in eternal torment is driven in order to defend its position is the concluding verse of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25. 46) "*and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal*". Some of the facts relating to the word here translated "punishment" may be of interest.

"Eternal punishment" in this verse is from the Greek "*aiomian kolasis*". "*Kolasis*" is a word which comes in the first place from "*kolos*", to lop or prune, and the meaning of the word as defined by Thayer, Liddell and Scott, and others, is to check, curb, restrain or correct. Its usage in the time of the Lord was twofold, (a) punishment in the sense of restraint of the offender's power to continue his offence, and (b) disciplinary correction, or as we would say, chastisement. In classical Greek usage, Aristotle (350 B.C.) distinguished it from the other Greek word, used in Heb. 10. 29, for punishment, "*timoria*", by saying that *kolasis* is disciplinary, referring to the correction of the offender, whilst *timoria* is penal, referring to the satisfaction of the judge. *Kolasis* is used only in three other instances, these being:

2 Pet. 2. 9 "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the ungodly unto the day of judgment to be *punished*."

Acts 4. 22 "Finding nothing how they might *punish* them."

I John 4. 18 "Perfect love casteth out fear; for fear hath *torment*" (has a curbing or restraining influence).

"*Timoria*" is used only in Heb. 10. 29 "Of how much sorer *punishment* shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God . . ." In this verse the type of punishment carries with it the thought of penal infliction, whereas in the former scripture it is the fact that the evil-doer is put under restraint so that his evil doing is suppressed that is in view. It is often urged that since "*kolasis*" does carry the thought of disciplinary correction equally with that of restraint or cutting off, it is equally logical to argue that the "everlasting punishment" of Matt. 25. 46 is, not "age-enduring cutting-off", but "age-enduring correction", and might very well refer to the "resurrection into judgment" of the Millennial Age itself (John 5.). This suggestion is logical, but the term is used so infrequently in the New Testament that it does not seem wise to build too much upon its strict dictionary meaning when there are so few instances from which to discern in what sense the New Testament speakers

and writers actually used it. It is better in such cases to interpret the word in the light of the context and adopt the particular shade of meaning which best fits that context. In verse 41 these same "goats" have addressed to them the words "*Depart from me, ye cursed* (separated or cut-off ones) *into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*". Rev. 20. 10-15 shows that this is the same thing as the "Second Death", the final end of sinners and of all that proves to be incapable of reconciliation with God and amenable to the laws of His creation. Nowhere does the Scripture warrant the thought that those who come forth to the disciplinary judgment of the Millennial Age are regarded by Jesus as "cursed"; rather are they the "other sheep" of His fold which are eventually to be brought within the circle of the Father's family, if they will. The "cursed" must surely be those who reject all endeavours for their elevation to human perfection, and, dying in their sin, become as though they had never been (Psa. 37. 10). We may consider ourselves justified therefore in interpreting this text "everlasting cutting-off" or "everlasting restraint" in the sense that those thus cut off are thereby permanently restrained from continuing to mar God's creation with their sin. "*Aiomian*" may mean everlasting in the sense of a long period of either definite or indefinite duration, or everlasting in the sense of being perpetual. A good example of both meanings appearing side by side in the same text is afforded by the Greek (Septuagint) version of Hab. 3. 6 where the prophet says "the everlasting (*aiomian*) mountains were scattered, . . . his ways are *everlasting*" (*aiomian*). The mountains are everlasting in a limited sense only; change and decay will remove them eventually even though the time be thousands or millions of years. God's ways are perpetual; they can never be removed. In this light the text is perfectly logical and in harmony with Jesus' teaching. The one class go into everlasting life, the other into everlasting cutting-off; as Jesus said in another place "He that hath the Son hath life: but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him".

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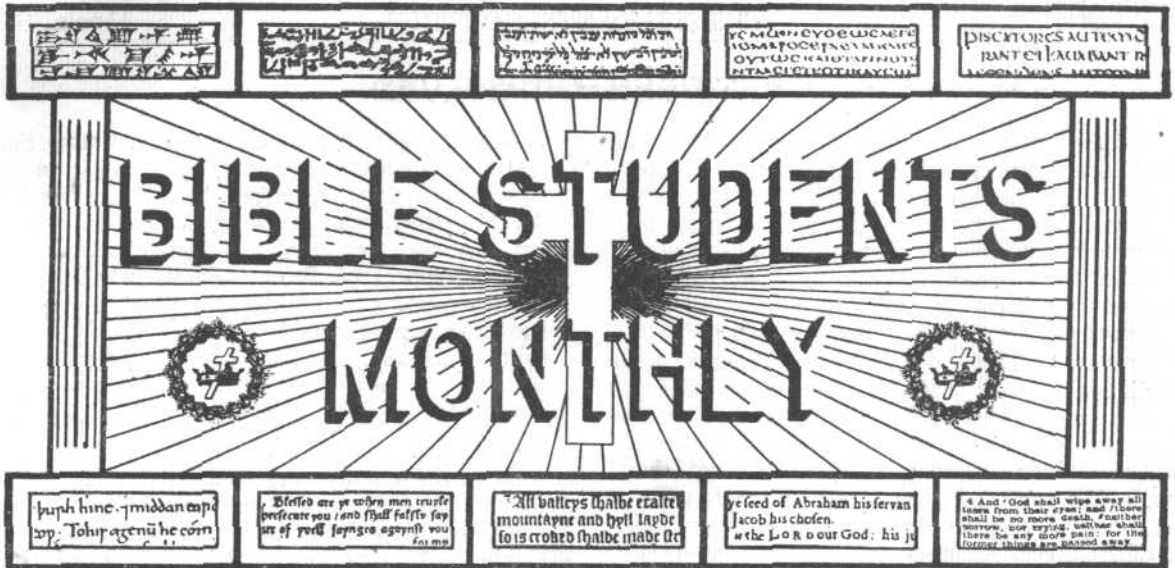
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BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION

THE BENEVOLENT FUND

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

We have cause this month to realise anew that the Great Shepherd is gathering home His flock. There cannot be recalled a previous occasion when so many of our brethren have rested from their labours at one and the same time. As we bear them in remembrance and their loved ones in prayer we can repeat, from the heart, the comforting words "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Brother W. H. Lucas, of Preston, departed from us on 30th January. He was prominent among the Lancashire brethren—not only at Preston, but also Lancaster, Barrow-in-Furness, Pilling, Blackpool; and in addition was known at Manchester and Liverpool. His public ministry was always rendered with an eye single to the Lord's service, and his memory is dear and refreshing.

Sister Barratt of Leicester passed quietly away on 1st February, after a long illness of ten years' duration. From as far back as 1911 until illness compelled a halt, she had been an active worker in witnessing to the message of the Kingdom, and then during her long period of being laid aside she found ways and means of testifying to the faith that was in her. Her wonderful spirit and patience was an inspiration to those who came in contact with her. She was laid to rest on 5th February, the service being conducted by Brother Goodwin of Rugby, who spoke of the power of the Resurrection, against the background of the lovely story of the little home at Bethany.

Three others of our brethren have passed away recently: Brother C. R. Wright, of Fordingbridge, Hants; Sister Haslam, of Stisted, Essex; and Sister Rosa Campin, of Westgate, Kent. For them all we trust, a "crown of life".

Frederick George Guard, Senr., so well known to many in this country, finished his course on 22nd February, aged 82 years, after a long life of zealous and faithful service, and was laid to rest in the City of London Cemetery on 27th February. Our brother had borne the heat and burden of an earlier day than our own, and we hope to include in our next issue an appreciation by some who knew him best.

Word is also just with us that our Brother H. Osborne, of Warrington, was called on 1st March. His presence at the coming Easter Convention will be greatly missed, but for him our confidence is that he, too, has "fought a good fight".

Our rejoicing is for these that they each have finished their course with joy; our sympathy and our prayers are for the loved ones left behind, that they may see the hand of the Lord in their loss, and look forward with quiet confidence to the day of reunion.

It would seem that a request from Brother Ford that a donation of £2 to the Benevolent Fund sent anonymously last December, be acknowledged in the MONTHLY, was inadvertently overlooked, and for this we are sorry. Although belated, our acknowledgment on Brother Ford's behalf is none the less sincere, and we would like the donor to know that some hearts have been made glad by the fruits of the gift.

* * * *

By the time these words appear in print our Brother J. T. Read, of Chicago, will, if the Lord will, be in this country and ministering to the friends. May his service be a means of encouragement and a spiritual uplift. In conjunction with Brother Van Halewijn of Rotterdam it has been arranged for Brother Read to visit Holland for a short while and to make contact with the friends there. Upon his return to this country he will be able to complete his tour here before returning to America. At the London Convention to be held at Conway Hall in August he should be able to give some account of the welfare of our Dutch brethren.

* * * *

Brethren who are acquainted with "Streams in the Desert", the book of devotional readings which has become familiar amongst us, will be interested to learn that we now have in stock a companion book, "Springs in the Valley" also containing readings for each day in the year but, of course, all different from the earlier book. We can now supply either of these highly esteemed books from Welling at 9/- each, post free.

* * * *

Another useful booklet for spreading abroad our message of hope is now available in "The Millennial Gospel of Jesus", published this month. This is a 40-page booklet with art cover printed blue and black with photo reproduction illustrating the text "they shall build houses and inhabit them" and it covers about all that the New Testament has to say on the Millennium. It consists of a re-arrangement of articles on the subject which recently appeared in the Monthly. Its five chapters are entitled: "The Promise of Restitution"; "Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven"; "The Testimony of Two Apostles"; "The Parable of the Sheep and Goats"; "The Holy City", and it should afford any interested reader a very fair idea of our beliefs regarding the great day of the Kingdom. Post free prices are 8d. (12 cents) each; six for 3/6 (65c); 50 for 22/- (4 dollars); 100 for 40/- (8 dollars).

The Communion of Saints

A VITAL FEATURE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body." (I Cor. 10. 16-17.)

In these burning words Paul has laid bare for us the fundamental principle of our fellowship. Throughout his busy life he strove consistently for one supreme object, the union of the Body of Christ, the welding together of all who named the Name into a unity of the Spirit that would defy all attempts to break. He succeeded only partially; the visible Church of Christ has never measured in full up to the spirit of our Lord's last prayer "that they may be one, even as we are" (John 17. 22). The human element has often failed the inspiration of the Spirit. But the prayer of Jesus has not gone unanswered. In every generation from Pentecost to the present there have been some who have entered so fully into the spirit of Christ's message that they have overridden the bonds and bars fashioned by men and found themselves at one with others of like understanding. True Christians may recognise each other wherever found and there is a unity of the Spirit which transcends and ignores all denominational barriers.

The outward expression of that unity is to be found in the Memorial of the Last Supper and the coming together from time to time in regular assembly for the simple sharing of bread and wine—a symbolic feast that at one and the same time expresses our one-ness with each other and our one-ness with the Lord. Whether that celebration be as often as once a week or as seldom as once a year it always symbolises, not only our acknowledgment of the saving power of our Lord's death, our acceptance to ourselves of His shed blood and sacrificed life, our association with Him in the offering of life to the world in due time; not only all this, but also that kinship, that brotherhood, that one-ness with each other as brethren in Christ, without which none of the other significance can be really appreciated by us or true of us. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, asks James, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? So the one that has not entered truly into living relationship with his brethren may by no means be in living relationship with Christ. His acceptance by and standing with Christ may be, and is, the result of an individual

decision and based upon his personal justification by faith, but he can maintain that acceptance and standing only by becoming one of "the brethren"; a fellow-member of the Body. He must enter and accept the communion of saints.

Paul chose a wonderful word to express this relationship, and he used it in a variety of connections in order to show how intimately this "common-union" enters into every aspect of our Christian walk in the flesh, and extends beyond this life into the future glory. And this text in I Cor. 10 is a fitting commencing point for a sober consideration of all that the word implies, just as the Memorial ceremony itself is the centre and basis of our Christian life and fellowship.

"Communion"! What does it mean? What is there in the word to stamp it as particularly and peculiarly expressive of all that is deepest and most precious in our dealings and intercourse the one with the other? "Communion" in the Greek means the act of using a thing in common, or as we would say, sharing together in the use of a thing. It has its origin in the word which is translated "common" in Acts 2. 44, "*all that believed were together and had all things common*" and Acts 4. 32, "*they had all things common*". Now this is a good pointer to the principle behind the word, for it is beyond doubt that the primitive Church of the days immediately following Pentecost, when they sold possessions and parted to every man as each had need, grasped this thought of the family relationship perhaps more clearly than did the Church at any other time. Here, it seems, is the basis for the Apostle's expression "the communion—*common sharing*—of the Body of Christ." The same word is used in Titus 1. 4 "*the common faith*" and Jude 3 "*the common salvation*" where the meaning, that of something to be held and shared together, is obvious.

But this word "communion" is also sometimes translated "fellowship", sometimes "communicate", sometimes "partaker". Each of these aspects of our Christian life is an aspect of the communion of the saints and as such is intimately associated with our understanding of the Memorial. The early Church, we are told, "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and *fellowship*"—communion (Acts 2. 42). James, and John, and Peter, extended to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of *fellowship*—

communion (Gal. 2. 9). Paul exhorted that he who is taught in the word should *communicate*—share with—him that teacheth (Gal. 6. 6). These few instances are enough to show that in the minds of the Apostles the fellowship of the brethren was the same thing as the “communion of the Body of Christ”. We sometimes tend to think and speak of our “fellowship” as of a mere social contact and the enjoyment of a pleasant time together. The New Testament writers knew of no such thing. To them the fellowship of the brethren was a deep-rooted and vital association together in Christ—common-sharing in all the obligations, all the endurance, and all the joys of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And as though testifying to their realisation of the practical implications of this association with all that Jesus stood for, which they had entered, the Apostles made it clear that we are sharers together in a communion of good works, a mutual care the one for the other, extending out of the realm of spiritual things into that of material things. “*Distributing* to the necessity of saints” says Paul in Rom. 12. 13, where *distributing* is the same word as “*communion*”. “To do good and to *communicate*—to share with others—forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13. 16). An account is given in Rom. 15. 26 of some in Macedonia and Achaia who were pleased “to make a certain *contribution* (communion) for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem”. How tender and eloquent a way of expressing their material help so freely rendered; not a “gift,” not “charity,” but a “common-sharing”. And that these Macedonian and Achaian believers had the right understanding of the matter as well as the right spirit is beyond all doubt. Their “common-sharing” of material things followed logically from their position in the “communion of saints”. Had there been no common-sharing they would have been outside the communion, no matter how extensive their knowledge of the Truth, eloquent their discourses, or profound their studies.

It is out of this practical brotherliness that effective fellowship in service is born. There is a communion in the Gospel which is the inspiring force behind all powerful proclamation of the Kingdom message. In writing to the Philippians Paul speaks of this “*fellowship*—*communion*—of the gospel” (Phil. 1. 5) and the “*fellowship*”—*communion*—of the Spirit” (Phil. 2. 1). To the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8. 4) he refers to the “*fellowship*”—*communion*—of the ministering to the saints” where the allusion is to service in material, and not in spiritual things. In this really marvellous Scripture we have the Macedonians who provided the gift, Paul who

carried the gift, and the Jerusalem Christians who received the gift, all joined together in the communion—sharing together—of the ministrations. Could there be any greater depth of Christian unity than is implied by this relationship where the donor, the messenger and the recipient are all considered as one, sharing together in the privilege of the ministrations? Herein lay the secret of the power of that early Church; they were welded together as one family, one Body, and the welfare of each was the concern of all. Thus their outward witness was powerful and effective, because it had behind it the driving power of a solidly compact body of people who maintained their essential unity in Christ and with each other.

This in turn led to a realistic understanding of their common participation in the sufferings of Christ. There was no beclouding or confusing the plain issue by theological definitions of doubtful value and full of incipient sources of argument and misunderstanding. To these earnest, enthusiastic souls, participation in the sufferings of Christ was a sharing the life that He lived and enduring the same trials and distresses that came upon Him in consequence of that way of life; and this participation was a very real thing to them. The history of early Christian persecution and martyrdom shows that. The ordeal of fire which so many of them went through and endured until death released them from their sufferings is too terrible to recount—historians have already described it in sufficient detail. Let it be realised that nothing but the one-ness of the Church in which all members suffered with one, and so the strength of all was given to one in the hour of need, could have enabled them thus to endure. Many in later times have wondered how those stoical souls withstood the fiendish cruelty of their pagan persecutors. The answer is that their strength was not of themselves, it was of the Body, and from Him Who is the Head of that Body. And without the true unity of the Spirit the strength would not have been theirs. Paul knew this when he desired that he “might know . . . the *fellowship*—*communion*—of his (Christ’s) sufferings” (Phil. 3. 10). He knew that in that common-sharing there resided a source of strength such as his own self-resolution could never give him. To the Corinthians he says “as ye are *partakers*—*common-sharers*—of the sufferings (both of Christ and of His disciples) so shall ye also be of the consolation” (2 Cor. 1. 7). That word “*consolation*” is full of significance here. It means the arrival of help at a time when it is needed (*paraklesis*—a being alongside to help). That is the effect of conscious sharing in the sufferings of one another and of our Master—it gives strength to withstand all that makes our Christian way diffi-

cult and arduous. There is then a "being alongside to help". What wonder, then, that Peter, in the calm maturity of his old age, bids his suffering brethren to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4. 13). And it is Peter who takes us to the highest level of this communion of saints, for in two eloquent Scriptures he relates it to the consummation of our glorious hope. In 2 Pet. 1. 4 he tells us that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the divine nature" and in I Pet. 5. 1 that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the glory that shall be revealed". The communion of saints is not only one of suffering, it is also one of glory. The fellowship that is begun here below in conditions of "weakness and much trembling" is to be continued forever in that eternal kingdom where it will be expanded into the glorious fellowship of the general assembly of the Church

of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven.

Seeing then that we know these things, how ignoble and petty become those specious arguments which limit and restrict the unity which can exist between all who name the Name. We who have a glorious hope for mankind, a clear perception of the Divine Plan, and a noble tradition going back to Apostolic days, should we be one whit behind those who in those same early times took their Lord at His word, and because He bade them "share together", brought that spirit of sharing into every phase and aspect of their fellowship, and in that joyful union found a strength and a power that in its outworking shook the pagan world until that world tottered and fell? If we in our day could by any means achieve a unity such as that, what man could foretell the magnitude of the blessing that would flow out from the "communion of saints"?

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 3—"What a man soweth!"

Habakkuk had now been brought to a realisation of the fundamental causes underlying human distress, man's own sinful, fallen condition, and of the way of escape therefrom, repentance and justification through faith. The details of the process of reconciliation could not yet be revealed; that had to wait for the advent of Jesus, but sufficient was given the prophet to show him that God had devised a way, that the oppression and injustice from which his soul revolted would not endure for ever. Now God had something else to show him, the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. That law is as true in the case of nations as in individuals, a lesson that needs to be brought home to-day and indeed is being brought home to those who have regard to the significance of current events. And in order to impress this lesson with all the sharpness it required, the Holy Spirit cast it in the mould of a "taunt-song", a form of poetic composition in which the Hebrews excelled. One of the earliest "taunt-songs" is that of Miriam the sister of Moses, composed to rejoice over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exod. 15). This one in Habakkuk is directed primarily against the Babylonians, exulting over their coming fall, in veiled language touching upon the great moments in their history when their arrogance and opposition to God's holiness was thrown up in sharp relief,

dwelling upon the "poetic justice" of the retribution that was surely coming upon them at the hands of the Persians. But the taunt-song has a wider scope of application than that, for its principles also fit the greater world system which, built on the same basis as Babylon of old, has by reason of its greater magnitude and extent infinitely excelled the empire of Nebuchadnezzar in the weight of its oppression and the cruelty of its yoke. And that greater system also must fall with the weight of its own corruption, perishing in the fires of retribution which follow inevitably upon the filling up the full measure of its evil course, to be succeeded by the glorious Kingdom of Christ in which the hand of the oppressor will be felt no more. The terms of this taunt-song, framed at first to fit the Babylon of Habakkuk's day, can be suited very easily to this present world-order in which we live.

"*Shall not all these take up a parable against him (Babylon) and a taunting proverb against him, and say 'WOE to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges.'*" (vs. 6.) This is the first of the five "woes" of the song, each describing one outstanding sin of Babylon. Here it is the sin of usury, consistently condemned in the Scriptures. Much of the distress of our modern world is due to the place of usury in its financial system, and the opportunity thus given the unscrupulous to exploit the

needy and defenceless. In the case of Babylon the prevalence and practice of usury is known to go right back to the beginning of the city's existence, prior to the time of Abraham. In Habakkuk's day Babylon was the centre and controlling power of the world's commerce and trade. But, "shall they not rise up suddenly that smite thee", cries Habakkuk, "and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" (vs. 7). The Persians were destined to destroy Babylon's usurious practices, and Babylon, that had preyed for so long on others, would in turn become the prey of others. "Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee" (vs. 8). Babylon steadily declined in commercial importance after its capture by Cyrus, its trade being transferred in later days to the new city of Seleucia on the Tigris, and it never recovered its place among the nations.

The second "woe" may very well contain a veiled allusion to Babylon's first great crime against God, the building of the great Tower from which God might be defied (Gen. 11). "WOE to him that gaineth an evil (dishonest) gain to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil" (calamity—Moffatt). The word for "nest" denotes an eagle's or other bird's nest set high up in the crags of the rocks, and also any kind of sanctuary or abiding place built on high. Speaking to Edom, God says "though thou exalt thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down" (Obad. 4) and to Bozrah "though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence" (Jer. 49. 16). Those godless men of early times set out to build a tower whose top should scale the heavens; they would challenge God in His own realm. Men are doing that to-day, and the fate of their predecessors. In Daniel's time, the tower, still standing, enlarged and beautified by almost every successive king since its erection, was crowned with a golden sanctuary dedicated to the Babylonian god Bel, the god to whom was devoted the treasure looted by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple (see Dan. 1. 2). The literal Bel has been destroyed as was prophesied of him (Jer. 51. 44, Isa. 46. 1); and his modern counterpart is fast meeting the same fate.

"WOE to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity" (vs. 12). That is an apt description of the building of great Babylon, one of the mightiest cities the world has ever seen, largely in the blood and tears of the helpless captives taken from other lands, its gigantic walls, magnificent palaces and stately temples monuments of oppression and iniquity.

WOE to it all, cries Habakkuk, for it will all come to naught. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour for (Heb.) the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for nothing? for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (vs. 13-14). In other words, man has erected this great edifice of evil on the misery and sorrow of his fellows; and when it is completed the Lord will sweep it away as by fire and the labour will have been for nothing, for it is the Divine intention to fill the earth with Divine glory, a glory which will brook neither sorrow nor sighing, neither unhappiness nor pain, but demands that the former things shall pass away (Rev. 21. 4). So "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, without an inhabitant" (Jer. 51. 37). To-day, the Baghdad-Basra railway crosses a wind swept waste of broken brickwork and heaps of rubble, inhabited only by jackals and scorpions, all that is left of proud Babylon. That is a fitting picture of the end of this world. The rule of unrighteousness will perish, and the evil that man has created be swept away, as God arises to "turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph. 3. 8-9). In the midst of the darkness and gloom of these five woes, with their dark recapitulation of human sin, this fourteenth verse shines like a beam of light piercing the storm clouds. It is an assertion of the inflexible Divine purpose that cannot be frustrated. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—a universal, world-wide knowledge of the glorious gospel of Christ, the ultimate fruit of the work of the Millennial Age.

"WOE unto him that giveth his neighbour drink . . . and maketh him drunken also" (vs. 15). It was literal intemperance and drunkenness that marked and contributed to the final capture of Babylon by the forces of Cyrus. The carousal at Belshazzar's feast, when the aged Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall as spelling the doom of Babylon, is well known. When the Persians laid siege to the city they effected an easy entrance because the whole city had been given over to feasting and debauchery. In a metaphorical sense Babylon had made all the nations drunken by seducing them into the worship of her own system of brute force, in much the same way that present-day materialism is seducing the people more and more away from true religious faith and belief. Both then and to-day the prophet's words are true: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. 51. 7). It was during their captivity

in Babylon that the Jews, before that time mainly a pastoral people, learned the arts of trade and acquired the financial acumen for which they have since become famous—or notorious. They too have been intoxicated by the influence of Babylon. Today all the nations partake of the same “mixed wine” and in their intoxicated condition cannot see, even after the earth-shaking war from which they have but recently emerged, that this vast edifice of greed and gain has come at last to the point where the judgment of this woe will be executed, and that without remedy.

“For the violence done to Lebanon shall return upon thee and the slaughter of beasts shall terrify thee.” (vs 17). This is the literal meaning of the verse. The cedars of Lebanon, so ruthlessly cut down by the invaders (see Isa. 14. 4-8) are poetically used as a symbol of God’s people; there will be a dual judgment upon great Babylon, retribution for the violence done to the saints of God (Rev. 16. 6) and a great destruction of earthly evil powers, the “wild beasts” of the earth, which, in their fall, will involve in ruin the entire evil system which is symbolically termed “Babylon the Great” (Rev. 17. 16).

The final woe is a sentence upon idolatry. Babylon, by means of her power and ruthlessness, first intoxicated the nations and then led them into idolatry, the worship of the created thing rather than the Creator. “What profiteth the graven image . . . the molten image . . . dumb idols?” cries Habakkuk. “WOE unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach. Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it” (vs 18-19). There is a modern counterpart to all this. Men to-day have set up science as a god, a god of their own creating, a god to which they devote all their powers and wealth, laying it over with silver and gold, and saying to it, “Arise—it shall teach!” And the prophet scornfully regards their handiwork and says “there is no breath at all in the midst of it”. Though all people in the world bow down before the image they have made and cry to it for deliverance from their distresses, there will be no answer. “They bear him upon the shoulder” says Isaiah “they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth . . . one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble” (Isa. 46. 7). So it was with Babylon, and so will it be at the end of this Age. Men will plan and put into execution all their schemes and devices for bringing peace and prosperity to the earth without God and without righteousness, and all their endeavours will fail, because there is no breath at all in the midst of them. There can be no peace without righteousness, no righteousness without

morality, no morality without Divine law—despite all that the “moderns” say to the contrary—and no Divine law without the Holy Spirit, the “breath” which is of God to inspire and vivify. It is when all these plans have utterly failed to bring about any deliverance in the earth that God’s time will come, and He will intervene in His own way to establish lasting peace amongst men.

And so Habakkuk, comforted and reassured by this revelation of Divine judgment impending over the oppressors of his people, looked up into the heavens and saw the beginnings of a new and marvellous revelation. The darkness was rapidly giving place to an effulgent golden glory. Like Elihu in the days of Job, suddenly perceiving in the heavens a light that he had never seen before (Job 37. 21-22), and Isaiah, waiting to be used of God, beholding the wondrous vision of the throne (Isa. 6. 1), so now Habakkuk, realising at last that evil shall not always flourish but that the time of the dispensation of evil is known to, and fixed by, the Almighty, looked up into the skies and saw the temple of God open in heaven, and the Lord seated upon His throne with His attendant angels around Him; and in the glory of that vision cried out in exultation “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him”.

And in his fervour of soul he bowed himself before that great sight and waited in silent reverence for the vision of the End Time that God, by His Spirit, was about to show him.

* * * *

Sin—justification—retribution. These three great truths had to be seen in their true relationship to each other before the necessity and nature of the Time of Trouble could be rightly understood. Now comes the great prophecy which shows God arising to perform His “strange work”.

We say, in the first moments of consecration, that we are eager, not only to be reckoned dead in the sight of God, so far as our self-life is concerned, but to be dead. And if we really mean what we say, God undertakes the work, first of all revealing the insidious presence of the self-life where we had least expected it, and then of nailing it in bitter suffering to the cross of a painful death. O ye who know something of the analysis of your inner life, do not your hearts bear witness that, as the light of heaven breaks with glowing glory on your souls, it reveals unexpected glimpses into the insidious workings of self? So much so that you are driven to claim, with no bated breath, first Divine forgiveness for harbouring such a traitor, and then the interposition of Divine grace to mete out that death which is the only condition of growth and blessedness.

THE SUPREME GRACE

Part 4—"Chalice-vessels of Truth"

A Series of Studies in
I Cor. 13. 13.

In a previous section of this study the suggestion was made that the Apostles and the early Church had had to expand the meaning of these two words, repeatedly, so that they could continue to express ever more adequately their growing conceptions of the heavenly verities, as these great truths came through, "God-breathed", into the range of their consciousness. It is now proposed to take up that suggestion again, to present the evidences showing that expansion, and to indicate how these once common words came at last to be the chalice-vessels, in which the Church's choicest doctrinal wine has been brought to our lips. Then, after calling attention to the expansion of thought behind the words, it will be our pleasure to show how these two forms of Love have a special relationship to each other in the hearts and experiences of the Man of God possessing them.

At the beginning of New Testament history these two words were in common use, but with very restricted meanings. Taking them as they received them, linked as they were with certain modes of Greek and Jewish life, both our Lord and the Apostles first used them conformably to the common use, but soon began to infuse into them shades of meaning hitherto unknown—a process, which, once under way, went on unceasingly, until at last, even these exalted words were found to be inadequate to express the resultant conceptions of the Love of God—and even the Apostle of Love himself was compelled to adopt a circum-locution to state what he had to say. "Behold what manner of Love the Father has bestowed upon us"! Precise explanation had, at last, become impossible, and John, the last white-haired survivor of the little band, *could only speak of the "Agape" as he spake of God.*

"*Phileo*" came into the early Church's usage permeated with the spirit of the clan-life of ancient Greece. So many of these small communities, linked as they were by common descent—often by actual blood relationship—joined themselves together for each other's good, in matters of defence and husbandry. This feeling of communal brotherhood gave to each member of the community the sense of belonging to one greater family. It was to them as though the kinship of the domestic family had been extended outward far enough to embrace the communal family. This kinship attitude, both

to the domestic and communal family, was the thing they called the "*Phileo*".

Of course, the Greeks were not unique in this clan-membership, for colonies and communities of this sort were scattered everywhere throughout the habitable section of the globe, all of them alike actuated by the same kind of friendship for those within the pale, and a like hostile attitude to those without. The special advantage to us, in separating out the Greek clan-states arises from the fact that they had the precise word for this kinship, that is now engaging us—the word which we are seeking to define. Though "*Phileo*" was the term, descriptive in Grecian thought, of the kinship bond that knit together their own communal or city-state, it would also serve quite well to define the bond of the Roman "*civitas*", the Jewish Diaspora, or the roving barbarians "*gemote*", for each alike, in its own little field, had the same kindred love for those within, and the same antipathy towards those without.

This attitude of exclusiveness, so acceptable and praiseworthy to those within, tends to stamp the word "*Phileo*"—or its equivalent in other tongues—with that spirit of aloofness and narrowness, which as seen from without, can only be defined as communal selfishness. This self-centredness, this willingness to live though all else should die, was the precise keynote of the pre-Christian "*Phileo*". The Grecian classics spake of "*Philanthropy*"—the love of man—but, in spite of all her greatest masters said, it was not a love embracing every man, in every place, of which they spake, but only love for every man within the pale; the clan would only love its own!

This exclusiveness, then, was the sense which pervaded that word (which to the Greeks was one of their noblest words) when it was adopted for sacred use by Jesus and the infant Church. Jesus early showed how much of this self-seeking, self-gratifying spirit it contained when He said, arraigning the Pharisees, "they *love* to pray standing in the synagogue or in the corners of the streets" (Matt. 6. 5.) This was no attitude of love for other men, but of *a love that turned inwards upon themselves.* Again He said they loved "the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matt. 23. 6.) thus revealing gross disrespect towards another of more honourable estate than they, and of selfish in-

difference to other interest than their own. Again the Master placed His finger on the spot when reminding His followers that, since they had linked their lives with His, the world would treat them as it treated Him. Said He "If ye were of the world, the world would love his (its) own." (John 15. 19.) Here is the exact definition of *Phileo*—and from the Master's lips—which we have already found "... love ... but only of its own".

On another searching day, when about to send them into the harvest field, Jesus advised them that their direst foes would appear among their own kith and kin, who would seek, in many ways and arguments to dissuade them from the work. But "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me ..." (Matt. 10. 37.)—whoso would permit his love to turn inwards and homewards more strongly than it turned outwards and "fieldwards" with Him was not worthy of His trust or Name. Thus far the word in its native sphere!

How marvellously the grace of God transformed the word in later days! And how amazing the change of attitude for which that changed word stood! From every tongue and nation men had been drawn together into a fellowship, which had cut through all communal barriers—Jew, Greek, Roman, barbarian, patrician, slave—all brought near into one mutual brotherhood, each and all depending on the slain Lamb of God, for his way of approach to the holiest Name. And even so, the tie that bound them in this new community was still the "*Phileo*". Let us note the words of Paul to men who hitherto had been members of that exclusive Greek nationality "... as touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4: 9.) Here, by the grace of God, a former Jew can over-step the boundaries of his own nationality to greet and encourage men who hitherto were Gentile dogs, "without God in the world". And they, in turn, Gentiles though they were by blood, could extend a brother's hand in fellowship to him.

Again, to co-believers in proud Imperial Rome, Paul could also say "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love". (Rom. 12. 10.) Even into the chambers of that exclusive metropolis the spirit of another (and Diviner) *Phileo* had won its way and not all the might and majesty of Cæsar's throne could uproot this nobler thing. Within its walls sojourning Jews and men "free-born" joined hands in Jesus' Name, in holy brotherhood.

Again, to Hebrews of some city now unknown, the same appealing exhortation goes forth, "Let

brotherly love continue". (Heb. 13. 1.) "Let brotherly love be firmly established among you" is the reading of a new translation just to hand. And why? Because they had known the power of that mutual love so markedly in former days! "Call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions ... and became companions of them that were so used, for ye ... took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. ..." (Heb. 10. 32-34.) Here indeed had been the "outward" turning of their hearts to others of like precious faith—let it now not cease so to do! How transcendently different was this attitude of "sharing together in suffering" than that more ancient Pharisaic "turning inwards upon one's self".

And Peter also has a word to say, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1 Pet. 1. 22.) Here is a wonderful development indeed, for an unfeigned love of brethren had already been attained, and the exhortation now is that this sincere love should become the servant of a wider Love—the *Agape*.

Thus, to the Greeks, the Romans and the Hebrews of that day—the main races of those times—the Word of Grace had been sent forth, and had wooed and won from their ancient faiths these varied companies of men and brought them, against all the deadweight of prejudice, into another fellowship! Men of alien birth were now closely knit together with a nobler "*Phileo*"—still the old, old word, but quite a new brotherhood! still the olden vessel, but containing a new wine! It still stands as the symbol of family affection, but it is a different family—a community whose life and love were on a higher plane.

As has already been said, "*Agape*", in its origin, was mainly a Jewish domestic word, first introduced by the translators of the Septuagint to convey the meaning of the Hebrew word "*Ahabah*" as found so frequently in the Song of Songs. "His banner over me was love." (S.S. 2. 4.) It thus passed into Jewish usage though not on an extensive scale. It has been said that neither Philo nor Josephus ever made use of it, though they lived and wrote contemporaneously with the Apostle's latter days.

When Jesus presented Himself to His people, and took the word upon His lips its associations were not, by any means, of an elevating nature. Here are a few examples of His use of it. "Ye have heard that it hath been said 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.'" (Matt. 5. 46.) Here *Agape* has much the same exclusiveness in

Hebrew thought that *Phileo* had in Greek. "Men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil". (John 3. 19.) Here *Agape* is the link between evil men and their evil deeds. "Woe unto you, Pharisees, for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues". Here it is associated with pride, self-seeking and avarice, and is almost a parallel to "*Phileo*" in Matt. 23.6.

A rather better use is made of it in Luke 7. 5, where certain elders of the Jews, in an appeal to Jesus for His help, made an unusual statement of a Roman centurion—"he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue". But this centurion was an exceptional man—a man actuated by a greater faith than any son of Israel amongst whom he lived. (Luke 7. 9.) Because of a greater respect than they possessed for the God of Israel, this feature of a nobler "*Agape*" had come to be.

It is when we come to the Apostolic conception of this deepening, widening word that we can see how greatly the life of Jesus influenced the change. That sacrificial life was the pattern for their own, and led them ever deeper into the mysteries of sacrifice. With that example before him and that same spirit in his heart Paul said to the ungrateful Corinthians "I will gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved". (2 Cor. 12. 15.) Here "spending" and "being spent" is the self-less expression of the "*Agape*". Not what he could receive from them, but rather what he could do for them was the guiding motive of his heart! To give one's self by "spending and being spent" in sacrifice and service had now become the essence, if not also the substance of "*Agape*". How well this agrees with Gal. 2. 20, "... the Son of God ... loved me and gave Himself for me". And also with Eph. 5. 25, "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it".

And how fully this accords with John 3. 16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ...". And further still, it was God who "Commendeth His Love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us". (Rom. 5. 8.) Here we find the Love of God and Jesus turning outward toward another's need in overflowing measure—and this henceforth became the standard for defining the word *Agape*! For Paul, as well as for his Lord, it meant "to spend and be spent".

Another aspect of the word is the universal width it has assumed. Not only has it depth in keeping with the character of God, it now has width as wide as the needs of man. It was "the world" that God so greatly loved. It was the "all" of Adam's fallen sons for whom Jesus gave Himself

in ransom sacrifice. And further, when the Love that carried Jesus to His death, lay its magnetic power upon our hearts, it also "constrains" us to see things in the same universal way. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5. 14). When the Love of God moved man-wards to meet his deepest need, it did so on so vast a scale that not one single soul was left outside its field. That has ever been the character of that compassionate gesture of God which Apostolic men designate the "*Agape*". From being a word therefore that could at first be harnessed up to evil things as well as good it became in time so greatly amplified that its depths profound were accounted equal to the unplumbed deeps of the Grace of God. And in becoming deep it also grew in breadth, till it stood as emblematic of an Universal Plan. So far the word—what of the thing behind the word?

The Love that prompted God to undertake the redemption of the world is the very self-same thing which He sheds abroad in our hearts to-day—part and parcel of that mighty moving force that will win a world from sin into the ways of righteousness and truth. How did the first Apostolic men react to its energizing influence? Let us remember that for the most part they were humble fishermen, altogether inexpert in the craft of moving men by polished phrase, but even so their sense of the sublime was so intensified that they had to call upon the superlative to express what they wished to say. Look how it affected the pen of Paul. "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us . . . quickened us . . . and raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the Ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2. 4-7). And again, "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father . . . that he would grant you . . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3. 14-19).

We cannot but stand amazed at the change wrought upon these simple men as they sought to grasp and set forth the magnitude of the "*Agape*"! "Behold what manner of *Agape* the Father has bestowed upon us" says John in ecstasy, "What manner of man is this" that can speak to wind and waves, said the awe-stricken witnesses, as wind and wave obeyed His word! What manner of man is this! . . . What manner of Love is this! . . . Here

the Apostle of love himself lacks power to define or explain the greatness of this heavenly thing that had come through from the beyond into his finite consciousness. Can we wonder then, that at last, completely overpowered by his conception of this

devotion-inspiring, wonder-working thing, he elevates it to the high pinnacle of the Divine and says "God is *Agape*"—*Agape* is of God, yes indeed; but God Himself is *Agape* from everlasting to everlasting!

What an amazing history this word has had!

BIBLE STUDY FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

A SUGGESTION

The following note has been sent us by a brother in America, and is reproduced here because of its sound advice and spirit of Christian reasonableness and tolerance. The meetings referred to have now been held regularly for over a year, which seems to indicate that the procedure is handled on workable lines. Similar problems to those facing these brethren have come before many in this country; the method of approach outlined in this article is one that seems likely to yield equally beneficial results here; at any rate it is worth considering.

It is sometimes claimed that Bible Students cannot meet and discuss and study subjects on which there are different viewpoints without undue controversy. There is therefore a tendency to avoid those subjects which are considered "controversial" and study only those on which there is unanimity of opinion. During the past year a group of Bible Students from southern Wisconsin has met monthly and studied topics on which there is much difference of opinion. And they have done so without indulging in argumentation, controversy, or animosity of spirit. The experience of this group proves that brethren with positive, opposing convictions can meet, study, and discuss those so-called "controversial" subjects and profit thereby. These brethren have studied such topics as: The Sin Offering; Presence of Christ; Woman's Place in the Church; Causes of Divisions; Justification, and Covenants, and are still meeting regularly and harmoniously. Furthermore none of them have "gone out of the Truth".

Two things, at least, are essential for the successful studying of such subjects. One is that the brethren must manifest the Lord's Spirit in large measure. The one with desire to force acceptance of his ideas must restrain that desire. The one who would monopolize the time of a meeting with his thoughts, must consider that others also have a right to be heard. The one who desires to argue his point back and forth with another until he has convinced or silenced the other must bear in mind that such style of debating is neither essential nor beneficial. One must go, not only with the thought of presenting ideas on subjects under consideration, but also with the purpose of listening to others.

There must also be an orderly method of conducting the meeting. The chairman must be impartial, and the business of two brothers arguing back and forth across the table with each other must be prohibited. There must be adherence to the topic, and opportunity for all to participate.

Here is the *modus operandi* followed by the group mentioned above. A topic for consideration is chosen by the group at one of their meetings. Within a week following the members send questions on the topic to the one acting as secretary of the group. The secretary eliminates the duplicates, and those not pertaining to the topic, and mails the completed list promptly to the members, who then use these questions as a guide in their study prior to the meeting.

At the meeting the chairman reads the first question, and then calls upon each member of the group for comment thereon. Then it is thrown open for general discussion. Members may ask further questions of others for enlightenment on points brought forth, but promiscuous argument back and forth is "taboo". The idea is that each is given full opportunity to present his views, but there is to be no forcing acceptance of views by means of endless argument. The group referred to meets once a month, and therefore each session runs from two or three hours in length. Generally the meetings are so live and interesting that the time slips by very rapidly. Unanimity of decision is not often reached, but each accepts that which he believes to be Scriptural, and no one is hurt if the thoughts he presents are rejected by others.

These meetings have demonstrated their value in many ways. They encourage *REAL BIBLE STUDY*. Some who knew nothing about a concordance are learning how to handle it and profit thereby. They develop tolerance for the views of others. They give splendid opportunity to manifest the Spirit of Christ towards the brethren, whose ideas we may consider wrong, but who we can see are just as honest, earnest and sincere as we are. They help eliminate some of the self-complacency, with which some of us are afflicted, and present us with much needed lessons in teachableness and meekness. Furthermore, such meetings are the best kind

of an antidote to a false philosophy which is now being circulated among Bible Students. There are those who decry actual Bible study by Bible Students. They say that class study should be confined solely to the Scripture Studies, and that direct Bible Study brings confusion and division. This is the same old theory with which Papacy throttled hearing of the Word in years gone by, and its effect is likewise deadening to-day. The Scripture Studies are of greatest value in learning the plan of God, but they are not the Scriptures, nor a substitute for the Scriptures. Using the Scripture Studies exclusively denies brethren much of the truth which the Lord

has placed for them in His Word.

If brethren who are honest of heart and tolerant of spirit among our many divisions would get together from time to time and study those so-called "controversial" topics they could not help but be benefited by it. It would add greatly in breaking down the divisional barriers. It would help eliminate intolerance and bigotry, and bring a stronger realisation of the fact that the Lord's people are under one Head and are all brethren. Why not advocate procedure of this sort as a step towards eliminating the spirit of division, and establishment of the spirit of unity among brethren now separated?

BOOK REVIEWS

Palestine—the land of my adoption. (J. W. Clapham) Pickering and Inglis. 12/6.

So many books descriptive of Palestine have been written by authors on the strength of a few months' tour through the country that one, such as this, from the pen of a life-long resident is worthy of more than the usual attention. It is written in an easy and interesting style and the author's expectation of the coming Millennial Kingdom and the time of trouble that must precede it enables him to see things in Palestine that will specially appeal to many of our readers. His treatment of fulfilled prophecy is reverent and sane—it is refreshing to find a writer who does not apply Deut. 33. 24 to the Irak Petroleum Company's oil pipe line from Mosul to Haifa; Mr. Clapham points out that the promise of abundance of oil to Asher is met in the rich olive groves of his land. The book has 196 pages, subject index, index of Scripture citations—a feature that will appeal to Bible Students—four coloured plates, twenty handsome monochrome plates of scenes in the Holy Land, coloured map of modern Palestine, and another of Jerusalem, and is cloth bound and gold blocked, with serviceable dust cover. The map of Jerusalem might have been of greater interest had it been an up-to-date street plan; we are less familiar with the city's present layout than that of Biblical times. Altogether it is a useful book for all readers and certainly a suitable gift book. We will supply if desired from the Welling bookroom at 13/3 post free.

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Why be an Ape? (Newman Watts) Uplift Press, 124 pp., stiff cover.

This is a new edition of a most useful book on the Evolution question, written in plain and simple language and an eminently readable style. It gathers together a host of quotations from the writings and sayings of scientists and gives the Scriptural viewpoint very clearly and succinctly. There are no long

words and no "scientific jargon". Any of our readers would find the book interesting and capable of giving a clear impression of the difference between Scriptural teaching and the theories of evolutionists. From stock at Welling bookroom at 2/9 post free.

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

- April 1.—Warwick.
2.—Atherstone.
4-7.—Warrington (Easter Convention).
9-10.—Lymm.
11.—Bolton.
12-14.—Manchester.
15-17.—Manchester district.
19-20.—Dewsbury.
22.—Sheffield.
23.—Darlington.
24.—Middlesbrough.
26-27.—Gateshead.
28-29.—Gateshead district.
30.—Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- May 1-2.—Dundee.
3-4.—Glasgow.
5-6.—Glasgow district.
7-12.—Belfast & Londonderry, N. Ireland.
13-15.—Carrickfergus, N. Ireland.
16.—Blackpool.
17-19.—Bury.
24-26.—Birmingham (Whitsun Convention).
29.—Bristol.
30-31.—Cardiff.
- June 1-3.—S. Wales district.
4.—Pontypool.
5.—Pengam.
6-8.—Yeovil.
13-23.—Holland (The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leiden, etc.).
28-29.—Rugby (Home Gathering).
30.—Blaby.

Dates after June 30th will be published in next issue. Friends who have not yet requested visits will be included if application is made to Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, but please write early if possible. Details of any of the above visits can be obtained from Bro. Walton.

The Fading Light of Laodicea

AN EASTER MEDITATION

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The reading finished and the little company sat silent, almost as if expecting the Master Himself to come into their assembly. Thus had they sat, for more years now than some of them cared to remember, at each Memorial celebration, recollection going back over the years past, hopes rising as they thought of the future. That passage in the Book of Revelation had an especial significance for them and they read it every year at their Memorial service; always did it grip them with its solemn expectation of the Coming One. They were but a small company, meeting in a small house on the outskirts of the city, but they knew that when their Lord did come, He would come to them. The wealthy and fashionable congregation whose magnificent building was one of the sights of Laodicea would have none of Him; they had ignored John's message and cast out the faithful few who reproved their increasing worldliness and carelessness in spiritual things, and so there were now two companies in Laodicea that claimed the name of Christ, but in only one of them that His voice was heard.

It had not always been thus. Although none of them were old enough to remember it, they all knew of the time when the Church at Laodicea had its humble beginning in the house of Nymphas. (Col. 4. 15) He had been at Ephesus, eighty miles away, on business, and whilst there had heard the preaching of Paul the Apostle. *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified! Repentance, remission of sins, justification by faith, consecration to God and holiness of life! Times of Restitution, life for all by a resurrection from the dead!* Nymphas had long sought the meaning of the sin and distress in the world; he was a business man and Laodicea was a business man's city; but he had sometimes gone the six miles across to Hierapolis (Col. 4. 13) the holy city of the Greek Nature gods and goddesses, to seek inspiration and enlightenment, and as often returned home dissatisfied. But here was a message which satisfied his longings as nothing else had ever done. It answered all his questions and fired his imagination; now he was agog to finish his business and get back home to Laodicea to tell his friends of the glorious news he had heard.

So it came about that he found himself on the great Roman road that, running inland from Ephesus

across Asia, passed through Laodicea and Colosse on its way. He had companions, too, for at the Ephesus meetings he had met Philemon of Colosse and his son Archippus, and as they travelled back together the long road seemed but an hour's journey, so much there was to discuss, so much of recalling the words of the great Apostle and his no less fervent fellow labourers at Ephesus. Epaphras, already a tower of strength to the Ephesian church, had exhorted them to return to Ephesus and hear more of the words of life, and had promised to come to Laodicea and Colosse to help them with their converts and minister to them the things of Christ. Arrived at Laodicea, Philemon stayed one night at the house of Nymphas and then went the remaining twenty miles to his own town of Colosse, where his wife Apphia heard the word from his lips, and believed too.

Thus grew up, first in Laodicea, and then in Colosse and Hierapolis, (Col. 4. 13) three little companies of believers who were themselves never to see the great Apostle in the flesh, but nevertheless were to make rapid progress in the knowledge of the Truth as they studied the Hebrew Scriptures and read together the fragments of the sayings of Jesus that began to come their way. Paul's own journeyings took him to many places but never to these three towns. Timothy came sometimes; but Epaphras was their most frequent visitor and he was to them an ever welcome and a faithful minister in Christ. (Col. 1. 7.)

There had been one memorable event in those early days. Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, had returned to Colosse bearing with him two—perhaps three—precious letters, letters written by the great Apostle himself. The one was a personal letter to Philemon, written jointly from Paul and Timothy. *"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and the church in thy house"* it began (Philem. 1. 2), and in it Paul the aged besought his brother Philemon for the errand slave who had now himself become a brother in Christ, in Whom there is neither slave nor free, but all are brethren. And the other letter was particularly to the church, a letter full of fatherly counsel and doctrinal instruction; for Paul had heard that already in these Greek cities there were some coming among the believers seeking to take away the liberty

that was theirs in Christ, and graft upon their simple Christian faith, on the one hand Jewish ordinances born of the Law, and on the other hand Greek mysticism and Eastern philosophies which would reduce the living Christ Who had become the inner power of their lives to a meaningless theological figure, a shadowy emanation that could neither sustain nor save. The trading markets of Laodicea brought many such Eastern doctrines to the ears of the Christians there, and the false worship of Hierapolis added its quota of Greek mythology, and Colosse received the impact of both. So the Epistle to the Colossians, carried to his master by Onesimus, was read, as was Paul's wish, both at Colosse and at Laodicea, and treasured up in the archives of the Church.

Perhaps there was a third, an Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans. It seems to be indicated in Col. 4. 16 but it is not in the New Testament and it has never been found. (There is a so-called "Epistle to the Laodiceans" but it is known to be a forgery of much later times.) So that, if Paul really did write such an epistle, it was not preserved by the Holy Spirit as necessary to the later edification of the Christian Church. The loving brotherliness that so clearly existed between the ecclesias at Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis makes it evident that the one epistle to the Colossians was shared by them all, and all were edified.

Then came the news of Paul's death. Far away in Rome, he had suffered under the sword of the executioner, and Philemon and Nymphas were conscious of a new responsibility in their respective pastoral charges. Persecution was breaking out; Ephesus, more in the public eye than the inland cities, bore the brunt of it, and Laodicea and Colosse were left to a greater extent than formerly to their own devices.

And now the first generation of Christian Laodiceans and Colossians was passing away. Epaphras had gone, Nymphas had gone, Philemon had gone, and Archippus, after perhaps a season of service at Ephesus, had been called, if tradition be correct, to become the "presbyter" or "bishop"—the elder, as we would say to-day—of the now flourishing church at Laodicea. It would seem that the sister assemblies at Colosse and Hierapolis were declining, or at most remaining stationary. Laodicea flourished. That was not surprising. Laodicea was an important city, the capital of the province of Phrygia, and a trading centre. It occupied a prominent place on the great road, situated in the midst of beautiful country and splendid scenery, and boasted the finest architecture in all Asia; hence it attracted many visitors. Its citizens were prosperous, well-read and well-educated. Insensibly at first perhaps,

but none the less surely, the church at Laodicea, bereft of the personal presence and direct influence of its first fathers in God, subject to the persuasive arguments of newcomers who knew nothing of that early missionary zeal and simple faith which had characterised its first members, began to conform itself more and more to the fashions and ways of the city, and as it did so the Spirit began to depart. They had not repudiated the Truth; they held still to the main doctrines of the Faith, perhaps more closely than had the brethren of Colosse; but there was a lukewarmness about their service, a formality about their worship, a self-satisfaction with their Church organisation and a smugness in their study and ministry, that caused perplexity and sadness of heart to the few of their number who loved their Lord sincerely and waited still for His appearing. Those faithful ones wanted to preach the Kingdom; they believed that to be the only hope of the world; but now so many of their fellowship, professing the same Lord and the same faith, seemed to be indifferent or sceptical regarding that appearing and that Kingdom. They were so much more interested in business and the social life of the city.

Until, one day, when the Church was assembled in its magnificent building for formal worship, there came a grave, dignified presbyter, his clothes stained with travel-dust, and the congregation sat still as he mounted the rostrum, for ambassadors from the important sister-church at Ephesus were treated with ceremony and honour. His eyes swept the audience, resting sternly upon the self-satisfied, well-dressed men and women seated in the front rows, softening as he surveyed the eager faces of the company at the back. He spoke slowly and sadly. "My brethren, I come with news. Our beloved brother John, the last of the Twelve who followed our Lord in the days of His flesh, has finished his course. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give him in the day of His appearing." He paused. "He sends you a farewell message, given him in vision in the Isle of Patmos, a message from the all-seeing One, the Master Himself. Give heed, my brethren, for the message is for you." He drew a roll of parchment from the recesses of his robe and began to read in a firm voice that resounded through the building.

"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need

of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent—.” . . .

They never went back to the great building. The scene at that night's meeting was too vivid, too painful, for any of them ever to wish so to do. They never went back, and when next the emissaries from Ephesus came to Laodicea, they came to a little house on the outskirts, where a few true-hearted believers in the risen Lord met to encourage one another in the faith and to wait for His appearing.

* * * *

The simple ceremony was over. The aged elder looked at his brethren affectionately. There were not many left who had been present, with him, at that service when the message to Laodicea had been read in the great Church. It was a long time ago—he was beginning to realise that now—and most of these were of the third generation and knew nothing at first hand of the events that forced him and his out of the church which had left its first love. He looked at them again, and thought to himself “The time is prolonged—surely He must come soon”. In quiet assurance of faith he raised his hand in benediction. “Little children” he said “ye are members one of another, brethren beloved in the Lord. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him . . . The bread that we have broken, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? The cup we have shared, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and we are all partakers thereof . . . Let us therefore who are thus minded esteem one another alike, building up one another on our most holy faith, waiting together for the glorious appearing of our Lord from heaven, for—He will surely come!”

He made a gesture of dismissal, and they went out, quietly, as always after the Memorial Service. Through the darkened streets of the city they made their way, one and another turning off here and there as the parting of each several way was reached. The last half-dozen of the little company came thus to a building ablaze with light and gay with music. People were coming down the steps; rich, well-dressed men and bejewelled, lavishly attired women to where slaves awaited them carrying litters in which to bear them home, and torchbearers holding flaming torches to guide them on their way. Behind the tall Grecian columns which graced the vestibule

the pilgrims caught sight of a brilliantly lighted interior, costly furnishings, and amid an admiring crowd, a proud dignitary, clad in purple vestments. And the little party moved on, away from the wealth and the show, out of the circle of light, into the darkness, into the unknown—to God.

“COME YE APART”

(Mark 6. 31)

Sometimes amid Life's busy press and throng
We hear the Master say—“Come ye apart
And rest awhile”—and after toiling long,
It sounds like music to our fainting heart.
For coming thus apart, full well we know—
By contact with the noise of rushing feet—
The “coming and the going” to and fro
There was “no leisure for so much as eat”.
And while He sees our heart's desire to be
For service, ere the daylight fades away,
And “night wherein no man can work” we see
Is fast approaching, and will end the day—
He also knows our need of food and strength,
To toil, or in the crowd to take our stand,
And bids us leave our work and come at length
To take refreshment from His loving hand.

They tell us there are crystals bright and rare
Which cannot form till they are cool and still—
And certain flowers “won't bloom in sunlight glare”
Yet shed forth fragrance sweet by vale and hill—
So gems of character may thus be brought
From out the cool and silent resting place
With Jesus, Who such wondrous lessons taught,
And spake such words of wisdom and of grace.

They say we grow like those with whom we live—
Association likeness doth beget;
Also in photographic art we give
Some time to rules which we must not forget.
If we a perfect likeness would obtain
The “sitting still” is an important part—
Thus “sitting still” with Jesus we may gain
His likeness mirrored on our ravished heart.

O, Master, dwell with me in every place,
Whether at home I rest, or toiling go;
That I may gaze upon Thy lovely face,
And thus into Thy perfect image grow!

Brother J. T. Read will speak in the Town Hall, Dewsbury, on Sunday, April 20th, at 3.0 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. The public will be invited to the afternoon meeting. Tea will be provided for visiting brethren, and the Dewsbury friends extend a hearty welcome to all who can join with them on that occasion.

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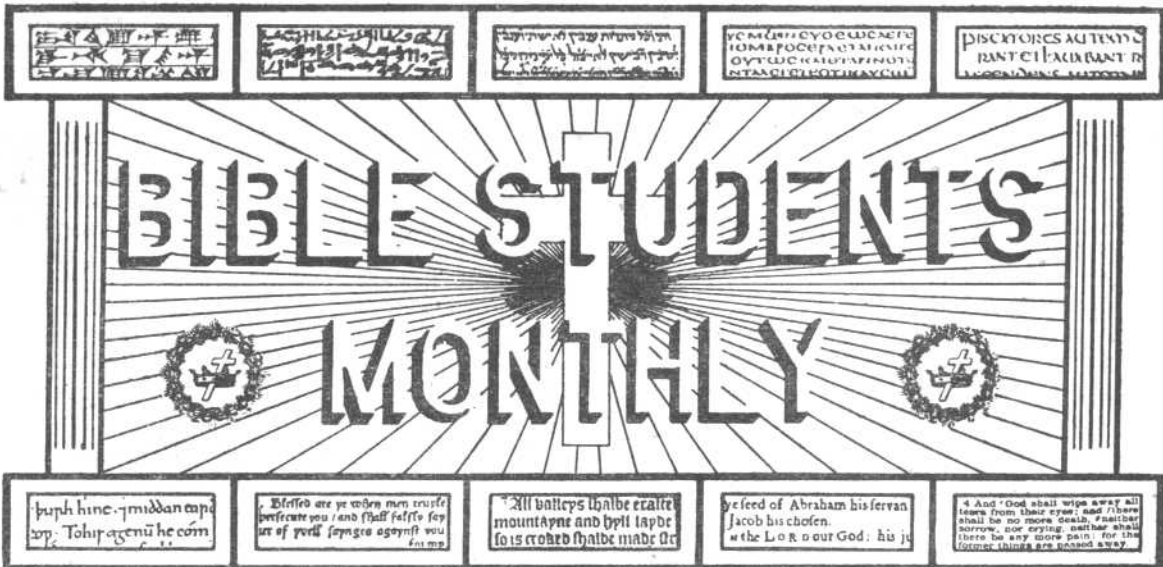
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MAY, 1947

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Sister J. Hunnable, of Braintree, and Sister L. Fisher, of Norwich, have both passed from the scenes of earth, and those who have known and loved them will see them no more until in the fulness of time our Lord begins to "gather together all things in one".

* * * *

Brother Ford would take this opportunity of acknowledging, with deep appreciation, the receipt of anonymous donations to the Benevolent Fund, of 10s., £1 and £2 respectively.

* * * *

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

The thoughtful generosity of a number of brethren is now enabling free tracts to be supplied to some who would like to distribute but are unable to meet the expense involved. To all such the invitation is extended: please ask for as many as you can profitably use during a period of, say, a month or so. When your supply is exhausted you are welcome to ask for more, and so far as the Master indicates this service to be of His leading by making the necessary provision, supplies will be gladly sent. The free literature at present being supplied is "Millennial Message" No. 1.

A brother and sister have also made available a quantity of No. 201 "The Bible—the Book for To-day" and these too will be supplied in small quantities for the next three weeks upon request. *"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest; and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal."*

* * * *

In connection with the United Convention to be held in London, August 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 1947, provision is being made for a Baptismal service to be held at the Seventh Day Adventist Hall, Boundary Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17, on Sunday afternoon, August 3rd.

It will be appreciated if those who desire to take advantage of this opportunity to symbolise their consecration to the Lord by water immersion will notify the Convention Secretary as soon as possible. Please write Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * * *

A few complete sets, unbound, of the "Bible Students Monthly" for 1946 are available at 5s. per set post free. Friends who have become readers only recently and would like to go back over past issues may care to avail themselves of this opportunity.

There is now in stock at Welling two very acceptable children's books. "The Ten Camels", published by our Australian brethren, is Rota-printed (the type being that of a typewriter—clear and easy to read), well bound in stout red cloth gold lettered cover. It contains ten stories illustrating the ten leading truths of the Bible, and is suitable for small children. Written in the first place by a Canadian sister for her own small child, these stories have found appreciative readers in the past and this new edition, which is better produced than previous copies, can be recommended. There are 138 pages, and the price is 3s. 9d. post free.

The other book is already well known. "The Bible Story Book" published by the Warner Press of U.S.A. is claimed to be America's best book of Bible stories. It certainly goes far to justify the claim. There are 608 pages, comprising 234 stories, 16 coloured plates, 160 illustrations, two maps, bound in good cloth cover, gold blocked, and attractive coloured dust wrapper depicting children of all nations, the whole being packed in cardboard box. The book is 9½in. x 7in. x 2in., and weighs 4lb. The stories are suitable for children up to say the age of 14. The price is 15s. 9d. post free.

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

- Apr. 19-20.—Dewsbury.
 21-22.—Sheffield.
 23.—Darlington.
 24.—Middlesbrough.
 25.—Darlington.
 26-29.—Gateshead.
 30.—Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- May 1-2.—Dundee.
 3-4.—Glasgow.
 5.—Edinburgh.
 6.—Glasgow.
 8.—Fermanagh, N. Ireland.
 10-12.—Belfast (Convention).
 13-15.—Northern Ireland.
 17-19.—Bury.
 24-26.—Birmingham (Convention).
 29.—Bristol.
- June 1-2.—Cardiff.
 3.—Llanharen.
 4.—Pontypool.
 5.—Pengam.
 6-9.—Yeovil.
 11.—Central London.
 12.—Anerley.
 14-16.—Welling.
 17-19.—Bognor and Arundel.
 20.—Castleigh.
 21-22.—Portsmouth.
 23-24.—Oxford.
 25-29.—Rugby.

The Gates of Righteousness

THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP AS REVEALED IN THE PSALMS

A. O. Hudson

"Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord—this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter—I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." (Psa. 118. 19-21.)

Upon many an occasion whilst the Temple at Jerusalem was standing those words were sung by the priests and worshippers at the great festivals. Israelitish worship was essentially a worship of praise, of song and of music, and this is but one of the many examples of the songs they sang, and which have been preserved for us in the Book of Psalms. We do well to consider something of this aspect of the Psalms, for an understanding of Israelitish methods and outlook respecting Divine worship cannot fail to be of assistance to us in our own attempt to relate the outward forms and ceremonies of worship to the inwardly felt reverence and adoration of our hearts. We know that God seeketh the worship only of those that will worship Him in spirit and in truth, but it is also true that our very sincerity and fervour should lead us to worship God in a dignified manner and so far as possible in appropriate surroundings. Some consideration of the ways in which Israel of old waited on God with praise and prayer can help us to trace more clearly the effect of outward forms in promoting the spirit of true worship.

Since the Book of Psalms is really the record of Israel's public worship and contains the songs, chants and prayers which were used in the Temple ceremonies this short study will not go outside the Psalms for its material. Within that Book there is contained a wealth of inspiration for sincerity and purity in worship.

One of the most characteristic praise-prayers is found in Psalm 95. *"O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods", and so on.* Notice that the worshippers have commenced their service on a note of praise; more than that, on a note of joyful praise. This is characteristic of Israel's worship; their first impulse upon coming together was toward a lifting up of voices jointly in joy and gladness, and in gratitude of heart for all God's mercies, a gratitude that was not only felt inwardly but ex-

pressed outwardly. *"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psa. 118. 24). The very first element of their worship was a full, frank acknowledgment of Divine supremacy over all things and of their gratitude because of that supremacy. The valleys and hills, the seas and land, were made by Him and are His by right, and those who are His children have the privilege of using for their own pleasure and joy the things that He has made, and the obligation of bringing to Him for His pleasure and joy the offerings of praise and thanksgiving which such beneficence has inspired.

This leads quite naturally to the second element in worship, a quiet and reverent acknowledgment of that moral responsibility to be conformed to God's laws and to live life in God's way which lies upon every man. One can almost sense the change in tone in verse 6 of Psalm 95. The major key of loud praise has dropped to a minor key of quiet reverence and awe. *"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."* It is now that the mind turns away from the outward things of the earth which God has created, the appendages of life, of happiness, of enjoyment, for which praise has just been offered, and diverts its thoughts inward to the heart and soul. God did not only make the hills and valleys, the sea and land; He made us, and He made us His people, His flock. He is not only a Creator, He is also a Shepherd and a Father. And the causes of worship, of reverence and of praise that lie within the human frame are greater by far than those that reside in the earth, which is itself but a minister to that same human frame, for God created the earth for man, and not man for the earth. Man is the glory and king of this material creation—or will be when the Divine purpose has been fully achieved. So the joyful ebullient praise that is prompted by the material blessings surrounding man gives place to reverent adoration, a recognition of the spiritual blessings that find their place within man's heart. Therefore in Psalm 96. 8 the exhortation is *"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth"* and in Psalm 29 *"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give*

unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". In all of this there is the realisation that to worship God in holiness is a thing of beauty, that the yearning of the human heart for that which brings beauty into the life and drives out the drab and sordid can be met, and fully met, in joint worship before God.

Is not this worth considering in our own fellowship and our own worship? We too have much that is drab and commonplace in our daily lives. The conditions attendant upon earning a living or managing a home in this present day, especially under the conditions brought about by the war from which we have just emerged, are oftentimes dull and monotonous to an extreme, and even although we who have the knowledge of Divine truth to cheer our way feel the pressure of the times. It cannot possibly be otherwise. The world feels the same thing and rushes madly from one form of amusement to another in the endeavour to forget. The importance placed by our ruling authorities on the maintenance of "the peoples' amusements" shows that they too are alive to the seriousness of the situation; for man was made to be happy and to enjoy the good gifts of God, and now that human selfishness and sin has taken away much of the possibility of happiness humanity is in danger of breaking down. Now the fact that in general we do not desire and could not be content with the amusements which do temporarily satisfy the majority of people does not dispose of this fact that the drabness and ugliness of life has its effect on us as on them. We too need something that will counteract these things and show us visions of beauty in which we can rejoice and find satisfaction and rest of heart. That counteracting force is to be found in worship—sincere, selfless worship offered in joint communion with others of like mind in an atmosphere of beauty and peace. Worship that ascends in chariots of praise to the highest heaven, that bears up the worshipper himself as it were on eagles' wings and takes him in the spirit of his mind to the holy place where God is seated upon His Throne, guiding the destinies of the world that He has created.

We need then by all means possible to develop within our fellowship an increasing appreciation of the importance of worship—and, too, of joint fellowship together in worship, of communal worship. And that worship must be a joyful and happy worship—every gathering for worship an holy convocation unto the Lord where expressions of thankfulness and thanksgiving are predominant. Even although there must be other occasions where life is lived to the accompaniment of quieter and more

subdued strains, when grief afflicts the heart and tears may be not far away, the time of worship will be a palliative to these things and call forth the happiness and joy that resides in the possession of the "deep things of God". The Psalmist felt like this when he sang of his dark moments, of the contradiction of sinners against himself, of tears by day and by night, and yet "I had gone with the multitude, I went with them in the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psa. 42. 4). He found the comfort his soul desired in going up with his brethren, with praise and song, to worship the Lord in His holy temple.

This brings us to the third very important element in our worship—the place where worship is offered. In natural reaction against the formalism and ceremony of the great Churches we tend to go the other extreme and eschew all outward aids to beauty in worship. The Psalmist knew as well as do we that God may be worshipped in any place and does not require that the voice of praise ascend acceptably only from marble halls and prayers be offered to the accompaniment of swinging censers. David must have known better than any man how near God could be when alone on the mountain-tops at night, or lying in the field with the flocks in the heat of a summer day. But the Psalmist also knew what inspiration could be given his soul by the mere sight of the Temple buildings on the summit of Mount Moriah, the thrill of heart as the multitudes moved slowly up the wide stairways and assembled in the great court, the awe and reverence that filled the soul as the music of harps and chanting of singers fell upon the ear. That was why he could say with feeling "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." (Psa. 122. 1) The very suggestion of going up to worship the Lord in company with the brethren is one that should induce feelings of gladness and happiness.

After all, just as Jesus at twelve years of age was found in His Father's courts, because that was the natural place in which to be found, so should we always feel as if the place of worship is our rightful spiritual home. It should possess a magnetism and an attraction for us that is possessed by no other place on earth. We should be conscious of an intense, a longing, desire to be there and to commune with our brethren of like faith, and to join with them in praise and prayer, and share with them the consciousness of the overspreading Spirit, come down to bless and fill each worshipper with the grace and truth of the Most High God. The Psalmist felt like that. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" he cried, "My soul longeth,

yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." (Psa. 84. 1-2) When he was away from the Temple he was an exile, a wanderer in strange lands. When he turned his steps toward the Temple he was coming home, and as its familiar buildings came into sight he experienced the satisfaction of a spiritual hunger which could be met in no other way.

That word "amiable" in verse 1 really means "beloved". "How beloved are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" The thought of the word is shown very vividly in its other occurrences. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him" (Deut. 33. 12); "So he giveth his beloved sleep" (Psa. 127. 2); "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my well-beloved touching his vineyard." (Isa. 5. 1). Thus is our own worship made complete, when we can look toward the place of our meeting with our brethren, and call it "beloved". Thus may we combine the three-fold aspect of worship; our own personal coming to God in reverence

and adoration; our joining with our brethren in united praise and prayer; our love and esteem for the place which is the place of our gathering, the place of our meeting, the place of our fellowship and worship. "THIS GATE OF THE LORD, INTO WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL ENTER." How fitting are the words of the Psalmist in Psa. 117. 17-19, expressive of this three-fold cord. How the words come down to us in all their majesty and all their music, telling us of saints in olden time who trod this way before us, bidding us follow faithfully in the same way, that we, like them, may one day stand before God in Zion.

"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.

"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people!

"In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!

"PRAISE YE THE LORD."

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 4—God came from Teman.

A. O. Hudson

The third chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy opens with prayer and closes with praise. Between these expressions of worship there is a wonderfully eloquent account of Israel's enemies' last onslaught and Divine deliverance at the end of the Age, told in language which takes for its inspiration that other glorious epoch in Israel's history, the time of the Exodus. The prophecy is written in poetry—Hebrew poetry—and in form to be sung at the Temple services to the accompaniment of musical instruments. We may not doubt that in after days the noble strains of Habakkuk's psalm often were heard in Jewry, the hearts of the people beating fast with excitement and their eyes growing bright with pride as they thought of the salvation that one day must surely come.

"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet in dithyrambic measure." That is the superscription, the title, of the psalm, appearing in the Authorised Version as verse 1. The translators were uncertain as to the meaning of the last part of the phrase and so left the Hebrew word "shigionoth" untranslated, to the lasting puzzlement of future generations. Scholars know now that it refers to what we call the "metre" of the song. In the original Hebrew the lines are of the impetuous, lofty style, composed in a state of deep mental stress or excitement, to which the Greeks gave the name of "dithyramb"; hence the

title "upon Shigionoth" is best translated "in dithyrambic measure", as Moffatt renders it.

It is sometimes suggested that this third chapter was written at a much later period in Habakkuk's life, and that this accounts for the change in style. What is much more likely is that the vision awakened the dormant fire in Habakkuk's nature and brought to the surface all the passionate zeal which lay beneath his faith. In chapters 1 and 2 he had talked with God, prayed to God, and interceded with God—and God had answered and talked with him; but it is certain that at the end of chapter 2 heaven had been opened before the prophet's eyes and he had seen, first, the Lord seated upon His heavenly throne (ch. 2 vs. 20) and then the stupendous vision of the Lord coming forth to bring to pass His "strange work" (Isa. 18. 21) upon the earth. And it was that vision which, in the intensity of his excitement, he recorded in such glowing, vivid symbols in verses 3 to 15 of Chapter 3.

It was this experience that led him first of all to utter what must surely be one of the most moving prayers in the whole of the Scriptures. "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy" (vs. 2). He had realised at last that there was ordained a great gap between his own day and

the day of the vision when Israel would be completely and finally delivered, and he was concerned that God should save alive His people, the work of His hands, during the intervening time. The word really means "preserve alive" as well as "give new life at the end," and is as often rendered "save alive" as it is "quicken". Habakkuk acknowledged that he had heard God's words, but although the scenes of the vision had filled him with joy and exultation, and given him a new confidence as to Israel's ultimate destiny, he was still "afraid" as to the intervening period. He knew that his people time and again would merit Divine condemnation for their faithlessness and hardness of heart. He knew how often they had been scattered and enslaved in past times because of their apostasy, and although he could not doubt God's faithfulness, his heart failed him when he thought of Israel's waywardness. And so, like Moses of old, he besought God on behalf of a stiff-necked and perverse people, that God would not cause his purpose to fail even although the people would prove undeserving of His bounty; that in His chastisement He would always save a remnant, and in the end "bring forth judgment to victory". "*Preserve alive thy work in the midst of the years*" he pleaded "*in wrath remember mercy.*"

With that his mood changed. Even as he uttered the words he knew that God would be faithful, that deliverance would surely come, and with it the overthrow of all those evil forces which threatened and oppressed his people. And as the glorious history of the Exodus flooded into his mind he lifted up his eyes to the distant horizon and the Holy Spirit quickened his spiritual faculties so that before his wondering gaze there appeared the splendour of the God of Israel, a glory overspreading the skies and putting even the sun to shame as He advanced in the forefront of His ancient people, destroying their enemies before them and leading Israel into his desired haven. To the prophet's lips there came, unbidden, words which at one and the same time combined the events of the Exodus; the upheavals of Nature which so aptly symbolise the arising of God to set up His Kingdom; and the details of that last conflict in the empire of men which the Scriptures elsewhere call "Armageddon" and "Jacob's Trouble".

What did Habakkuk actually see? He beheld a great manifestation of natural forces—all in vision—the gathering and the breaking of a terrible tempest over the earth; in the midst of the tempest, riding upon the wings of the wind, Jehovah Himself in His war chariot, hurling celestial thunderbolts upon the wicked and burning up His enemies round about (Psa. 97. 3). He saw Israel, a helpless people, surrounded by hostile nations invading the Holy Land,

and he saw those nations swallowed up in the zeal of God's fury. He watched the storm die away, and Israel, resplendent in the calm sunlight of Divine favour, delivered for ever from all his oppressors. That was what he saw, and as he looked he clothed what he saw in the language of the story he knew best, the story of the Exodus; and at the same time, all unknowingly, he described the later conflict that is yet to come, the one that closes the end of this Age.

We can be certain of that because it is that conflict which results in Israel's final deliverance and the fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning the Kingdom; and as if to make doubly sure, Habakkuk in verse 16 places on record his knowledge that he himself was to "rest" until that day arrived. If this prophet is in fact to be one of the heroes of faith who will rise again to lead Israel in the day of Christ's Kingdom, then there is a very definite fitness about the words of verse 16. But of that more presently.

In reading the verses that follow, it needs to be remembered that Habakkuk is writing in what has been called the "prophetic perfect" tense, that is to say, he took his stand, mentally, at the time of the fulfilment of the vision and described the events as having already occurred. This is a common practice in Hebrew prophecy; the absolute certainty of the thing seen, even though still many years in the future, justifying the use of the completed tense. We appreciate the force of the symbolism best if we, in thought, range ourselves alongside the prophet and behold what he beheld, our imagination fired by the glory of his language.

"*GOD CAME FROM TEMAN, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.*" That is the tremendous announcement with which Habakkuk heralds his vision. Then comes the rubric instruction "*Selah*", the command for a reverent hush and pause in the Temple service, for priests and people to keep silence, as it were, before the God Whose majestic presence has so solemnly been declared to them. And if the people thus kept silence before the ineffable Name upon every occasion that this psalm was sung in their worship, with what more awesome reverence must the prophet have viewed the opening scenes of the vision which gave birth to the words. He was evidently looking southward toward Teman, (Edom, or Seir), and Paran (in the Arabian desert), the two centres from which God had arisen to lead His people to the Promised Land, and he saw the dawn of a golden radiance that told him of the Lord's rising up once again for deliverance. He might have thought of the words of Moses "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he

came with ten thousands of his saints"—holy ones—(Deut. 33. 2). He must certainly have recalled the inspiring words of the 68th Psalm "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him . . . O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel", for this is the song of Israel's march toward the land under the leadership of God, as the historian declares in Num. 10. 35; "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said 'Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.'" For a moment Habakkuk may have seen what Balaam, seven hundred years previously, had seen in vision, the ten thousands of Israel surging homeward to their land of inheritance under that golden radiance of the Divine presence; and have repeated to himself Balaam's words on that great occasion: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him . . . how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. . . . God brought him forth out of Egypt . . . He shall eat up the nations his enemies . . . Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. 23 and 24). And as Habakkuk watched, the brightness of the Shekinah glory, the "pillar of fire by day", illumined all the sky and all the earth, preceding and guiding Israel in the way. So did he break out into the glowing description that follows the pause. "*His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; rays streamed forth out of his hand (Leeser) and in them was hidden his might.*" (Ferrar Fenton) The whole picture is that of a great sunrise of golden fire advancing from the horizon to overspread the heavens and resolve itself into the glory of the Lord, the *Shekinah*, leading the hosts of redeemed Israel back home.

And the question we have to ask ourselves is this: to what event in the end of the Age does this opening portion of the vision refer? Where is our starting point for the final application of Habakkuk's prophecy?

Analogy points us to the day when God will "set his hand the *second time* to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt . . . and from the islands of the sea . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11. 11-12). And not only so, but to a time when God begins to rise up for the salvation of all men from the power of sin and death, a time when He commences to set in motion

those forces which result in the "sending" of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the glory of His Second Advent, to inaugurate the "Times of Restitution of all things" (Acts 3. 19-23). The vision as it proceeded showed that the golden glory was to be followed by a dark storm before the ultimate "afterward of peace", but prior to the storm there was certainly a phase in which the sunshine of Divine favour shone for a brief space upon the earth, an earnest of good things to come. And that fact gives us our starting point. The vision dates the commencement of its fulfilment at that time in the history of this world—the nineteenth century—when both Christian and Jew became conscious of the active working of God in their separate destinies. The Christian world—that section of it which was "watching for His appearing"—realised the approaching consummation of the Age and the imminence of the Advent of its Lord, and the Jew who still prayed in sincerity and earnest longing "next year in Jerusalem" saw the outward evidence of forces moving toward the accomplishment of his desire. Before the storm clouds of this present time of trouble had begun to gather there was a period of golden glory during which light from the Heavenly Throne was illumining the Plan of God as never before, and the roseate prospect of the coming Kingdom, for both Christian and Jew, became clearer and more entrancing as year succeeded year, "This Gospel of the Kingdom" said Jesus, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24. 14). That word was fulfilled in that century as never before. An understanding of the nature and purpose of the Millennial reign was attained such as had not blessed the Church in previous centuries. The knowledge of "Advent Truth" relating to the coming again of Jesus was brought to a higher and more complete stage than had ever been known. On the Jewish side the movement for the return to Palestine—then drawing its inspiration largely from religious sources—was born, and men began to talk of a Jewish state and nation. In a score of ways the golden light of Divine favour overspread the earth and caused men to look up and lift up their heads, sensing that deliverance was drawing nigh. In very truth a mighty angel had come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. (Rev. 18. 1.)

* * * *

And the next stage in the prophecy is the gathering of the storm-clouds of trouble, the calling to the "valley of Jehoshaphat"—still a preparation, but a preparation that ushers in Armageddon itself. That forms the subject of next month's instalment.



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. In what sense do you use the words "religion" and "religious" on page 18, "Between Ourselves" of the February issue? What is the meaning of the words? Is there any justification for the attitude of a certain Society which scathingly refers to "Religion", "Religious" and "Religiocracy"?

A. The word "religion", which is derived from Latin, refers to the reverence, veneration and worship of God. Where it appears in the New Testament it is from the Greek word "threskeia", which bears the same meaning, as can be seen by a glance at the passages in which the word occurs:—

Acts 26. 5 "After the strictest sect of our religion I (Paul) lived a Pharisee."

Jas. 1. 26 "This man's religion is vain."

Jas. 1. 27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, . . ."

Col. 2. 18 "A voluntary humility and worshipping of angels."

Another example is in Josephus, who, writing shortly after the time of Jesus, and describing the apostasy of Jeroboam, says (*Ant.* 8. 11. 1) "(Jeroboam) hast left off my worship and made thee molten gods." Then again, Herodotus, the Greek historian, four hundred years before Christ, used the word *threskeia* of the Egyptians' worship (*Histories* 2. 37) "They are of all men the most excessively attentive to the worship of the gods."

Since a person can only be truly "religious" if he is reverential towards his God—even if his understanding of God is deficient or erroneous—it is manifestly improper for anyone professing Christianity to speak slightly or sneeringly of religion as such. Since England is professedly Christian, references to the word "religion" in this country would be understood as referring to the Christian faith and it is this sense in which the word was used in the article to which reference is made. Among Christian peoples—whether sincere or "nominal"—the religious life is the same thing as the Christian life and religion means Christianity. It is true that many who profess to be religious are not so in fact and their hypocrisy may bring religion into disrepute. This is not the fault of religion, but of its unworthy professors.

The literal meaning of "religiocracy"—an uncouth word—is "government by religion" and this, so far from deserving derogatory mention, is a very good thing. Government by religion, both within the heart of the individual and outwardly in the affairs of the community is greatly to be desired and the lack of it is the root cause of all our present

troubles. The Divine rule of the Millennial Age will be a "government by religion" for in that day all men will come to worship and serve God in sincerity and truth, and find, in the wise rule of the King Who is to reign in righteousness, life everlasting.

Questioner's comment on the above answer.

The word "Religion" embodies the thought, *re* = back again, *ligiare* = to bind. As a result of the Ransom, the *antlutron*, the corresponding price, or the perfect balance, all the world is REBOUND to God (where separation or alienation previously existed), "to be testified in due time". This of course does not depreciate the privileged position of the saints, who are already "first-fruits unto His glory".

In the Old Year the B—friends studying the matter were disposed to look upon the word "religion" as one of the most beautiful in our language.

Intervals of rest fall to the lot of all who bear the cross. Even in the midst of the desert our gracious God is able to provide for us a place of repose; the storm does not rage incessantly; peaceful hours intervene unawares and the burden upon our shoulders becomes for a while a resting pillow for our heads upon which we insensibly gather recruited strength. At one time the Keeper of Israel sends us bodily slumber in the midst of our sorrows, and what a welcome guest may it not prove to us, particularly when spiritual conflicts threaten to confuse the senses and absorb the spirits! At another season, a sympathising Jonathan visits me in my outcast condition, and by his affectionate conversation imperceptibly removes my depression. At other times, some consoling truth of revelation is, by a text or hymn, suggested to my mind and hope diffuses its mild and cheering light in the midst of my darkness. In short, the very days of storm and tempest have their hours of repose and mercy. Therefore let no one be anxious, however steep and thorny his path, however dreary and rough his road. When his weary knees are ready to sink, God will know how to provide him a resting place and he will be able to say, "I laid me down and slept; I awakened, for the Lord sustained me." Although these may be only short pauses, still they remind us how easily He could, if He pleased, at any moment deliver us out of every trouble, and a believing assurance of this is sufficient to overcome every anxiety and fear.

THE SUPREME GRACE

Part 5—Conclusion

T Holmes

A Series of Studies in
I Cor. 13. 13.

Having presented at some length the evidence proving the expansion of the meaning of the words "*Phileo*" and "*Agape*", as so many new super-excellent spiritual verities came crowding through into Apostolic consciousness from the spiritual "beyond", the time has now come to consider the relationship of "*Phileo*" to "*Agape*" as they find expression in the day-to-day experience of the man of God, in whose life these two higher phases of love have become an actuality. To bring this relationship pointedly before our minds, an illustration, drawn from the lives of ordinary men in both their domestic and communal relationships, must be used. And it should not be overlooked that the man of God himself, though possessing these elements of a higher love, also possesses the lower elements of domestic and communal love, common to all his fellow-citizens. To him the higher elements are an addition to those possessed by men on the lower plane.

In the lives of most ordinary men there are two circles of attachment between them and those who live around. First, there is a nearer circle where his domestic bonds and his friendship's ties abound. Here the links that bind him to "his own" are found—his parents, wife, children, brothers and his sisters; while in a slightly wider range, the ties with bosom friends and intimate confidants, with whom his life is linked at many points, may also be found. To each of these relationships he will bear a love varying in degree, which he cannot show to those without. To each he will accord right of entry, also varying in degree, into his private life.

This nearer circle of domestic ties constitutes the pattern for our "*Phileo*" attachments, on the higher plane. But those who are thus linked together on the higher plane by this "*Phileo*" attachment are not of necessity, also linked by blood relationship. Only those who are linked by kindred ties as children of the one Divine Father can find entrance thereinto. Hence an unbelieving wife is not linked with her believing husband in this relationship, though the believing wife of another man may be associated with him therein. Actual outstanding instances of this "higher-plane" association may perhaps be found in many small "ecclesias", where true believers in the Lord may not always be accompanied (either in person or spirit) by their wedded life-partners. Here, in a

spiritual association, and on a truly higher plane, we would have the sphere, where in a special sense the "*Phileo*" counterpart to the "domestic-friendship" love would operate. Here in this exclusively spiritual circle, the love of brethren—the *Philadelphos* love—should be found in exercise.

Outside this "domestic-friendship" circle is the wider sphere in which most men's lives touch other lives as fellow-citizens of one community. Here the contacts have wider purposes affecting more or less the mutual well-being of the whole community (or nation) at large. A link of an entirely different kind cements the members of this community together both in times of peace and war.

In times of peace the well-being of the community prompts each member to accept both limitations of rights for himself and obligations of duty towards each other member thereof. Thus, in this way, a rule of established law and public order is accepted and observed, while the supervision of the magistrate (meaning for our purpose, anything from that of the king down to his lowest deputy) is assented to. The freely-expressed consenting attitude which prompts each man to accept and bow to these things is called, in common language, "love for the king" or "love for the law", and "love for the fellow-countryman". In times of war this consenting attitude to the claims of king, of law, and of fellow-citizens, brings them all together into organised activity for mutual self-defence. At such a time it is easy to give this organised consenting attitude its proper name. Men call it "patriotism"—an attitude which in its highest flights has given birth to the world's "Dunkirks" and Thermopylaes. On the other hand, the civic response in the days of peace may not be so spectacular, or so appropriately named, but it is there all the same, and leads to the schemes of public reform which seek to alleviate the disabilities and inequalities of the body corporate.

Here in this wider public circle every member of the community is included. Even the members of the smaller domestic circle are included in this, for husband and wife in the one, are fellow-citizens with all the rest in the other. The special feature of the domestic circle is its exclusiveness; while that of the communal sphere is its comprehensiveness.

This civic sphere of the natural man forms the exact correspondency to that of the *Agape* attachment on the higher plane, while the consenting attitude and the consequent submission to both king and law forms the precise counterpart to the true Christian attitude of submission to the sovereign Will of God. In his "*Synonyms of the New Testament*" Archbishop Trench shows that the Latin equivalent (*diligi*) to the Greek word *Agape* belongs to the sphere of the "magis ad iudicium"—the sphere of the magistrate and the reign of law, in its fullest sense, and as such, is capable of universal (or communal) application. And since "*Agape*" is the true equivalent of "*diligi*", this statement will hold good also of "*Agape*".

Here then, in this wider circle of civic life, an illustration of the Christian association on the higher plane, is brought to view; but on this higher plane the circle that is introduced is not less extensive in its scope than the whole wide Plan of God. The love of God that is shed abroad in the Christian's heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5. 5)—and it is this that is the mainspring of the *Agape* that beats within that heart—not only constitutes him a citizen of the Kingdom of God, but also brings his whole life into alignment with that universal Plan. In his consecration vows he has freely shown a consenting attitude to the claims of its King, its laws, its objects, and to his fellow-citizens, and has pledged himself to work together with them all for their common good, both for immediate and coming days. In this way, the love of God—the love that prompted God to frame the Plan, with all its love, its duties, and its obligations—will have taken a controlling hold upon his life, in its every phase, and will thenceforth be shaping it into accord with the great design. Seen from this point of view, all that Jesus did, by way of sacrifice (and likewise all that we are called to do, as we seek to follow Him) can be reduced down to the single matter of becoming permeated and saturated with the Love of God. There is no disparagement of that great sacrifice here, in stating the matter that way, nor any lessening of its sacrificial value in describing it thus, for there is no other way than that whereby even our blessed Lord could attain to all the fulness of God, and be saturated therewith. And when the love of God does come in to any heart, it must, of high necessity be afforded scope to work outward again upon other lives, as it did through Jesus' life.

Now it is most essential that the man of God should look outside the small sphere of the local ecclesia for the exemplification of the love of God. Should he concentrate his vision only upon that small community, he may find himself uttering only the merest platitude as he exhorts and is exhorted

to have love for one another. He must look outside (as well as within the fellowship) if he is to know and understand (even though it be then only as in a glass darkly) something of the measure of that mighty moving force that both planned a world's redemption and has competence to carry it through to its destined end. The love that he is called upon to exemplify in his association with others of like precious faith is no more than a mere chip from the universal block; a scant reflection from an all-illuminating Sun. Were there no more in the love of God than that which at times he sees exemplified in the ecclesia's life, he may be excused if he comes to think that Love's energy has waned, and that its heat has cooled. But there is more to it than that, there is an energy of Love that springs from God, and remains constant throughout the passing years, seeking entry into every receptive heart, and a passage through it to the wider world beyond. It is more than half-a-mistake to think that by dint of exhortation we can persuade our hearers to cultivate the tree of love, on which the fruit of goodness, kindness and patience will grow. Love is like the water in the reservoir; it is there in great abundance, but awaits the opening of the spigot or tap. Opened just a little way and a little only will come through, but opened wide there can be a mighty flow. It is indeed a "shedding abroad" in our hearts (Rom. 5. 5) of a power that comes in from without. And, if this energising Love does enter every heart in such measure as it ought, every ecclesia's life would be intense, and every one of its members would be alive with the spirit of the great Divine Plan. The *Agape* residing in every heart should really be a tiny "mickle" shed off from the mighty "muckle" that has set itself the task of winning unto righteousness, every sinful heart.

And what would that mean in the lives of all true saints? First, it would instil an ever-deepening reverence into the heart for the Holy Name. Having learned so much of His good intents toward man would lead us more and more to say "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven". Next, it would deepen our gratitude to our beloved Lord for all that He has done to set us free from sin, and bring us into this grace wherein we stand. That would be the "mickle" of our love answering back to the "muckle" of His!

Towards our brethren there would be the response of a truly grateful heart reaching out to mingle with their own grateful hearts, one and all seeking to hold each other in high esteem for the Kingdom's sake, of which we are a part. That would be true spiritual patriotism; a spirit of loyalty and devotion to the Cause, as well as to the King.

To our enemies or opponents it would reveal itself as an attitude of tolerance and goodwill; an attitude that would leave all recompense for God to administer in His own time and way; while, seeking for ourselves to requite their evil with our good.

To state these attitudes in brief, they would stand thus expressed:

(a) Towards one Who is our Superior—our Father and our Lord—we would respond with reverence, adoration, and worship.

(b) Towards those who stand on an equality with us—and in Christ Jesus we all stand on such equality—we would respond with “high esteem” and “due regard” for what they were “in Christ”.

(c) Towards those who have not attained to this equality we would exhibit pity, compassion and goodwill.

Thus, *Agape* would reveal itself as a different attitude according to the occasions and conditions it had to meet.

The spirit of Divine Love should extend the right hand of kinship and fellowship to every other member of the flock. Even if in person they are unknown to us, the attitude of kinship is there. Should they live beyond the seas, and unlikely to cross our path, still the attitude that reaches out and prays for them is there. And even if they have passed to their “Rest” from this vale of tears, we feel that the link has not thereby been snapped, for the “Love” that grips us to-day, is a Love that would not let them go. Sometimes, these faithful souls of days gone by, though dead, yet speak, and bring an influence to bear upon our lives, in these later days, as truly as do they whom we both see and hear. Thus the *Agape* that comes to us from God is an all comprehensive thing—it is the link that binds the whole community of God into “one” as truly as the spirit of patriotism in the civic sphere binds all the members of the community into one people or nation.

But the “*Phileo*” is different from this. There is no “*Phileo*” expended on those whom we do not know. It is only in the sphere where lives are in close touch that the “*Phileo*” spirit can abound. In some cases perhaps, the sphere of this “personal affection in the Lord” will be limited to the members of one small ecclesia here or there—or it may be, if circumstances permit, if some faithful servant of the Lord is more widely known—say, in some country like our own—he may kindle and win this warm affection from many hearts, in response to his unwearyed labours of love on their behalf. This was the kind of love that Jesus had for all His little

band, but in especial measure for Peter, James and John. It was the “friendship-love” Peter offered to his Lord, by the Galilean Sea.

This love is based upon affinity—a something in the spirit and outlook of one that draws and binds another to his heart, and in consequence a deeper friendship comes to exist—akin to that of David for Jonathan, but on a higher plane. It is not wrong to cement a friendship of that kind; had it been so, surely our Lord would not have had His special friends. But deeper friendship should always be directed to the fostering of the wider *Agape*. The “Philadelphian love” should always be the handmaid of that wider love, whether in the ecclesia, or in the more private sphere of one’s life. To brotherly love, *Agape* should be super-added. (2 Pet. 1. 7.) Having purified one’s heart by attaining to an unfeigned love of the brethren (the *Phileo*) we are to use it to promote the wider love (*Agape*) purely and fervently. (1 Pet. 1. 22.)

How then do *Agape* and *Phileo* overlap in one’s life? *Agape* is the wide community-love that loves all the members of the Divine community everywhere, because they are in line with the Kingdom of God; the *Phileo* is the love that rises in our own spiritual homesteads and links us, in another sense—a double link—for our own immediate spiritual good. We do not offer “*Phileo*” love to God, nor to our beloved Lord. This we cannot do. We do not proffer this love to our enemies, nor to the unbeliever in the Lord. We cannot offer it to brethren beyond our reach. Its sphere is with those among whom immediately we live and labour in the Lord. It is the background of all ecclesia life.

Looking abroad among our fellowship in this and other lands, it is this “*Phileo*” that is so much lacking to-day. It is not exactly the “*Agape*” that is overlooked. Each little group, with its own interpretations of this or that, is at heart loyal to the Lord, and the work of God within may be going on apace. The *Agape* is being shed abroad within, in proportion as they open the doors of their heart; and we can thank God for that! God’s work “to will and to do” may be having free course in their lives, and some day He will bring it to its completion in His own special way, but, for to-day, it is the lack of *Phileo* that mars the scene. Agree though we may that the dissident is a brother in the Lord, we stand away at arms length to make the admission of the fact. Is there any remedy for this? How would we approach a like situation in the domestic sphere? Think it out, brethren in the Lord, and then say what we ought to do to make the “*Phileo*” the “warm affection in the Lord” which it ought to be.

HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP

INSTRUCTION FOR TO-DAY IN THE LIGHT OF THE PAST

“ . . . and that, knowing the time, it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Rom. 13. 11.)

Those words were penned at a time when the Apostle Paul, and many of the Early Church with him, had come to realise that the promised Second Coming of the Lord to set up His Kingdom of life and light was much further away than they had thought. In the first flush of Christian enthusiasm the early believers had expected the Return to take place in their own lifetime; to what extent Paul now realised the long period destined to elapse before that longed-for happening would materialise we cannot say, but he did at least know that he and his generation would be laid aside to await their crown of life, and many centuries pass, before the returning Lord would come to raise His faithful ones from the dead and set up His Kingdom. And if, under such circumstances, Paul could assure his readers it was high time to awake out of sleep because their salvation was nearer now than when they became believers, how much more forceful must the same exhortation be to us, we who live so much closer to the time of His revelation and His Kingdom?

Paul was probably not speaking altogether from the dispensational point of view. He must have used the words largely from the personal standpoint. He and his converts were growing old together; their first impetuous rush of youthful energy was giving place to the slower stream of age, and Paul knew that for many of them the end of life's experience was within measurable distance. Whether or no the Lord was to return within the century, or not for another thousand years or more, he knew that his companions must pass into death without seeing the fulfilment of their hopes—and they knew it too. Hence there would creep upon some, quite naturally, a lessening of the first enthusiasm, a resigning of one's self to life as it was, a turning back, if ever so little, to the interests and distractions of this world—and a corresponding partial indifference to the Calling. So Paul deemed necessary an exhortation to continued and unabated zeal for Christ, a shaking off the bands of apathy which were slowly closing upon some, for life was hastening on and the “Day of Salvation” running its course. Only they that should endure to the end could hope to receive this “so great salvation” and to those who already were coming near the end of their allotted span that salvation was indeed nearer than when they first believed!

This almost rhythmic process, this waning and flagging of zeal and love followed by a call to awaken, a revival of hope and enthusiasm, and a consequent “reform movement”, seems to be characteristic, not only of the history of the Christian Church, but of the whole history of man in his relation to God. Perhaps there is instruction for us here, and guidance for the days in which we live; for none would deny that we do sadly need the flaming torch that will rekindle hope and zeal, leading us onward into a fellowship of sacrifice and service such as that which did in fact characterise earlier days.

Very little is known of conditions on earth between the Fall and the Flood. It is clear though that the human race as a whole lapsed very quickly into ignorance of God and apathy as to the destiny of man. “Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die” might fairly sum up their philosophy if our Lord's allusion to the days that were before the Flood is appreciated. When one remembers the great length of time that Adam was alive and the clear knowledge of God he must have retained even in his fallen condition, it seems surprising that godlessness should so quickly become rampant, but the history of Cain's descendants shows that such was the case. Turning for a moment to the discoveries of archaeologists and geologists, it is clear that whilst a high state of human civilisation and culture prevailed over part of the ante-diluvian world, there were many peoples that had become depraved and bestial, both physically and mentally. The discoveries relating to what are known as “Neanderthal” men can only be harmonised with the Bible account by supposing them to have been more or less savage ante-diluvian tribes, and it is probable that they sank to that low stage of existence within a very few centuries after Eden. It need occasion no surprise to reflect upon the implication of Gen. 6 that by the time of the Flood God, and the ways of God, were practically unknown in the world of men.

The catastrophe of the Flood caused a swift revulsion of feeling. Whether one reads the Bible account as demanding that only Noah and his family survived, or whether, as some consider, the Genesis story refers only to the central “civilised” area, and outlying peoples—perhaps in China or Australasia—were untouched by the Flood, it appears that the first few generations after that event were intensely religious. It is highly probable that there was a very sincere return to God—perhaps those

in the Ark realised that from the point of view of God's redemptive Plan it was "high time to awake out of sleep". We may surely take it as certain that righteous Noah sensed the opportunity to make a fresh start in the world that God had given his family. And probably there was great enthusiasm and there were high hopes when his sons set out to rebuild the shattered land of their birth. But from the records of Genesis, brief though they be, it appears that the enthusiasm waned away again, until by the time of Terah, Abraham's father, even the line of Shem through whom Abraham came had relapsed into idolatry. A new and interesting light is shed upon this idolatry from the discoveries of recent years. The period immediately after the Flood is still very largely a closed book and it is not possible to be dogmatic as to the number of centuries that elapsed between that event and the earliest reliable dates we have, at the time of Abraham. There is however a wealth of information available concerning Abraham's day and the century or so immediately preceding him, and from that information it is fairly clear that the idolatry of Abraham's native land was a corruption of a formerly pure and intelligent worship of the true God. The elaborate mythology of Babylon, which has been the model for nearly all subsequent false religions, bears a remarkable analogy with what we regard as the truth of Scripture. It seems clear that in those centuries there had been a steady decline in understanding of God and His plans, and that the true knowledge of God had all but vanished from the earth—until God called Abraham!

Once more it could truly be said that a call came, "high time to awake out of sleep". Abraham bestirred himself to reject the worship and interests of the land of his birth and set out to follow the leading of his God.

There is no need to repeat the story here. Suffice to remind ourselves that the bright light which blazed out over the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and made their epoch one of the best known and most fully described in the whole of Scripture, a record of rare activity and great triumphs of faith, flickered out again in that darkness which settled over the tribes in Egypt; then was fulfilled the prophecy which had declared "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years".

At the end of those years it was again high time to awake out of sleep, for another great step forward in the Plan of God was due to be taken. God called Moses, prepared him over many years for the task for which He had called him, and sent him to Egypt to lead His people away. In the strength and power of that great awakening they

went forty years in the wilderness until they reached the Promised Land, battled and fought until they had won for themselves and their children a place in which to dwell, and then—ceased from their early zeal and went to sleep again. Once more the darkness settled down, illumined now and then by fitful flashes of national revival, none of which were long-lived, until the final carrying away into Babylon at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and the subsequent fall of that city before the conquering armies of Cyrus. Again had come the time for a fresh development in the outworking of the Plan, and again a national awakening out of sleep. The liberated captives, with songs on their lips and gladness in their hearts, pressed across the desert to rebuild their Temple and city, in full expectation that the darkness would never more close in upon them.

But, of course, it did; and it needed the preaching of John the Baptist to awaken the nation to consciousness of the importance of the time. And now the Plan was working itself out in rapid steps—John had a new, an urgent message, never before heard: "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" Almost before the purport of his preaching had been grasped, there came another, One Who brought life and truth to the world and called to an eternal awakening in which there should never be any more darkness at all. But those who had not heeded Moses and the prophets, did not heed even although Christ rose from the dead: and of those who did at first listen to His words there were many who, as the centuries began to pile up again, left their first love: so the darkness descended. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The Reformation, later, was a time of partial awakening, but sleep overpowered the partially awakened ones, and it was not until the first rosy gleams betokening the coming change of dispensation, and the approaching Millennial Age, began to dawn, that the age-old call went out, this time with greater force than ever before, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed; *THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND*".

That is the call for to-day and it is more insistent than ever. It seems to be the fashion of the moment to deplore our own alleged inactivity and slothfulness in Christian zeal and witness during the years between the wars. That is really not fair. It may be that activity on an organised scale has not been pronounced, but there is no doubt that individual believers have continued to the extent of their ability in the proclamation of the Kingdom message, and little groups here and there have laid their hands to tasks that have accomplished something for the Lord and His Kingdom. We should not decry such

contributions to the work of spreading the Kingdom Gospel just because they do not come within the ambit of some great and prominent Christian organisation. Neither should we disparage them because they do not attract widespread public attention or display noticeable fruitage. It has always been a case of "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts". And the first and most important purpose of Christian activity during this Age is the training and qualification of the Christian believer himself for the greater work of the next Age. That is the most effective fruitage of all our evangelistic efforts, of whatsoever kind they be.

This, then, is the background of the Apostle's exhortation to awake out of sleep. At every important time of dispensational change in past history there has been such an awakening. Now, in face of the most important change of all, the transition from "this present evil world" to the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness", we need to be alert and waking, quick to discern the significance of current events and eager to grasp such opportunities of service as may be open to us or such as we can create. The Apostle in writing

to the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 5.) lays down three vital admonitions "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others . . . let us watch and be sober . . . and . . . be at peace among yourselves"! There can be no marked advance, as a fellowship or as a community, in the understanding of the signs of the times unless we are united in spirit and purpose, manifesting the Spirit of Christ in our dealings one with another. Neither can there be effective joint service and evangelistic effort unless we arm ourselves with that spiritual dynamic which comes from the consciousness of a common ideal and a common purpose. Before we can wake up to dispensational light and evangelical opportunities we need a heart-searching revival of our first faith and zeal leading to a spirit of brotherliness which overrides all other considerations and fulfils within and between us the words of our Lord Jesus "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren". That is the awakening that must precede our next advance in the Master's service and it is to that awakening we must now apply the Apostle's words "Knowing the time, it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed".

THE PASSING OF A PIONEER

As briefly noted in our last issue, Brother Frederick George Guard "finished his course with joy" on 22nd February at the age of 82 and was laid to rest on 27th February at the City of London Cemetery, about one hundred brethren being present at the service. Thus closed the earthly life of one who was a pioneer amongst us and was responsible to a great extent for the early development of our fellowship.

Yielding his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ in his early twenties, he was at first actively engaged in evangelical work, passing on, soon after his marriage, to foster and encourage our own fellowship, then in its infancy. Living at a time when the doctrine of everlasting torment was a live issue, he incurred the censure of his former Christian colleagues in his stand against that doctrine. His earliest witness to his new-found enlargement of understanding was made at a street corner to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The Christian group thus formed eventually found its home at Earlam Hall, Forest Gate, and became a vigorous centre of Christian life and witness.

He dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the service of the Word, and of the brethren who were associated with him in those early years many have testified of his zeal and devotion. He spent his substance in his work for the Lord, and did not

hesitate to give up his secular career to engage in special Christian service to which he felt God was calling him.

He once said that he based his life on the text "for He is kind" and undoubtedly kindness characterised his life. In later years he treasured Micah 6. 8, and his parting message to the brethren was "Love one another".

We have bidden him farewell, but only until we meet again in the land whose citizens never grow old and have realised the Psalmist's hope "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness".

Fading away like the stars of the morning,

Losing their light in the glorious sun—

Thus would we pass from the world and its toiling.

Only remembered by what we have done.

Shall we be missed, though by others succeeded,

Reaping the fields we in springtime have sown?

Yes, but the sowers must pass from their labours,

Ever remembered by what they have done.

Only the truth that in life we have spoken,

Only the seed that on earth we have sown;

These shall pass onward when we are forgotten,

Fruits of the harvest and what we have done.

Oh, when the Saviour shall make up His jewels,

When the bright crowns of rejoicing are won,

Then shall His weary and faithful disciples,

All be remembered by what they have done.

A PASTORAL MINISTRY

By the time this note appears in print our brother, John T. Read, of Chicago, will have been in this country six weeks ministering to the friends. He landed at Southampton on 13th March and was met by a London brother who accompanied him to the Metropolis, where, at Waterloo Station, a "welcome" party of four brethren was waiting. After a few days' informal gatherings in various London suburbs our brother addressed two sessions at the "welcome" meeting held in the meeting hall of the Forest Gate Church on 23rd March. The gathering was well attended and well representative of the London friends. Brother Read's mellow and winning manner has very quickly won him a place in our hearts. The first section of the British tour follows a line through the Midlands to Scotland, including the Warrington Easter Convention, thence to Ireland for a three-day Convention at Belfast, thence back to England to Birmingham for the

Whitsun Convention, and on through South Wales back to London by early June. He will then visit the east Midlands, eastern and southern counties of England for a further series of appointments, to include the London Convention in August.

It is sincerely believed that our brother's tour will be a means of real spiritual uplift and blessing to those among whom he moves and we pray that the Master's blessing may be upon all the arrangements that are made in connection with his trip.

It is fitting that we here express on behalf of all the British brethren who have been concerned in the planning of this trip, our appreciation of the loving co-operation of the Pastoral Bible Institute, which has made it possible for Brother Read to visit us at this time. This will prove to be one more link that binds us ever more closely in the ties of Christian love and good fellowship to our American brethren.

TWO CORINTHIANS NINE, TWELVE

Arrangements for the London Convention at August Bank Holiday week-end, to be held at Conway Hall, are now well in hand and the London classes co-operating in this effort are trusting that there will be a good attendance from all parts of the country. There has not been a London Convention of this nature since 1939, and those who remember the pre-war assemblies (mainly at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street) will know thereby the type of gathering that is being planned. Bro. J. T. Read will address the friends together with a representative panel of speakers from various parts of the country, and no effort is being spared to ensure the comfort and well-being of our guests in both spiritual and temporal matters.

It will be very warmly appreciated if London friends able to offer accommodation for any of the nights (Saturday, Sunday or Monday, August 2nd, 3rd or 4th) either in their own homes or those of their neighbours, will do so, as soon as possible, to Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex. This problem is a very difficult one at the present time but we have confidence that the loving zeal of our London friends will contribute greatly towards its solution. Please state precisely the amount of accommodation offered, and if with neighbours, the cost. If rationing is the only difficulty, please say so; many friends will bring their own rations with them.

It is hoped to provide lunches and teas at the hall as in previous years but with the existing food rationing conditions this will be achieved only by a further exercise of helpful enthusiasm on the part

of the friends—not necessarily confined to London this time. It is suggested that those who can do so commence to lay by such small portions of rationed foods or items of "points" commodities such as meats or other sandwich fillings, to be contributed to the common stock when the time of the Convention has arrived. If brethren who are able to do this would mention, when writing this office on other matters, just what they have been able to store up, or can hope to provide, for this purpose, this will be a valuable guide and encouragement to the brethren who are planning the catering.

In these last days of the Gospel Age we seem to be getting back to the conditions that existed in the Early Church at the beginning, when the believers gathered together for their "love feasts", each contributing something to the common meal. If we can recapture something of the joyful faith and zeal which they manifested in those early days, then our new methods of catering, forced upon us by the necessities of the times, may itself become a new link in our fellowship together and lead to a rich spiritual experience.

In connection with the visit of Bro. J. T. Read the brethren in Northern Ireland have arranged a three-day Convention, to be held in the Imperial Hotel, Donegall Place, Belfast, on Saturday to Monday, 10th, 11th and 12th May. The Convention will be addressed by several brethren and further particulars may be obtained from this office. The Sunday evening session will be a public meeting.

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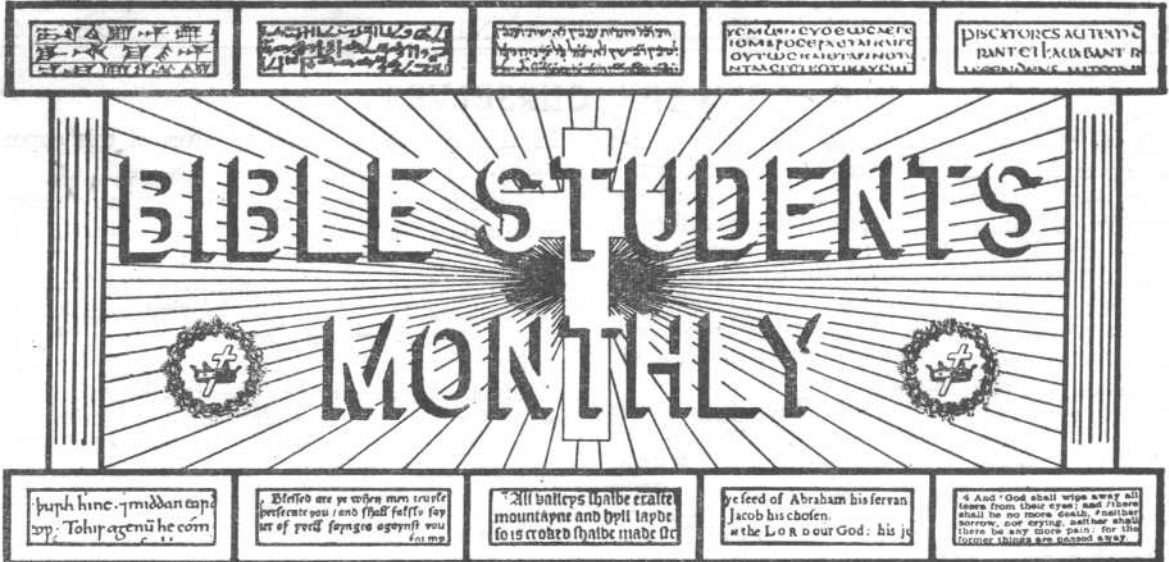
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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The first of a co-ordinated series of public meetings arranged by the Manchester Bible Students Council was held at St. Helens on 19th April last, when Bro. F. Linter of Stockport spoke on "*World Crisis—the Divine Purpose*." The meeting was advertised by means of newspaper adverts, a loud-speaker car touring the district, and 22,000 handbills. The attendance was small but over 50 per cent. of those present asked for further information and in consequence follow-up meetings are to be arranged. Succeeding meetings have been fixed for Northwich (Bro. E. G. Roberts, Manchester, "*World Calamity—Divine Deliverance*"), Bolton (Bro. A. J. Lodge, London, "*From Universal Upheaval to Divine Peace*"), and Chester (Bro. A. Chrimes, Bromborough, "*Crises or Crisis—Whither Mankind?*"). The prayers of the friends are solicited that these efforts may redound to the glory and power of our Father and the wider knowledge of His Plan.

* * * *

Brethren in South Wales are planning a series of public meetings in June. On Sunday, 1st June, Bro. J. T. Read will speak on "*Crisis on Crisis. Whither Mankind?*" at the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Cardiff, and this meeting will be followed by one on Tuesday, 3rd June, at St. John's Ambulance Hall, Llanharen, by Brother Read, and a further one at the latter hall on Tuesday, 10th June, when the speaker will be Bro. W. Shepherd, of Penarth. A large number of leaflets are being distributed and there is very cordial local support for the venture.

* * * *

The Warrington Convention is now an event of the past, and the following report has been received: "The attendance was well maintained, and a number who had not formerly met at this gathering were happy to renew friendships of many years ago. The spirit manifested was beautiful, and the week-end was one of living testimony to the Heavenly Father. The Warrington brethren, who were responsible for the arrangements, would like to be known by all their wish and trust that the blessing and spirit of the Convention will sustain many in their consecrated life. A very acceptable feature was the singing, by Brother J. T. Read, of some wonderfully worded hymns. Both his singing and his ministry gave a foretaste of the blessings which others in the country will doubtless receive as he moves amongst the brethren."

* * * *

A few complete sets, unbound, of the "Bible Students Monthly" for 1946 are available at 5s. per set post free. Friends who have become readers only recently and would like to go back over past

issues may care to avail themselves of this opportunity.

* * * *

There is now in stock at Welling two very acceptable children's books. "*The Ten Camels*", published by our Australian brethren, is Rota-printed (the type being that of a typewriter—clear and easy to read), well bound in stout red cloth gold lettered cover. It contains ten stories illustrating the ten leading truths of the Bible, and is suitable for small children. Written in the first place by a Canadian sister for her own small child, these stories have found appreciative readers in the past and this new edition, which is better produced than previous copies, can be recommended. There are 138 pages, and the price is 3s. 9d. post free.

The other book is already well known. "*The Bible Story Book*" published by the Warner Press of U.S.A. is claimed to be America's best book of Bible stories. It certainly goes far to justify the claim. There are 608 pages, comprising 234 stories, 16 coloured plates, 160 illustrations, two maps, bound in good cloth cover, gold blocked, and attractive coloured dust wrapper depicting children of all nations, the whole being packed in cardboard box. The book is 9½ in. x 7 in. x 2 in., and weighs 4 lb. The stories are suitable for children up to say the age of 14. The price is 15s. 9d. post free.

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

- | | |
|------|----------------------------|
| June | 1-2.—Cardiff. |
| | 3.—Llanharen. |
| | 4.—Pontypool. |
| | 5.—Pengan. |
| | 6-9.—Yeovil. |
| | 11.—Central London. |
| | 12.—Anerley. |
| | 14-16.—Welling. |
| | 17-19.—Bognor and Arundel. |
| | 20.—Eastleigh. |
| | 21-22.—Portsmouth. |
| | 23-24.—Oxford. |
| | 25-29.—Rugby. |
| | 30.—Nottingham. |
| July | 1.—Nottingham. |
| | 3.—Mansfield. |
| | 4-6.—Lincoln. |
| | 7-8.—Melton Mowbray. |
| | 9.—Downham Market. |
| | 10-11.—Peterborough. |
| | 12-14.—Leicester. |
| | 15.—Kettering. |
| | 16.—Luton. |
| | 17-18.—Putney. |
| | 19-21.—Windsor. |
| | 22-24.—Walthamstow. |
| | 25.—Clacton. |
| | 26-27.—Ipswich. |
| | 29.—Maidstone. |
| | 30-31.—Petts Wood. |
| Aug. | 2-4.—London (Convention). |

Turn You Northward

A CALL TO ACTION

"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. Turn you northward." (Deut. 2. 3.)

It was after the generation that came out of Egypt had passed away, and forty long years of penance in the desolate territory surrounding the Gulf of Akaba at the northern end of the Red Sea had been endured, that the word of the Lord came again to Israel and electrified the host with its promise of great things to come. The terrible tragedy of Hormah, when the host from Egypt had essayed to take the land by force in defiance of the Divine command, had trusted in their own swords and personal prowess instead of the arm of the Lord, and had in consequence been soundly defeated by the Canaanites, was forty years in the past and the present warriors of Israel had not then been born. All they knew of the far-off stirring times when God came down upon Mount Sinai, revealing Himself by signs and terrible wonders; when the pillar of cloud and fire led the tribes through the wilderness; when the judgments of God had been exacted, time and time again, in consequence of Israel's rebellion and perversity, had been told them by their fathers. All that remained visibly to give evidence of those far-off days was manifest in the persons of three men, Moses, Joshua and Caleb, and those three stood before Israel sole witnesses to the veracity of God's promise. For nearly forty years the people had dwelt in one place—for most of the travels of the Exodus were accomplished in the first year of wanderings and for the bulk of the time they dwelt, spread irregularly over the eastern half of the Sinai peninsula, from Kadesh in the north to the Gulf of Akaba in the south, waiting and hoping for the relaxing of God's stern decree that they should remain there and not see the good land He had promised them until His wrath was assuaged and His due time had come.

Now, into the midst of this new and virile generation, sons of the desert, accustomed from birth to hardship and stern endurance, brought up in an atmosphere of religious observance and ritual worship which pervaded every activity of life, free from the idolatrous influences of Egypt, ready for the task of building up a new nation in a new land, came the call "*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward!*" Northward lay Canaan, the land of promise. Northward lay the fulfilment of all their hopes, the golden land

of all their dreams, the place where they should become a great nation, and God Himself would dwell with them, and under His leadership and in the glory of His presence they become rulers over all the earth and fulfil the promise to Abraham to the blessing of all men. No wonder that the host was excited as messengers went swiftly from camp to camp, from settlement to settlement, throughout the whole area where dwelt the three millions of Israel, proclaiming the message: "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom is at hand; prepare yourselves, O men of Israel, to go forward. *Turn you northward!*"

These were the men who conquered Canaan and translated the promise and the hope into reality. The generation that came out of Egypt could never have done that. They commenced the journey; they were the people who willingly entered into the Divine Covenant and cried with enthusiasm "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient", and they were the people who endured the hardships and privations of that terrible desert, that "waste and howling wilderness" where the sun scorched by day and the frost chilled by night, where they hungered and thirsted and suffered as perhaps few nations have ever suffered. They did it for an ideal. They followed Moses because they believed he would lead them to a land of freedom for their children, and despite their often waywardness and rebellion they did, in the main, hold to that ideal throughout. We are perhaps too apt to condemn that generation for their unbelief without giving sufficient value to the credit side of the picture. Those people brought into the world and trained up in the national hope and worship another generation which was better fitted than they themselves to continue and complete the work. Those slaves who came out of Egypt could never, in the natural way, have conquered Canaan for themselves. They were too weak physically, too divided in counsel, too insecure in their conception of the common ideal, to act with sufficient resolution ever to win themselves the land by the sword. True, God had foreseen that and expressly forbade them to make any such attempt. He would empty the land from before them, He said, and all they need do was to march right up in faith and possess it; but the adverse report of the ten spies was sufficient to destroy any assurance Israel might have had that

God could do this thing, and so, because they would not gain the land by faith, and could not gain it by the sword, their carcasses rotted in the wilderness, forty years. But even so, they did, even in their failure, make a great and essential contribution to the ultimate winning of the land. They brought into the world the men and women who did eventually enter, and prepared them for the task, and for that we must give them due credit.

To-day we stand at such a time. There has been a long time of waiting in the wilderness. The exodus from spiritual Egypt is already a long way in the past. Those of us who now live, in the main have no personal experience with the trials and difficulties of the early pioneers who fifty and more years ago proclaimed with fire and zeal the message they had received: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" There have been experiences many and varied since then; there has without doubt been lack of faith and vision and because of that a loss of power in service and witness. The proclamation has without doubt suffered because of that. The old sneer of the desert dwellers "Because their God could not bring them into the land which he promised them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness" has been repeated—and some even of the pilgrims have believed that too. The bright vision of the coming Kingdom has measurably faded, the assurance and certitude of things to come is not so firmly held, and, like Israel of old, there is an increasing tendency to revert to man-made aids to the preservation of our fellowship and the bringing in of the Kingdom. Just as Israel, when faced with their own failure to live on the high level to which God had called them, said "No, but we will go up ourselves into the land to possess it" and, attacking it with fire and sword, were soundly and deservedly defeated, so have we seen a time of materialism both in service and in doctrine, and the result has been leanness to our souls.

But—we of this generation can remedy all this, if we will. We may be small in numbers and influence, but not more so than the people of Israel in face of the hosts of Canaan, whose cities were "walled up to heaven" and whose inhabitants were as giants. If we are as grasshoppers in the sight of the world we are but as was Israel then; and they conquered. We are a generation that has the inestimable advantage of being the inheritors of a mighty work done by our immediate predecessors in the faith, and a wonderful tradition which it is both our privilege and duty to guard and amplify. We have waited many years for just such signs as we see around us to-day. The Kingdom now is nearer than when we believed. Is it not time then

that we listen for, and hear, the cry "*You have compassed this mountain long enough. TURN YOU NORTHWARD!*"?

The crisis of the Age is upon us, a crisis more momentous by far than that which faced Israel on the day those messengers ran from camp to camp in breathless haste with the message—even although their response was an essential preliminary to our own position to-day. If Israel had not answered the call, left their "place of habitation" in Kadesh (Psa. 107. 7) and taken up their responsibilities in the outworking of the Divine Plan, electing instead to remain where they were in the desert, *where would we be to-day?* And if we fail to heed the Divine call when the time comes to act, electing to remain quiet and inactive, intent only on the undisturbed contemplation of the Divine mysteries, *what is going to be the effect upon the continued out-working of that Plan?* Will God revise His times and seasons to await our convenience? Must the groaning creation, travailing in pain because it is "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" go on waiting beyond the time God has set because the sons of God refuse to be manifested? If God is ready for us, must He be kept waiting until we are ready for Him? Or will the words of Jesus come true in a more terrible sense than has ever been known before; "the Kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation which shall bring forth the fruits thereof". (Matt. 21. 43.)?

From the sphere of exhortation we must come down to that of practice, for the one is of no value unless it becomes a guide and stimulus to the other. Is there such a call now being uttered, and if so, what should be our programme in response to that call?

There is such a call. Individually and communally it has equal urgency. In the individual sense it comes to every Christian having understanding and strength to take up any kind of mental or physical activity in the service of our King. This aspect of the call must obviously be of greater moment to the young and middle-aged, for later in life both mental and physical resilience begins to yield to the progressive failure of the flesh, and the work of life is nearly done. To such there remains the privilege of prayer for the younger ones who henceforth must bear the heat and burden of the day.

In the communal sense the call is more of a "dispensational" character. Times come when another stage in the development of the Divine Plan has to be initiated, and God sends out once more the age-old call "speak to the children of Israel that they go forward". This is a collective call; no purpose can be served by the advance of two

or three out of the host. Israel must be agreed in spirit and in purpose, in method and in practice, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, fired by the enthusiasm of a common purpose, go forward together, "northward".

What doubt can there be that such a time is now upon us? In two short years, since major warfare ceased and men began to grapple with problems greater even than those created by the war itself, the whole aspect of the world order has been changed. We have in these two years seen visible evidence of that coming relapse of ordered world government into anarchy after an attempt at and a time of authoritarian rule, which is so clearly defined in the Scriptures as the last phase but one of the Time of Trouble. From then on, to the day of "Jacob's Trouble" and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom in visible glory and power may be a very short space, measured in terms of years. We may not say, even now, that it is five minutes to twelve; but it is certainly a long way past eleven o'clock.

What then is the programme? If we can once bring ourselves to throw off the shackles of the past and re-examine the position with fresh and unbiased minds it may not be long before the Holy Spirit breaks through into one mind and another and we as a community recognise the voice of God speaking in our midst, calling us to a period of clear-cut Christian progress, fellowship and service. We have much to proclaim, but we have also much to learn; and the practice of the Christian life and manifestation of Divine principles in daily life is probably capable of considerable improvement, not so much in individual life as in our life together as a fellowship of believers.

There are three aspects of our Christian life which exercise a profound effect upon our communion one with the other and the manner in which we make progress. They may be expressed by the three words "fellowship", "revelation" and "evangelism" and each of these aspects must be well considered in relation to our future.

Fellowship involves much more than the mere exchange of social pleasantries or the spending together of a pleasant Sunday afternoon. When the children of Israel turned northward they entered upon a fresh stage of arduous experience but they journeyed onward in the ties of a close fellowship. So with us; our fellowship involves the life of a family of God, in which each member is deeply and intimately concerned with the welfare of every other member and all are conscious of a common bond in a common aim and ideal. The first essential to any kind of progress together, whether in know-

ledge or in service, is a union of like minds and the only possible lasting basis for this is our common standing in Christ as His consecrated disciples. As students we are bound to arrive at varying conclusions in the interpretation of Scripture and this is to the good if by this means the constantly unfolding vista of Divine Truth is seen more clearly in all aspects. As proclaimers of glad tidings and heralds of the Kingdom there are bound to be different ideas as to the most effective methods of proclamation, and this too is good inasmuch as it serves to reveal by the acid test of actual experience how best the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour may be made known. But there is only one fellowship; only one bond of union and that bond is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in each one to sanctification of life, and flowing out from each one to edification and building up. The Shekinah glory, the Angel of the Presence, was in the midst of the host of Israel and under that overshadowing Cloud, and in the radiance of that Light, that host moved forward as one man. We have the Holy Spirit in our midst, around us and within us, to guide and protect us in our turn, and it is as a Spirit-guided company that we shall be united as one family so to fulfil our Divine calling, now as well as in the future, to be a "people for a purpose".

The second essential is revelation. God in His wisdom has from time to time "set" teachers in the Church and their stamp of Divine authority has been such that many, recognising that authority, have accepted the Divine provision thus made and advanced in the unfolding light accordingly. God also sees to it that the Church is provided with "helps" of all kinds, ministers who are able, in varying degrees, to instruct, encourage and exhort the household of faith. And God has not provided that a few monopolise this work of the Spirit; every member of the Body of Christ is a "help" in greater or lesser degree according to ability and zeal. So it comes about that although from time to time in the history of the Church a teacher arises to shed some particularly bright light upon a difficult part of its pathway, such interventions are the exceptions rather than the rule, and the more continuous revelation of truth lies in the ministries of each one of the brethren, the Holy Spirit through them all ministering as it will. It is in the studies, the quiet talks, the reading together, that revelation comes to each mind to appreciation of the truth, and essential therefore that, as the well-known exhortation has it, we "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together" so that our onward progress in the understanding of God's Divine Plan may proceed apace and fit us the more for the third essential in our "turning northward"—evangelism.

Now at the present time, halfway through the twentieth century, we have to realise that our Christian world itself has been subject to change since those earlier days, three generations ago, when the proclamation of the "Kingdom message" first began to go out to Christendom. The effects, such as they are, of the work done at that time should be taken into account when planning how best to fulfil our Lord's word "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation". Christendom as a whole was not prepared at that time to accept many of those advanced conclusions and so a very general and increasingly definite separation, on the part of the messengers, from the Christian systems of the day followed and this was good, for those messengers were in the position of learners and needed to be so placed as to study and learn without distraction and hindrance. Today the position is different. Many of these conclusions, proclaimed throughout the Christian world for forty or fifty years, have been accepted by evangelical bodies or by the great Churches, and, particularly in respect to the dispensational aspect of our faith, there is a far wider basis for service than seemed possible a generation ago. In one sense the separation must still persist, for our devotion to the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" demands that; but in another sense we do well to consider if we are not now privileged, with the knowledge of Truth that we have, to set out as teachers of Christian truth rather than remain forever in the school of debate and discussion.

The idea of the earthly Kingdom is taking hold of the minds of men. The object if not the manner of our Lord's return is beginning to be more accurately appreciated. Even that once infallible sign of heterodoxy, the doctrine of probation after death, is admitted in some Christian circles to be a possibility. Anyone who keeps in touch with the religious press knows of such indications that the message of the Kingdom, proclaimed in zeal and faith over many years, has taken some root, blossomed in due time and already brought forth at least this amount of fruit. And if this be so, we should be alert to take advantage of the fact and press home our further message with all force on the ground thus to some extent made receptive.

Our message, then, should include more than the mere proclamation of the coming Kingdom and the issue of present events in a great Time of Trouble to precede that Kingdom. In proclaiming the "acceptable year of the Lord" and the "day of vengeance of our God" we need to place before all who will listen, and particularly before those who already are Christian believers, the essential truths of the Bible regarding Sin, Redemption,

Repentance and the Divine calling to consecration of life for the service of God. On a lower plane of understanding, but still a very necessary one, must come the explanation and exposition of the Bible itself, its history, its trustworthiness, and particularly its basic principle, that man was created perfect and fell into sin, from which fall he is to be saved by the Mediatorial reign of Christ in the Millennial Age. Let us become known, not merely as prophets of coming woes to be followed by golden days, but serious, reasonable exponents of a Scriptural philosophy which is solidly founded on the "impregnable rock of Holy Scripture", which attempts fairly to meet the critics' objections even although it may not always provide a completely full answer, which views the problems of to-day in accurate focus and shows how the Divine way of life is the only solution to those problems. It will involve much re-examination of general ideas tacitly accepted for years but not necessarily well founded on Scripture. But it will lead us to a new realisation of the appeal underlying those historic words "Go ye, *teach* all nations".

The night is far spent; the day is at hand; therefore let us put off the bonds of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. There are such tremendous possibilities before us. We can march up and possess the land, if we will. Surely we have lingered overlong in Kadesh. Our brethren are crying out for the instruction and encouragement we can give them as a united people. The world offers scope for a vigorous prosecution of the message of Scripture, the good news of the Kingdom. The messengers are going about with their cry to the faithful, but there are not enough messengers. There is no need for leaders, for the Holy Spirit is with us, a Shekinah that will lead us safely if we as a people will follow together. What is needed now is not the command of a king, but the response of a people. Who will respond? "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward . . . *Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. TURN YOU NORTHWARD!*"

"The tendency of the age is to softness. Some may read this final message (obedience) and turning from it say—'This is not easy.' Easy! When did Christ suggest ease to men in the method of their own making? Did He not solemnly warn those who would follow Him to count the cost and indicate that the pathway of His footprints necessitated the denial of self and the taking of the Cross? If the perfection of character and pleasure of life and permanence of being for which we profess to be desirous, are ever to be realized it will be by strenuous action; time, thought, energy are all necessary."—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

A Path that no fowl knoweth

A STUDY IN JOB 28. 1—11

The Book of Job, like the Book of Proverbs, excels in descriptions of the virtues of Divine Wisdom, and its twenty-eighth chapter gives utterance to some of the most uplifting thoughts in all the Scriptures. "Where shall wisdom be found?" asks Job "and where is the place of understanding? The depth saith 'It is not in me' and the sea saith 'It is not with me' . . . but unto man God saith 'Behold, the reverence of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'" That is the theme of Job's parable, and it is in the development of that theme that he prefaces his picture of the search for wisdom with a natural illustration that must have been familiar to all his hearers—a vivid description of man's quest for the mineral treasures concealed deep below the surface of the earth. The mining profession is immensely old in world history, and Job's description of a miner at work in his own day is a fine piece of literature.

It is not merely as literature, however, that we look upon this passage. The Bible is much more than an anthology of the world's finest writings. It is a book of instruction for the man of God, and every one of its chapters has been set in its place by the overruling providence of the Holy Spirit, to the intent that teaching, exhortation and encouragement may be given to those who in every age have sought to know God's ways. Even so prosaic a subject as a day in the life of a Sinai copper-miner has been transformed by the inspired tongue of this man of God into a vivid illustration of the search for Divine wisdom, and at the same time becomes an analogy to the salient features of the Divine Plan, the very embodiment of that wisdom.

The passage in question is Job 28. 1-11. It is primarily descriptive of the art of mining as carried out in Job's day and betokens his own close acquaintance with the details. As he reflects aloud, so to speak, on the ardour with which men search underground for metals and precious stones whereby to serve and enrich the life of man, so he directs the mind to that parallel search "in the dark places of the earth" for the wisdom that will eventually make men like gods, "knowing good and evil". There is a striking contrast here between the attitude of the first human pair, who sought to obtain that knowledge by the easy way of self-indulgence, and failed, and this conception advanced by Job in which

Divine knowledge and wisdom can be attained by man, but only at the cost of great effort and hardship—perfection coming through suffering, or as in the New Testament setting "through much tribulation (shall ye) enter the kingdom". (Acts 14. 22)

In reading this passage it is desirable to remember that, first, it is written in poetic form and so far as possible the Hebrew rhythm needs to be retained in the English translation in order to bring out both its beauty and its sense, and second, that the translators of the Authorised Version were academic scholars, not practical men, and when translating the Book of Job, a book which abounds in technical terms connected with the arts and sciences of the ancients, they were often uncertain or even totally ignorant of the meanings of those terms and allusions. Excellent as is the A.V. as a rule, its renderings in the Book of Job often require correction in the light of present-day knowledge.

Job commences his parable by alluding to the already well known fact that the valuable metals—silver, gold, iron and copper—could be gained only by sinking mines in the mountainous and rocky places of the earth. He goes on to describe how men take no heed of the darkness of their mine workings, how they sink a shaft and are let down by ropes, swinging to and fro until they reach the bottom; how that the birds and animals of the earth will not venture into such places, but the intrepid miner, burrowing his tunnels underneath the very mountains themselves, restraining and leading off the waters that break out and would flood the workings, diligently seeks and finds the precious things of his quest. So he comes out again into the light, enriched with his discoveries; and so, says Job, is the lot of the man who has found Divine wisdom after the harrowing experiences of this world of sin and death.

In such light read the patriarch's words, adapted from the Authorised Version with necessary corrections.

*For there is a mine for silver;
And a place for the refining of gold.
Iron is extracted out of the ore,
And copper is smelted out of the rock.
Man setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out to the farthest bound.
He hath sunken a shaft away from the dwelling
of men.*

*They have no support for the foot;
They hang down, far away from men;
They swing to and fro.
Out of the earth cometh bread,
And underneath it is turned up—as it were
fire!*

*Among its stones are found sapphires,
And it hath ore of gold.*

*That path no bird of prey knoweth!
Neither hath the vulture's eye seen it.
The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the lion passed thereby.*

*He putteth forth his hand upon the red granite
And undermines the foundations of the mountains.
He excavates channels among the rocks
And restrains the streams that they trickle not.
His eye discovereth every precious thing,
And the hidden things he brings forth to light.*

There is a most interesting evidence of the date of the Book of Job in the first verse. The order of the four metals is the order of their relative value in the times before the Exodus. Silver was extremely rare and therefore more valuable than gold until considerably after the entrance of Israel into the Promised Land, and iron was of greater value than copper. Gold and copper were plentiful, silver and iron were scarce. Not until the Phoenicians began to bring silver from Spain during the times of the Judges did gold become the more valuable metal. There is this indication therefore that the passage before us dates back to at least the time of the Exodus, and probably much earlier.

Modern research has demonstrated the accuracy of Job's description. He speaks of iron and copper being smelted from the crude ore excavated from the bowels of the earth. The blast furnaces of Egypt are referred to in Deut. 4. 20, and remains of such furnaces dating back to the time of Abraham have been found in India and Mesopotamia. In the island of Cyprus blast furnaces identical in principle and general construction with those that exist to-day in the North of England, have been found. The copper thus produced was exported all over the ancient world and made Cyprus famous. With the addition of tin, which came from the ancient tin mines of Cornwall in our own country, this copper was used to make all kinds of tools and implements. It is highly probable that the copper articles which the Israelites gave to Moses for the construction of the Tabernacle furniture contained tin which had been mined in Cornwall, and we can take some pleasure in reflecting that probably some of our own ancestors in this land thus made their contribution to the material which was used in the Tabernacle's construction. The description of the mine shaft in

which men were let down, standing in a loop of rope, or maybe a crude box, swinging to and fro and with "no support for the foot" is also true to life. Such mine shafts, up to three hundred feet deep, and four thousand years old, have been found in the Sinai mountains and in other parts of the world. But the Holy Spirit did not cause this description to be recorded for the light it sheds upon the industries of the ancients. It was preserved rather for the light it can shed upon the life of the man of God, and it is because Job, with his profound knowledge of God's plans and his close communion with God, was able to frame his description in words which suggest deeper truths to our minds that we can linger over this chapter with such profit.

Silver, gold, iron, copper and sapphires. These are the fruits of the seeker's activity. To obtain them he must separate himself from the world of men, tunnel a way through the darkness under every possible condition of toil and danger and fight against the floods of waters which threaten to break through and overwhelm him. Dark and dismal is his lot, but he is at least shielded from the danger of wild beasts and birds of prey whilst he remains in the mine; they do not dare to penetrate the "secret place" in which he abides.

There are several analogies which may be drawn with this picture, but the one which comes most readily to the mind is that which applies the familiar Scriptural symbolism of the metals mentioned by Job. Taken in harmony with the main theme of the chapter, the search for wisdom, they present a miniature picture of the Divine Plan. The very first obligation laid upon the one who renounces the world's interests and becomes a "co-worker together with God" is to ask and seek Divine wisdom, the Truth from above—and silver is often used in the Scriptures as a symbol of that wisdom and truth. "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psa. 12. 6). "The tongue of the just is as choice silver" (Prov. 10. 20). "If thou seekest her (wisdom) as silver" (Prov. 2. 4). Just as the ancient miner went first for the silver, esteeming it as of more value than anything else, so do those that seek the Lord search for His truth, counting it as of supreme value to their lives and standing before Him.

From this receiving of heavenly wisdom, truth from above, into good and receptive minds, comes our understanding of Divine law which leads us so to walk before God that we may, by virtue of our Christian faith and practice, become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1. 4), symbolised by gold—another object of the miner's quest. The crude ore, as gathered from the mine, had to be com-

pletely crushed and the pure gold refined from it—an apt picture of the crushing, fiery experiences which are necessary to us before the fine gold of the Divine nature can be revealed in us. But when at length that longed-for end has been achieved, comes the turn of the iron. Iron, too, is a symbol, a symbol of earthly things that are strong and unyielding, and in this connection an apt illustration of the strong, irresistible rule that is to be established upon earth after the “sons of God” of this Age have been clothed upon with the Divine nature and shone forth “as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13. 43). It is this event for which the world is waiting, as seen so clearly by Paul when he said “the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8. 19).

But even this strong rule of the Millennial Age cannot be set up without prior preparation and endurance. The strength of that kingdom lies in the fact that its rulers, its administrators, have all been previously tried in the fire and found worthy. Iron is weak and valueless until it has been smelted from its ore in a blast furnace, and then worked by rolling, forging and hammering until all its latent strength is brought out. So with the rule of the Millennial Age. Its force, its power, its authority, its very effectiveness, is not derived merely from an arbitrary decree of the Most High, but from the rigorous course of development and testing to which its “princes” have been subjected. The “kings and priests” of that Age will have found their way to that position through the darkness of the mine workings and therefore the “iron” that they have produced is adequate to every demand that will be made upon it. The kingdom will not break in pieces like other kingdoms, but it shall stand for ever. (Den. 2. 44)

And so to the copper—familiar symbol of perfect humanity. Just as the silver of heavenly wisdom and truth results in the bestowment of the gold of Divine Nature upon the Church, so does the iron of Kingdom rule result in the copper of perfect human nature to mankind. The final fruitage of the miners’ activities will be the “melting of copper out of the rock”. Even men in the next Age will achieve perfection only through hard trial and endurance, and for men that Age, pleasant and favourable in many aspects, will have its call to stern endeavour and endurance. Men must build strong characters and be able to stand for righteousness to all eternity. The copper must literally, in the words of Job, be melted out of the rock.

But the greatest prize of all is found in the over-spreading presence of God’s majesty in all His creation. “The dwelling place of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and be their God”

(Rev. 21. 3). When all that hath breath shall praise the Lord, and every tongue in heaven and on earth is giving honour and glory and blessing to Him that sitteth upon the throne, for ever and ever (Rev. 5. 13) then indeed will the miners of this Age have extracted the last treasure from the earth. Perhaps Job was specially guided by the Holy Spirit when, of all the dozen or so precious stones that were mined by the ancients, he chose one for mention when he said of that gloomy place below the earth “among its stones are found sapphires”. Sapphires are pre-eminently stones of faithfulness, God’s faithfulness, the faithfulness which guarantees that as truly as God lives, all the earth shall be filled with His glory. “I will lay thy foundations with sapphires” He says to Zion (Isa. 59. 11). There was under His feet, when He appeared in vision to the elders of Israel in the days of Moses, a “paved work of a sapphire stone” (Exod. 24. 10), and when, later on, Ezekiel also saw Him in vision, there was “an appearance as a sapphire stone” (Ezek. 1. 26). So it will be when God at last appears to men in the accomplishment of His plans; His faithfulness will be manifest; there will be a sapphire stone “as the body of heaven in clearness” (Exod. 24. 10).

Let the miners, then, go on in all diligence, seeking precious treasure. The enemies of God and righteousness, the birds of prey and the fierce lions, will not be able to harm them as they go about their work, for such do not know that path, The vulture’s eye does not see it; the wild beasts do not tread it and the fierce lion dare not enter. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty . . . there shall no evil come nigh thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Psa. 91. 1, 10). That is the promise; whilst we are doing the work of God, the Lord will preserve us from all evil, and we shall come forth again into the light of day bearing precious treasure for the world’s salvation.

So do we challenge this world and all its might, fearing not to put out our hands upon the solid granite rocks in faith that those rocks can be riven by the power of our God. So do we tunnel under the foundations of the mountains, taking from out the very heart of the kingdoms of this world those things which shall be treasure indeed in the kingdom to come. So do we excavate channels among the rocks to entrap and lead off, to dam up and restrain the floods of error and opposition, of evil and unrighteousness, which break out to make our quest of no avail. So do we go on, in supreme confidence that it may be said of us, as was said of that unknown miner of long ago: “his eye discovereth every precious thing; and the hidden things he bringeth forth to light.”

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 5—Let God arise!

"Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet."

This is the first hint of the gathering storm. In front of the advancing Lord go pestilence and disease to decimate the hosts that would oppose the progress of His people. That is a fit symbol of war, the great desolator of mankind, war which breeds pestilence and throws fire upon the earth.

And now it is as though the Most High, rising to "shake terribly the earth", has paused for a moment to take stock of the position. *"He stood, and measured (i.e., took the measure of) the earth. He beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow (before him) whose ways are everlasting."* This is not the actual coming forth of God to judgment. It is preparation for that judgment, and as such corresponds very well to the troublous period in the first years of the twentieth century when the nations were engulfed in war, the first world war. They have struggled together ever since in a morass of tumult and strife, war and revolution, famine and disease, distress and disaster which has had the effect of scattering the symbolic mountains, the kingdoms of the world, and the driving asunder of the nations. And God has not yet come forth in judgment. He is yet in the day of His preparation, calling the nations to Armageddon and gathering them into the valley of threshing. "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles," He commands, "prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near . . . let the weak say, 'I am strong'. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together round about: thither the Lord will bring down thy mighty ones . . . multitudes, in the valley of threshing; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of threshing." (Joel 3. 9-14.) This is how God measures the earth, drives asunder the nations, scatters the everlasting mountains, and brings low the perpetual hills. We in our lifetime have seen this very thing come to pass; and to-day this gathering of the nations to judgment is all but completed and the stage set for the final act in the drama.

Men sense that fact, and they are afraid, just as afraid as were the inhabitants of Arabia and Canaan when they beheld the advancing hosts of the Most High coming out of the desert with the

Shekinah glory cloud at their head. Habakkuk knew of their fear, and described it in moving words. *"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble."* (vs. 7.) "Upon the earth" said Jesus, there will be "distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking to that which is coming upon the earth." (Luke 21. 26.) The time in which we live is such a time of fear, and the fear is well founded, for the sword of the Lord hangs in the sky above this doomed social order, and ere long will descend, as Isaiah said it would descend, "upon the people of my curse, to judgment". (Isa. 34. 5.)

The evidences of Divine displeasure with the earth increased as Habakkuk continued to behold the vision. He broke off his account for a moment to ask two questions—rhetorical questions, put in order to draw attention to the reality. *"Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?"* he asks *"was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots are salvation?"* The implied answer is in the affirmative. The Lord is displeased against the rivers and the sea, and is come out upon His horses at the head of His army against them. But what is meant by this allusion to the "rivers" and the "sea"?

In the Exodus story, the Red Sea and the river Jordan were barriers to the onward progress of God's people into their inheritance. The Red Sea was driven back, and the Jordan was restrained from flowing, to give the people free passage. In our day there are symbolic rivers and a symbolic sea which alike oppose the onward progress of the Divine Plan and they too will experience the Divine displeasure. The rivers symbolise human autocracy and the sea human democracy, both playing a prominent part in the affairs of nations to-day but both destined to give way before the triumphant march of the King of Kings. That the sea symbolises "the people" in prophetic lore, is demonstrated by Isa. 17. 12-13 "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased

as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like thistledown before the whirlwind". Of the great host that is to be raised up from the north parts to invade the land of Israel at the end of the Age it is said "their voice roareth like the sea" (Jer. 6. 23) an indication that their savage onslaught has behind it all the irresistible force that is associated with a mighty overwhelming flood of waters sweeping over the land and carrying away everything in its course. "In that day" says Isaiah, speaking of this same great host that will invade the Holy Land at the end "they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea". (Isa. 5. 30.) The picture is that of a tumultuous host of people recognising no authority save that which proceeds from their association together; the roaring is the roaring of "mob rule", of government by the masses, of democratic government without God; and God is against it. "Was thine anger against the sea?" asks Habakkuk. God's anger at the time of the end will most assuredly be against the sea.

And the rivers? The great rivers of the Bible—the Nile in Egypt, the Euphrates in Babylonia and the Tigris in Assyria—became the centre of each nation's life and the source from which it drew wealth and sustenance. To the river the nation owed everything, fertility of land, food, facilities for trade; all came from the river. To such an extent was this the case that in each of these countries annual ceremonies were held in honour of the rivers and their beneficent gifts. So the river very easily becomes a symbol of kingly power and rule, contrasting with the sea, general or mob rule. Ezekiel alludes to this, identifying Pharaoh king of Egypt with the river Nile. "Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself". (Ezek. 29. 3). Jeremiah, seeking for a simile to describe the coming of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt to do battle with the Babylonians at Carchemish, cried "Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth . . ." (Jer. 46. 7-8.) But Isaiah has the grandest passage, where the God Who is our King is also likened to a life-giving river. "But there the glorious Lord will be to us a place of broad rivers and streams . . . for the Lord is our king; he will save us." (Isa. 33. 21-22.) Just as the sea pictures or symbolises the restless masses of humanity seeking to evolve their own system of government, so do the rivers symbolise the more autocratic rule of kings and princes, of military powers and commercial interests; and the

anger of the Lord is against them all. God comes forth upon His horses, to war—and the chariots of salvation are following Him.

What are these chariots? They are the forces of heaven, coming forth to bring Millennial blessings to mankind immediately the judgment is ended. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." (Psa. 68.11.) Elisha's servant was permitted, for an instant, to see the chariots of God in the mountains, sent to defend the prophet of God (2 Kings 6. 17). Daniel saw the angelic messengers around the throne in his great vision of the inauguration of the Kingdom (Dan. 7. 10), and John the Revelator, seeing something of the same in his vision, said of the heavenly ones with the returning Lord "the armies which are in heaven followed him" (Rev. 19. 14).

The next verse marks the completion of God's day of preparation. "*Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word—SELAH.*" (vs. 9.) This is a poor translation and the meaning is obscure. The word for "tribes" also means an instrument of chastisement, and it is thought that the most likely rendering of the passage is "*Thy bow shall be bared, even the chastisements sworn by thy word*". Now if that is the true rendering—and it is certainly more intelligible and more closely connected with the context than is the A.V. rendering—we have a picture, from verse 4 to verse 8, of the "day of His preparation", the gathering of the forces that are to play their part in the closing scenes of this "battle of the great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16. 14) and then, in verse 9, all things being ready, God, as a great warrior, as it were, draws back His bow and lets loose the winged shaft that will bring judgment, swift and decisive, upon the hosts of Gog and Magog of Ezek. 38 and 39, that have arrayed themselves in determined opposition to His incoming Kingdom.

This conception of the swift descent of judgment upon the evil host is illustrated by allusions in other parts of the Scriptures. "For my sword shall be bathed in heaven" says God through the prophet Isaiah, "behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment" (Isa. 34. 5). Isaiah's 34th chapter refers directly to this same period of time, the final phase of the Time of Trouble. The prophetic song of Moses recorded in Deut. 32 has a similar strain when the Lord promises that at the end of time He will remember the sorrows of His ancient people and deliver them, inflicting judgment upon their enemies. "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword;

and mine hand take hold on judgment . . . I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh . . ." (Deut. 32. 40-42.) "The kings, of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed" says the Psalmist, but "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." (Psa. 2. 2-5.) And perhaps the most biting, burning, moving words of all are those of Jeremiah, directed, it is true, to the Philistines of his own day and having no prophetic application, but in their impassioned eloquence a fitting commentary on what has already been said. "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the seashore? There hath he appointed it?*" (Jer. 47. 6-7.) How can it be quiet, indeed, when all the sin and the iniquity of the long millenniums of human history has filled up the measure of human guilt and the earth cries to high heaven for judgment? How can it be quiet, when the outraged holiness of God will brook no further delay, and the seventh angel is raising his trumpet to sound (Rev. 11. 15), and the nations are angry, and the time of judgment is come, and of reward to the faithful saints and prophets, and of destruction to the corrupters of the earth? (Rev. 11. 18.) "He gathered them together" says the Revelator "to a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16. 16.) "After many days" says Ezekiel, addressing this same great evil host "thou shalt be *ordered forward*" (Ezek. 38. 8); and Joel, seeing in vision the result of that "ordering forward"

cries out "multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3. 14).

Thus the stage is set; the world in general, exhausted from its experiences in the preliminary stages of the trouble, the "Day of His Preparation", passively beholding the welding of every power for evil in the world into one great striking force, gathering and setting itself in array, ostensibly against the regathered nation in the Holy Land, but in reality against the Prince of Peace and all that is inherent in truth and righteousness; and on the other side, unseen by and unknown to men, the raising of that sword of the Lord, that terrific spiritual power which is to descend and in one swift blow annihilate for ever the greatest confederation of evil forces the world will have ever known. Ezekiel and Zechariah have vied with each other in finding words in which fitly to describe the overwhelming disaster that will descend from the heavens upon those who have dared to fight against God.

And at that point the prophet, overawed by the majesty and solemnity of the situation, breathes a reverent "*Selah*". In the Temple service there was a pause, a hush, as for a full minute the worshippers contemplated that gleaming sword upraised in the heavens, poised that in a moment it might strike down.

Just so, it may be, shall Christian workers in the not too distant future realise, as did Habakkuk, that the "gathering to Armageddon" is complete, the armies in position, the "land of unwallled villages" encompassed on every side, and, realising these things, wait with bated breath for that fearful maelstrom of Divine judgment that will demonstrate to all men without possibility of doubt that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth".

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

AN ESSAY ON A PERPLEXING SUBJECT

Most of us would agree that suffering has a definite value in forming character. We recognise that a man is the better for having his share of hard experience. It teaches him perseverance and self control. It widens his sympathies and deepens his understanding. In a word, some adversity is evidently necessary to bring out the best that is in us. For people who have never suffered are rarely worth knowing.

But when we have made every allowance for the educational value of suffering, we are still confronted with a problem of staggering proportions. For although some suffering does some good, the great

bulk has no apparent effect. All too often, what people are obliged to suffer seems just misery without meaning. It is but seldom that the "punishment fits the crime". This discrepancy between personal suffering and personal deserts has been noticed for thousands of years. The ancient Jews had a proverb that "the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge". So the problem is old enough, and the recent war has given it a fresh urgency.

If we would understand the cause and purpose of suffering, we must first examine the relevant facts.

If we are Christians, we start with the conviction that the physical world is the product of Divine creation, although we may differ in our beliefs as to the means adopted. But whatever we believe, we cannot fail to recognise a Design in Nature. And you cannot have design without a designer.

Furthermore, much in Nature is living. It is common knowledge that life can only come from life. Therefore it follows that the Power behind the world is a Living Person. This basic truth has a vital bearing on the problem of suffering. It means that the world was not just made and then left. And there is something about its design which is quite remarkable. In one way, things in Nature are perfect beyond all human craftsmanship. Yet, if they are left alone, they are incomplete.

Gardening provides us with some ready illustrations of how Nature is incomplete without our help. The crops, without which we cannot live, can only grow to perfection if they are properly spaced out and freed from the competition of weeds. In this connection, two quotations from Holy Scriptures are very much to the point. "*Cursed (i.e., unfinished) is the ground for thy sake.*" And "*in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground*". (Gen. 3. 17-19.) This was surely an invitation to man to co-operate with God in running the world. This conception of partnership is expressed many times in Holy Scripture. It covers the whole range of honest endeavour, from the routine of daily life to the specialised activities of the Christian.

When we examine the nature of human misery, we find that its primary causes are three in number. The greater part of the world's wretchedness and pain is directly due to the neglect of the land. Hunger is still the chief cause of man's sufferings. Even to-day millions are condemned to endure the miseries of malnutrition with its probability of deficiency disease. Yet the science of cultivation and our facilities for transport have both been developed to an extent which borders on the miraculous and all this is not just the tragic legacy of war. This heartbreaking contract between the actual and the possible is as old as the human race.

The second major cause of human suffering is money. We are accustomed to think of money as a means of ending or at least reducing suffering. This is often true in particular cases. But, taking the long view, the power of money has caused more suffering than all other factors put together. It is significant that the Bible does not condemn money, but the worship of money. A ready means of exchange is essential to organised life. For example, the shoemaker needs bread more often than the

baker needs shoes. There must be some ready means of keeping accounts between them. But that is very different from our elaborate currency system which has regulated human progress not by the needs of the many, but by opportunity of profit for the few.

Many illustrations could be given of the tragic consequences which follow this worship of gold, but one will suffice. In eastern lands, cultivation is an endless drudgery from lack of modern implements. Yet in western cities, skilled craftsmen who would gladly have made those implements have been condemned to continuous unemployment. Thus, with grim irony, has the power of gold kept one group of men in drudgery and misery, and the other group in idleness and misery, and both groups desperately poor.

But those who have never experienced unemployment may suppose its suffering ends with social insurance. Except for people with little self respect, to be unemployed is to feel useless and unwanted. That hurts more than pain, and is sadder than death. In fact, to feel unwanted is to die slowly.

All this comes of man's refusal to work the world in God's way, which is the only way in which it will work. He planned the earth to give work and plenty for all. He gave us soil and seed, timber, minerals and animal life, and many things with many uses. Even water, our common necessity, serves equally as drink, as a means of transport and as a source of mechanical power. And the bounty of God is constant. As Solomon declared at the dedication of the original Temple "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise" (1 Kings 8. 56). It is mankind that has failed.

We are bound to ask why God should allow men to fail, especially as that failure necessarily involves the spoiling of much of His own work. To answer this question, we must first ask another. Just how far can God prevent human failure? We must remember that He deals with realities, and not merely with appearances. Consequently, He is concerned with our motives more than our words and actions which may give them expression. The reason is obvious. Even a bad man can conform to the rules of good conduct for a particular purpose, but he remains a bad man. From the beginning, God has been engaged in a long term conflict with evil. So also has human justice. But magistrates and judges have to wait until evil shows itself in action; so their chief weapon is some form of restraint. God alone can tackle evil at its source. The Divine method is therefore one of persuasion. God simply invites us to change our motives, in Biblical language, to repent. Of course, He could change them forcibly; but then, they would cease

to be our motives. The evil in us cannot be destroyed that way. The truth is that evil can only be overcome with good. (Rom. 2. 4.) Force would be quite useless for this phase of the contest with evil. Of course, human justice is obliged to use force. But, in this case, the primary motive is the protection of society. We can summarise the matter as follows. God's attack on evil is a long term campaign against its cause. Man's part in this oldest of conflicts consists mainly in attacking the effects of evil, and is carried on by a mixture of prevention and punishment. But the great truth remains that goodness can only exist where there is freedom. Inevitably, this freedom has brought opportunities for the strong to impose on the weak. All too often the physically or financially strong are so morally weak that they cannot resist the temptation their position creates.

God is not indifferent to "man's inhumanity to man". He sent His own Son into the world to conquer evil and shorten the period of human suffering. And we should notice carefully the Divine method. There was no display of force and no intimidation of wrongdoers into a compliance with standards of decent conduct. The method adopted was persuasion. From the Gospels, we learn that Jesus helped many sorts of people, but there were some that even He could not help. These people were impervious to good influence because they had lost all sense of their own shame. Being without moral regret, they were capable of anything. They even came to gloat over the Agony of the Cross, whilst decent ordinary people were very disturbed, and this moral uneasiness prepared the way for Apostolic preaching. This same preaching has done more to reduce the amount of suffering than all the secular authority which has ever existed. The Gospel has shamed millions out of an unbridled self seeking and settled them into the harmony of a self disciplined life. For once we are Christian, we try constantly to clean up our motives. We are not left to struggle unaided. In the Parable, the vigilant father ran out to succour the returning prodigal. So in life, our Father in Heaven meets us on the road of repentance, and arranges that we find that moral and spiritual help without which we could never "make the grade".

So far, we have considered two main causes of human suffering which arise from a mixture of abuse and neglect, and for which mankind is collectively responsible. We must now face the problem of those kinds for which men are not directly responsible, that is to say, physical pain, and death.

Those who are obliged to endure a great deal of pain will naturally regard it as a major kind of suffering, but a little reflection will show that the

function of pain is really meant as a protection against it. For example, the human hand in contact with great heat is in danger of being destroyed. God mercifully arranged that dangerous heat, excessive cold, and all injuries, should give us pain. This pain is not meant to hurt for the sake of hurting, but rather as a warning to do something to repair the damage. On the same principle, the pain which follows indiscretions at table is a warning to be more careful in future. Of course, if we persist and ignore these warnings, we have only ourselves to blame. We blame the cook, but we dare not suggest that God is responsible.

Many people try to end their suffering by means of surgery. Opinion is sharply divided as to the value of operations as a means of ending some causes of suffering. Orthodox medicine believes that surgery effects a cure for certain diseases. Other practitioners accept it only as an extreme measure to relieve unbearable pain. This difference of view over operations is the echo of a fundamental divergence as to the true nature of illness. Doctors, and the public generally, tend to define illness as any condition of the body serious enough to interfere with normal life. So the doctor aims to end those conditions quickly in order that normal life may be resumed. But "orthodox" practitioners assert that so-called "illnesses" are not the real *cause* of suffering. They are the *clues* which indicate what is wrong. It is not yet common knowledge that the iris of the eye is a most reliable guide to the state of the whole body. The iris is divided into sections, each of which is connected to some vital organ. If this part is damaged or ceases to function properly, the fact is registered by a change of colour in the appropriate section of the iris. Thus, the qualified practitioner can see at a glance what is wrong.

We who are Christians believe that the human body is God's design—His masterpiece of physical creation. If we take away one of its parts, we remove something that He judged necessary for its proper functioning, and He has made the iris to reveal the fact when any part of the body is out of order. When we reflect on this merciful provision for sickness and accident, we feel a renewed awe and gratitude towards our Father in Heaven. It shows how much care He took to save us needless suffering.

But there is one class of suffering, the fairness of which is very hard to understand. Why does God allow babies to inherit disease and why does He permit children to be shackled from birth by some major disability? Obviously, the children are not to blame and, in many cases, neither are the parents. We can, however, be sure of one thing.

We have convincing evidence that God does not want people to remain disabled. The character and miracles of Jesus and His Apostles are sufficient proof of the Divine concern at human suffering. We submit that the early withdrawal of these gifts of healing does not disprove our conclusion, for God does not normally allow men to be channels of miraculous healing. The exceptions have always been very rare. The best answer to the problem rests more on Christian faith than on Christian history. In the Resurrection, the disabled will at last realise the joy of normality which, in this life, they could only envy in others.

Lastly, we must try to understand the purpose of that suffering which is associated with death. As we have already examined the question of pain, there is no need to consider the physical aspects of the end of life. We are concerned with the effects of death on the minds of the living.

We begin with the great truth that death is the wages of sin. (Rom. 6. 23.) The disobedience of our first parents made this world the battlefield for the forces of good and evil. This war is not for territory, not for material wealth, but for the allegiance of men and women. In this struggle, God has used death as a means of keeping the powers of evil in check, and has authorised men to do the same. Had evil men been allowed to go on living, the world would have been unbearable, and all progress impossible. (The first world society became so evil that it had to be destroyed in the Flood, only eight persons being allowed to survive.)

We know that evil is a major cause of human suffering. So death is not merely the wages of sin. It limits the time in which a man can do evil, and consequently the amount of suffering he can cause. This helps us to understand why only the thoroughly good will be allowed to live for ever. But most people are not evil. They follow what they believe are decent standards of conduct with only an occasional lapse. So when they die they are mourned quite sincerely. Such deaths cause real suffering in the hearts of the living, and their grief is often cruel and undeserved. This suffering does not come to punish, but to purify. It is not meant to crush us down, but to raise us up to a fuller life, and a truer perception of the things that really matter. Many a soiled mind has been washed clean in the tears of grief, and many a wavering heart has been made constant by the example of someone beloved who has departed this life in the faith and fear of the Lord.

To summarise our conclusions, we have seen that the greater part of human suffering is largely proportionate to man's failure to co-operate with God. Because God deals with realities, He made us free

to choose whom we would serve. For the same reason, He respects our choices which are meant to be free and independent of either threat or reward. God knew that our collective freedom, so essential to the eventual triumph of goodness, would also prove a frequent cause of individual suffering. So He has ordained that the unfairness of this life shall be equalised in the life to come. And in order that those who suffer should not despair, God mercifully inspired His servants with some understanding of His purpose, to record their thoughts in great words for our comfort.

"When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee":

"For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming."

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, or crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

"And he that sitteth on the throne saith 'Behold I make all things new . . . and he that overcometh shall inherit these things and I will be his God, and he shall be my son'."

Live to give the world a true conception of the unseen Lord. Put away self-indulgence, whether of the sense or thought, for this will undermine the better qualities of the heart. Carefully check impatience, uncharity, and insincerity of speech and manner. Embodiment in heart and life the meekness and gentleness, the purity and truth of the Lord Jesus. Do the commonest and smallest things as beneath His eye. Are you beset with chafing irritations and annoyances? Bear them as the martyrs the pillory and the torture chamber. You may do all these things by the grace of God and without brilliant talent.—F. B. MEYER.

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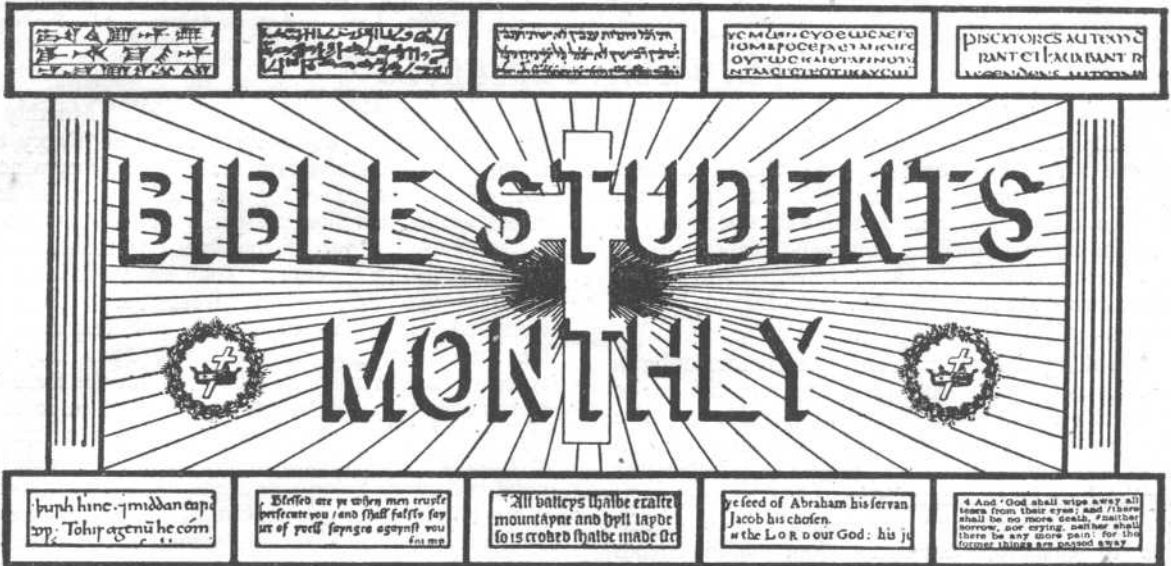
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BETWEEN OURSELVES

London Convention.

Arrangements for the August Convention in London are now complete and British readers should find a programme enclosed with this issue. It is hoped and believed that this occasion will be a means of true spiritual uplift and blessing to all who attend, and the prayers of the friends everywhere are solicited that this may indeed be the outcome.

One thing is very important. Accommodation in London is very difficult to secure and has to be reserved for a considerable time in advance. The brethren having this aspect of the arrangements in hand wish it to be known as widely as possible that applications for accommodation *must* be sent in by 15th July at latest; after this date it will be impossible to guarantee accommodation. Will friends requiring accommodation please write as early as possible, and definitely before 15th July, to the address given on the programme, stating requirements and maximum price it is desired to pay. Please make this known amongst the brethren; there is no guarantee, and very little likelihood, of accommodation being provided unless the request is made by 15th July.

* * * *

Free Literature

It is a privilege to supply free tracts to friends who for any reason are unable to meet the cost themselves. A Free Literature Fund exists for this purpose and to the extent made possible by this Fund quantities of various tracts will be sent gladly, upon request, to brethren who are able to make good use of them, either in door-to-door distribution or in other ways.

* * * *

An opportunity for students.

The recent unprecedented period of bad weather in this country, with the damage wrought by snow, flood and wind, coming on top of the failure of last year's harvest, is being connected by some observers and writers in certain Christian papers with the refusal of this country to carry out its obligation of facilitating the gathering of the Jews to Palestine under the terms of the Palestine Mandate. The text "*I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee . . .*" (Gen. 12. 3), is frequently quoted in this connection, and reference made to the apparent fact that adversity does attend nations which deal unjustly with the "scattered and peeled" (Isa. 18. 2) people of Israel. The assertion that history bears out the accuracy of this observation is so often made that it seems desirable to establish the facts and make them available in published form. Here is an opportunity for students, especially students of

history. You are invited to send to the "Monthly" accurate details of any occurrence in the history of Israel, from the Exodus to the present time, which goes to demonstrate either the *truth or the fallacy* of this impression that prosperity or adversity does in fact result from favourable or unfavourable treatment of that nation. Your entries should if possible give full extracts from the authorities consulted, and in any case should give reference to the sources of your information. They may be typed or hand-written, may be in full or the form of brief notes; they will in any case be used in combination with other such entries to make as complete as possible an exposition of the subject and will be published in such form as seems desirable. There is no time limit for entries, but, of course, the sooner the better. Such a booklet would be very useful to friends when this particular argument arises, as it often does nowadays in discussions on the significance of current events.

* * * *

Acknowledgment.

Brother Ford would acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, the receipt of anonymous donations during May of £2 and £1 respectively for the Benevolent Fund.

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Special Notice.

Will friends please note that the Welling Office will be closed from 27th June to 10th July and that any correspondence received during that period will not be dealt with or acknowledged until the week commencing 12th July.

* * * *

Gone from Us

These are our brethren that have preceded us into the "glory that excelleth".

Bro. H. Postill (Leamington) *May*.

Bro. W. Smallman (Warrington) *May*.

Appointments for Bro. J. T. Read

July	1.—Nottingham.
	3.—Mansfield.
	4-6.—Lincoln.
	7-8.—Melton Mowbray.
	9.—Downham Market.
	12-14.—Leicester.
	15.—Kettering.
	17-18.—Putney.
	19-21.—Windsor.
	22-24.—Walthamstow.
	25.—Clacton.
	26-27.—Ipswich.
	30-31.—Petts Wood.
Aug.	2-4.—London (Convention).
	16-17.—Coventry.
Sept.	6-7.—Lymm.

HIS CALLING

An exhortation from the
Epistle to the Ephesians

The apostle Paul prays earnestly (Eph. 1. 16-20) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would bless the Church so bountifully in wisdom, in knowledge and in heart appreciation that they will be able to know the hope of HIS calling. And the word "hope" is used in the best Bible sense of certain prospect and eventual attainment. On no occasion should we suppose the word to mean the hope of the man of to-day, for he in his most ambitious and happiest moments uses the word in the sense of "perhaps" and "I hope so". For the purpose of an interesting and profitable excursus in Scriptural truth let us read as though Paul is emphasizing the word "his" in v: 18. Is he not stressing the fact that the invitation emanates from the Father of glory alone; that while the whole plan of the ages is the ordering of the great Creator, this phase of His purpose is particularly HIS? Paul is impressing this upon us that we may the more value it; that our hope in it may increase; that we may gain confidence by it; that the eternal Father has deep interest in this portion of His workmanship; and that He does not dwell alone in inaccessible heavens waiting for His plans to reach their inevitable triumph, but is ever personally attentive to the needs of those who HE HIMSELF has called. According to verses 4/5, this calling was in His mind before the foundation of the world and that He had then predestined the honour to which the called should attain. Truly it is HIS calling. Planned long ago, but at long last at the appointed period the call goes forth, first by our Lord and then through His faithful disciples, particularly the apostle Paul. God had through the prophets of old declared His intention to recover and bless mankind, but this sacred secret was not revealed by them or known to them. It may be that this secret purpose can be deduced by close study of Tabernacle features and incidents in the lives of the early servants of God; but it is true to believe that it was "hidden in God" prior to its appointed time of revelation. And, furthermore, unless the Church truth had been revealed (for revealed is the true word) by the operation of the Holy Spirit it would never have been found by diligent students of the Old Testament. Throughout the law and the prophets God is declared as the creator, the lawgiver, the judge and protector—in fact, all that we revere in the word God; but beginning with our Lord, the Holy Spirit reveals Him as the heavenly Father. And it is because He is the Father of the Church, and they His sons as shown in the N.T.

that we may know that in the highest sense it is HIS calling. Hence His personal interest in the welfare of His sons. And that is why Paul when planning such words as Romans 8 and the first four chapters of Ephesians speaks in such exultant tones. It was this new aspect of relationship to God in our Lord's words about His Father and our Father (seen particularly in John's gospel) that caused Philip to exclaim "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us". The answer to Philip and to us all who make the same request is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church dispensation, and the answer does suffice, does satisfy us that "the Father himself loveth you". Only by the knowledge that it is HIS calling can we fathom and accept the fatherhood and love of God.

But, whereas we assume that Paul emphasises the point that it is HIS calling, when writing to the Corinthian church he says it is YOUR calling. (1 Cor. 1. 26.) He changes the word in order to assure these brethren that they, even they, were called. It is probable that were the work of calling deputed to us, we should have passed Corinth by as unsuitable. None knew better than Paul the failings of this ecclesia; he knew that when they considered the breadth, and length, and depth, and the height of the love and also the call of God they would know themselves to be unworthy and might become despondent by introspection. In the context of 1 Cor. 1, Paul has forestalled any plea of unworthiness by describing the ones whom God has honoured with His calling, and the description fits the Corinthian brethren very well. Thus by saying it is the foolish, the weak, the base and the despised which He has called, he is contrasting HIS calling of Eph: 1 with YOUR calling of Cor: 1. Both points of view are true, for it is HIS because it is His purpose and grace and it is YOURS because you are called according to His purpose. Is there not strength and assurance in the belief that we are called, even though we know in ourselves that we often fall short and cannot ever be worthy in ourselves? And, in 1 Cor. 1. 30 Paul adds that by God's provision, Christ "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and deliverance" and thus we may know that our deficiencies are supplied by His gifts. Let us believe with James that God hath chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith, for by doing this we shall assure ourselves that it is OUR calling.

When writing to the Hebrews (ch: 3: 1) he describes it as being a HEAVENLY calling. It

is heavenly in origin and in prospect. We who once were Gentiles may believe and hold the church promises in this epistle, but should remember that primarily it was written to those who had long been the favoured people of God. As children of Jacob they had promises heavenly in origin but not in prospect. They had blessings of which, like the Church later, they were not worthy, but nothing in those promises gave any hope that even the great man of Israel would ever reap heavenly reward. And, they had already been called; called out of Egypt; chosen by the Lord God to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deut. 7. 6-8). On Mount Sinai, Moses, as near to heaven as it was possible for man to be, had received the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and by the giving of the law with its provision of sacrifice and priesthood; and given a fair land in which to dwell, with promises of blessing in basket and store, they were ranked above the surrounding nations. It was to this favoured people that the HEAVENLY call first is made, being at first thought, the people most likely to accept the new appeal. On the other hand knowing themselves to be the chosen people with ample proof of Divine blessing, they might question any new offer purporting to come from their own God of Israel. And so the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the heavenly prospect of the call as distinct from the best of earthly promises which they had enjoyed. He was offering something far better, something heavenly, based upon a better sacrifice. In the second chapter of Hebrews he expresses this new and heavenly call as bringing many sons to glory, and that the chief Son Who had been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death was now crowned with glory and honour, which in a later chapter he shows to be at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. And from the words of our Lord Himself we know that He has gone to prepare a place for these sons of glory and that on His coming again He would receive them unto Himself; that where He was there they would be also.

When Paul writes to the Philippian church he refers to it as a HIGH calling, and again the context tells why in that connection he so speaks. The heavenly calling is of course a high calling as to destination, yet he speaks of the HIGH calling as to rank. Think of the rank to which Paul had been born as a Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law, a Pharisee. (Phil. 3. 4-5.) His standing was so high that he could have boasted that if any man thought he had whereof he could trust in the flesh, he had more. But those things which were gain he counted loss for Christ. His high rank as a Jew he renounced most gladly for the hope

of His calling, "the HIGH calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 14). Called in his youth and taught in the perfect manner of the law at the feet of Gamaliel; called while on the Damascus road to be an apostle; there was another call to which all his powers were centred and he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the HIGH calling. Thus he was able to forget those things which were behind, honourable though they were and reach forth unto those things which were before, knowing that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3. 4).

Writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 1. 9) he speaks of the HOLY calling—a reminder that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14.) A call to be like Him who issued the invitation. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1. 15/16.) Here Peter quotes from words addressed to the nation who had been called out of Egypt to be a holy nation unto himself. God's method of forming them into a holy people was to separate them from the surrounding nations and bless them. He blessed them so abundantly that He appealed to them in later times through the prophet Isaiah, saying "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" That they failed to be worthy of their status is too well-known to need noting now, providing that those who now are called with the HOLY calling profit by their failings. For again the call is issued to us to be a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. The called of to-day will also be separate (though not isolated) from the world by the Father's answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17. 15 "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil". The sons of God may confidently know that He Who kept Israel, never slumbering or sleeping, will also keep them; it being understood that the sons will walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called.

We may say then, that the calling is HIS in origin; YOURS by gift; HEAVENLY in origin and prospect; HIGH in rank; and HOLY in requirement.

"It is so in the revelation of Jesus Christ. When the eyes of men are opened to see Him in all His grace and wisdom and sympathy—in all the sufficiency of His sacrifice and the comfort of His spirit—the heart is satisfied, and every rival light is lost in the infinite splendour."—JOSEPH PARKER.

Michael The Archangel

A PRINCELY CHAMPION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

So many theories have been woven around the identity of the Divine messenger who appears in the Scriptures under the name of Michael, that one does not realise at first thought that his name only occurs five times in the Bible. A slender basis, this, upon which to build, and yet there is sufficient to afford ground for an interesting study of this intriguing personality—Michael the archangel.

Although Scripture references to Michael are very scanty, he does figure prominently in other Hebrew literature. It would not do to take these other allusions as the basis for belief, but they help to illuminate the subject and make the Bible statements more easily understood.

Michael is called "the archangel" in the Epistle of Jude (Jude 9) and "the prince" or "chief prince" in the Book of Daniel. Another passage in which his name is mentioned is chapter 12 of Revelation, where the reference is a symbolic one. The only other angelic being referred to by name in the Bible is Gabriel, who appears both in Daniel and in Luke's Gospel. Gabriel is not called an archangel, but the Jews counted him as such, and in fact believed that there were seven archangels in the courts of heaven, each commissioned to carry out certain duties. In this the Jews probably based their ideas largely upon Babylonian mythology, for the Babylonians believed in the existence of seven "Watchers" who controlled the affairs of heaven and earth in subordination to the three supreme gods, Anu, the god of heaven, Ea the god of the sea, and Marduk (Bel or Merodach in the Old Testament) the god of the earth. It is to these "Watchers" that reference is made in Dan. 4. 13 and 17, where Nebuchadnezzar saw "a *watcher* and a holy one" come down from heaven, and where the decree against the great tree was said to be pronounced by the "watchers."

In the time of Daniel, and onward into the days of the New Testament, this belief in the seven archangels was general among the people of Israel. By common consent Michael was esteemed the leader of the seven; his especial work was the protection and defence of Israel, the chosen people. Hence he was thought of in the light of a great heavenly warrior, always ready to do battle against Israel's foes. He was known as the "Prince of Israel". Next in the popular mind came Raphael, (not mentioned in the Bible) who was commissioned to care for the material interests of men and heal their diseases. Gabriel was the messenger of God, having jurisdiction also over the lost Garden of Eden

(which the Jews believed had been preserved and would be thrown open to them at the Last Day). The remaining four were Uriel, placed in charge of the earth and of Tartarus; Raguel, who controlled the movements of the sun, moon and stars, that they might serve man's needs in giving light and warmth to the earth; Saraquel, who was the guardian of the imprisoned evil spirits; and Remiel, archangel of the resurrection. We need take no account of the five names not mentioned in the Bible but we do well to note the harmony of Scripture in respect to Michael and Gabriel, that the one is the spiritual defender and princely champion of Israel, and the other the messenger of God.

In our examination we have to bear in mind the suggestion that is often made to the effect that Michael was really the Son of God in His pre-human state, prior to His coming to earth as Jesus of Nazareth. There is no basis for the acceptance or rejection of this suggestion other than the four passages in which Michael is mentioned, and these four passages will be examined in turn.

"*Yet Michael the archangel*" says Jude (vs. 9) "*when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*" The incident to which Jude refers is recorded in an apocryphal book, but not in the Old Testament. It is evident though that Jude's readers understood the allusion quite well, and the importance of the verse to the present study lies in Israel's belief in the existence of a heavenly being, Michael the archangel, at the time of the Exodus, one of sufficiently exalted rank to challenge and oppose the devil and yet so much subordinate to God Himself as meekly to leave the issue of the matter in His hands. Whether such an incident as is referred to by Jude actually occurred or not is beside the point. Jude could have access to sources of information now denied to students, but the verse is important as testifying to Jude's acceptance of the fact of Michael's existence.

In this perhaps lies an indication that Michael should not be identified in person with the Lord Jesus Christ. The attitude and words credited to him seems more appropriate to an angel, even if of high rank, than to the One Who was the Father's Executive in all the works of creation. There seems something out of harmony with the dignity of His position in thinking of Him as involved in this kind of controversy with the Devil.

There is a more definite and detailed picture of Michael in the book of Daniel. The venerable prophet had been engaged in earnest prayer for the return of Divine favour to Israel, and Gabriel had been sent to him with the message of the "seventy weeks" which were to culminate in the appearance of Messiah. That was in the first year of Darius, the year that Babylon fell (538 B.C.) Two years elapsed before Cyrus succeeded Darius and issued his famous edict permitting the Jews to return to their own land. According to chapter 10 it was three years later still, in the third year of Cyrus, that Daniel, mourning and fasting three whole weeks because of the apparent non-fulfilment of the promise, was granted another visit from the Divine messenger. Gabriel's name is not mentioned this time—chapter 10—but it is fairly obvious from chap. 11. 1. that the messenger is the same one who visited Daniel in the first year of Darius. Now Gabriel, in coming to Daniel, says (11. 12-13) "... from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand... thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I left him there with the king of Persia."

This is a record of a historical incident. Daniel did actually behold and converse with a heavenly being. And if Gabriel is thus demonstrated to be an actual personality, then the Michael who came to his assistance must be equally real. There can be no doubt about Gabriel, for the gospel of Luke (1. 19 and 26) tells of his visits to Zacharias and to Mary the mother of Jesus, and it follows logically that angels bearing these names do literally exist, and that Michael the archangel did in fact come to the assistance of Gabriel the archangel in his conflict with the "prince of the kingdom of Persia".

Here we have some evidence of the activities of the "fallen angels". The Jews held that each nation had an angelic "prince" which had much to do with that nation's destinies. Just as Michael was their own champion, so Persia and Greece had evil angelic champions. The record in Daniel lends support to this belief; if it is believed that Daniel does describe a visit of the angel Gabriel to Daniel, that the story as written is literally true, then it must equally be believed that Gabriel was successfully resisted in his mission for twenty-one days by the angelic "prince" of Persia, and was only able to resume his duty when Michael, the "prince" of Israel, came to his aid.

What was the nature of that spiritual conflict? Certainly not a warfare in the sense that men know warfare. Much more likely that it was a spiritual battle between good and evil angels for the mastery of the mind of Cyrus, the king of Persia. It is

claimed by scholars that the first verse of chapter 10 should read "first" year of Cyrus, and not "third"; and this is the rendering of some copies of the Septuagint. If this is so, it would bring this conflict to the time when Cyrus issued his famous decree for the Return from the Captivity. Surely the evil "prince" of Persia must have been busily engaged attempting to influence the mind of Cyrus against issuing such a decree, one which would advance and help to fulfil the Divine Plan. He must have suggested every possible objection to the proposed course of action, labouring in the interests of his master, Satan the Prince of Evil. And by making use of the many men in the Persian court who were amenable to evil suggestions there might be a very considerable force exerted against the issue of that decree which meant so much to Israel.

Is this why Gabriel was detained twenty-one days, endeavouring to counteract these evil suggestions by correspondingly good ones, influencing the king in the direction of carrying out the Divine designs? It had been prophesied by Isaiah two centuries earlier that Cyrus would set Israel free and become God's instrument for this purpose (Isa. 44. 28 and 45. 1.) Perhaps Gabriel brought this fact to the king's mind and endeavoured to fire him with the ambition to effect what was written of him. But evidently the suggestions of evil were becoming predominant, until Israel's own champion, the archangel Michael, came upon the scene and Gabriel was able to resume his interrupted commission with Daniel.

Michael was triumphant. Those spiritual powers of evil which dominated Persian affairs were overthrown, at least for the time being. The nature and progress of Michael's intervention in the spiritual sphere, beyond the veil of human sense, cannot be guessed or described, but its results—if this really was in the first year of Cyrus—are obvious in the favour shown by Cyrus to the Jews for the rest of his life, besides the famous Decree which gave them liberty. If the liberation from captivity which took place at that time was due to the valiant endeavours of Michael the archangel, this would be quite in harmony with the Scriptural statement that "in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia... the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation..." (2 Chron. 36. 22-23, Ezra 1. 1-2.)

These two incidents, the one in Jude and the one in Daniel 10 are records of historical events. They describe Michael's actions in the execution of his duty. The other two references to his name, one in Dan., 12. 1 and the other in Rev. 12, occur in what is called, technically, "apocalyptic", that is to say, prophetic descriptions of coming events expressed in symbolic language of such a nature

that only the initiated could understand it. In such symbolic passages, as is well known and understood amongst us, figures and things familiar to the prophets and the people of their day were used as symbols of the real truths about which the prophets were talking—hence our use of the term “symbolic.” Thus in Rev. 4 the lamb is a symbol of Christ, in Rev. 19 the woman seated upon a beast, an apostate church allied with a corrupt civil power; and in Rev. 21, Jerusalem pictures the new government that will be set up during the Millennium. The references to Michael in these two symbolic passages must be interpreted in harmony with their symbolic context.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel furnish a symbolic description of the progress of events affecting Daniel's people from the time of Persia to the establishment of the Kingdom. As the account unfolds and develops from the simple conflicts of Persian and Greek kings to the much more complex struggles of modern times it becomes increasingly evident that the “kings” of chap. 11 picture great dynasties and military powers, until at last the final world power of evil which is broken before the incoming Kingdom is symbolised by the last king. Now of this time, the time of great trouble such as “was not since there was a nation”, the time of the resurrection of the dead, the time of reward for the faithful followers of God, the angel says “*At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people*”. There can be no dispute as to the time of this event, for there is only one point in world history at which the dead are to be raised; likewise there can be no dispute as to the identity of the great Deliverer Who is to stand up at that time. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That is the great truth to which Gabriel referred. But since to Daniel and his people, knowing nothing of Christ and having as yet only an incomplete idea of the Messiah, some symbol capable of conveying the idea was necessary, the angel adopted the appropriate and obvious symbol of Israel's spiritual champion—Michael the archangel. That was enough for Daniel and his compatriots. That assured them of the certainty of coming deliverance; and as we read the passage and then our Lord's interpretation of it in Matt. 24 we realise that Michael the archangel was used as a symbol or figure of the world's great deliverer, Jesus the Son of God.

A similar usage is met with in Rev. 12. There will be no attempt here to interpret this much discussed chapter, but only to point out that since it is so very obviously a highly symbolic chapter the reference to Michael and his angels is evidently symbolic also. After the “catching up to heaven” of the “man child”, away from the threatened grasp

of the dragon, we are told (vs. 7 and 8) “*and there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels; and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.*” The dragon is symbolic of a strong earthly power—Pagan Rome; this much at least is agreed by most expositors—and Michael, with his angels, must be symbolic of the heavenly power which engages this dragon in combat and overthrows his power in the “heaven” which he occupied at the time of the opening of the vision (vs. 1). To say more than this would involve a complete exposition of Rev. 12, which is outside the scope of this article. Suffice it now to say that here, as in Daniel 12, the name of Michael is made into a symbol in order to convey a definite idea—the uprising of a righteous power to fight with and overthrow the forces of evil at a time of great need.

It may be concluded then that there is reasonable ground in the Scriptures for believing in the existence of two greatly honoured holy angels—archangels, meaning “first” or “leading” angels—named respectively Michael and Gabriel; that both these angels have intimate connection with earthly affairs in the course of their service for their Creator; that Daniel 10 and possibly Jude 9 record actual events in which Michael took a leading part, and that Daniel 12 and Revelation 12 use his name as a symbol in the series of apocalyptic prophecies which those chapters enshrine. There is no ground for identifying Michael with the Son of God as though they were one and the same person; in point of fact, it is perhaps more appropriate to think of Michael, surely held in high esteem in the heavenly courts, as created on the same plane of being as was Lucifer before his fall, and in consequence of his sterling loyalty to God entrusted with important missions to earth in connection with the recovery of mankind from the results of Lucifer's fall.

“*Blessed are the poor in spirit*” (Matt. 5. 3).
Why did Christ call this condition blessed?

It is, for one thing, the only condition of peace. It delivers us from all bondage to what others think of us. Their criticism does not wound us. We know ourselves too well for that. The feeling of inferiority is lifted, for we know that all we can ever be, is of His grace, and that is ours to the full. We cease to care about the applause of men, for the real story of whatever good we do, is all God's work in us and through us. But free from ourselves we can see and value others. The worst barrier to real fellowship is gone, for the thing that isolates us is pride.

(The “*Herald of Christ's Kingdom.*”)

HABAKKUK - PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 6—Conclusion

"Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken." (Ezek. 39. 8.) There is a ring of finality about those words. Well may there be, for they speak of the most comprehensive and spectacular judgment against evil that up to that time will have ever been witnessed upon the earth, not even excepting the great judgment of the Flood. The sword of the Lord will have descended; and things on the earth will never be the same again. It is this final arising of God to judgment in Armageddon that is prefigured in the remainder of Habakkuk's vision.

That "Selah", in the middle of verse 9, divides the "Day of His Preparation" from Armageddon, or as it is sometimes called, "Jacob's Trouble". The preparation is ended; the nations have been gathered together in the symbolic "Valley of Jehoshaphat" and God is ready to reveal Himself for the salvation of His people. To this time belong the events of Zechariah's vision, recorded in the last three chapters of his prophecy. Israel has been regathered and is settled in prosperity and faith in the land of promise; the forces of evil have laid their plans and set out to crush this new power for righteousness that is arising in the earth with its centre at Jerusalem; there is a temporary and partial success—"half of the city shall go forth into captivity" (Zech. 14. 2)—probably a cleansing of the land from faint-hearted and faithless elements; and then, with the people and their governors, waiting in faith and assurance the further onslaught of their enemies, the unbelievable thing happens—God intervenes.

Habakkuk in his vision saw the breaking of the storm that had been gathering, and all the forces of nature joined together in one great onslaught against the earth. Behind the storm he saw the majestic figure of the God of Israel, coming forth in anger to judgment. "Thou didst cleave asunder the rivers of the earth" cried the prophet in wonder, as he saw the earth rent by the breaking forth of mighty waters from its depths. "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the inundation of the waters swept along; the abyss uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." Habakkuk saw a repetition of the Flood of Noah's day, sweeping all the enemies of God away and overwhelming them in its depths. "Upon the wicked he shall rain burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psa. 11. 6.) The word

which is rendered "deep" in the A.V. is the Hebrew *tehom*, the primeval chaotic abyss which harks back to the waste and void condition of the earth described in Gen. 1. 2, the condition in which it stood before God began to prepare it for human habitation. The use of the same word here seems to indicate that Habakkuk witnessed a gigantic upheaval of the earth and the bursting forth of the waters of the abyss, destroying completely all the works of man. "The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high"—with a roar like thunder the earth opened to permit the uprush of a giant waterspout from the depths. That is the picture; and it fitly describes what may yet very well prove to be one salient feature of the Last Days, an uprising of the peoples which will shake and destroy the symbolic mountains, the autocratic kingdoms of earth.

But the storm is not finished at this—it increases in fury. The sky grows ever darker and the sable curtain of clouds overcomes the sun and moon so that they seem to withdraw themselves and retire from the scene. "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, at the shining of thy glittering spear." (vs. 11.) "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood" says Joel, referring to the same happenings, and the sixth chapter of Revelation, describing the breaking of the "sixth seal" uses a very similar expression in connection with the same events. In Habakkuk's vision it is as though the brilliancy of the lightning (the "light of the arrows" and the "glittering spear"—the darting flashes being likened to the celestial arrows and spears of the Almighty shooting down upon His enemies) has so outshone the heavenly luminaries that they have ceased in their onward progress across the sky and gone into the storm clouds out of sight.

Now the Lord is pictured as coming forth at the head of His legions. "Thou didst march through the land in indignation; thou didst thresh the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed" and then, following Rotherham, "thou hast crushed the head out of the house of the lawless one, baring the foundation up to the neck." (vs. 12-13.) Here is depicted the active intervention of God to the physical scattering of the invading host, an assertion that God has thus gone forth in order to effect the salvation of His people, regathered Israel, and an

intimation that He is accompanied in this onward march "with thine anointed", as though in coming forth for the salvation of His "people" he is at the same time accompanied by His anointed. Now we know that although in all these Old Testament prophetic scriptures it is God Himself, the Father, Who is spoken of as rising to defend His people, it is in actual fact the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, Who comes to earth for the purpose of overthrowing the enemies and setting up the Messianic Kingdom, coming and reigning in the power and authority of the Father and enshrining in His own Person all the duties and offices which in this connection in the Old Testament are applied to "Jehovah"—the God of Israel. Hence this allusion to the "anointed" being with Him at the time He is revealed in glory for the defence of Israel is particularly apt; for the Lord will have already returned and gathered His Church before these events of "Jacob's Trouble" have commenced, and hence quite logically will have His Church with Him when He is revealed in judgment against the evil forces and in mercy upon those that have put their trust in Him. This verse in Habakkuk therefore corresponds very well with the "opening of Heaven" in Rev. 19 where the rider upon the white horse emerges, followed by the "armies which were in heaven" to do battle with the forces of evil gathered against them on earth.

Here there is another "Selah", another pause in the Temple service. At the last "Selah" the worshippers were able to contemplate the vision of God arising to judgment; at this one they see Him marching through the earth scattering His enemies; when the story is resumed the work is complete and the workers of evil have been utterly routed. The prophet looks back on what he has seen. "*Thou didst strike through with his staves (weapons) the head of his villages. They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters (vs. 14-15.)*" The first phrase in the 14th verse is very significant. It implies that God has turned the enemies' own weapons back upon themselves—"thou didst strike through with his weapons the chief of his warriors" is one rendering thus paralleling the expression in vs. 12 "the head out of the house of the lawless one". There seems to be some suggestion here that the mighty army of Gog will in part at least encompass its own destruction by means of its own weapons. The prophet permits himself one word of exultation in a minor key. "They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me" he says, identifying himself with those of his people who would be living when the great day came—"their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly"—a word remi-

niscient of Ezekiel 38 where the same host plans to sweep down upon an apparently defenceless people "to take a spoil and to take a prey".

There the vision ends. The evil host has been scattered. Israel has been delivered, and Habakkuk is satisfied. From what he has seen he is content; he knows now that even though the time be long and Israel suffer yet further agonies of distress and persecution, at the appointed season God will come forth and save them with an everlasting salvation, and in that knowledge he can rest.

But although Habakkuk was content, he was by no means unconscious of the severity of that final trial upon Israel. Well did he realise the horror of the situation and although his heart leapt at the prospect of Israel's final glory, it sank at the thought of the trouble that must needs precede it. And it is here, in this 16th verse, that we stumble across one of the most amazing statements to be found in any of the prophecies; amazing, because it reveals Habakkuk's own knowledge that he himself was destined to live again upon earth and witness for himself the stirring events that he had just seen in vision.

"I heard" he says ". . . and I trembled in my place, that I should rest, waiting for the day of trouble, when he that shall invade them in troops cometh up against the people." This is the Revised Version rendering. It declares in plain language that Habakkuk expected to rest in death until the events which he has just described come to pass. The implication is plain that he expected his period of "rest" then to end that he might share with his people the experience of that great day of invasion and deliverance. Leeser renders the passage "*That I should rest till the day of distress, till the withdrawing of the people that shall invade us with his troops.*" There seems to be no doubt that this is the literal meaning of the text, and the amazing thing is that Habakkuk saw so clearly that he, and those who, like him, were "heroes of faith" of old, were destined to be raised from the dead in order to witness the overthrow of the powers of this world and take over the reins of government on behalf of earth's new King, Christ Jesus. "I will restore thy governors as at the first, and thy princes as at the beginning" says God through the prophet Isaiah. Habakkuk must have known the inner meaning of those words, and looked forward in faith to the day when he should stand once more upon earth and witness Israel's final glory. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." (Isa. 54. 7.)

It is this same understanding, and this same time, to which Zechariah refers when, speaking of the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem, he says "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like

an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about" (Zech. 12. 6.). Those "governors" are the resurrected "Ancient Worthies" or "Old Testament saints" as they are variously called, and Zechariah's words indicate that they will have returned from the grave and be in control of affairs in the regathered holy nation when the great onslaught of Gog is launched.

It is at this climax that Habakkuk has given expression to one of the finest expressions of faith to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. The confidence engendered by the vision he has seen is such that he can now regard the greatest of disasters with assurance. Even though every aspect of his people's national life be destroyed; every activity prove fruitless and the very land itself seem to turn against them, still will he not only believe, but will even find occasion for joy. "Although the fig tree shall not

blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

No matter how adverse the earthly circumstances, he knew that all was well with the Plan of God, because God Himself was working out that Plan. And on that note he ends; a note of utter confidence and of joyous confidence. His faith has progressed from a silent faith to an ebullient faith, a faith of peace to a faith of joy, and in his ecstasy of heart he set his prophecy to music that it might be used for ever afterwards in the Temple service to the glory of God, a living witness to the faith of the man who saw in vision what God will one day do in reality, and laid himself down to rest in utter confidence that so surely as God had spoken, so surely would it come to pass.



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left'" (Isa. 30. 21) Does this imply that we should expect audible or inward voices to guide us on our Christian way?

A. No. The verse is a Millennial promise to Israel applying after the chastening experience of "Jacob's Trouble". The context shows this. "The people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it he shall answer thee, and though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of oppression, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee . . ." and so on. Here is God's promise that in the time of Israel's greatest extremity, when the great forces of evil, the "hosts of Gog and Magog", are descending upon their rebuilt and prosperous land, God will await the cry of faith and will answer it. Whatever of trouble and distress is in store for the people at that time, deliverance will come, and the "teachers" of Israel—the "Ancient Worthies", the resurrected heroes of old time—will no longer be despised and rejected ("Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted?" asked Stephen at his trial, Acts 7. 52) but "thine eyes shall see (look upon) thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear (listen to) their word." And those Ancient Worthies will say to Israel, "this is the way, walk ye in it". Thus will Israel, after their deliverance from "Jacob's Trouble," and the estab-

lishment of the Kingdom, commence to walk up the Highway of Holiness of Isa. 35. 8. and be followed by all the hosts of redeemed mankind, pressing toward true conversion to Christ and perfection of life. Verses 22-23 describe the end of idolatry consequent upon the establishment of the Millennial reign, and the climax comes in verse 26 where the enlightenment of the Millennium is described as the light of the moon being as the sun, and the light of the sun being increased sevenfold, in that day when "the Lord shall reign in Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously".

Why not take advantage of the quiet time of our daily opportunities that strength may be imparted to us by the only source profitable to man? Nature works in quietness; strength is begotten by admitted methods and formulated habits, thereby accepting God as the "Live Wire" to every fibre of our being. The Upper Room experience of added strength came conditionally, by process of waiting. We are all the time busy at our work; we do not know the sacredness of resting. We know how to toil and how to give, but we do not know how to sit still and how to receive.

When the heart is quiet and the door is shut on the world, we can give thanks to God for sleep, for merriment, for our opportunities to worship with others, but let us not neglect to give thanks for this same quiet hour when the heart communes with God and is still.

(Selected)

A NOTE ON THE CREATION OF MAN

"My substance was not hid from thee" says the Psalmist in Psa. 139. 14-16 "when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, the days they should be fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." That is a very striking passage throwing light on the creation of man. The Evolution theory declares that the human child in the process of its development before birth passes through all the evolutionary stages of its animal ancestors; the Word of God says that God planned the structure of man's body before any part of that body came into existence. There may be—and admittedly are—similarities between the physical frames of men and animals; that is only to be expected since both live under the same outward conditions and have much the same physical needs; but this by no means demands that the one is descended from the other, and the Psalm above quoted states very definitely that God planned man as a special creation. There are two interesting statements by notable scientists of a past generation which are well worth repeating in this connection. Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892), a British naturalist, superintendent of the Natural History Dept. of the British Museum, a fellow of nearly every learned Society in Britain and America and recognised as one of the greatest authorities in this branch of learning who ever lived, said "the recognition of an ideal exemplar for the vertebrated animals (animals having spines or "backbones") proves that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed before man appeared. For the Divine mind that planned the archetype (first pattern) also foreknew all its modifications. The archetypal idea was manifested in the flesh under divers modifications upon this planet long prior to the birth of those animal species that actually exemplify it." In other words, the fact that the animal creation exhibits a constantly ascending scale leading up to and culminating in man, who is the crown and glory of earthly creation, indicates that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed in the mind of the Creator when the first animals were brought into being, long before man was introduced upon earth. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), an eminent Swiss naturalist and professor at Harvard University, U.S.A., and author of many books on Natural History, said in his "Principles of Zoology" (1848) "there is a mani-

fest progress in the succession of beings on the surface of the earth. This progress consists in an increasing similarity to the existing fauna, and among the vertebrates (animals) especially in their increasing resemblance to man. But this connection is not the consequence of a direct lineage between the faunas (living creatures) of different ages. There is nothing like parental descent connecting them. The fishes of the Palæozoic Age are in no respect the ancestors of the reptiles of the Secondary Age, nor does man descend from the mammals which preceded him in the Tertiary Age. The link by which they are connected is of a higher and immaterial nature; and their connection is to be sought in the view of the Creator Himself, Whose aim in forming the earth, in allowing it to undergo the successive changes which geology has pointed out, and in creating successively all the different types of animals which have passed away, was to introduce man upon the surface of our globe. Man is the end towards which all the animal creation has tended from the first appearance of the first Palæozoic fishes."

Thus the same phenomena which has been explained by Evolutionists as an evidence of the descent of man from the lower animals was noticed by scientists years before the Evolution theory was formulated (in the "Origin of Species", published in 1859) and was realised to be evidence of the Creator's orderly methods in creation, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear". God commenced with very humble forms of life and went on with creatures of ever greater complexity and increasing similarity to man until at last man himself appeared, the last and final work of God's hands. After that He rested."

Ebenezer—stone of help.

(1 Sam. 7. 12)

Not one single moment passes,
But is laden, as it flies,
With some precious gift of blessing,
Which His loving care supplies.

Not one step, in faith, is taken,
O'er life's pathway rough and dim,
But may open out new treasures
To the soul that trusts in Him.

Ebenezer! countless mercies,
Bid us praise Him more and more,
Calmly to His wisdom leaving
What the future has in store.

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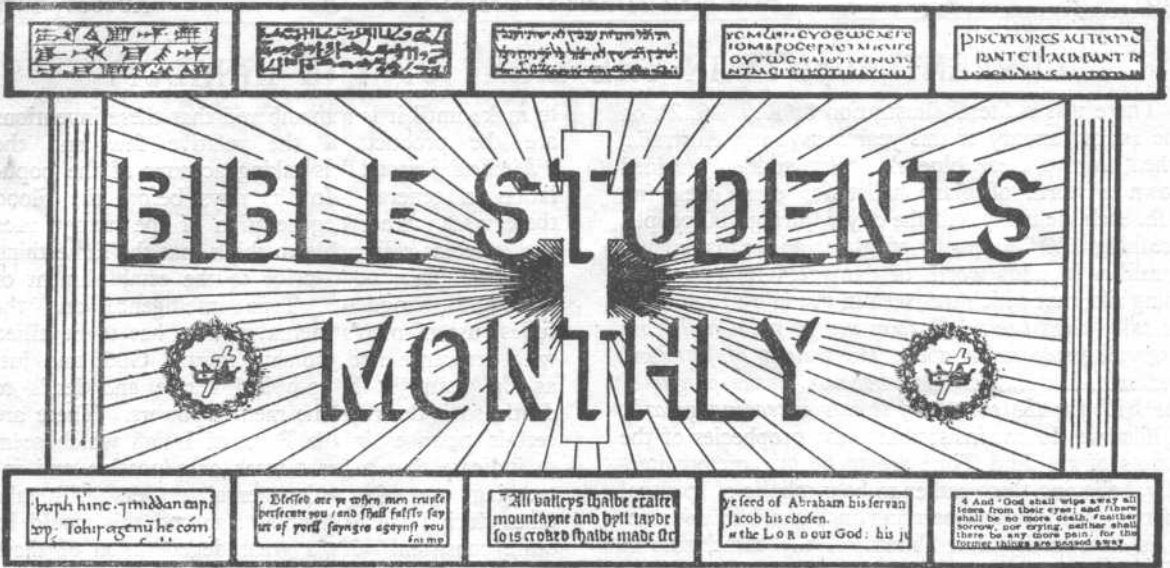
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CURRENT EVENTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE KINGDOM

There was a literal illustration of Rev. 16. 21 on the 1st of January of this year in Sydney, Australia, when from a clear blue sky there suddenly rained down a storm of giant hailstones, some weighing 4 lb. each, deluging half the city, injuring 300 people, breaking 200,000 panes of glass, and causing half a million pounds worth of damage. It was something like that which was seen in vision by John when he said "and there fell upon men a great hail from heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague of it was exceeding great". Whilst we do not insist that these prophecies of the events of the End Time are to be interpreted literally, believing them rather to be symbolic of spiritual matters and forces operating in the affairs of men, it is noteworthy that almost all the cataclysms of Nature which are used by the prophets to picture the events of the End are witnessed in greater or lesser degree in literal reality at some time or other during these last days. Perhaps such things are permitted or even ordained as warnings to some who will not be convinced by any but literal signs in the earth.

* * *

An interesting side-light on the much-discussed fate of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel is cast by a statement made to the United Nations Assembly session on Palestine, at Washington in May, by the representative from India, Asaf Ali. Speaking on a motion concerning the Arab case, he mentioned in passing that twenty million people in Kashmir and Afghanistan consider themselves sons of Israel. This is three times as many Jews as there are in the whole world. It is a remarkable fact that although these people are practically all Moslems they have preserved this tradition as to their identity through the ages. The missionary traveller, Dr. Wolff, in the middle of the last century declared his conviction, as a result of his researches on the spot, that the peoples of Afghanistan were descendants of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon. This later testimony is an interesting confirmation.

* * *

The "British Medical Journal" considers that a decline in the level of national intelligence is taking place. In consequence of observation and tests which have been carried out it claims that the mental powers of men and women compared with previous generations is decreasing. In an age when the researches of scientists and the skill of industrial workers are producing increasingly marvellous triumphs of invention this seems a strange statement

to make until it is remembered that these inventions are the product of the relative few and the "Medical Journal" is taking account of the population in general. In the days before the Flood there was a great degeneration of the human race and it seems reasonable to think that the same thing will take place now, prior to the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom. True intelligence and the fullest use of man's mental powers has to be allied with reverence and worship toward God, and just as sin destroys the physical frame and leads to death, so it destroys the mental powers. There are certain passages in the Book of Isaiah which seem to indicate that a great work of education and increasing use of man's mental powers will take place during the Millennial Age and this would be quite consistent with a great degeneration of those powers at the time of this world's ending.

* * *

In a Jewish settlement in Galilee there is a picture on the wall of the communal dining-room, painted by a member of the colony. It depicts the prophet Ezekiel sitting in the middle of the "valley of dry bones", with the bones all around him, waiting. The picture was intended to symbolise the present state of the people. Here, perhaps, is some of the material that God will be able to use when the time comes to make those bones live, colonists who believe that God will show forth His power in His own due time to fulfil His promises to His earthly people.

The usual price list is omitted from the back page of this issue. Will friends kindly refer to the last issue for details of literature now available. Particularly do we mention the new booklet "The Millennial Gospel of Jesus" which is now available and should be another useful item for passing to people who may be interested in the message of the Kingdom (8d. post free).

* * *

In response to many requests, the "Quiet Time" feature is being re-introduced. It will be found this month on the back page of the "Monthly".

Gone From Us

Sis. Francis (Birmingham) May.
Bro. J. W. Wright (Stockport) June.

Share it with someone else and you will make the blessing doubly yours. Jesus once borrowed Peter's ship and returned it full of fish.

The Ark of the Presence

A STUDY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Such was God's promise to Israel at the outset of their journey from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. The thought behind this promise was not so much that God would be with them, but rather that He would go on ahead. Leeser puts it "My presence shall go in advance" whilst Rotherham reads "Mine own presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest". Centuries later at the outset of another pilgrimage, a similar promise was made, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age". Although the thought of leading, of going on ahead, is not implied in this second promise, a parallel drawn between the two shows that the same significance is there.

The first promise was made by the Eternal God to an earthly house, the second to a spiritual house by the Lord Jesus. To draw this parallel we must go back a little to the incidents which led up to the giving of the first promise. In Exodus 19 we find the account of making a covenant between God and the children of Israel. The basis of this covenant was the Law, and Israel expressed their willingness to keep this law, and by doing so became "a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation". God proposed to give them a permanent reminder of this promise in the shape of two stone tablets upon which were to be inscribed this Law, but whilst Moses was with God in the mountain to receive these, the Israelites broke the first and primary law. At this God's anger blazed up and He threatened to destroy Israel, but Moses, in pleading for them, reminded God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; however, when Moses descended the mountain the sight of the golden calf and Israel's idolatrous feasting caused his anger to blaze up and he threw down the stone tablets and they were smashed.

As a result of this first defection, about three thousand of the Israelites died, but this was not all. God said that He would not go with them, but send an angel instead (Ex. 33. 1-3); so failure to keep the Law brought alienation from God.

As a result of this Moses "took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp . . . and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation". This was obviously not the tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to erect, for it had not yet been

constructed; this is made clear in Rotherham's translation of this passage (Exodus 33. 7) "*and Moses proceeded to take a tent, and pitch it by itself outside the camp, and he called it The Tent of Meeting*" (or trysting tent). Moses could not understand God's great anger, and was greatly troubled by the alienation which had resulted from Israel's wickedness, so on one occasion when he went out to the "Trysting Tent" to speak with God, he expressed his utter inability to face alone the task of leading Israel, and asked God to reveal Himself to him, "that I may understand thy nature, and so know how to find favour with thee" (Exodus 33. 12-13 *Moffatt*). God caused His goodness to pass before Moses and assured him that He would manifest Himself to him. Acting under God's instructions, Moses prepared two more stone tablets and ascended Sinai with them, that God might inscribe the Law thereon. On this occasion God declared Himself to be, not a God of anger, but "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth". In order that this truth might be deeply impressed upon Moses, God indicated his change of attitude by giving him the assurance that He would not send an angel with him, but that "Mine OWN presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest". (We accept *Moffatt's* alteration of the text by placing verses 14-16 of Exodus 33 after the 9th verse of Chapter 34.)

In Moses' account, in Deut. 10, of the giving of the Law a second time, he tells us that God ordered him to make a wooden box in which to keep the stone tablets. This he does and on receiving them he puts them in this box, which in turn he places in the temporary trysting tent. This arrangement continued until the tabernacle which God had designed was completed; then the two stone tablets were placed in the new ark. This was a much more elaborate container than the plain wooden box (Ex. 25. 10-21) and as it thus held the two tablets of the Law, it was called the ark of the covenant, or the ark of the testimony. It was, however, much more than this, for when the Tabernacle was completed God showed His approval by manifesting His Presence in the Shekinah glory which settled between the cherubim. Thus it became the "Ark of the Presence" (Josh. 4. 15 *Moffatt*). This ark did not, however, always remain in the Tabernacle; it went

before Israel to search out their resting places as they journeyed on; it diverted the waters of the Jordan and enabled them to cross dry-shod; it threw down the walls of Jericho and led them on to victory.

The ark of the presence did not always bring them victory. In Josh. 7 and I Samuel 4 we find accounts of defeat even when the ark was with them, but this was not due to any failure on God's part, but to the fact that they were disobedient and defiled and thus alienated from Him. On the second occasion not only did the Israelites suffer defeat, but they also lost the ark to the Philistines. Even in captivity the power of the ark was manifested. The Philistines placed it beside Dagon in his temple, but on the morrow they found the idol on its face; they replaced it but on the next day they found it not only on its face but with its head and hands broken off. Furthermore the Philistines were plagued with tumours, so that, after seven months they were glad to return the ark to the Israelites. After being lodged three months in the house of Obed-edom, it was carried up to Jerusalem, where it remained under a tent until Solomon's temple was built.

When this great and glorious edifice was completed the ark was taken from its tent and carried into the Inner Sanctuary and, after Solomon had recited his great dedicatory prayer, God showed His approval by manifesting His Presence in the Shekinah glory between the cherubim.

This manifestation of God's presence in their midst should have nourished the religious life of the Israelites and kept them from idol worship, but alas, they forgot the covenant that they had made with the Eternal, and the memory of many blessings which the ark of the Presence had brought upon them faded. Thus the doleful prophecy of Jeremiah 3. 16 was fulfilled. "*In after days when you become numerous and fruitful in the land, says the Eternal, men shall no longer speak of the Ark of the Eternal's compact; that shall never enter their minds, they shall not remember it, they shall never miss it, and it shall never be re-made.*" (Moffatt.) We must needs conclude, in this minor key, the account of the Ark of the Presence in the Old Testament, but we hope to strike a major chord in our consideration of that much more intriguing subject, the anti-type.

We, as Israelites indeed, are journeying from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. What does the Ark of the Presence mean to us? We were alienated from God, and even now we cannot keep God's perfect law unaided; we need the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, and without a leader and guide would soon become lost in the

wilderness. As we looked back to the events leading up to the making of the first promise, so we need to consider the events preceding the second promise.

We noted, in the type, that the two stone tablets were first contained in a wooden box. If wood is scripturally symbolic of humanity, this would surely represent the law of the Lord deep in the human heart of Jesus (Psa. 40. 8). This wooden box remained outside the camp, so Jesus in His humanity was "without the camp". The Israelites were sinful, idolatrous, unbelieving. He was holy, harmless and undefiled—*separate from sinners*. Thus He remained, among them, but not of them, until the anti-typical Tabernacle was completed. Even as the Ark was not made for the tabernacle but the tabernacle for the ark, so in the anti-type the spiritual Tabernacle was not made for Jesus; but before He could enter therein, the sacrifice must be consumed and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. With the consumption of this sacrifice the wooden box was entirely destroyed; but what of the perfect Law of the Lord contained therein? Even as in the type the stone tablets were placed in the golden ark when the trysting-tent was completed, so our Lord's love for God's law remained, and when He arose from the grave and later ascended to His Father, He was clothed in the gold of the Divine nature, and entered into the Most Holy, even into the very presence of God. When the tablets were placed in the Ark of the Presence, it was no longer outside the camp, but in the midst; likewise since Jesus has entered into His reward He dwells no longer without the camp, but He has become the first-fruits among many brethren, and as He intercedes on our behalf, He provides for us the way back to God.

Not only does He intercede for us, but He is all and more to us than was the Ark of the Presence to Israel. The Ark of the Presence should have nourished the religious life of natural Israel; He provides for us the spiritual bread from heaven, symbolised by the golden vase of manna, and calls us to become "a peculiar treasure, a holy nation", a fulfilment of the picture of Aaron's budding rod. The manifested presence of God in their midst should have kept Israel from idolatry; so, surrounded as we are with many counter-attractions, calculated to draw us from the whole-hearted worship of our God, we need to keep our eyes fixed upon our Ark of the Presence, worshipping always and only Him Who is worthy of all praise. If we would become and remain spiritually healthy we must come regularly to the fount of every blessing, bowing in prayer and meditation before this holy shrine. Only before God's perfect law are we fully conscious of our shortcomings, only before the mercy-

seat can we find peace with God, only in the presence of Jesus can we enjoy that fellowship and communion which will enable us to attain that growth in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This, however, is only the static aspect of the matter. Even as the Ark of the Presence went on before Israel to lead them to rest, so Jesus goes on ahead, leading us, through hardship and danger, to our eternal rest. To Israel the Jordan was an impassable barrier; Moses told the people that they were to wait "for you have not crossed here before". We have our Jordans too; those just starting on their pilgrimage may not yet have come to the place where they have not crossed before, on the other hand those nearing the end of the journey may look back to many such emergencies, but to young and old the lesson is the same. Even as the Israelites waited for the feet of the Levites carrying the Ark to touch the water, and saw the waters diverted and were able to cross dryshod, so we must wait until our Ark of the Presence shows us the way across the obstacles over which we must pass.

After Jordan came Jericho. We, too, have our Jerichos; enemy strongholds, within or without, stand between us and the Golden City. Israel waited patiently whilst the priests carried the Ark round Jericho, day after day, until victory was theirs; we must persevere in our efforts to overcome the enemy, realising that "standing and waiting" will sometimes be our portion, so that all the glory may be given to Him Who gives us victory.

Israel lost the Ark of the Presence to the Philistines because, having left it at Shiloh, they had turned from the worship of the true God to idolatry; may the time never come when we shall have strayed so far from the worship of the true God that we shall lose our Ark of the Presence! We saw, in the type, that after its return from captivity the Ark found its way to Jerusalem where it remained in a tent until taken into Solomon's temple. This seems to picture the return of our Lord, after the journeying of the Gospel Age, to gather His Church to Himself to dwell forever with Him in the heavenly courts.

Beautiful as was the Trysting-tent in its simplicity, its beauty was eclipsed by the glorious temple which Solomon prepared as a final resting place for the Ark. The altar in the court was larger and the laver was more elaborate, the Holy Place was larger and more ornate, but the Inner Sanctuary had a beauty all its own. The woodwork was wonderfully carved, and tons of gold and hundreds of precious stones were used for its decoration. It was eight times the size of the Most Holy of the Trysting-tent and was dominated by two great golden

cherubim each fifteen feet across, standing, not face to face with bowed heads as were those upon the Ark, but side by side facing forwards, standing erect wing tip to wing tip, thus completely filling the width of the Sanctuary. All was new and unsurpassed in beauty, but into this glorious edifice was brought the much-travelled Ark, made so long ago in the wilderness; a fitting picture indeed of Him Who is proclaimed "the same yesterday, to-day and forever".

Although this was the same Ark, there was a difference. The golden vase of manna was no longer within. Likewise when the anti-typical Ark of the Presence finally enters the Heavenly courts there will be no need for the heavenly manna, for the Church will share God's nature, being clothed with self-sustaining immortal life. Neither was Aaron's rod that budded contained therein. This is fitting too for the Church will have made her calling and election sure, and thus will have fulfilled the significance of this phenomenon. But the two tablets of the Law still remained. So Jesus, in all His glory and majesty, still loves the Law of God, and the glorified Church too will be lovers of God's Law, and so the complete Christ, Head and Body, will be not only the Ark of the Presence, but also the great Lawgiver of a New Age.

This picture of the Ark of the Presence in Solomon's temple would then surely represent the completed, unified Christ, abiding in God's dwelling place among men (Rev. 21. 3 and 4), shining forth as the Sun in the Kingdom, prepared to lead men back to God.

This brings us to the outset and the third and last pilgrimage. Is there any promise that God will be with the nations in the same sense that He was with Israel and Jesus was with the Church? Will the Ark of the Presence go on ahead and lead them to rest? No, the wanderings of the Ark are forever concluded. The glorified Bride and Bridegroom will remain at the New Jerusalem, beckoning men up that great highway of holiness which will lead them to that perfect life, health and happiness which will be theirs when God dwells between the cherubim. As we look back and trace the wanderings of the anti-typical Ark of the Presence through the Gospel Age we believe that its journey is almost completed; soon, we believe, all the faithful will be safely in the Inner Sanctuary, but what of the time remaining? We cannot see into the immediate future, we would not if we might, but we can rest assured that Jesus' promise to be with us all the time, even unto the end, will be abundantly fulfilled. In sickness or in health, in poverty or wealth, in sunshine or shade; through fire and flood, through weal or woe, in victory or defeat; on the heights of

joy or in the depths of despair, in the loneliness of seclusion or in the noise of the throng—through any or all of these our Ark of the Presence will safely lead us, until we all enter into heaven itself, there to dwell forever in the very presence of God, beneath the wings of the cherubim.

*“Lord Jesus, make thyself to me
A living bright reality!
More present to Faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen,
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.”*

DO WE BELIEVE IN THE KINGDOM?

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said ‘We will hear thee again of this matter.’” (Acts 17. 32.)

That was two thousand years ago. Paul, standing upon Mars Hill in Athens, preached Jesus Christ to an audience of the world's foremost philosophers and learned men. The resurrection and the Kingdom was the centre and keynote of his message to them in that notable day, and because of that he exhorted them to repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ. The one went with the other. “God calleth every man everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” Impossible for Paul to preach repentance without preaching the Kingdom also; the two messages went together. So it is throughout all his writings; Christ is not only the solution to the troubles and woes of this life, He is also the hope and certainty of the life to come. Paul never forsook that faith or lost that enthusiasm. To the very end of a busy, arduous and oft-times intensely disappointed life, he kept his vision of the coming Kingdom clear and undimmed; was always ready to talk about it and describe his understanding of its details, even although he knew that understanding to be “in part” and imperfect. One of his last utterances ended with the hope of the Kingdom upon his lips—“which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*, and not to me only, but also to all them that love his *appearing*”. (2 Tim. 4. 8.)

In our own day there is a growing tendency to lose interest in this vivid expectation of an imminent Kingdom. We have been familiar for many years with the message that declares “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” But the misapplication of Bible chronology has disappointed and discouraged many, and the failure of some, blessed with a knowledge of these things, to live up to the standards of their profession has disappointed and discouraged a great many more. And because the majority have preferred to remain in that phase of understanding regarding the resurrection and the Kingdom which was given them when first they “came to a knowledge of the Truth”, without increasing and clarifying that knowledge as year succeeded year, they have become weary of waiting for the Golden Age

which seems never to come, and have allowed its beauties to recede to a secondary place in their thinking.

This is becoming a noticeable feature to-day. There is plenty of enthusiasm for prophecy—of a sort; usually the lines of thought advanced by commentators of a century ago and already therefore a century out of date. The secondhand bookshop has proved an inestimable blessing to some students of the Bible and an unmitigated evil to others. The mind that seeks to exercise itself upon something novel without the trouble of serious thinking can always do so upon the writings of one or another saintly student who expounded the light that was shining in 1850 or 1750 or even 1650; but that is not Present Truth. And it is the student who, assessing at its proper value this light of the past, and looking forward and perceiving in the light of the present how immeasurably clearer is the vision of the future, who realises the fashion in which prophecy is now passing into history, and sees with clearer sight than ever man has seen before the details of the coming Kingdom. He is the man whose faith in that Kingdom will neither waver nor be relegated to a minor place in the life; it remains the beacon which illumines his path, the lode-stone which guides his actions, the glory-cloud that leads him ever onward to increasing heights of vision and of achievement, until his own work for the Master is done, and the torch drops from his hand to be caught by younger and equally fervent spirits, and he himself is called home to his promised rest.

There are influences abroad to-day which draw in the opposite direction. The tendency to retire more and more into a “devotional” Christian life, taking comfort from the more personal promises and exhortations of Scripture, and ceasing from the outward work of testifying to the goodness of God and the Plan of God, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and the principles of Jesus' teachings, is not good. It is the pitfall into which so many promising movements of the past have fallen. Especially is it true of Christian bodies that have ceased to attract the younger element into their ranks, and the not-so-young are realising the passing of the years. Their meetings tend to become pleasant Christian social gatherings where the glories of the past are recounted and enlarged upon but there is no looking forward

to the future. Their personal witness is to the converted, and the testimony meeting takes the place of public witness. And the vision of the Kingdom fades; it can do no other, for the basis of its inspiration—the Baptist message, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’—is lost. And that is why so many in this day are reluctant to talk about the Kingdom or to discuss the details of earth’s coming glory, dismissing any attempt to do so as “idle speculation”. They turn instead to leisurely discussions and studies in the pastoral epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians or the Galatians, and become more and more like established Christendom every day.

We have, in all our studies, our conventions and our published literature, only touched the fringe of what the Scriptures can be made to yield concerning the Kingdom on earth. There is a store of information as yet unexplored which ought to be

brought to light and embodied in our message. The events of to-day show in no uncertain manner that we have no need to change the outline of expectation which we have inherited from earlier times; but we can do a great deal to fill in the details, and in so doing we shall both find encouragement and comfort for ourselves and inspiration for our work of witness. “Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?” “Lord, here am I; send me.” If the live coal has touched our lips we can go to “this people” in confidence; but we must go armed with knowledge of the message for the day, and that message is—it can be naught else—“The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” And when the interested ask us concerning the details of this promised Kingdom, we can, if we have been diligent students, set the seal upon our witness by saying in no uncertain tones, as did Jesus in times gone by, “the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto . . .”

AN IDEAL CLIMATE

Scientists have defined the ideal climate as that in which it is possible for a lightly clothed man to walk at four miles an hour in sunshine without sweating, and to sit in sunshine, or stand or sit in shade or indoors, doing light work, without shivering. Experiments have shown that with relative humidity of 60 per cent. this requires a temperature of 66-68 degrees, and for a nude man, 70-71 degrees. (“Nature,” 12th May, 1945.) Markham, in “Climate and the Energy of Nations,” points out that the 70 degree Isotherm (a line connecting those points on the earth’s surface where the mean annual temperature is 70 degrees) passes through the sites of the ancient empires of Egypt, Palestine, Assyria, Sumeria, and Persia, and concludes therefore that these lands are capable of producing the best and most virile types of men.

This is of interest to those students of the Scriptures who expect the establishment of a nation, located in some of those lands, through which the administration of the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be conducted. The Old Testament consistently proclaims Palestine to be a most desirable land, one “flowing with milk and honey,” and it is noteworthy that the Divine promise to Abraham takes in the entire stretch of country from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, and from the Arabian Desert to Lebanon, as the territory which is to be the headquarters for Divine government upon earth. That part of the world in which the human race probably originated and from which it spread outwards has evidently been endowed by Divine Providence with all the natural amenities to make it the most fitting source of the new life which will come to all nations in the time of Messiah’s Kingdom. “Out

of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2. 3).

The friends at Yeovil report a happy time of fellowship during the week-end of June 7-8 when they were addressed by Brother J. T. Read and other brethren. Brethren from various parts of the West Country came to this Home-Gathering and a very pleasant feature of the sessions was the singing of Brother Read, for which, in addition to his ministry, he will be long remembered. The singing together of “God be with you till we meet again” brought to a conclusion a most inspiring and profitable time.

* * * * *

Several public meetings held in the Cardiff area, at the beginning of June, in connection with Brother Read’s visit to South Wales, proved a wonderful stimulus to the friends participating. Very complete efforts to advertise the meetings were made, and in this the brethren had the co-operation of the local Y.M.C.A. The results showed the wisdom of giving very special attention to effective advertising prior to the meeting: an unusually large number of interested people attended the main meeting at Cardiff, and very definite attention was given. Permanent results have already appeared in at least one case.

* * * * *

A Home-Gathering held at Welling on June 15 and addressed by Brother Read became an opportunity for a number of friends to renew fellowship together. After a praise service in the afternoon our brother gave his impressions of this country and his experiences whilst ministering to the friends during the last few months, and after tea together he ministered the Word of the Lord. A very happy and uplifting day was brought to an end by the singing of “God be with you till we meet again.”

THE DISCUSSION CIRCLE

"The following question is thrown open for discussion, and a synopsis of replies which bring new points or aspects of the case to light will be published in a future issue.

Q. "I am convinced Christ's teaching is perfect and right and the *only* solution to this sorry world's troubles, yet I find such stumbling blocks, one of which is 'Why does God allow such untold suffering to animals?'—I see such a lot of this and there is so much that is cruel and heartless in Nature. Recently I read that starving lambs have been found in the snow, their eyes pecked out by crows and other birds. It is understandable that the human race is suffering through non-compliance with God's law—but even in that the innocent suffer; but animals haven't the knowledge of good and evil. It makes us, poor imperfect human beings, cringe in horror at their sufferings; how can God endure it and permit it? . . . I can't reconcile all this with the Scripture that not even a sparrow falls to the ground but the Lord takes note of it." V.C.K.

A. I know how difficult it is to reconcile what the Scripture tells us, and what we know ourselves must be true, that God is a God of love, with all the evidences of fear and cruelty, and pain and suffering, that we see around us, not only among men, but in the animal creation. One thing we must hold fast: that God *is* love, and that we ourselves, imperfect as we are, cannot understand fully all that is involved in what seems to us to be a hopeless contradiction. We have to go on seeking the Truth and one day we shall see that what seemed so hopelessly unjust was in fact the only way God could possibly create His world.

One thing that we do not realise, even yet, and which the brethren and indeed all Christian people never realised in the past, is that in some mysterious way perfection can only come through suffering. It was so with Jesus and it must be so with us. Now in the light of that we need to go back to the beginning and realise that at man's creation part of the commission given to him was to "have dominion" over the animal creation. Had he not fallen from perfection, his perfect human powers would have enabled him so to control the lower creation as to bring about a state of order among them, thus achieving what was evidently to be the final state of that part of the Divine Plan. The entrance of sin has reflected itself upon the animals and caused additional suffering to them just as it has with Adam's descendants.

We are slowly learning that perfection can only come through suffering—why, we do not know. It

is still a Divine mystery, although one day we shall understand. It behoved Jesus Himself to be "made perfect through suffering" in the days of His flesh, and man is to attain perfection through suffering, which is the reason for the permission of evil, and it seems that the lower creation is not exempt. There was violence and suffering among the animals long before man was created; it has continued until now; but we do know that under the Millennial reign of Christ that condition will pass away and all creatures live in peace one with another. The two well-known passages in Isaiah (11. 6-8 and 65. 25) taken together, tell us that:—

The wolf and the lamb shall dwell and feed together.

The leopard shall lie down with the kid.

The cow and the bear shall feed, and their young ones lie down together.

The lion shall eat fodder like the bullock and the young lions dwell with the calves and fatlings.

A little child shall lead them.

This Millennial condition of order in the animal kingdom will be brought about largely by man's own progress toward perfection and his consequent recovery of power to control that kingdom. When he has attained mastery over the forces of Nature he will be able to provide, not only for his own physical wants but for all those of the brute creation also, and it need not be expected that there will ever again be a condition in which, for instance, crows will attack lambs because of hunger. At present birds and animals do suffer at times because of inability to get food. So does man. Under the new order of things men will see to it that the earth brings forth enough, not only for all men, but also for all living things. The Isaiah passages make it clear that the entire animal creation will, like man, live on the herbage and fruits of the earth, and when the twin destructive instincts, hunger and fear, have been banished, there is no reason to suppose that any creature will wantonly attack another.

A.O.H.

"What is the grace of God? To say that it is free unmerited favour only expresses a little of its meaning. It is the unhindered, wondrous, boundless love of God, poured out upon us in an infinite variety of ways, without stint or measure, not according to our deserving, but according to His measureless heart of love, which passeth knowledge, so unfathomable are its heights and depths."

The Way of an Eagle in the Air

A REFLECTION OF WISE WORDS IN PROVERBS

"There be three things that are too wonderful for me, yea, four that I know not; the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." (Prov. 30. 18-19.)

This is one of the proverbs, or wise sayings, of Agur the son of Jakeh. We know nothing else of Agur; he is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible; but there is some ground for thinking that he may have lived in the Arab lands at some time between Abraham and the Exodus, his words being preserved in Israel and added to the Book of Proverbs when King Solomon compiled that book.

What a strange little statement it is! Four everyday sights in the world, two connected with the lower creation, one in the air and one on the earth; two connected with man, one in the sea and one on the land. Four everyday sights, common enough, so common as probably not to excite any remark at all on the part of ninety-nine out of a hundred witnesses—but Agur the son of Jakeh was the hundredth, a serious, reflective man, and as he watched, he confessed that in each of these four sights there resided a mystery, a something that went beyond his understanding, a something that stirred his emotions to their depths and left him with a feeling of quiet awe.

The eagle (or, more accurately, the vulture), winging its swift flight through the higher levels of the air, building its nest on high in the inaccessible crags of the highest rocks, swooping down at terrific speed upon the prey its keen sight has espied from far, cleansing the earth from the defiling presence of dead carcasses: Agur gazed upon the spectacle with wonder. The serpent, slithering out from its den to sun itself upon the warm rock, its brilliantly coloured scaly skin scintillating and glistening in the sunlight as it twisted and turned and darted after its prey: Agur must have stood enthralled as he watched it shed that skin and emerge clothed in an even more brilliant and showy one. He beheld the birds and small animals stand petrified with fear, held spellbound by the serpent's malignant eyes, until it advanced upon them to their doom. The serpent, perhaps mused Agur, brings death to the earth—but the eagle cleanses death from the earth!

And then he lifted up his eyes and far away on the heaving billows of the great sea beheld a vessel,

making its way with difficulty and labour through the mounting waves that ever threatened to submerge it. "The way of a ship in the heart of the sea" indicates that he had in mind a boat caught in a storm, tossing and straining in the trough of the waves, helpless in the grip of the elements. However could it get safe to land, Agur must have wondered; yet in the fulness of time the storm would abate and the crew arrive safely home with their cargo. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." (Psa. 107, 29-30.) And in coming to the fourth subject of wonder there is no need to think other than that Agur conned over what Paul himself called a great mystery, the love of a man for the woman who is to be his wife. Perhaps the son of Jakeh caught some echo of those far-off days when the Lord God brought the woman unto the man, and she became his wife. (Gen. 2. 22.) In the impulse which drives a man to seek and win the woman of his choice Agur found mystery beyond his ability to solve.

But why are these homely allusions in the text of Scripture? What is there here of instruction or furnishing unto good works for the Christian? Agur may have spoken and perhaps written down these words in all sincerity and others may have recorded and preserved them to later generations, but why should they have been taken hold by the Holy Spirit and granted that immortality which is the lot of every word "written in the Book"? In short, what is there here for us?

We may take it that Agur ben Jakeh had no idea of any deeper significance in his words. He spoke as he felt and said exactly what he meant. He intended the application of no other than a strictly literal meaning to his sayings. But the fact that the Holy Spirit enshrined these words in a setting which presents them for the consideration of every succeeding generation of truth-seekers does indicate that some deeper purpose is in fact intended to be served.

A great deal of Bible teaching is pictorial imagery. Everyday scenes and incidents are described, not for the merit or interest of the particular scene or incident itself, but because in the description of the scene or the relating of the incident parallel thoughts

of spiritual things are suggested, and the mind is led to be exercised in the "things of the Spirit". An analogy between the natural illustration and some important spiritual truth is discernible, and although the natural illustration is at best but an illustration, it has served a valuable purpose in turning the mind more definitely and habitually to the spiritual truths in which that mind has already been instructed, and familiarises it with the "things of the Spirit". The discerning of a likeness between the natural things of this world and what may be termed their spiritual counterparts brings more reality into our spiritual understanding and accustoms us to look at all things in life from the standpoint of the Spirit rather than the standpoint of the world.

The four "mysteries" of Agur ben Jakeh therefore may very reasonably be taken as illustrative of the four great mysteries in the Plan of Salvation—the power of Evil, the Redemption from evil, the call of the Church, and the hope for the World. And even if such an application be held to be no more than the use of the text to provide an illustration—well, it is by illustrations often that, the deepest of truths are conveyed to our immature minds.

"*The way of an eagle in the air.*" That downward swoop of the swift-pinioned bird to the earth reminds one of the well-known hymn "He saw men plunged in deep distress, and flew to their relief." The eagle makes its nest in the highest parts of the mountains from whence it can survey the world around. Wisdom, says the 8th chapter of Proverbs, stands at the head of the ways, the chief of the high places of the earth. (Prov. 8. 2.) The personified "Wisdom" of Prov. 8 is the pre-human "Logos", the Son of God, our Redeemer, prior to His coming to earth for our salvation. From that high place He surveyed the world, seeing death and corruption, and came down to the world to abolish death and cleanse the earth from the defiling influence of sin. The vultures (or "eagles") of the Bible were in reality great blessings to the land, for, being what is known as "carrion birds", they disposed of animal carcasses which otherwise would quickly putrefy in that tropical heat and pollute the land, spreading disease and further death. It is from this standpoint that we must use the illustration. Our Lord, coming to those who were dead in trespasses and sins, "as the way of an eagle in the air", descends to earth, takes to Himself the burden of death and sin, and leaves the earth clean and free from defilement, corruption and death. "*O death, I will be thy destruction*". He transmutes death and decay into life and immortality. Surely to us, as to Agur ben Jakeh, this "way of an eagle in the air" is too wonderful for our human understanding. "As an

eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him". (Deut. 32. 11.) The protecting power of the Saviour, and of God the Father, is shown too in this other picture of the eagle and its care for its young.

"*The way of a serpent upon a rock.*" From the very commencement of the sacred history the serpent has been the symbol of Satan and of sin. The seed of the woman is one day to bruise the serpent's head and righteousness will then be supreme for ever, but in the meantime evil reigns, and that fact is a great mystery not only to the natural man who knows not the things of the Spirit of God, but also in large measure to the "consecrated in Christ Jesus" to whom have been revealed much of the Divine counsels and the Divine Plan. The way of evil through world history is like the way of a serpent upon a rock, tortuous and sinuous, a stealthiness of progress, first in this direction and then in that, seeking out opportunities for entrance into the good and pure and holy, that it might befoul with its corrupting influence. "Your adversary the devil . . . goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5. 8.) "From whence comest thou?" asks the Most High of the Adversary in the story of Job. "From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it" answers the Adversary glibly (Job 1. 7). That has ever been the way of Satan, like the way of a serpent upon a rock; and why such a thing has been permitted for so long has been a matter of wonder to men just as the natural case was to Agur ben Jakeh. But evil and the Spirit of evil is earthbound, as is the serpent. Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven and although he appears to men as an angel of light it is but an earthbound glory; it reflects no radiance to heaven. The serpent cannot follow the eagle into the air; it must forever twist and writhe upon the rock, its sinister beauty dazzling to mortal sight but having nothing in common with the graceful denizens of the air. It emerges from its hole; it suns itself upon the rock and fascinates by its fatal beauty even while it repels; it hypnotises its victims by its baleful stare and strikes death to them before ever they are aware; but its latter end is that it perishes in the dust and is no more. In the new earth which is to be, the nobler animals are to live in peace and concord one with another, but "dust shall be the serpent's meat" (Isa. 65. 25)—a metaphorical allusion to everlasting death—for "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain".

"*The way of a ship in the heart of the sea.*" The ancient peoples looked upon a sea voyage as a hazardous undertaking—as indeed it usually was in those far-off days. The frail ship, with its load of

precious human lives, so utterly at the mercy of the elements, so dependent upon the saving power of God when storm or other danger threatened, very easily became to them a symbol of the uncertainty and difficulty of human life. That symbol is a more than usually apt one. The world of mankind, pursuing its normal course, very generally heedless of God whilst times are calm, becomes transformed into a frightened world when danger and disaster threatens, as it does to-day. And like the mariners in Jonah's ship, men then begin to call upon God for salvation. But, through calm and storm, through fair weather and foul weather, alternating between unbelief and faith, indifference and supplication, the world of man, like a ship in the heart of the sea, goes on its way, forging onward to an unknown land, in imminent danger from the towering waves and yet after each burst of the elements' fury is seen to be still afloat, battered and shaken perhaps, but still limping on its way toward the unseen land of promise. That was the wonder to Agur ben Jakeh, that the ship survived at all, that it could still be seen in the far distance until at length, the conflicts and tumults over, it was lost in the calm glory of the far horizon. A fitting symbol, surely, of the way of mankind during this time of sin and death! Not because of their own righteousness, but because of His great mercies, does God save them and bring them at the end into His "afterward of peace". Zechariah, his spiritual vision quickened to perceive the details of that final ending to the ship's voyage, said "at even time it shall be light". The way of the ship in the sea, with all the vicissitudes it experiences, is a great wonder, but it ends in the light of the far horizon, the light of the "land of far distances". (Isa. 33. 17 marg.)

"*The way of a man with a maid.*" There are several words for "man" in the Old Testament, each having its especial significance. There is *adam*, meaning "red earth"; *ish*, man as an individual, an ordinary being; *enosh*, man as a mortal, dying creature; *ben*, man as related to his surroundings (as "a man of the city") but in this passage the word is the supreme one of them all, *geber*, a "mighty man", a man indeed, a man head and shoulders above his fellows. And that takes us at once to the glorious description in the Song of Solomon, "My beloved is . . . *the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely*". The last and greatest mystery of the four wonders must surely be the mystery of Christ and His Church. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy lord; and worship thou him." (Psa. 45, 10-11.) That is the "way of a man with a maid", the

coming of the Lord from heaven to seek and win His Bride, that He might take her away and present her faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy. We all have heard that call and responded to it; we trust that we are of those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"; we talk together, as did Paul to the Ephesians, of the love of Christ for His Church, but, like Agur ben Jakeh of old, we still stand in wonderment before this great mystery. We look forward to the "marriage of the Lamb" when the Bride has fully been made ready; we hear in anticipation the words that are one day to be uttered by the Bride to all the world, "Come—take of the fountain of the water of life freely", (Rev. 22. 17) but still we do not approach to the depths of understanding that must one day be ours when, in the splendour of that marriage feast, and in the overwhelming glory of the Father's presence, we look back upon the long story of sin and redemption and perceive the evidences of Divine love and wisdom in every step of the way. Then, perhaps as never before, we shall understand why, long ages ago, a man of God was inspired to look upon the world he knew and speak of four things too wonderful for him to understand: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and—*the way of a man with a maid!*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Incomparable Book. (Newman Watts.) Uplift Press, 7s. 6d. 214 pages, cloth.

This book enshrines within its covers an imposing array of reasons why the Bible should be accepted as the Word of God and be given its rightful place in every affair of life. It seems to examine every possible aspect of the subject and the result is a most helpful volume which could be put into the hands of any enquirer or sceptic with confidence. It does not touch the doctrines or teachings of the faith, but sets out to establish the position and authority of the Bible; and it includes a comprehensive selection of quotations from eminent men of the past and present who were "men of the Book". Every Bible student will enjoy reading it; its principal use will be for gift purposes to thinking friends who have not yet made the faith their own. Can be obtained from Welling if desired, post free 8s. 3d. (2.00 dollars.)

Anxieties are like weights tied to the feet of a runner, they will greatly hinder in the race. Let us drop the petty worries, they will hinder our spiritual progress.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

TURN YOU NORTHWARD

*Captain of Israel's Host and Guide
Of all who seek the Land above,
Beneath Thy shadow we abide
The Cloud of Thy protecting love.
Our strength—Thy grace,
Our rule—Thy Word,
Our end—The glory of the Lord.
By Thine unerring Spirit led
We shall not in the desert stray,
We shall not full direction need
Or lose our providential way.
As far from danger as from fear
While love—Almighty love, is near.*

PRAYER

"Prayer brings and keeps God and man together: it raises man up to God and brings God down to man. If you would keep up your walk with God, pray without ceasing."

(George Whitefield)

AN EVERLASTING LOVE

When we speak of God's love being everlasting, we are not thinking merely in terms of time and duration—although that is something which is profoundly true. Everlasting is a word which has to do with quality as well as quantity. It is a word which describes the essential nature of Divine love. It is a love that partakes of eternity rather than of time. It is not subject to the changes and fluctuations of human nature. It is a love which is based on knowledge and on will. God loves us with an everlasting love because it is His nature so to do. God is love, and just because He is love, the love He has for His children is a love which is like His own nature, everlasting and unchanging.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline and discipleship are two sides of the one forward movement of the soul. The disciple is not a mere follower, as so many imagine. Thousands followed, and still follow, Christ without being disciples. The disciple puts himself under the discipline of the Master in order that he may learn from Him.

CONFIDENCE

*"It fortifies my soul to know
That though I perish, truth is so,
That howsoever I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That if I slip Thou dost not fall."*

PRAYER'S VICTORY

Prayer is warfare! It storms the gates of heaven, and shakes the foundations of hell. It is the constant occupation of the true and determined Christian warrior, whom the Apostle exhorts to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit", and to "watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication" (Eph. 6. 18). It is the only way to spiritual fitness and victory and holiness. It is the great pre-requisite for revival. But prayerlessness is powerlessness and barrenness and sleep.

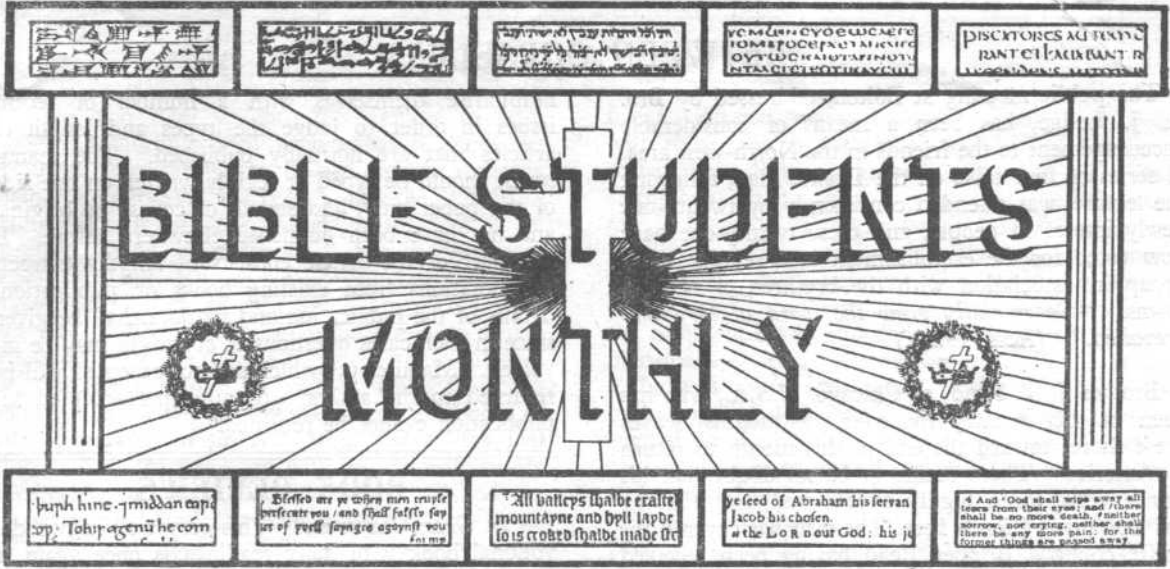
Prayer is opposed by our bodies, which relax into indolence and interject the excuse of weariness when our spirits cry out for prayer. Prayer is opposed by our minds, which embrace the time set apart for devotion as an opportunity for the entertainment of vain fancies and ungodly imaginations. Prayer is opposed—ah, with what raging fierceness!—by the devil, who permits the Christian to engage upon any spiritual exercise rather than that of prayer.

OUR TRUST

Dr. Hodgson says this: "Amid the changes and chances of our earthly life we seek in our religion for something firm and dependable to which we can cling and we do not really put our trust in the living God. We do not believe He can be trusted, unless we think of Him as bound by the text of a written document or the tradition of an ecclesiastical body, the conscience of a holy man or the opinion of some theological professors. But this is to seek to find our final and absolute authority within the framework of creation instead of where alone it is truly to be found, in the free sovereign will of the Creator."

HOW CAN I PRAY?

*If I within my heart withhold
Forgiveness for another's wrong,
If with a spirit proud and cold
I face the erring human throng.
How can my prayer to heaven be
"Forgive my debts, forgive my debts?"
How can I lift my own heart's plea
"Forgive my debts?"
If I refuse to heed the call
Of God to paths I would not tread;
If yielding not to Him my all,
I choose the selfish way instead,
How can I pray with heart sincere,
"Thy will be done, Thy will be done?"
How can I pray with conscience clear,
"Thy will be done?"*



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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The public meeting at Bolton, addressed by Bro. A. J. Lodge, has been a means of considerable encouragement to the friends in the North-west area. A series of four talks on the Divine Plan, following the lecture, was attended consistently by twenty-one newly interested people, and these twenty-one have now voted for the establishment of a regular study group in association with the brethren of near-by towns. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (Acts 19.20.)

Brother J. T. Read, of Chicago, U.S.A., who has been in this country for over six months, leaves these shores toward the end of this month to return to America. There seems to be no doubt that his ministry has been highly appreciated and that he has won many friends here. The visit has covered the entire country, Brother Read having been received by practically every meeting in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, beside addressing the Easter, Whitsun and August Conventions at Warrington, Birmingham and London respectively.

The brethren in the Midlands who have the "Tune Book" project in hand would like it to be known that although publication is not yet possible, work on the selection and classification of suitable tunes is going forward and enquiries are still being prosecuted as to ways and means of actually producing the book. Information as to progress will be given when there is something to report.

There are divers ways of proclaiming the message and it is always interesting to hear about some of the more unusual ones. The following extract is from a letter just to hand; the writer is a very enthusiastic and consistent distributor of tracts and there is evidence that his efforts often have the effect of finding a reader many miles from his home town.

"— station is where a number of north and south express trains pass through. I hand some of the tracts through the windows to passengers; so the message goes wide over the country. We, like John Wesley, feel the world is our field of service, and it is where we do good unto *all men*. We rejoice to have the privilege of witnessing to the *Kingdom of Peace*. Please send along a few 'two-minute tracts'."

New readers of the "Monthly" may not be aware that the submission of articles for possible publication in its pages is always welcomed, and although it cannot be guaranteed that any article so submitted will be published, *very careful consideration is given* to every such manuscript. Intending authors should

familiarise themselves with a number of recent issues in order to judge the types and length of articles that are normally published. The manuscript should be typed or legibly written on one side of the paper only, and should of course be original and not have been published elsewhere before. If any part of the article consists of lengthy extracts or quotations from existing books or publications details of the publication and its date shall be given since in such cases questions of copyright may be involved. Manuscripts which are not accepted will be returned to the author. Manuscripts accepted for publication cannot be returned.

BOOK REVIEWS

"*In Green Pastures*." This very well-known devotional book with daily readings is once again in print after a lapse of some years and a stock is being kept at Welling. There are 243 pages of very choice readings, and the book is well bound in cloth and gold blocked. It is surely true, as the book itself claims, that it is "read in thousands of Christian homes throughout the world". The price is 4/3 post free (One dollar).

Scriptural Cards. The "J. Danson Smith" cards are fairly well known to our brethren and in consequence of several enquiries it has been decided to keep these available in the bookroom in future. The price is 1/6 per dozen post free, twelve different cards in each packet, there being thirty-two different cards available, all consisting of very choice Scriptural poems with suitable texts.

Westminster Bible Atlas. This will be of interest chiefly to students and those who love to pore over maps or to read about the discoveries in the Holy Land. Just published by the Student Christian Movement Press, the book contains 33 maps in full colour, 2 maps in black and white, 77 photographs, and a total of 114 pages, and measures 11 inches by 15½ inches, well bound in cloth. The text consists of articles dealing with the history and geography of the Holy Land and Biblical lands generally, giving very full information on the latest discoveries in Egypt and Babylonia, and has an index which refers to nearly 2,500 place names in Bible lands. The only possible objection to the book is its large size, rendering it somewhat unwieldy for the average bookcase; but as a present for young students it is certainly a good choice. There is a useful section dealing with all the latest discoveries bearing upon the chronology of ancient nations and their connection with Bible chronology. The price is 26/- post free (six dollars) and it can be supplied from Welling if desired.

TWO MEN WENT UP

A Thought for the Month

"Two men went up into the Temple to pray . . ." A story so well known that it needs no repetition. Yet how often do we stop to consider whether we ourselves are become like the man who, fasting twice in the week and giving tithes of all he possessed, found cause for glory, not in his separateness to God, but in his separateness from his fellow-men. "I thank thee that I am not as other men are." What a miserable confession to make. In looking upon his fellows he saw nothing to emulate, no characteristics or virtues which he could desire for himself, but only the sordid evidences of evil. The reign of sin and death was a very real thing to this Pharisee; and with an exquisite nicety he carefully dissociated himself from it all and explained to the Almighty that, living perforce in an evil world and amidst sinful men, he was nevertheless not of them nor with them, and that he at least was one to whom had come the superior inward knowledge which, separating for ever from the plebeian multitude, rendered him a fit companion for the One Who dwelt in the inner sanctuary.

We read the story, we smile pityingly at the vivid picture of this pompous Israelite, and mentally place ourselves with the publican standing afar off, as we continue our reading. But what of the lesson behind the parable? Is it not true that many times in the individual Christian life we find ourselves thanking God that we are not as other men. Does it not often happen that this wonderful separateness to God which we call consecration degenerates into a mere smug and self-satisfied separateness from the world. And worse still, at times the suggestion is made that in this latter day when the purpose of God in calling from the nations a people for His Name seems to be on the brink of completion, a still more exclusive and narrow-minded outlook is called for:—to wit, that our age-old mission as witnesses of Jesus and ministers one to the other must be abrogated in favour of an individual contemplation of the sacred mysteries and a refusal to extend the privilege of fellowship and the Word of Life to all but the favoured few who are accepted as being likewise the "sealed of God". Alas; that the fruit of a one-time zealous response to be "not conformed to this world" should be, not a transforming by the renewing of the mind, with all the marvellous light of spiritual understanding that transformation can bring, but a gravitation to the lowest depths of bigotry, of self-delusion, of utter spiritual blindness which separation from our fellows must mean when we are not separated to God.

The spirit of exclusiveness is amongst us—we must fight it. It is within our hearts—we must root

it out. No matter how discouraging our experiences with those to whom we bear the Word of Life—no matter how disappointing our efforts to serve and strengthen our brethren—we must not become narrow or bigoted. The glorious Truth of God is too precious a heritage to be made the tool of personal theories and party politics. Our mission is not to evolve novel expositions and ordered theologies from the Sixty-six Books and demand acceptance of these man-made creations as the way to God. It is not to build a creed wall behind which is defined the only hope of salvation. We are exhorted to be sure of our foundation and to have a reason for the faith that is in us, by all means. We are expected to be rooted and grounded in the knowledge which has come our way and we are warned not to compromise our understanding of Divine Truth for the sake of outward harmony. But above all things we are impressed, time and time again, with the necessity for continual progress and advancement in our personal understanding of Truth—and it is in recognising this basic principle that we shall be able to take our stand in the Temple, with open face and open heart worshipping the Father Who dispenses His blessings upon all who come to Him in spirit and in truth. There may be many things—there must of necessity be many things—upon which various disciples do not see eye to eye, and because of differences of thought there must upon occasion be a physical separation into groups for orderly worship and service. But that mystic common-union which binds together all who truly name the Name of Christ transcends such temporary divisions and triumphantly demonstrates the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer "I will . . . that they may be one." Stand then upon this sure foundation, and we shall have cause to rejoice, not in works of righteousness which we have done, but in that common standing in Christ which is our privilege and seal of Divine sonship.

Whenever I meet with the will of God, I feel that I meet with God; whenever I respect and love the will of God, I feel that I love and respect God; whenever I unite with the will of God, I feel that I unite with God; so that practically and religiously, although I am aware that a difference can be made philosophically, God and the will of God are to me the same. He who is in perfect harmony with the will of God, is as much in harmony with God himself as it is possible to be. The very name of God's will fills me with joy.

(Madame Guyon)

Until the Cool of the Dawn

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

In the thick darkness which precedes the dawn of the New Day, men are groping helplessly for a panacea for the ills of this world. Out of the chaos left by the recent War men are going to build a better world. "A world in which tyranny and aggression cannot exist, a world based upon freedom, equality and justice, a world in which all persons, regardless of race, colour or creed, may live in peace, honour and dignity." This was the professed war aim of the Big Four, but we know that all their efforts to this end will fail, because the chaos in the world to-day is symptomatic of the working of a supernatural power, a power past mens' comprehension, but understood by the children of light.

We believe that we are at the very doors of that "Day of God" which Peter urged his contemporaries to "look for and hasten unto". What a day! The symbols used in the prophecies foretelling it, fantastic though they must have seemed to those who wrote concerning them, are proving apt and true to a startling degree as we "Behold the works of the Lord".

Knowing that all mens' efforts will fail inasmuch as they ignore the fact that Jesus is to be the Universal King and that His laws of justice and equity will be the basis of the new world order, what is our position as we see the world disintegrating before our eyes?

There are many pictures in the Word depicting the Church in this life, e.g. sheep in the care of a shepherd, soldiers serving under their captain, a bride awaiting her wedding day, or probationary priests awaiting elevation to a Royal Priesthood, each appealing to us according to our circumstances or dispositions.

In these days of waiting and watching, to what better picture could we turn than to that of an Eastern bride, who after long and painstaking preparation, stands, all expectantly, adorned and perfumed, ready to be escorted by her beloved to his father's house? As we, members of the Heavenly Bride, await that moment when the deferred hope of union with our Head becomes a reality, let us heed the words of the Bridegroom as he speaks in his Song of Songs (4. 6-8) "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense".

The word here translated "day-break" is an unusual one. Rotherham gives it "until the day

breathe and the shadows lengthen". Leeser has it "until the day become cool and the shadows flee". While Moffatt says "until the cool of the dawn, till the shadows depart". The word means literally "to breathe, or flow" implying relief after suspense or movement after stagnation. Fleeing shadows foretell the coming of daylight, and coolness suggests freshness after the oppressive heat of a storm in the night, so our Bridegroom refers to the beginning of the Millennial Day.

There has been much confusion concerning the beginning of this "Day". Many expected it to begin with the warmth of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings, and looked for an immediate and miraculous outpouring of the Millennial blessings, but a glimpse at the picture of the natural day would explain the reason for the non-fulfilment of these hopes.

Even as the day begins in the coldness and darkness of midnight, and the dawn is preceded by that critical period between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. when the desire to sleep seems overpowering, so the Day of Jehovah commenced in the coldness and darkness of this passing evil world, and then has followed a time of lowered spiritual vitality when the desire to sleep has overpowered many. Hence we see the need of the warnings to the church of the Laodicean period, the lesson of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and the exhortation of I Thess. 5. 2-10 (Moffatt) "You know perfectly well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night; when 'All's well' and 'All is safe' are on the lips of men, then all of a sudden destruction is upon them . . . escape there is none. But, brothers, you are not in the darkness, for the Day to surprise you like thieves, you are all sons of the Light and sons of the Day. We must not sleep like the rest of men, but be wakeful and sober . . . for God destined us not for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ".

No, we were not destined for Wrath, yet we find ourselves in the opening phase of the Day of God's wrath, so we should not yet expect the sunshine of day-break or the cool of the dawn.

We have all experienced those stifling, breathless nights, when the quietness is shattered by the roar of thunder, and the darkness is riven by blinding flashes of lightning; when we turn and toss in our

vain endeavours to rest and long for the light of morning; how refreshingly then comes, at last, the cool of the dawn.

So now the world is overcast with the storms of anarchy and unrest, and the thunder of God's wrath is rumbling among the mountains, so we recall the words of the Apostle 2-Pet. 3. 10 (Moffatt) "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, when the heavens will vanish, the stars will be set ablaze and melt, and the earth and all its works will disappear" Here also is one of many passages in Old Testament prophecy. "Hush, 'tis the Lord, the Eternal! The Eternal's day is at hand! . . . A day of wrath, that day, of woe and anguish, a day of stress and distress, darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thundercloud, a day of trumpet-blast and battle-cry against town fortified and ramparts high—when men must grope like blind men, desperately . . . no silver and no gold avails to protect them on the day of the Eternal's anger, when the fire of his fury consumes the whole earth." Zeph. 1. 7-18 (Moffatt.)

This, then, is the new day. The light of dawn is hidden by the thunderclouds of the Lord's presence, the natural coldness and stillness of night are dispelled by the storms and the fires of destruction, and men seek in vain for rest and quiet.

But how does all this affect us? We need not heed the roar and the turmoil, but quietly wait for that cool of the dawn, that "flowing" or "breathing" which will follow when the fire has done its work. So let us consider further the words of our Bridegroom; "I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense".

Whilst the Lord's messengers are carrying out their appointed tasks, the Lord dwells not in the smoke and fire of earth's destruction, but in the sweet-scented mountain. Myrrh is symbolic of wisdom, and the wise man tells us that "all her paths lead unto peace". So, midst all the tumult and strife of earth's chaotic disintegration, Jesus dwells in perfect peace, serene and confident. Frankincense was used in the ritual of the tabernacle, and was an ingredient of the incense which burned in the Holy and symbolises not only the appreciation and gratitude, but heart adoration too.

Even as the myrrh and frankincense yielded the fulness of its perfume when in contact with the fiery altar, so we, accepting the fiery experiences of this evil day, will yield that perfume of gratitude, praise and heart adoration, which will ascend as a sweet savour to our Master as he calls to us from the mountain top. What is His message to us? "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of leopards." Rotherham trans-

lates as follows—"With me from Lebanon O bride, with me from Lebanon shalt thou enter; thou shalt look round (approach) from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards." Where are these peaks from which we are to "approach" or "look round"?

Lebanon is a high mountain noted for its cedars, and of these a frequent visitor writes "Beneath the giant arms of these old patriarchs of a thousand generations there comes a sudden hush upon the soul, as if by enchantment. A night among the cedars is never forgotten; the impressions are hidden away in the inner chambers of the soul, to be visited a thousand times with never failing delight." It is our privilege to dwell upon the symbolic Lebanon, to study the writings of and about the old patriarchs of Israel (the Old Testament) and as we live thus in the light of the Eternal, the inner recesses of the soul are indeed illuminated with a gleam which brings a never-failing delight.

The name Amana is only used once in the Word, and seems to be the name of a peak on the Northern ridge of Antilebanon, whilst Hermon (or Shenir) is a peak on the Southern ridge. The meanings attached to these names seem of some significance, the one being "Permanent" the other "Prominent"; so as we approach the kingdom, the ground under our feet is permanent, it is of the "things that abide"; and our position is one of prominence inasmuch as we have a marvellous view of that which lies behind and ahead. These two peaks overlook the land of Palestine from the North, and present a view of the Land of Promise stretching out even unto the Dead Sea; so we are invited to approach the kingdom with a wonderful view of all that is promised to man redeemed and restored, when the River of God has brought life everlasting to the Dead Sea. But whilst we can thus look into the future at the wonderful restoration of all things, there are other agencies calculated to distract our attention. Our Bridegroom says "Come from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards", and in Old Testament times there were lions, leopards, wolves and panthers roving about on Lebanon and Hermon. These not infrequently attacked the flocks, even in the presence of the watchful shepherds. We see their counterpart today, but whilst they may come very close to us we need not fear; we may be adversely affected by their activities, and even suffer hardships through their machinations, but they can bring no harm to our spiritual life, for our Heavenly Bridegroom is also our loving Shepherd.

If we could look from Hermon (literal) in the twilight of early morning, we should see the tor-

tuous and neglected roads curling like snakes about the countryside. There were no roads in Palestine as we know them, but just neglected paths or tracks, cluttered with stones and boulders, thrown out of adjoining plantations. If a king or royal personage was visiting the district, a messenger was sent on ahead to clear and level the roads with the aid of forced labour. In Isa. 40. 3-4 (Moffatt) we read "Hark, there is one calling 'Clear the way for the Eternal through the waste, level a highway across the desert for our God; every valley must be filled up, every mountain and hill lowered; rough places smoothed and ridges turned into a plain; and the Eternal's glory shall be revealed before the eyes of all. Such are the Eternal's orders'".

Do we see any signs of this work being carried out? We would suggest that it has been in progress for some time. The way of the Lord has been sadly neglected, the paths of righteousness have become crooked, tortuous and obscure; but the Messenger has come and men, all unwittingly, maybe, have been preparing the way for our God. That messenger has stirred the souls of men long dormant in slavery and servitude. The French Revolution was a rising against wrongful taxation and land-ownership, in Russia the valleys were raised as the serfs were forever emancipated from the thralldom of their overlords. In this country and others the process has not been so violent, but during the last sixty years or so class distinction has been decreasing, and is, we believe, fast disappearing. In India and other lands we see the same irrepressible agencies doing their preparatory work.

Are there any indications that God is on His way? We have already quoted Zeph. 1 but there are many other Scriptures which describe His coming, e.g., Psa. 97. 1-5 (Moffatt) "The Eternal reigns! let earth rejoice, let many a shore be glad. His throne rests upon equity and justice; clouds and darkness surround him, fire burns in front of him and blazes in his steps, his lightnings illumine the world, till earth shivers at the sight; the mountains melt like wax before the Lord of all the earth". Yes, we see the signs of the Lord God coming in majesty and power, but such are the manifestations of that power, that many still wonder where God can be to permit all these terrors. They are in a similar condition as was the Psalmist when he cried "Has God forgotten to be gracious, has he in anger stopped his pity? Yes, this is my grief, that the Most High no longer has the strength he had." But faith asserts itself and he continues "Let me recall what the Eternal did, let me remember thy wonders of old . . . Thy dealings were divine . . . Thou wast a God of wonders, thou didst show the world thy strength, rescuing thy people by thy power, leading thy people

like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron". As we take note of the terrible experiences through which the descendants of Israel have been passing, we can well imagine them echoing the words of David "the Most High no longer has the strength he had" but from our vantage point on Hermon we can look beyond the present evils to the mighty deliverance foretold in Ezekiel 39, after which the flocks will dwell safely under the care of their shepherd, forever safe from the lions, leopards, wolves and panthers which have preyed upon them with such ferocity.

Mention of these wild beasts reminds us that the care of the sheep in time of threatening danger calls for great strength and indomitable courage, so we see the force of Isa. 40. 10-11 (Moffatt) "Here is the Eternal coming in power, maintaining mightily his cause! Here he is bringing what he has won, bringing what he has gained! For he feeds his flock like a shepherd, and gathers them in his arms, he is carrying the lambs in his bosom, and leading the ewes gently." What a wonderful picture of strength and power blended with tenderness. The care of the shepherd for his sheep is emphasised in the expression, "he feeds his flock," for in the ordinary way the shepherd does not feed his flock but merely leads them from pasture to pasture, but in the late Autumn and Winter he must provide them with food; so, we are told, one can see the shepherds on the mountains, all day cutting branches and tender twigs for their flocks. This reminds us of yet another picture from the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 47. 1-12 we read of a stream issuing from under the Altar, reaching even unto the Dead Sea, and "on the bank of the stream, along both sides, every sort of food-tree shall grow, etc., etc." We see very little food for the souls of men distributed by their "shepherds" at this time, and nothing to remedy the mental and moral diseases which now afflict them, but according to the marginal rendering of verse 12 the leaves from those "food-trees" are for the healing of "bruises and sores". As we observe the festering wounds which are causing such distress among nations to-day, we are glad that from our position on Hermon we can take a view of this living stream, and see that both sustenance and healing will be provided in God's own way and time.

From a small stream, this river rapidly expands, rushing down the valley of Jehoshaphat, through the Kidron valley, before finding its way to the Dead Sea. As we look out over the valley of Jehoshaphat we are reminded of Joel 3. 11-16 "Assemble yourselves and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together round about: let the nations be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge the nations round about."

Verse 14 (Moffatt) "What a din of hordes, what a din within the valley of the Verdict." And what will the verdict be? We find the answer in verse 17 (Moffatt) "I will teach you that I am the Eternal One, your God, dwelling in Sion, on my sacred hill. Thus shall it be: the mountains shall drip wine, the hills shall be aflood with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall run with water; from the Eternal's house shall pour a stream to water the wady of Acacias." This is the Shittim valley of the Authorised Version, where Israel first became so terribly defiled by worshipping Baal-Peor, but this river of living water will finally cleanse both natural Israel and all mankind from the deepest stains of sin.

The Kidron valley has been described as "a region of hopeless desolation, a barren wilderness blasted by the curse of God, with nothing to relieve its frightful desolation,"—a true picture of this passing evil world, blasted by the curse of sin, stricken by God's righteous anger and left desolate by the fire of his jealousy: but wherever this river comes, the desert blossoms as a rose, its banks become verdant with green pastures and shaded with trees, and the air is filled with bird-songs.

But more wonderful still, the waters of the Dead Sea are healed. Although the Jordan, the Arnon and many other rivers and streams have poured their sweet waters into it, it remains intolerably bitter, as deadly as ever, no fish, reptile or even the tiniest creature being able to exist therein.

What a graphic picture of the world at the very bottom of its decline. All the years of effort of good men and true have never fundamentally altered man's inherent sinfulness, which leads him inexorably on to destruction: but that living stream which flows from under the altar on which the Lamb of God was slain, will cleanse away all the wickedness and defilement, the error and violence forever, when the world will at last be quiet and at rest.

These are but a few of the many scenes which we behold as we stand on Hermon waiting for union with our heavenly Bridegroom, but as we look out over the land of promise, whilst thus we are trans-

ported by these heavenly visions, we are nevertheless surrounded by the stern realities of life, some of which may draw our attention from the hope set before us.

We have already mentioned some of the dangers which beset us, but there are possibly other trials to come, as yet but dimly seen. Some Bible Students see a typical significance in the last days of Elijah and John the Baptist, foretelling a further time of fiery trial for the Church. Time alone will prove whether or not this is to be; but if we should become at all apprehensive about the future, an incident recorded in the Old Testament may help us to keep our eyes fixed in the right direction as we wait for the "cool of the dawn".

Jehoshaphat was a man who "made it his ambition to live on the lines of the Eternal", and we read that "the Lord was with Jehoshaphat", but, like so many of those who seek the way of the Lord, he reached a serious crisis in his affairs (2 Chron. 20). In great fear he sought the Lord, and after praying earnestly for God's help he says "we have no might against this great host, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee". Here is a simple but sublime confession of faith which bears repetition. "We have no might, we know not what to do, BUT OUR EYES ARE UPON THEE." What was God's answer to this confession of weakness and trust? A command to be not afraid but to face their foes, together with an assurance that the battle was not theirs, but God's, followed by a complete liquidation of all that appeared to be so overwhelming.

Here, surely, is a lesson for us as we stand on Hermon waiting for the fulfilment of all our hopes. Though the storms may rage and the fire roar, though tempest blow and famine threaten, let us, realising our own weakness and God's omnipotence, fix our eyes upon our heavenly Bridegroom, and 'midst all the tumult and the strife, sing praises to our God; then we can be assured that we shall be kept unharmed, until the cool of the dawn, when the shadows depart.

LONDON CONVENTION, 1947

London Convention 1947 was a memorable season of fellowship and upbuilding for those who participated; a "holy convocation" such as the South of England has not seen for many years. The numbers attending were good, greater than those of any London Convention since 1931, and it was speedily evident that this gathering was being well supported by friends from every part of the country.

It may be that the five-day working week now obtaining in many industries made it possible for friends to travel on Saturday morning; at any rate when, punctually at 3.0 o'clock, the convention was opened with the customary words of welcome, there were already one hundred and fifty brethren present, a number which had nearly doubled itself by the time of the evening meeting.

The first address, by Bro. F. H. Guard (Forest Gate), on the subject "Without Hypocrisy", was a plea for rigorous self-examination and absolute sincerity in the Christian way. Bro. J. A. Jones (Cardiff) followed with a series of thoughts on the all-comprehensive sovereignty of God, especially as concerns the individual Christian, under the title "The Might of His Power" and this theme was crowned by Bro. H. C. Thackway (Central London) taking as his theme "The Love of Christ", relating the power of Divine Love for the believer to the power that is inherent in God's inflexible purpose.

Sunday morning dawned clear and fair as the brethren gathered again, first to hear Bro. G. B. Tharratt (Bishops Stortford) speak in characteristic fashion on "The Glory that shall be Revealed". His words took the minds of many hearers back to hopes and labours of many years ago, and of all to the expectations now apparently so soon to be fulfilled. After lunch the scope of the convention widened. Whilst many remained at Conway Hall, first to participate in a prayer meeting conducted by Bro. H. W. Burge (Birmingham) and then to hear Bro. W. F. Fox (Yeovil) discourse on "The Minister of the Sanctuary", others assembled at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Walthamstow, kindly lent by its congregation for the occasion, to witness the Baptismal Service that had been arranged as part of the Convention. Bro. Fox took his hearers through familiar territory—the types and shadows which have so much to teach—and drew from these things the spiritual lessons which mean so much more than the letter, centring all upon Christ. At Walthamstow the baptismal address was given by Bro. Alex Guy (Forest Gate) and several brethren symbolised their baptism into Christ, at the hand of Bro. J. A. Sharman, also an elder of Forest Gate.

The brethren all came together again in the evening to hear Bro. J. T. Read, of Chicago, U.S.A., one of the co-editors of the "Herald"; but not before the Junior Students, who seem to have acquired a flair for crowding the maximum of activity into the minimum of time, had held a short meeting for themselves in the North Room at Conway Hall, at which they discoursed with one another along the lines of particular interest to their own selves. Prior to Brother Read being called upon to speak there was a short praise service in the main hall which ended by the entire assembly singing together the song which Brother Read himself has introduced to us: "Great is Thy Faithfulness". And after that the brethren sat quietly for an hour whilst our brother talked about "Our inheritance through Faith", taking us through fields of thought from which we could view vistas, both near and far, of those things which are ours by promise.

On Monday the friends were early at the Hall and

Brother Read directed their thoughts to "Fountains of Life", a theme which spoke of life and refreshment for Church and for world both now and in the time to come. During the lunch interval the Junior Students had our brother to themselves in the North Room for a short time, and listened to the counsel he had for them; and so came the time for the final session.

The closing assembly participated first in a praise and testimony meeting conducted by Bro. L. W. Shephard (South Wales) and then Bro. A. J. Lodge (Central London) delivered an address, designed to be of particular interest to the younger brethren, on the subject "Serving the Lord". His words dealt with the practical implications of our faith in daily life, applicable in their principles to young and old alike. The final discourse was by Bro. T. Holmes (Melton Mowbray) who, taking as his text the words "Giving all Diligence", brought to a focus the things that had been said and done at the Convention, outlined the responsibilities and opportunities that lay before us at this momentous time, and exhorted to a zealous and confident advance in faith and service toward the brethren and toward all men.

So closed a memorable gathering, memorable, not only for the discourses and fellowship, but also for the many evidences of unselfish zeal and concern for the brethren that were manifest. The brethren who cared for the meals laboured very devotedly under difficult conditions of restricted space and time, and the comfort of the friends and orderly progress of the sessions was due in considerable measure to their efforts in the provision of temporal needs.

Brethren all over London, and some from the provinces, had contributed the necessary food, and a deeply appreciated gesture from one class in the United States in sending two parcels of food crowned the provision that was made and that proved sufficient for the need. Two brothers had spent considerable time on the difficult but very necessary task of seeking out suitable accommodation in London for the visitors, to such good effect that all were provided for prior to their arrival. And the general happy atmosphere of the gathering must have been due in part to the sight of the younger ones tirelessly discharging the hundred and one tasks for which enthusiasm and agility are so necessary.

An organised distribution of literature in the vicinity of the hall took place during the morning before the first session of the Convention, and a number of brethren participated and called upon householders, handing them literature with a brief word of explanation. The Convention opened with witness; it proceeded to fellowship, instruction and worship; and it closed with exhortation. May its influence last long in the hearts and minds of those who were present.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

THE EXTRA

'Tis not the duty of the day
The race you ought to run.
But just the thing you needn't do
That earns the great "Well done!"
The willingness for love to go
Beyond the single mile.
The measure pressed and running o'er
That wins the Master's smile.
(Beatrice Cleland.)

FAITH

"Dreamer; crank; fanatic"; how often have such terms been applied to men and women who have seen in vision the world that can be; yea, shall be, when the beneficent reign of Christ has done its work upon earth. "Christianity—had it for two thousand years. It doesn't work," say some, all regardless of the fact that in all that two thousand years only a few have ever approached near enough to the feet of Jesus to learn of Him and find that it does work. "The Sermon on the Mount—very fine, but not practical to-day," say others, as though the sorry mess men have made of their world is "practical". The dreamers of olden time were better informed, and in a fine flight of ecstasy the prophet declared, "Your young men shall see the glorious visions of which your old men dreamed dreams." Let the dreamers go on weaving their visions of the golden future on the solid foundation of God's Word, knowing in the words of one who was himself a dreamer that

"We take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God, beyond the years you see
Hath wrought the dreams that count with you
as madness
Into the substance of the world to be."

BE YE DOERS

This business of Christianity would be fairly straightforward if all that was required was to preach the death of Jesus; not to live His life. But the Lord presumably knew best how His Gospel might be made understandable and it was He who said men would know His disciples by their love one for another; talked about a light which was to shine before men, and an unhidden city. Writing about Him, speaking about Him, it would all be so much easier. It is living like Him that He requires. And there's the rub.

("Reconciliation.")

HIS TOUCH

On more than one occasion the biographers of our Lord tell us that He took those who required His aid by the hand. There is an example in the story of the miracle wrought on Peter's mother-in-law. We read that our Lord took her by the hand and lifted her up, with the result that the fever disappeared at once. Later in the chapter, we find again that Jesus put forth His hand and touched the leper so that he was healed of his malady. The touch of the hand may make a world of difference. It does not seem to amount to very much, but it may mean everything to the person who receives it, especially when the hand is that of Jesus.

WORSHIP

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind by the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

(Dr. Temple.)

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

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. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine.

(Moody.)

TRUST

"Dear Lord, the way seems very dark,
I cannot see."
"Yes, child, I know, but I will be thy light—
Come, follow Me!"
"Dear Lord, so lonely is this way—
Where are my friends?"
"My child, dost thou forget how far from Me
Their pathway tends?"
"Dear Master, I am growing weak,
I scarce can stand."
"O, foolish child, trust not in thine own strength,
Come, take My hand;
For I have trod this way before,
So dark to thee.
I know each step, its weariness and pain,
Wilt trust in Me?"
"Yea, Lord, though friendless, lonely, dark,
This way may be,
I will be strong. Beloved Guide, lead on,
I follow Thee!"

"Every Eye Shall See Him" AN EXAMINATION OF REV. 1. 7

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (Rev. 1. 7.)

In what way will they "see" Him; by natural sight or spiritual? In past ages such a question would not arise; the belief then prevalent that our Lord was resurrected in His fleshly human body made it the logical conclusion that He would return in that same body and hence would be seen of men by natural sight. We know to-day that our Lord was resurrected from the dead in the glory of spiritual nature, a glory that cannot be sensed by natural eyes, and that the human body buried in Joseph's tomb became no part of His present being. It follows therefore that, unless at His return He "materialises" in human form as did the angels in Old Testament days, and as He did Himself upon certain occasions between the time of His resurrection and that of His ascension, He must be invisible to human sight, and the fact of His return must be discerned by other evidences, and He be "seen" therefore by what we call "spiritual sight".

It is not sufficient, though, thus to dismiss further consideration of this Scripture, for the word here is that "every eye shall see him". Some have pointed out that the word is not "*horao*" which is said to have the meaning of "discern", but "*opsetai*", which is said to mean the seeing with the natural sight, and hence that the text should be taken literally despite the considerations which have just been expressed. Now in fact both words, "*horao*" and "*opsetai*", and their variations, in the New Testament, have both uses, to "see" with the physical eyes and to "see" mentally. Since this is a rather important point a few instances of the word which is rendered "see" in the text under consideration are given here in order to establish the matter.

Jno. 3.36 "He that believeth not the Son shall not *see* (*opsetai*) life".

Luke 3.6 "All flesh shall *see* (*opsetai*) the salvation of God".

Matt. 27.24 "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. *See* (*opsethe*) you to it".

Matt. 27.4 "What is that to us. *See* (*opsei*) thou to that".

In the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint):

Psa. 49.9 "That he should still live for ever and not *see* corruption".

Zech. 9.5 "Askelon shall *see* and be afraid".

And in the Apocrypha:

Baruch 4.24-25 "The neighbours of Sion... shall *see* your salvation... Thine enemy hath persecuted thee but shortly thou shalt *see* his destruction".

From these instances—there are others—it should be clear that the word is not used necessarily to mean "seeing" with the physical sight; it does on occasion indicate "seeing" with the mental sight, and it does not follow, therefore, that the use of "*opsetai*" here teaches that Jesus at His return will be visible to mankind.

The next thing to consider is the thought in John's mind when he wrote the words. What did *he* intend to convey? What is the understanding that the Holy Spirit sought to impart to us through John's ready pen?

The verse stands by itself; it has no direct connection either with the preceding or the succeeding verses. It is an ecstatic outburst, as it were, on John's part using the language of the Old Testament. He had written his greeting, a greeting of grace and peace from the Father, the Son, and the angelic host as represented by the archangels, (the "seven spirits before the throne"). He had gone on to extol the One Who has both saved us and made us kings and priests, and having concluded this greeting with a deep-felt "Amen" (vs. 6), it is as if a new thought strikes him and he exclaims "Behold, he cometh...", seeing the ultimate end of all that he had witnessed in vision on Patmos. We should take the verse as being, not a bald, sober statement of physical fact, but a rhapsody of praise for a forthcoming event, expressed in familiar Scriptural terms. The words of this verse are repeated from the sayings of Jesus and the utterances of the prophets and it is to those origins that we should turn if we would rightly understand the text.

The memory immediately in John's mind must have been the reply of Jesus to the High Priest, recorded in Matt. 26.64. John was present at that scene (Jno. 18.15) and heard the words. "Hereafter shall ye *see* (*opsonai*) the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven". That declaration was in turn a direct reference to Dan. 7.13. "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven... and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him". Now that verse in Daniel, in common with

the whole of the chapter, is quite clearly symbolic; we do not expect that the Most High will seat Himself upon an earthly throne and superintend the burning of a literal ten-horned beast! Neither do we expect that the Lord Jesus will literally be brought before a throne of fire in order to receive His Kingdom. And Jesus knew that this was symbolic when he alluded to this well-known belief before Caiaphas. John knew it too when he quoted the words in Rev. 1.7, and there was no doubt in his mind as to the reality of that Coming even although he knew himself to be describing it in terms that were symbolic.

But John's thoughts had ranged further back than the time of Daniel. He had the golden visions of Isaiah in mind, visions in which the same word "opsetai" is used for the same event. He was thinking of Isa. 40.5 "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see (opsetai) it together", and of Isa. 52.8 "For they shall see (opsontai) eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion". (This latter Scripture refers to the "Watchers" coming as it were "face to face" with the returning Lord, and not, as is sometimes suggested, to the harmony of believers on doctrinal matters at the "Time of the End". "They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion" is the way Margolis translation has it, and this is the thought both of the Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint.)

Quite instinctively John associated with these Scriptures another theme, that upon which the prophet Zechariah dwelt when he said (Zech 10.10) "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son". John had already associated that Scripture with a limited fulfilment at the time of the Crucifixion (Jno. 19.37); now he associates it with a greater fulfilment. Not only would the "Watchers" as in Isa. 52.8, see the Lord returning to Zion; not only would "all flesh", all the world, as in Isa. 40.5, see the glory of the Lord revealed; not only would the wicked who had risen up for judgment, as in Daniel 7, see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, but those who in John's sight were the furthest of all removed from God—"they also which pierced him"—would experience this same realisation of His Return for judgment and conversion. None can escape the Coming of the Son of Man! All are to be brought before Him that He might separate them as a shepherd divides between his sheep and his goats. (Matt. 25.32) Just as in Zechariah there is a world-wide mourning for an only son so in John's ecstasy he foresaw that "all kindreds of the earth shall wail over (not "because of") him". (The word is *epi* and the thought

that of mourners wailing over a dead beloved one.) The correspondence between Zech. 10.10 and Rev. 1.7 on this point is exact.

It should be clear then that since the "seeing" in the Scriptures which gave John his inspiration for this verse in Revelation is not physical, but metaphorical, John is hardly likely to have intended his words here to be interpreted to mean physical sight. "Behold" he says, in the language of his beloved Scriptures, "he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him". He knew that the "seeing" in those texts was with the mental sight and it is reasonable to conclude that in alluding to those texts he applied the same meaning to them.

A further confirmation of this viewpoint is the fact that if "they that pierced him" are literally to witness His coming in the clouds of heaven they must be resurrected before the Second Advent takes place. Such a thought is out of harmony with all that we know of the Plan. The Lord comes, first, to raise His own faithful ones. After that, and after He has presented the risen Church before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, He will be revealed, with His Church, in glory to the world. And only after that will the General Resurrection commence and "they that pierced him" be awakened from the sleep of death to stand before the great White Throne. They will not, they can not, physically witness His return to earth; but they will "see" Him then in exactly the same way that we, now, see, "eye to eye", the Lord returning to Zion.

The "Young Bible Students Messenger" for July is to hand. This bright duplicated magazine reflects the zeal and aspirations of the younger brothers and sisters in the Truth, but there are some things in it that would interest the older ones too. This issue has a story for the "under-tens", an article for the newly interested, four short articles for the consecrated, a senior and a junior "quiz". To the brethren in general the chief interest in this venture is the evidence it affords that the appeal of the Truth is to the present generation as well as to those whose days are well advanced. And realising, as we must, that the torch of Truth must be passed from hand to hand as the years slip by, it is encouraging to realise that there are willing hands ready to grasp that torch in their turn. May the Father's blessing be upon their efforts, and wisdom and discretion come to them in due measure. The magazine is now priced at 3/- per year, and like all our magazines, is free to those unable to meet this charge, the subscriptions being received by Brother D. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex. Six months' back numbers will be sent gratis to anyone desiring same if request is made to Brother Nadal.

"OUR FELLOWSHIP"

AN INTERESTING QUOTATION
FROM THE PAST

The following manifesto will be recognised by some of our older readers as first having been published some fifty years ago. Although penned to define the position of the "Present Truth movement" of that time, the sentiments it expresses are so much in line with what we regard as fitting to-day that it is reproduced here and commended to all our readers. We cannot pretend in our own fellowship completely to have attained or maintained this ideal; perhaps it is too much to expect of any brotherhood where imperfect, fallible men, however well-intentioned, are concerned; but that it is an ideal worthy of striving after few would deny. Can we then do more than we are doing to make it more true of ourselves?

Our fellowship sprang up spontaneously and gradually... It is composed of thinking Christian people of various ages who are studying the Bible reverently and profitably. There are no limitations as to membership, except such as could be properly applied to any true Christian, (1) Faith in God as the great Creator and Heavenly Father, (2) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the world's Redeemer, (3) Faith in the Bible—that it is the inspired message of God, respecting His will and purposes in connection with mankind, (4) A clean and honourable life.

We find this platform broad enough for all true Christians, regardless of denominational differences. We have no bondage, and anyone is as free to leave the local gatherings as to enter them. Indeed, following the example of the Early Church in this as well as in other matters, we avoid any special manner of joining these gatherings, or any special enrolment, or any special commitment as to faith and practice other than the broad principles already mentioned.

Each local gathering is independent, manages its own affairs, conducts its own meetings, and provides for its own expenses. The personnel of these gatherings come from all walks of life—labourers and physicians, pupils and teachers, housewives and the leisured. It is observed that many of these truth-seekers were unsatisfied when they studied the Bible from various denominational standpoints; now they are satisfied. How may one account for this? How comes it that a clearer light can be gained in such meetings than in the ordinary denominational institutions?

There is a difference. Each denomination seeks to uphold its own traditions of the past, some of which are true and some false. In our fellowship all denominational predilections are ignored. We pause not to inquire what Brother Calvin or Brother Wesley

taught, nor what others taught before them or since. We go back to the teachings of Christ and the apostles and prophets and ignore every other teaching. True, all denominations claim more or less to do this, but they are more or less handicapped by their traditions and creeds. They look through coloured spectacles. We ignore all those and strive to view the words of inspiration in the light of the context only, or in the reflected light from other passages of Scripture.

There is another reason why our position is blessed of God—the time mentioned in the Scriptures when the "wise" of God's people are to understand is here. The Scriptures show, what men are now beginning to realise, that we are in the dawn of a new era. This is the time concerning which God promised that He would give special enlightenment respecting His Word and His Plan, and the mystery of God should be finished.

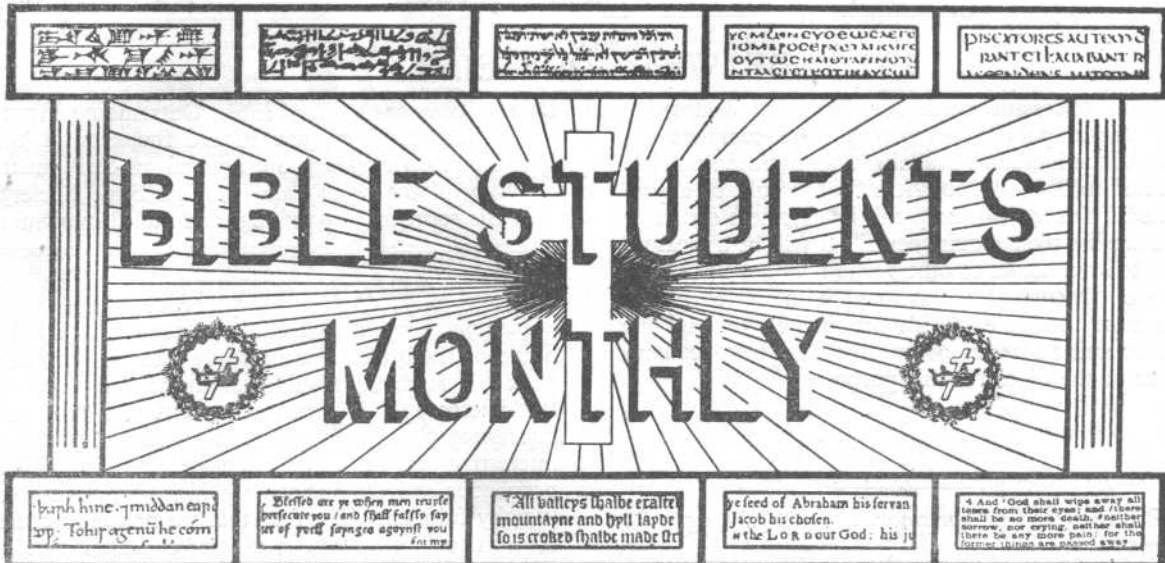
Our fellowship therefore, while not affiliated to any of the older denominations and sects, is sympathetic with all Christian people of every creed. We realise that the various denominations were organised, not for the purpose of dividing and distracting the Lord's flock, but each with an endeavour to find the light and truth. We urge Christians to ignore all sectarian fetters and fancies, and would point out that there is one true Church, and but one Head of that Church.

Our fellowship therefore endeavours to bring all Christian people into relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His members. We recognise that the different denominations contain true people of God, and are glad to co-operate with them in any manner for the furtherance of the Lord's work in harmony with the Scriptures. Our only objection to sectarianism is that it attempts to divide God's people, insists upon the theories of the Dark Ages, and refuses to recognise the paramount authority of the Bible. We urge Christian people to stand for the Divine character, Plan and Word, even although this may mean opposition and persecution from those of sectarian spirit.

We labour therefore specially for Christian unity, on the Bible basis, in harmony with the words of the Apostle. "*By one Spirit we are all baptised into one Body*". (1 Cor. 12.13.)

"There are great truths that pitch their shining tents

*Outside our walls, and though but dimly seen
In the grey dawn, they will be manifest
When the light widens into perfect day".*



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BETWEEN OURSELVES

With this issue there will be found enclosed a new list of publications giving more complete details of the literature available than has been possible heretofore in the "MONTHLY." It would be appreciated if friends will keep this list by them and refer to same for their requirements. It will be a pleasure also to send copies to others who may not be readers of the "MONTHLY" but may be interested in the literature, and the friends are invited to send the names and addresses of any such of their acquaintance to the office for this purpose.

* * * *

Gone From Us

* * * *

Brother Pender (*Portsmouth*), 29th July, aged 84 years.

Sister Amy Halton (*Hyde*), 11th August, aged 69 years.

* * * *

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

* * * *

There are occasions when contributors to these columns use words which are not generally "understood of the people", to use the old Prayer Book expression. Sometimes, also, names of ancient or modern writers or preachers are quoted and some readers have not heard of them before. For their benefit, therefore, it is intended to print on this page, each month, a brief glossary of such terms and references as it may be thought are not generally well-known. Readers can turn back to this page when they meet with such items in the following pages.

* * * *

GLOSSARY

of little-known terms and names appearing in this issue.

Fathom. A British measure of depth equal to six English feet.

Spectroscope. An instrument which, among other uses, receives and analyses a beam of light from some source such as a star or the sun, separating it into its component colours and indicating the nature of the various elements of which such star or other source of light is composed.

Stade (plural stadii). A Greek measure of length equal to $606\frac{3}{4}$ English feet, in use in Bible times. Translated "furlong" in the New Testament, as in Rev. 14. 20 and John 11. 18.

Dr. John Clifford. Born 1836, died early in this century. Baptist minister of some note; ministered at Paddington, London.

Charles Simeon. 1759-1836. Outstanding Evangelical minister, one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society and an early mainstay of the British and Foreign Bible Society. His sermons and writings ran into 21 volumes.

BOOK REVIEWS

Fulfilled prophecies that prove the Bible (Davis). Some of the brethren are already familiar with this book. It is chiefly notable for the wealth of excellent photographs illustrating the text. 34 clear and interesting photos and two maps, with 124 pages of interesting matter, cover fourteen striking Bible prophecies and the manner in which they have been literally fulfilled. The fact that we normally count the spiritual fulfilment as of greater importance in the case of many of these prophecies does not detract from the fact that they are shown here to have been literally fulfilled in a most convincing manner. This book certainly brings them together in a most enthralling fashion. A good booklet to have handy when discussing these things with people who are doubtful. Printed on first-class paper with paper cover, 2/- post free.

Rebuilding Palestine according to prophecy (Davis). By the same author, a similar book but this time the subject is the present development of Palestine itself in the light of prophecy. 136 pages of text are illustrated by 29 excellent photos and 2 maps, all different to those in the other book. The series of views of Jerusalem showing how Zech. 14. 10 is being literally fulfilled in the present building development of the city is very interesting and this should also be of great interest to doubters. This book also is 2/- post free. Both are available from stock.

"In Green Pastures." This very well-known devotional book with daily readings is once again in print after a lapse of some years and a stock is being kept at Welling. There are 243 pages of very choice readings, and the book is well bound in cloth and gold blocked. It is surely true, as the book itself claims, that it is "read in thousands of Christian homes throughout the world". The price is 4/3 post free (One dollar).

Scriptural Cards. The "J. Danson Smith" cards are fairly well known to our brethren and in consequence of several enquiries it has been decided to keep these available in the bookroom in future. The price is 1/6 per dozen post free, twelve different cards in each packet, there being thirty-two different cards available, all consisting of very choice Scriptural poems with suitable texts.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

A Thought for the Month

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5. 16.)

A recently discovered and hitherto unpublished sermon of an old-time famous preacher, Charles Simeon, has this passage: "If your life be not as becometh the Gospel of Christ, the world will despise religion as a worthless unproductive thing, and those who profess godliness will be apt to catch the infection and to sink into lukewarmness." Is this one reason for the loss of faith and zeal which so many bemoan in these trying days? Is it that the world's unbelief and scorn as regards our message, reflected back to us, of itself induces a growing loss of zeal and even of conviction, resulting in a lack of enterprise and a resultant settling down in the social comfort of our fellowship and a waiting for the Lord to set up His Kingdom and take His Church to heavenly glory without being concerned any longer with the manifesting of the outward characteristics of the salt of the earth, lights in the world, and a city set on an hill?

It would seem so in some cases at least. Advancing age can justify some cessation of active service; the more strenuous and trying conditions of this distressful period involves a certain restriction of opportunity; the fact of decreasing numbers within the fellowship renders effective co-operation increasingly difficult. But none of these things would be seriously argued by any of us if our Master plainly appeared before us to exhort us, as He did His own disciples, that we go on in life, in whatever circumstances and under whatever disadvantages we may be placed, *just showing how a Christian can live!* In so many connections we do fail to manifest that in our day-to-day dealings with our fellows. We fail often enough with our own brethren, and how much more with the world. And it brings leanness into the soul.

We tend to view our Christian life from too intellectual a viewpoint. Even our entrance thereinto is carefully prescribed for us in technical terms; repentance, justification, consecration, sanctification, glorification; and too often the whole matter is presented to the immature believer as though he is invited to enter into a commercial agreement with God. Cold as ice, and about as inviting! And all the time we are conscious—or ought to be conscious—of the warm, vibrant words "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . . a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise". How strange that we, who claim so much and so often that God must break the hearts of the world in the Time of Trouble before they will be ready to heed Him, so rarely stress the necessity of a broken heart in the case of one who in this Age turns from sin to serve the living God!

This is the source from which we must get the oil for the light, the virtue for the salt, the power to raise that city to its elevation on the hill; here, at the foot of the Cross, where repentance and determination, contrition and hope, renunciation and consecration, go hand in hand. Not in the emotionless formalism of the detached acceptance of a cold invitation "if ye do *this* . . . I will give you *that*" but in the spontaneous, eager realisation of tender, compassionate tones "My son, give me thine heart . . . who will go for us?", lies the power that will make us to "shine forth as the sun" here and now in the sight of all men. In that experience, and that alone, shall we realise what was in the mind of the "beloved physician", Luke, when he beheld the fellowship of the Early Church and wrote of them, "*praising God, and having favour with all the people: and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*". Is it any accident that that last phrase is associated so intimately with its predecessor?

"And More than That"

A STUDY IN A FEW
VERSES OF EPHESIANS

Careful students of Paul's letter to the Ephesians are prone to remark with wonder the majestic nature of the language employed in the attempt to fit the things of God into the words of men. There is far too much of this lofty thought throughout the whole Epistle to be dealt with in this article,—for indeed, a whole series of articles could not scale all the heights or sound all the depths which our beloved brother Paul wrote into it.

Our attention at this time will be given to some three or four of these massive thoughts, though we know that even then the half will not be told.

The first point for our consideration is in Chapter 3. 8, where Paul speaks of the *unsearchable* riches of Christ. "*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" The word that is translated "unsearchable" is a word that

has baffled all translators, for no translation has yet set forth the whole thought as expressed by Paul. Moffatt renders the phrase "the fathomless wealth of Christ", while Weymouth has the "exhaustless wealth of Christ". Rotherham translates it "the untraceable riches of Christ", and the Diaglott "the boundless wealth of Christ". Even the Concordant Version fails to translate this word accurately, for if, as this version says, the wealth of Christ is "untraceable" what purpose could have been served by Paul's ministry? How could he inform the Gentiles of wealth which was untraceable? Does not the fact that he was charged with this mission to the Gentiles require that the subject of his ministry should be apprehensible, and therefore in some degree "traceable"?

The precise meaning of the Greek here is "that which cannot be measured out with the foot". The situation that this phrase brings to mind is that of some young worthy nobleman, newly come into a vast inheritance, despatching his trusty steward to "ride the boundaries", and survey the wealth of the estate. Furlong by furlong, "stade" after "stade", day after day, he goes, and yet the end seems as far away as ever. The time fails him to "measure it out by the foot",—yet with every passing step he is tracing out its dimensions, or estimating something of its buried wealth. He could report back that he had traversed a thousand stadii, but there was "more than that".

And that is precisely Paul's thought here. As the Steward of the Lord he was tracing out the length and breadth of the Lord's inheritance, and surveying its intrinsic wealth, yet there was always "more than that". He had never said the last word about it, at any time. No matter how he enthused about the Master's inheritance, there was always more to say—always "more than that". And for the saint, who, in thought, traversed with Paul, the wide reaches of the Lord's heavenly estate, there was always some present satisfaction and enjoyment as they pressed along their track, but they never reached its end—there was always more to come. Thus when we "trace it out", the track will have no end, and therefore we will not be able to "measure it out with the foot". We may measure it day by day, but we shall not be able to "measure it out"—it is too great for that.

Our next point is in verse 10, where Paul speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God" . . . "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." This is a wonderful statement, and merits more attention than can now be accorded to it. The word trans-

lated "manifold" or "diversified" has to do with a range of colours,—as for instance the spectrum effect when light is passed through a crystal prism.

The student of geology also sees this colour range as he views some rock specimen under a beam of polarised light. Among its components may be seen the sparkling green of its olivine, the dark brown of its hornblende, the flashing red of its hæmatite, the shining silver of its felspar, etc. Occasionally a specimen of more diverse and complex composition may be on the slide, and as he views the richly variegated colouring he is taught to call it "*poikilitic*". This is the very word used by Paul—the "*poikilitic*" wisdom of God; yet that is not all that Paul has to say—to emphasise this variegated wisdom of God he adds another word by way of prefix and calls it "the *poly-poikilitic* wisdom of God"—the "*much variegated* wisdom of God."

We are told that colour-makers, working with the elements now available can produce and distinguish no less than ten thousand shades and hues within the range of the visible bands of the spectro-scope. Not every eye would be capable of distinguishing the slight degrees of light or shade in this vast range of colour, but to the experienced eye this range would indeed be a "*poly-poikilitic*" one.

To the angelic hosts watching with intense eagerness the expression of the Wisdom of God as it reveals itself in the experiences of the Church, the wide scope, added to the manifold variety, of their Providential leadings, day by day, can be well compared to this colossal range of ten thousand hues and shades. God's dealings take each child just as he is, each different child being the subject of a different mode of leading and development; each different child being the object towards which a different facet of Divine Wisdom is directed, so that its full individuality may be developed to its fullest possibility.

Since our "*poly-poikilitic*" range is limited to ten thousand hues and shades all we can say (let the angels say what they will) is that the Wisdom of our God has ten thousand hues and shades—and more than that! Here is a Wisdom equal to every emergency and every experience the long age through, in the lives of every one who will constitute the Church of God.

The next point of our survey is found in verses 18 and 19—"the love that surpasses knowledge". Here is a wonderful galaxy of words indeed. "Breadth", "length", "height", "depth" . . . the love . . . which passes knowledge . . . filled with all the fulness of God". Behind the "*poly-poikilitic*" Wisdom of God lies a love which out-

strips all the range of our finite ken—which overleaps the utmost bounds of our present comprehension.

It is related that Nansen, the Arctic explorer, having one day bored through the ice, let down his sounding-line into the waters beneath the ice-cap. Down and down it went, but did not touch bottom. Another line was added, and another, until all the lines in the ship were tied together and let down—but even then they failed to reach the ocean bed. When writing up the records of, that day, Nansen wrote, “3,500 fathoms . . . and deeper than that”. That is exactly Paul’s thought about the Love of God. It is the full measure of man’s necessity—and greater than that! How much more none can ever know. Words just break down when contemplating a Love like that! When our sounding-lines have reached their utmost depth in the hearts and lives of men, all we can say is—in Nansen’s words—“3,500 fathoms, and more than that”!

Our final point is in verse 20—“above all we can ask or think . . .”. Here the Apostle’s words seem to fail him completely, as writing in the most highly inflected language of the ancient world, he tries to commit to the parchment the things which his illumined eyes could see. He piles up word on word, idea upon idea in his enthused attempt to utter what he knows. Now his theme is Power—after Wisdom and Love comes Power. It is a power that is “able to DO—able to do *above* what we ask—*abundantly* above what we ask—*exceeding* abundantly above what we ask—and then as though realising that the tongue may be less accomplished than the brain, he adds as a last attempt to state the impossible, “able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can . . . think”. And with that our attempts at understanding reach their boundaries, and we can only say “all that we can ask or think—and more than that”! And having reached that point, heart and mind and soul can only bow in reverent silence before the wealth of Grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, before the infinite resources

of Manifold wisdom, before the illimitable heights and depths of Love Divine, and before the all-prevailing power of Him who is the glorious Author of it all.

To the mind of Paul life’s journey was an increasing panorama of wonder—of things to be wondered at. The daily Providences of God in his life; the widening vistas of the great Divine Plan as it unfolded through the centuries, were things that enthused him with wonder upon wonder, and gave to his lips and pen these glowing phrases, these vaulting ideas, and these thrilling powers of holy imagination and understanding in the Way of the Lord.

Paul could rejoice in that Christ Jesus gave Himself a Ransom for all, but it revealed the very floods of joy when he could say “He loved me, and gave Himself for me”.

Children with “wonder” minds can always see much more in life than those who are coldly calculating in their approach to things. Children of God with “wonder” minds can always see in these glowing words and thoughts of Paul more than those who are coldly statistical in their definitions of truth. These glowing words were a transcript from Paul’s own experience. It was both fact and action in his own life and character before it found its way to his manuscript, and because he lived intensely with his Lord, his pen could write with an intense intimacy about those things he received from his Lord, and which he strove so enthusiastically to write for his friends.

“If you become His man” said one old saint to an early British king “you will come upon wonder upon wonder in His call—and every wonder true.”

And that goes for us too.

Each point dealt with foregoing could well have been the subject for a complete article and even then the half not have been told. Let each brother or sister as they read, try to fill out each point for themselves, and then, when the contemplation is complete, say—“*and more than that*”.

“I MAKE PEACE AND CREATE EVIL” A note on Isa. 45. 7

I form the light, and create darkness.

I make peace, and create evil.

I the Lord do all these things.

(Isa. 45. 7.)

Those words have puzzled many. How can it be that God is the creator of evil, when another prophet recorded the words which said “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab. 1. 13),

and the Scriptures are full of assurances that God is actively working to destroy evil; that Jesus actually laid aside the spiritual glory which He had with the Father before the world was, became man, and suffered Himself to be put to death by men, for the same purpose? The two ideas seem at first sight to be incapable of harmony the one with the other; and yet there must be a reasonable harmony be-

tween them even although we do not discern it at first sight.

Let it first be observed that the theme of this part of the 45th chapter is God's own sovereign responsibility for all that takes place in His creation. "I am the Lord, and there is none else." Whatever is, is ordained or permitted by God, and nothing can be, except it is at the least allowed by His sovereign will.

This, of course, immediately raises the question of evil, the most perplexing puzzle that has ever posed before the mind of thinking man. That evil exists and afflicts mankind, there is no doubt. Then if God is all-powerful, why does He allow it?

In the days of Isaiah, one answer—the wrong answer—to this question was beginning to penetrate Israelitish thought from the religious beliefs of the Persians, who at that time were coming more and more into contact with Israel. The system which afterwards became the national religion of Persia under the name of Zoroastrianism was advancing into prominence. The chief tenet of this system held that the world was the scene of a mighty and apparently interminable conflict between two great supernatural powers, Ahura-Mazda, the god of all good, and Ahriman, the god of all evil. Ahura-Mazda was pictured as throwing all his powers into this fight against evil, but progress was necessarily slow and in the meantime Ahriman was measurably victorious and the world in consequence suffering under the reign of evil. As a human philosophical explanation of the fact of evil the theory could appear to match the observed facts; but it was not the true explanation. And it might well be that the Lord gave this emphatic word to Israel through Isaiah in order to emphasise that He, and He alone, accepts responsibility for all that goes on in His creation and whatever condition of things may exist is subject always to His control. Evil is always under the controlling power of God, and can be instantly restrained by Him if that should be His will.

Such a time will come in history. The Scriptures speak of Satan being bound a thousand years, to deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1) and nothing will hurt nor destroy even although during that age, the Millennial Age, some who at heart are opposed to justice and righteousness will yield merely "feigned obedience" (Psa. 18. 44, margin). That one instance, of the binding of Satan himself, is sufficient to show that God is able instantly to restrain outward evil when in the exercise of His wisdom He deems it time so to do.

So, then, after emphasising that He alone is God and that there is no other God of equal power,

either good or evil, beside Him, God makes the issue doubly definite by saying "I make peace, and create evil". What is the meaning underlying the words?

This is where we must reach for our analytical concordance. There are three different Hebrew words, each having its own special application, used in the sense of "making" or "creating", and the meaning of a passage such as this can best be appreciated when the precise words used are known.

The first and most important of these three words is *bara*, which means to create a thing as though to bring it into existence. This is the word used in Gen. 1. 1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" i.e. brought them into existence. The second is *yatsar*, meaning to mould or fashion into shape as a potter does his clay, and so is usually translated "to form" or "to fashion". The third is *asah*, a word meaning to construct or make in a mechanical sense, as though to assemble or put something together from already existing things. Now let us see how these meanings help us in the passage under consideration.

"I form (*yatsar*—fashion or mould) the light,—and create (*bara*, cause to exist) darkness. I make (*asah*—construct) peace, and create (*bara*, cause to exist) evil. I the Lord do (*asah*) all these things."

By forming light the Lord automatically gave "darkness" existence as a separate thing, in contrast to light, for darkness is the absence of light. By constructing or putting together the laws that make for peace the Lord automatically gave existence to "evil" as a separate thing—for evil is the absence of righteousness. Without the law there is no knowledge of sin, said the Apostle Paul (Rom. 3. 20 and 7. 7.) So without God giving His definitions and laws of righteousness (peace) there could be no knowledge of what constituted evil. Thus in making peace or righteousness, God gave a tangible definition or existence to evil which it could not have had otherwise.

"What is freedom? Not mere political independence, but the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, the reign of Truth and Non-violence in every walk of life." (*Mahatma Gandhi speaking at Panchgani, India, 19th July, 1945. Gandhi is a Hindu by religion, and therefore his reference to the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth as the requisite for true freedom is doubly interesting.*)

* * * *

God is not sparing in His riches, He gives not a trickle but a torrent. As His power is great, so is His grace. (2 Cor. 9-8.)

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

GOD'S WORD

*Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil sing the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all those hammers so?"
"Just one," he said, then, with a twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."*

*And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon,
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.*

(Attributed to Dr. John Clifford.)

COMMUNION

It is not necessary to be always audibly speaking to God in prayer, or always to be hearing from God by the ministry of His Word to have communion with Him. There is an inarticulate fellowship more sweet than words. The little child can sit all day long beside its busy mother, and, although few words are spoken on either side, both being busy, the one in his absorbing play, the other in her engrossing work, yet both are in perfect fellowship. The child knows that mother is there, mother knows the child is all right.

How comforting and glorious to feel that every little thing he does is touched with the consciousness of the Father's presence, and the sense of His approval and blessing!

May God help us to keep this spirit of childhood—that is, our spirit of Sonship, undiminished, to the end.

CONFESSION

Is your trouble the *Disease of Silence*? Some will say that they believe in the testimony of the life. Certainly so; but that will not excuse us the duty of the testimony of the lips. Listen to this, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth . . . thou shalt be saved", which implies that the blessed experience of full salvation is dependent, in part, on the witness of the lips. The reason why some Christians fail to grow strong, and enjoy so little blessing, is frequently this, that they are silent Christians—sealed lips caused starved lives.

CO-OPERATION

It is important correctly to understand the doctrine of co-operation. A disposition to co-operate is not more opposed to the sinful indolence which falls behind, than to the hasty and unrighteous zeal which runs before it. It is in the excess of zeal, which has a good appearance but in reality has unbelief and self at the bottom, that we run before God. Co-operation, by being calm and peaceable, does not cease to be efficacious. Souls in this purified but tranquil state are souls of power, watchful and triumphant against self; resisting temptation; fighting even to blood against sin.

HOLINESS

Why are we bidden seek that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? What worthy motive prompts us to seek after a heart in every thought renewed and full of love divine? Is it because holiness is necessary for service or for a godly influence? No. The true reason for our holiness is given by God in His command to us, whether through Moses or Peter, "Be ye holy for I am holy"; and the first great reason why we should seek true holiness of heart and life is for fellowship with a holy God.

THE THREE TENSES

2 Cor. 1. 10

Past. Present. Future.
"Delivered." "Doth Deliver." "Will yet Deliver."

Past Grace that brought Salvation
That Grace did set us free—
By Jesu's pure Oblation—
From sin's dark Penalty.

Present—A Living Saviour—
High Priest who pleads above
For those who by God's favour
Receive this wondrous Love.

Future?—"Will yet Deliver"—
That Promise we strive to win,
Faith is still the Victory
To break the Power of sin.

R.W.

The women were too late with their spices; Mary was not with her ointment.

THE SON OF MAN

A BIBLE STUDY

When our Lord asked His disciples (Matt. 16. 13-20) as to whom men said that the Son of Man was, and followed their answer by asking them whom they thought Him to be, it was Peter who announced that He, Jesus, was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our Lord was manifestly pleased that the Father had revealed this to Peter, yet after the blessing of Peter which follows, He charges them that they tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ. We might think (and the disciples possibly thought) that this great truth should have been published throughout the land. We read (Luke 3. 15) that the people were in expectation and mused in their hearts if John the baptiser were the Christ, or not. Would not the prompt declaration of Jesus as the Christ end all doubts? Why did our Lord charge His disciples not to tell others? Why did He tell them not to tell the transfiguration vision to men till the Son of man be risen from the dead? In this connection it will be noted that only on rare occasions does our Lord own to being the Christ; that He will own to being the Son of God; and that usually He refers to Himself as the Son of man. And further, He is never addressed as the Son of man; and the expression is almost exclusive to the gospels. When He was raised from the dead to the right hand of God, the disciples proclaim Him as the Lord Jesus Christ without any restraint being enjoined on them.

The first explanation that may come to our minds, that He was the Son of man prior to His crucifixion, and the Lord Jesus Christ when exalted, is not convincing when we recall the circumstances in which the titles were used. For they are titles; titles indicative of the particular Divine work in which He is engaged. Upon study we shall find that these titles are never casually used, and it will assist us in the understanding of scripture by noting which title is used. Of all His titles, the expression Son of man, sounds, shall we say, the most human—it was the usual one our Lord used of Himself. "Lord" always implies that He is our master and superior, and is one that we may respectfully (and never forgetfully) use of Him. "The son of David" reminds us of the true descendant of David who will sit on the throne of Israel as their rightful and eternal king. "Jesus" we are liable to think as being a name to distinguish Him from others (and was so used by the Greeks; John 12. 21), but when further considered reveals Him as the Saviour who

effects the salvation which God has purposed. "Christ", the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*, speaks to us of the Anointed (as the word means) and appointed chief instrument of God and head of the church which is His body. We think of the "Son of God" as primarily showing that He derived his life from his heavenly Father, while the "Son of man" reminds us that this son of God became flesh, became a man for the purpose of redeeming man. Of all who have lived on this earth, this Son of man (not son of men) stands revealed as the one above all others. Nothing in the title implies human fatherhood. The titles should not be confused with a similar expression in the O.T.; for example, when the angel enlightening the prophet Ezekiel addresses him "son of man". With the thought in mind that the title speaks to us of the redemptive work of our Lord and the associated work arising from redemption, it will be useful to consider some passages of scripture where the expression is used, and there will be seen that the title most allied to our Lord's first advent mission has been used and that to have used any other of His titles would have been out of place.

Take as an example the verse which is regarded by many as the key text of Mark's gospel—ch. 10. 45. Our Lord's remarks were prompted by the request of the two disciples to places of honour when He would inherit and sit in His glory, and the displeasure of the ten disciples (vv. 37-41). He answers that in the purposes of God (in contrast to the practice of human government) and among his disciples whoever would be the greatest must be the servant of all. They had still to learn the Divine rule that "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted" and it is one of the hardest lessons to learn, with ambition and self-advancement so much praised by men. Only one could be known as the servant of all, and He became the servant of all and therefore the chiefest of all by expending His life that all might live. And this is the thought that He adds in v. 45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many". And thus is the title Son of man linked with the thought of redemption. And elsewhere we read that the "Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost", and it is by referring to Himself as the Son of man (not as Christ) that our Lord

adds point to His teaching about His first advent mission. Yet when Paul speaks of Him in risen glory and refers back to His redemptive work, he says of *Christ* "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". Thus did the greatest servant become the chief of all "That at His name every knee should bow". It should be noted that our Lord Himself does not use the title Son of man when referring to His work after He was raised from the dead. Prior to His sacrificial death He foretold His death, saying (Matt. 17. 22, 23) "*The Son of man shall be betrayed . . . and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again*" but when raised, his words are (Luke 24. 26) "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory*". Raised to immortal glory in His resurrection the title *Christ* is more appropriate than the title which speaks of His work before His triumph is accomplished. Again, when the Pharisees request a sign they were given one sign, like unto that of Jonas, that the Son of man would be three days in the heart of the earth. Those Pharisees may not have known how such a sign would declare whether He was the Christ or not, but all Christians know why He descended into the lower parts of the earth.

The first usage of this title in the N.T. (Matt. 8. 20) shows how among the titles of our Lord the most apt one has been used. He had just cured many of their ills, thus fulfilling the words of Isaiah, and it may be that in the enthusiasm which our Lord wished to avoid a certain scribe said "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest". It is easy to-day to say that the scribe did not know what was involved in following Jesus when he made the promise, but we will suppose that he meant well, and he is not the only one who has made that promise in the first flush of enthusiasm. But, Jesus' answer to him and to us all is exact—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head". We may think that the scribe would infer that following the Master would mean that he would never have home comforts again in this life and that he must be prepared to endure hardness in the field of service. Providentially there was always the home in Bethany where our Lord could rest; but whereas all lower animals are able to live their lives within their own environment, the Son of man Who of all men was most entitled to fullness of life on earth could not rest until He had finished the work given Him to do. Early in our Lord's ministry He said,

apparently to Nicodemus, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. (John 3. 14.) We have thus in the O.T. story an illustration of redemption (see Num. 21. 5-9). Because of the people rebelling at the discouragements of the journey the Lord God sent fiery serpents among them so that they died of their bites. The people realised their sin and prayed Moses to intercede in prayer for them; and Moses was commanded to prepare a brazen serpent (a copy, we may say, of that which caused their deaths) to which looking they were cured. And if we combine the teaching of John 3. 14, John 12. 32, 33 and 2 Cor. 5. 21 we shall see that the Son of man was likewise lifted up to die for us all, becoming sin for us. As the Son of man He was lifted up so that His own self should bear our sins in His own body on the tree, taking the place of the condemned race as surely as the brazen serpent meant life to those bitten of the fiery serpents. The people who heard our Lord's words of John 12. 32, 33 were quick to say that "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" They connected Messiah with the Son of man, but could not understand that he could die. Had it been said that *Christ* must die they would have argued from the law and the prophets to prove otherwise. And we may well believe that had the Jews believed that He was the very Christ, they would not have compassed His death. Possibly they viewed the matter as did Peter, who when he revealed that the Son of man was in truth the Christ (Matt. 16) and our Lord charged them not to tell others, and from that time forth Peter spoke of His sufferings, Peter, who cannot believe that Christ must suffer promptly exclaims "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee". And Peter would not then comprehend the truth within the rebuke he received from his lack of understanding, but he had learnt fully when he wrote the words of 1 Pet. 2. 21-25.

From these incidents we observe that it were better then for our Lord to be spoken of as the Son of man because He came expressly to die for us; but once the work of redemption is done we believe in words from the Acts "that God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" and now Christians do not use the title Son of man. It is, however, noteworthy that one disciple, the martyr Stephen, did speak of our Lord as the Son of man. There is probably one clear reason why the Holy Spirit prompted Stephen so to speak of our Lord, even though it hastened his own condemnation. When our Lord was examined by

Caiaphas, he, seeking whereby he could condemn Him (the false witnesses having failed) adjured Him by the living God to say if He were the Christ or not. Our Lord acknowledged that He was, but added that hereafter he, Caiaphas, would see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26. 63, 64). Caiaphas needed no more confession to condemn Him; but when this same Caiaphas was trying Stephen, his trial was summarily ended when he "*looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts 7. 55, 56). This reminder to Caiaphas of his previous infamy struck home, and the unrepentant Caiaphas again showed himself a bitter opponent of the purposes of God.

His redemptive work as the Son of man having triumphantly achieved that portion of the Divine Plan, He was raised from the dead and was no longer human, for He had given His flesh for the life of the world. But now the title Son of man does not seem so appropriate; yet no title reminiscent of His atonement could ever be outdated. The atonement made at the first advent will be completed by the work of the second advent, for restitution perfects redemption. Speaking of His second advent John says (ch. 5. 27) that God hath given Him authority to execute judgment BECAUSE He is the Son of man. Who, of all men or angels, is better suited to be man's Judge, than He Who died for them? Who, of all men, would men select were they asked to choose their judge? And God has given assurance of coming judgment in that He hath raised Him from the dead. But though

He comes to judge, He comes also to give the earth and man their needed rest, for the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath day, for the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. The weekly day of rest, the jubilee sabbath, the Millennial sabbath, and the ages of glory and rest were made to suit the needs of man, and He is the appointed Lord of it all.

When our Lord spoke of His second coming and presence He referred to Himself as the Son of man, not to suggest that when He came again He would come as a man but to show that the same One who died for man would Himself come again. Just as the angels at the ascension (Acts 1. 11) said, this same Jesus shall come. It would be of great satisfaction to men were they now to believe that the Son of man Who died for them will Himself come as their rightful king, but sad to relate the numbers who believe in Him are diminishing day by day. We could soon reach the position our Lord implied in His own statement "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith (or the faith) on the earth?" He gave no answer to His own query, but the implied answer suggests darkness over the earth when He, as the Son of man, comes again. In contrast to this dark picture, we know that He finds faith among His true followers when He comes as the Lord Jesus Christ, for He comes to receive them unto Himself. It is by noting the use of His titles that we avoid some confusion relative to His second coming, and find that verses such as Luke 18. 8 and those which tell of His return for His own do not oppose each other. We shall realise therefore that our Lord Jesus Christ comes again first for His own, and that following that He is present to rule as earth's King and Judge.

"They Shall Not Taste of Death"

AN EXAMINATION OF A PERPLEXING SCRIPTURE

"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9. 1.)

A strange statement, and one that has given rise to endless discussion in our own day, and probably in past days as well. The fact that the apostles "fell asleep" nearly two millenniums ago, but the Kingdom has not even yet been established, has encouraged the advancing of a number of explanations designed to make this text consistent with that fact. Thus it is suggested that the Transfiguration scene, which is recorded immediately afterward, was a vision symbolic of the coming

Kingdom, and the fulfilment of these words. The fact that each of the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, places the Transfiguration record in conjunction with these words of Jesus does not seem to indicate that they recognised a connection. Another suggestion, that the Variorum rendering "there be some of them that stand, which shall not taste of death", indicates that Jesus referred to those "standing" at the end of the Age who would witness the coming of the Kingdom hardly deserves consideration. But there is such a unanimity among the three men who recorded the words that we are justified in examining the text

closely in an endeavour to discern more accurately just what Jesus did mean.

Whilst it is quite a reasonable deduction that the Transfiguration scene was intended to symbolise the Kingdom and hence could be that to which Jesus referred, it is hardly a complete explanation of the matter. What are the actual words? Luke says, that some of them would not die before they had seen "*the kingdom of God*"; Mark, "*the kingdom of God come with power*", and Matthew, "*the Son of man coming in his kingdom*". Matthew and Mark both probably heard Jesus speak the words; Luke must have got his version from one of the disciples, for he was not a disciple himself at the time, and the fact that his version agrees with Mark, added to the other fact that Mark's Gospel shows signs of being generally more verbally correct than is Matthew's may justify us in accepting Mark's form of words as representing what Jesus really did say on that occasion.

Our usual approach to this problem is to assume, at once, that the expression "kingdom of God in power" refers to Jesus' coming power and glory at His Second Advent, attempting then to reconcile this with the fact that all the disciples have "tasted of death" before that event has taken place. It is thought now that a new approach to the question may be helpful.

This promise must have made a profound impression on the minds of the disciples. It was as definite an assurance as they had ever had from Jesus that they would live to see their hopes fulfilled. They ardently desired the Kingdom; they knew what the Kingdom was to be, the reign of Messiah over the nations with Israel as the missionary people to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth, and they themselves to occupy key positions in that Kingdom. They attached sufficient importance to this promise to record it, years afterwards, in practically identical words in each of their Gospels. Is it not reasonable to think therefore that the fulfilment, if and when it did occur in their lifetime, as it was promised it should, would be prominently recorded as evidence for all subsequent readers that their faith was not founded on the sand? When, thirty-five years later, Peter looked back over his life and testified to the reality of the things he had believed and preached, there came to his mind this very occasion, and he stated, as setting the seal upon the truth of his words, "*this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*" (2 Pet. 1. 18)—the Mount of Transfiguration. And the whole tenor of that passage in Peter is one which seems to indicate his feeling that the fulfilment of the promise was a past event with him,

not one that awaited the end of the Age for its accomplishment. Peter, writing in his old age, had already seen the Kingdom of God come with power, even as Jesus had promised him. That is the impression we get from this passage in 2 Pet. 1.

Is there then any record in the stories of the apostles that would seem to fulfil the words of Jesus? It is suggested that there is—a record familiar to us all. Peter, standing up with the eleven on the Day of Pentecost, quoted Joel's prophecy of the Kingdom and declared that it was even then being fulfilled before his hearers' very eyes. "*This*" he said "*is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh'*" (Acts 2. 16-21). If we are honest with ourselves in the examination of this passage we shall have to admit that Peter was preaching as though the Kingdom was being set up in power there and then; the whole of the quotation, from vs. 17 to vs. 21, is Millennial and refers to the power of the Kingdom which is to be manifested to men at the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. Peter was very definitely offering Israel an opportunity to receive the Kingdom both in its spiritual and its earthly aspects at once, and if we look at vs. 19-21 of chapter 3, remembering that "*when*" in vs. 19 should be "*that*", this conviction is heightened. Israel, as we now know, did not respond nationally to that invitation; only a "remnant" did accept it: and in consequence the Call went to the Gentiles and the earthly Kingdom was postponed for two thousand years, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11. 25). But that does not alter the fact that the Kingdom was offered to Israel at Pentecost and that Peter saw a very real sense in which the Kingdom had come "*in power*".

Now how can we define this sense in which the Kingdom did come to the apostles "*in power*"? Is there evidence in Scripture that such a thing was to be expected? Is there any sense in which it can be said that the Kingdom was already come at Pentecost and that the power of the Kingdom was then manifest?

There is such a sense, one with which we are all familiar. The Apostle Paul tells us that we, believers, have been "*delivered from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*" (Col. 1. 13). Again, Hebrews exhorts us "*wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably*" (Heb. 12. 28). We which have believed have already entered the Kingdom, not in its aspect of outward glory and power, which does not come until the Millennial Age, but in an inward

aspect which is none the less real and none the less "in power". The power of the Kingdom *now* is the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was that manifestation, seen at Pentecost by all men in the inspiration of the eleven speaking with tongues, "declaring the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2. 11) that constituted the kingdom in power and gave fulfilment to Jesus' words. To Peter and the other disciples, and to the multitudes of dwellers at Jerusalem who saw and heard them, the Kingdom of God was indeed "come with power".

John the Baptist preached, saying "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". He must have had this Pentecost aspect in his mind, quickened as he was by the Spirit, for he went on to speak of the Harvest of Wheat and Chaff, the Harvest of the Jewish Age (Matt. 3. 12), a harvest that commenced at Pentecost and continued until the final burning of the chaff in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was captured and destroyed. Jesus said on one occasion "*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). Again He said "*from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt. 11. 12). In both cases the underlying idea is that strenuous endeavour and a determination to "fight the good fight of faith" would be required of all who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven in its spiritual phase, the phase which at that time was about to be opened to men. Every man who *does* gain entry does so in consequence of effort and hardship, like a soldier who storms a city. But both texts indicate that entrance into the Kingdom could be gained there and then; the consecrated disciple, having intelligently entered in the High Calling, had thereby entered the Kingdom in its hidden or veiled aspect. That is what Jesus must have meant when He said to the Pharisees "*the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation*"—(with outward show, as of a scene spread before one's eyes) "*neither shall they say 'Lo, here' or 'Lo, there', for behold, the kingdom of God is within you*". (Luke 17. 20). This Scripture cannot possibly refer to the Kingdom in power at the end of the Age, or at the "revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven" (2 Thess. 1. 7), for men will then most definitely be able to say "Lo, here". The Kingdom will be plainly visible and all men will know it and see it. That text can only refer to this present Age, when the Kingdom, although real and in power—the power of the Holy Spirit—is hidden and veiled from men. "The Kingdom of God is within you" (The Diaglott rendering "God's Royal Majesty is among you" is not strictly correct).

"Royal Majesty" is not a correct translation, and *entos* can be equally "within you", in the sense of being inside an individual, or "among you" in the sense of being in the midst of a number of individuals. Since Jesus was talking to a group of men, either meaning may have been in His mind or even both! What He really did say was a definite, convincing word "The Kingdom of Heaven is, at this present time, in the midst of all of you, unseen, unknown to men, but present in spiritual power of the Holy Spirit".

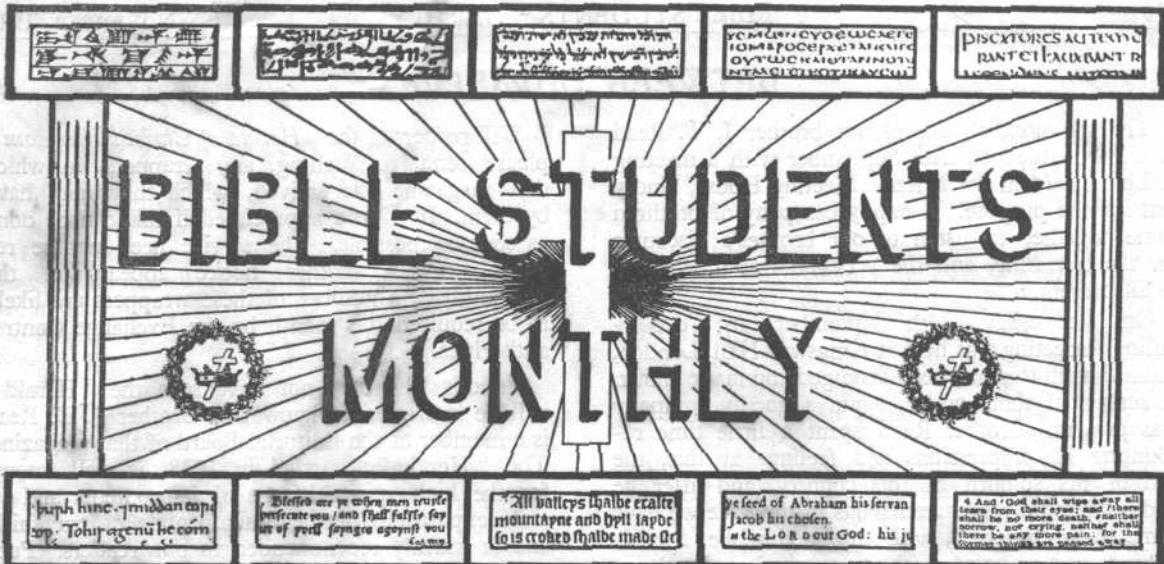
It is suggested therefore that Jesus' declaration to the effect that some of those around Him on that day would not die until they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power was fulfilled a few years later when on the Day of Pentecost the eleven disciples experienced, and the people around them witnessed, a display of Divine power of a nature that had never been known before. For the first time the power of the Holy Spirit, the power that sustains the Kingdom, was seen in operation commencing that great work which, beginning with the invitation to join the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, continued through the Age, completing that spiritual called company and glorifying its members by a change to heavenly nature, then going on to perfect an earthly missionary nation, in fulfilment of God's promise to His ancient people, and finally calling all men to perfection by restitution processes to what is admittedly the *outward* power of the Kingdom, its manifestation in the Millennial Age. It is all one Kingdom, commencing its operations at Pentecost with the Call of the Church and continuing into the Millennial Age when the invitation of the "Spirit and the Bride" to come and take of the water of life freely goes out to all men. We are accustomed to thinking of the "kingdom in power" in terms of outward might and glory; we of all people should know that the greatest power is that which is unseen and the greatest glory that which is spiritual, and it is this power and glory which has been working in and through Christ's disciples from the days of Peter to the present day.

"There are commonly three stages in work for God; first impossible, then difficult, then done."
(Hudson Taylor, missionary.)

* * * *

"Remember Alice in Wonderland, saying one of the wisest things she ever said. 'The best way,' said Alice, 'to explain it would be to do it.' In every realm that's true, and not least of all in Christianity."

(Dr. Harry E. Fosdick)



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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The six months' tour of our brother J. T. Read of U.S.A. ended on 21st September with a meeting at Luton held in the Friends Meeting House, kindly lent for the purpose. A happy company of brethren came together to listen to our brother's discourse for the last time, and the occasion was a stimulus to all present.

On Wednesday, 24th September, an "eve-of-sailing" meeting was held at Kingsway Hall, London, and although this had been arranged and made known at somewhat short notice, again a goodly company was present. Brother Read spent a little time recounting his impressions and feelings at this, the end of his sojourn in this country, and after he had rendered a few sacred songs in the style we have come to love so well, with our good wishes for his voyage and re-union with our American brethren, the evening was concluded with the strains of "God be with you till we meet again".

The following day, 25th September, was the day of departure. Five London brethren accompanied Brother Read to Southampton, and after a pleasant meal together, escorted him to the boat. Recent regulations forbid any but passengers passing within the Customs barrier, and so it was there that the final leave-taking was made. We lingered until our brother had passed the Customs, and watched him enter the gangway leading to the "Queen Elizabeth". So he passed from our sight, but not from our hearts.

Brother Read has been profoundly moved by his reception in this country and has desired of the "Monthly" an opportunity to express his feelings to the brethren among whom he has sojourned and ministered. A letter from his pen, addressed to all the brethren everywhere, appears in this issue.

* * *

There is published in this issue a reflection on the present situation entitled "Whither Bound?". This article is commended to the serious consideration of our readers. The times in which we live are full of significance to all who look for the Kingdom and it is in the highest degree important that we exchange with one another our views on those events which must yet transpire before the Kingdom is established.

* * *

A publications list was circulated with last month's issue of the "Monthly". A copy will be sent to any address upon request but it is thought that regular recipients of the "Monthly" will be able to make use of the copy furnished last month without further monthly reminders.

Will readers of the "*Herald of Christ's Kingdom*" please send, to Welling, any wrappers, in which that magazine has arrived, which they may have by them. It will be appreciated if this can be done as soon as possible. The service need not be repeated unless another notice appears in the "Monthly"; a number of these wrappers are likely to be required this month by the Exchange Control authorities.

Friends who may not have seen the "Herald" will be interested to know that Brother J. T. Read is a member of the Editorial Board of that magazine. The "Herald", founded in 1918, is well known for the high spiritual tone of its contents and its clear expositions of the fundamentals of our faith, and is warmly recommended to our readers. Published by the Pastoral Bible Institute at Brooklyn, U.S.A., the subscription (5/- per year) should be sent to Welling and the magazine will then be posted direct from Brooklyn. We will gladly forward a sample copy to any address upon request.

* * *

Announcement is made that the usual Easter Convention at Warrington is being planned for 1948. Further details will be published as they become available; in the meantime friends desiring to reserve accommodation or make other enquiries may write the Convention Secretary, Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington.

* * *

The usual Scriptural Art Calendar for 1948 is obtainable as usual from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23. Two months to each sheet, with text for each day and Bible picture in colour for each month, it is up to the customary standard. The price is 2/9 post free; please order direct from Bro. Lardent.

* * *

Gone From Us

Sister M. A. Beard (*Chinnor*) August, aged 81 years.

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

* * *

GLOSSARY

of little-known terms and names appearing in this issue.

Tycho Brahe 1546-1601. Danish astronomer, of noble birth. Made many important astronomical discoveries.

Whither Bound ?

A WORD TO THE WATCHERS

During the past few years observant people have been becoming aware of the emergence of a state of mind which may be the mental prelude to the setting-up of a World-Government, with a World-Church as its necessary partner. Many writers, in various lands, looking forward through the dark shadows of these present times, are increasingly making forecasts of the Great Society, partnered by the Great Church, which, so far as they can see, must be the solution to the present world problems. This attitude of mind, especially on this eastern side of the Atlantic, is indicative of a tremendous change of outlook in both the political and ecclesiastical spheres of life.

The driving force for this change of outlook has come mainly from outside the European theatres of State and Church Governments; but rushing in upon this old-world territory with the force of a rising tide, it has made many of the old institutions move their pitch of thought further up the beach. Protestant religious movements in North America—particularly in the U.S.A.—have not at any time been so deeply rooted to the spot as the more ancient institutions on the European Continent have been, consequently there has been more free-lance thought and activity there than here. This may account for the greater number and variety of oddly unorthodox organisations over there.

Now, with world conditions changing everywhere, these new-world influences are making a terrific impact upon our old world institutions, compelling them to adjust themselves to the set of the tides of modern thought.

All that has been suggested concerning the pressure from the New World, can also be stated of the 'urge' that has come from the mission-field. Here in the presence of the awakening pagan mind, the mission workers, though sponsored by the still separated denominations at home, have had to draw more closely together, and iron out, as far as possible, the divisions that have ruled at headquarters. The child-like way of approach to things, latent in the simple minds of the forest folk, was quick to note and reflect upon the divided claims of the strictly denominational missionaries, and compelled them to break down the fences, and to fraternise in every form of work and worship. This compulsory inter-denominationalism abroad has reacted back upon the parent organisations at home, becoming thus a forceful contributory factor influencing the situation here. In some parts of the

foreign field new Churches are springing up in which the amalgamation of former rival missionary enterprises has taken place,—new churches owning now no allegiance to the old Societies at home, no longer hampered by the creeds or consistories of their parent organisations. The South Indian Union Church is a case in point, which, after many disappointed hopes, has at last become an actual reality. The Bishop of Bombay, who for the last five-and-twenty years has had a great part in the promotion of this project, has called upon the old Churches of Christendom to awake, and has pointed out to them the way to bridge the chasms that separate the folks at home. The hopes and fears that once surrounded that Indian venture and which have now been overcome, are truly prophetic—so he says—of what the present hour so greatly needs, and which is surely, though slowly, drawing near. Commenting on this accomplishment in India the literary Commentator of the *Times Supplement* said "*It seems indeed as though the sectarian principle had worked itself out and a new form of ecclesiastical unity was being gradually built up.*"

In things political the drift set in some five or six generations ago—having its source of origin in the American and French Revolutions with which the eighteenth century came to an end. Since then the lap of the incoming tide around the foundations of out-dated government has brought change after change in the structure of society, and, the tide has not yet come to the full! The swell from the depths has set moving an irresistible force that compels the captains of every State to set the helm with, and not against, the tide. No ship of state can hope to outride the waves unless it runs with the tide.

But the greatest impetus towards the Great Society and the Great Church has come from the scientific world. With the discovery of atomic fission, and the resultant atomic bomb, men have become afraid of the changing situation as never before. A power more deadly than any other force has compelled thinking men to see and say that the modern world "will be saved together or lost together". Living apart, in the old sense, is now impossible. Talk of a world-state is not to-day dismissed as fantastic, as it was yesterday, and with the world-State, the world-Church must also come to be. Commenting on this point a reviewer in the *Expository Times* said recently "*As for the world-Church it begins to loom in some of its actual outlines from among the mists of our unhappy divisions.*"

The world's fears centring on the atom bomb, are driving men towards the former (the world-State); their deepening sense of failure to fulfil the purpose of God is slowly drawing people toward the latter."

Discerning men now say that there can be only "one world—one and indivisible"—the very force of circumstances is compelling men also to say "one Church—one and indivisible". To the modern mind the two things seem to be inevitable and compatible. If humanity is to survive they are both vitally essential—so say the frightened leaders of to-day.

The menace of these chaotic days is forcing through at breakneck speed developments which neither dreamers nor conferences could have hoped to achieve in as many generations as it is now taking years and months.

There is no need in these lines to flog the obvious. These tendencies can be seen on every hand, in every land, but they need to be accounted for.

The question outstanding, for us as Bible Students, to answer is "Will this world-State and world-Church organisation come to pass?" or "will the Kingdom of God come and intervene before that world-structure has been built up?" The answer to the first query, as seen by one watchman on the walls, is "Yes, it will surely come". To the second query the answer is "No! the Kingdom of God will not intervene till something like that World-structure has been set up." Men may not erect its final form at the first move, but in the end it is surely destined to come. There yet may be several changes to occur before the final structure is erected—one of which may be civil war between the East and West; in the partly-stabilised world-structure, but in the end a super-power will arise that will be given authority over all nations, tongues and peoples and cause all dissentients to pay the price with their lives.

It will be constituted of a league of powers forced into union by the pressure of events from heavenly sources, and will compel all to accept its endorsing mark on hand and head as the price of continued existence. Governments dare not yet go to that extreme requirement from their subjects, but the drive of circumstances will compel them then so to do. The drift of the irresistible flow will then have reached high-tide, and that which we see to-day in its incipient stage will have gone forward to its inevitable climax.

According to the outline in the Scriptures the Kingdom of God does not intervene until after the Kingdom of Man is established and men begin to say 'now is peace and concord come to stay'. With one Throne to rule and police the world, and

one Church to act as moral conscience to all, man will think his DAY has surely come at long last. It is then and then only that Heaven moves to the attack, to overthrow the whole Satanic system of Church and State, and begin to set men free from their bonds. Only then will modern tendencies begin to be checked and new ones begin to operate.

Is that outstanding change far away?

No one could say at present how many years may yet be required before we see 'the Kingdom come with power'. *But it is surely more than seven!* The intermediate stages leading up to that Millennial change are far too many and too complicated to be accomplished, even at the present momentum, in such a short period. We are, to-day, only in the beginning of sorrows—and "The End" times are "not yet". The "set-up" of those times is not yet visible on the world's horizon. *But we can begin to see the 'drift' leading up to the awaited consummation.* And that is something gained in these uncertain days.

T.H.

ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK-ROOM

Fulfilled prophecies that prove the Bible (Davis). Some of the brethren are already familiar with this book. It is chiefly notable for the wealth of excellent photographs illustrating the text. 34 clear and interesting photos and two maps, with 124 pages of interesting matter, cover fourteen striking Bible prophecies and the manner in which they have been literally fulfilled. The fact that we normally count the spiritual fulfilment as of greater importance in the case of many of these prophecies does not detract from the fact that they are shown here to have been literally fulfilled in a most convincing manner. This book certainly brings them together in a most enthralling fashion. A good booklet to have handy when discussing these things with people who are doubtful. Printed on first-class paper with paper cover, 2/- post free.

* * *

Rebuilding Palestine according to prophecy (Davis). By the same author, a similar book but this time the subject is the present development of Palestine itself in the light of prophecy. 136 pages of text are illustrated by 29 excellent photos and 2 maps, all different to those in the other book. The series of views of Jerusalem showing how Zech. 14: 10 is being literally fulfilled in the present building development of the city is very interesting and this should also be of great interest to doubters. This book also is 2/- post free. Both are available from stock.

The Resurrection of the Ancient Worthies

AN INQUIRY INTO AN INTERESTING SUBJECT

It is probable that the first outward indication of Divine intervention in earth's affairs, and the first physical manifestation of Kingdom power, will be the re-appearance of the "Ancient Worthies" or "Old Testament Saints" as they are sometimes called, upon earth. It is not always realised, but it is necessary to realise, that this event occurs before the establishment of the Kingdom in power, before the earthly "seed of Abraham" has been revealed to all men as the visible people through which God will bless all families of the earth, and before the "apokalupsis" or the full revelation to all men of the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent has become an accomplished fact. The Ancient Worthies must be raised from the dead and begin to take over the reins of government in the Holy Land before "this present evil world" has come to its full end.

The Scriptural basis for this conclusion commences with the earliest intimation God gave to man that there would be such a class at the time of Israel's restoration. Speaking to Isaiah of His intention ultimately to cleanse Israel and fit them for His Millennial service, He says (Isa. 1. 26) "*and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning.*" The word for "judges" is the same word that is used for the "judges" who ruled Israel before the days of the kings, and whose names and exploits are recorded in the Book of Judges. Now these men were deliverers, and in every case were raised up at a time of great need to deliver Israel from the grasp of their enemies, and in this differed from the kings, who normally succeeded each other, son to father, ruling over a kingdom which had established its position among the nations and was normally at peace with them. The expression "*I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning*" therefore must refer to a condition of things in which Israel needs the raising up of deliverers as in the days of the Judges. This will be the position at the time of "Jacob's Trouble" in the very end of the Age immediately prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, and it is at that time that once again the regathered nation, beset on all sides by inveterate enemies, the "hosts of the north", will cry unto the Lord and He will raise up to them judges, deliverers, as at the first when they had just escaped out of Egypt but their enemies oppressed them still. History will repeat itself.

Now the next word, and a very illuminating word it is, occurs in the prophecy of Zechariah, right in the middle of a passage which is one of the most vivid passages describing "Jacob's Trouble" that we have. The account shows how the peoples of the world come up against the regathered people; how that the latter place their trust, as did Hezekiah in the days of Sennacherib, in the Lord their God; how that God honours their faith and comes forth in power for their deliverance, destroying the nations that have come against Jerusalem and bringing about a great national cleansing preparatory to the full manifestation of Kingdom power and the commencement of the Millennial reign. All this is described in the 12th and 14th chapters and it is in the early part of the account, when the nations have laid siege to the Holy Land, that the Lord declares through Zechariah (Zech. 12. 5-6) "*and the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God. 'In that day'*" says God "*will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem' . . . In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*"

These "governors of Judah" can be none other than the Ancient Worthies. There is no intimation that Israel is to have national leaders apart from these "princes in all the earth" at the time of the end; and since it is agreed that directly this long-looked-for Divine deliverance has taken place the Law of the Lord is to go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem under the administration of the Ancient Worthies it is logical to expect that they will have been present upon earth for some time previously and attained positions of unchallenged leadership among their people. The men who will guide the new nation through its severest trial of faith will be the men to whom is entrusted its future destiny.

The sweeping nature of their defence is indicated by the language used. Jerusalem, with its governors, set in the midst of the besieging hosts, is likened to a *pan* (not "hearth") of fire surrounded by a pile of wood, and a torch of fire thrust into the middle of a sheaf of corn. In each case the result is the same; the wood and the corn alike are utterly consumed.

That is to be the fate of the nations that come up against the Holy Land in the time of Jacob's Trouble.

Now there is another Scripture that may indicate some connection of the resurrected Ancient Worthies with the final solution of the "Arab question". It is found in that little-known book, the prophecy of Obadiah. Obadiah based his words upon the scenes which he saw in his own lifetime, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took Zedekiah and his people prisoners to Babylon, and Edom, the progenitor of the Arabs of to-day, rejoiced at Israel's calamity and joined hands with the persecutors (Psa. 137. 7, Ezek. 25. 12), even as do their descendants to-day. Obadiah, seeing all this, was moved by the Spirit to declare how that Divine justice would bring ultimate retribution; and looking forward to the far distant future, he spoke of a time when "upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Esau" (Edom) "for stubble . . . and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau . . . AND SAVIOURS SHALL COME UP ON MOUNT ZION TO POSSESS THE MOUNT OF ESAU; and the Kingdom shall be the LORD'S." (Obad. 17. 21.) That word "saviours" appears also in Neh. 9. 27, where it is referred to the Judges, once again, who were raised up to deliver Israel in the early days.

This passage cannot possibly refer to any time now past, for there has never been any occasion in history between Obadiah's day and our own when "saviours" of any description have extended their rule from Mount Zion—a godly, righteous, Divine rule therefore—over Edom and a united Kingdom of God has resulted. Edom certainly did become tributary to Judah for short periods during the troubled centuries immediately before Christ, but the slightest acquaintance with the history of those times is sufficient to show that in no sense could this prophecy have been fulfilled then. And Edom as a nation ceased to exist many hundreds of years ago. The tenor of the entire passage shows quite conclusively that it refers to the Time of the End, at the point where the "kingdoms of this world" still persist and God comes forth to deliver the Holy Nation. Edom thus is represented to-day by the Arab peoples.

The precise point in the Time of the End at which these words apply can be identified a little more exactly. In verses 19-20 the extent of territory possessed by the Holy Nation at the time referred to, when "saviours" go up to judge the mount of Esau, is defined. Expressed in modern terms, it includes Lebanon, Trans-Jordan and the Negev

(southern Palestine). Now this is by no means the full extent of the land promised to Abraham, (from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates); it is less than a quarter of the total area promised; but it is considerably more than the present extent of the land occupied by the descendants of Jacob. It would seem from this prophecy therefore that these "saviours" appear at a time when considerable extension of the present area held by the new nation has been achieved, a measure of peace and prosperity has been reached, the "Arab question" still remains to be solved, and the nations of the earth are gathering for the final onslaught. Surely that expression "to judge the mount of Esau" implies a final judicial settlement of a problem that is to-day baffling the world's statesmen. The Ancient Worthies, many of them, were progenitors of Arabs as well as of Israelites. Although it cannot be said with truth that all Arab races are descended from Abraham they are all descended from Heber the great-grandson of Shem (Gen. 10) and the patriarch Job was, in all probability, of Arabic and not Israelite blood. It might well be, therefore, that the first achievement of the "princes in all the earth" after their resurrection and advancement to power will be the mutually satisfactory adjustment of what is quite evidently at present a serious barrier to the progress of God's plans.

One more reference must suffice. A remarkable prophecy in the 5th chapter of Micah makes its contribution to this theme. After speaking of the ruler that is to be raised up out of Bethlehem—Ephratah, the ruler in Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the prophet refers to His Millennial work (vs 4) and then says "When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword . . ." This word is more difficult of elucidation than that of Obadiah just referred to. This prophet lived just prior to the invasions of Sennacherib and he might well have been referring to the deliverance that was to come upon Jerusalem at that time. But even if so, that could only have been intended as a first fulfilment, for there are allusions in the prophecy, such as the coming forth of the everlasting ruler from Bethlehem in vs 2, and the supremacy of Israel over all the nations, in vss 7-8, that most assuredly were not fulfilled either at that time or any time since. It has to be accepted therefore that the ultimate and greatest fulfilment of Micah's words is intended to apply to the Time of the End, and the teaching in this case is that when the "Assyrian" i.e. the king of the north, the hosts of Gog and Magog, invade the Holy Land, the people will raise against him "seven shepherds and eight principal men".

This does not mean a total of fifteen defenders; it is an example of the Hebrew genius for repetition of thought in contrasting aspects. The numbers are symbolic and when we examine the words employed an inner meaning emerges.

"*Shepherd*" is literally "*feed-man*," meaning the one who feeds, and is translated "pastor" several times in the Old Testament where spiritual feeding and not natural feeding is indicated. "*Principal man*" is a word meaning "prince" or leader of a nation in a political sense, and literally means an anointed chieftain. The word is rendered "prince" or "duke" elsewhere. Now here are the functions of the Ancient Worthies as viewed from the Divine and the human standpoints. God sees these men as *shepherds* to mankind; hence "*seven shepherds*" for seven is the mystic number of perfection and completeness in Divine or spiritual things. Man, on the other hand, will see these men as princes, "*princes in all the earth*" (Psa. 45. 16), rulers over their affairs, men to whom they must render obedience, and hence the propriety of calling them "eight principal men", for eight is the mystic number of earthly or natural perfection, suggested by the fact that the eighth day is the first day of a new week when all things on earth start again. The point to note is that these "shepherd-princes," who occupy a subordinate position to the spiritual "priest-kings" of the Millennial Age (see Rev. 5. 10) but are nevertheless supreme rulers upon the earth, enter upon their mission at the time that "the Assyrian shall come into our land" and from then on are in undisputed control of affairs until the onslaught is over, the hosts of evil have been defeated and the Kingdom is established in power and great glory.

To sum up, then, we can expect the appearance of these men after the regathered nation has secured control of the Holy Land, has purged out from itself the lawless and faithless elements which at present afflict it, and has made considerable progress in material prosperity and in faith toward God. These things will draw down the hostility and covetousness of those powers called "the hosts of the North" and it will apparently be when these move up to the invasion that the "princes" will come forward as champions of their nation. Obviously they must have been present for some time before that, becoming accustomed to the conditions of the present day and gaining the confidence of their people. No man will be able to say with certainty from whence they came; they will gradually become prominent in the affairs of the nation and at the last unhesitatingly declare the nation's allegiance to God in the face of the threatened disaster.

In the meantime there must be a great change of heart in the Holy Land as well as a change of

political control. The people there at present are in no mood to be used for God's purposes. They are in no sense of the word a "light to the nations to declare His salvation to the ends of the earth". The physical rehabilitation of the land is proceeding just as is required by prophecy, but a moral change must also take place before the condition described in Ezek. 38 can be reached. When that is accomplished, men are likely to hear news from that land so startling that the majority will dismiss it at first as unworthy of credence. But in the end they will believe.

The Church will be glorified before all this. The resurrection of the Ancient Worthies must wait until all those who participate in the First Resurrection, the Church, have finished their course with joy, and, united with their Lord, are taken to be presented before the presence of the Father's glory with exceeding joy. During that period the work on earth will go on; the princes in all the earth will appear among men; the time of Jacob's Trouble, Armageddon, will run its course, and then, and not until then, the kingdom will be set up, and as was promised by Jesus two thousand years ago, the glorified Church shall "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

CHRISTMAS MEMENTOS

a little more elaborate than the usual Christmas card, can be sent to friends by the use of:—

Cellophane-covered "Morning Resolve." Made to stand up, 6in. by 4in., tinted, complete with envelope for sending, 2/- each.

Christmas Carol booklet. Words only of 14 carols, 2/9 per doz., 6/- for 36.

The new booklet "*The Millennial Gospel of Jesus*" a 40-page booklet replete with the Millennial hope of the Scriptures, illustrated art cover. A message of hope for the Christmas season, 6 for 3/6, 12 for 6/-.

"On the cross Jesus showed that there was another method for a king with ten thousand to meet him that cometh with twenty thousand; he could meet him with none."

(Rev. Paul Gliddon.)

* * *

"It is only through labour and prayerful effort, grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things."

(J. F. Willinger, missionary and martyr.)

A LETTER TO THE BRITISH BRETHREN from Bro. J. T. Read

Birkenhead, Ches.
Sept. 2, 1947.

Dear Brother Hudson,

Members of the Committee,
and Brethren of the British Isles.

Christian love and greetings. May grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

As the end of my sojourn in your midst draws near, I wish to express my heart's deep and grateful appreciation for the brotherly love, kindness and helpfulness that has been manifested toward me in our Lord's name, since I arrived at Southampton on March 13th. Six months and two weeks then looked like a long time; weather conditions were rather trying, and travel ways and places strange; but the kindly spirit and brotherly consideration shown me in the classes visited have caused the time to pass rapidly, and has made the physical exertion much less than was anticipated.

Age and increasing troubles in the world seem to preclude the thought of another such opportunity as has been my privilege to enjoy in serving you in the past six months, and so in all probability I shall not see many of you again this side the Kingdom. But the memory of sweet fellowship will continue with me as I recall the many occasions on which I assembled with those of you I have learned to know and love. Frequently there have been expressions of appreciation for my efforts in serving the friends, and to whatever degree the blessing of the Lord has attended my ministry in the way of comfort and encouragement to his children, I am more than glad. But the longer I continue in this way, the more fully I am made to realise that all real benefits in such service come from the Lord, and so to Him belongs all praise and glory.

While I have found here and there a considerable divergence of views concerning the less fundamental teachings of the Word, I am pleased to say that I have also found a growing spirit of oneness in the Lord, and an increasing desire for fellowship with those of like precious faith. I feel sure that such a fellowship, even though all may not see alike on some points of doctrine, can and does minister to growth in Christ-likeness in that there is afforded opportunity to practice tolerance and consideration one for another.

I know of no way in which I can convey my appreciation and thanks to all who have had a part

in making my visit such a happy one, except it be through the columns of the Bible Students' Monthly, and so, D.V., I hope you will see fit to publish this letter.

With warm Christian love to yourself and all brethren in the Lord, I am

Your fellow servant in Christ,

JOHN T. READ.

AN APPRECIATION

The following letter was sent with the suggestion that it be published in the "Monthly" as a token of appreciation for blessings received.

THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE, LONDON.

Dear Brethren,

We feel that a little expression of appreciation is due to you for all your labour and generosity in providing the brethren with such a lovely opportunity for assembling together for fellowship and mutual inspiration.

The Conway Hall was beautifully ventilated—neither too hot nor too cold and the spacious ante-rooms were a great source of convenience and comfort to tired mothers with children and much-travelled brethren. The little park just near, we found to be a sweet little retreat for further fellowship or relaxation and was certainly a boon during the hot weather.

The addresses from Bros. Thackway, Jones and Fox seemed all too brief and left us eager to hear more—as they said, they hardly touched the fringe of their subjects. Sunday morning we felt to be made really sacred by the address from Bro. Tharratt and the sweet combined singing was quite inspiring amid the true Sabbath atmosphere.

Bro. Read's singing with the well chosen words of encouragement, added a soothing freshness to a beautiful programme. In fact, the whole Convention was one "Glad Sweet Song" for those who have "ears to hear".

We must not omit to acknowledge the provision for our bodily needs—generous and dainty fare. We were specially struck with the lovely, smooth and gracious spirit which pervaded the "Refreshment" department. We feel a special tribute is due to those who did a very hot and trying job, yet maintained such a smooth and efficient service.

Thank you once again and all who contributed in any way, for a happy heavenly interlude.

Yours in the Great Kingdom Hope,

TWO SISTERS FROM THE NORTH

WARRINGTON ASSEMBLY FOR WITNESS

This account of the recent Public Witness effort at Warrington will be of interest and encouragement to many who feel that the time is ripe for a sustained evangelical advance.

* * *

The Assembly for Witness was a very happy time, and one feels really encouraged. The Lord blessed us richly. The speakers were Bros. Jennings, Lodge, Musk, Quennell and Sharples, whilst the public lecture, the climax of the Assembly, was delivered by Bro. Thackway.

This gathering was held in the St. Johns Hall, Warrington, familiar to so many of our brethren, on 20th and 21st September. The addresses were timely and encouraging. Here are some of the points that were made.

"This Assembly is different from most conventions in that the emphasis is laid on 'Witness'. A balanced viewpoint is necessary in our Christian life and service and there is need to study the Word of God, to edify one another, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and to bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom. God is in Heaven; we are on earth. He could speak to us direct from Heaven but He has not chosen to do so. In the past He chose individuals such as Noah, Jeremiah and Jonah, and gave them the message to proclaim. Now He has anointed us to preach the good tidings unto the poor.

"The Kingdom of God is the only remedy for all the troubles of the human race. There are many signs that the Kingdom is near and our privilege is to proclaim "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!". Our work must be seen in the light of the Word of God, and moreover must be viewed in the light of the work that has preceded it; it should be a logical development from the work of past generations of faithful disciples of the Lord.

"This ministry which we have has greater glory than had that of Moses. God has made us 'ministers of the New Covenant' and put His glory upon us; we who have 'renounced the hidden things of dishonesty', 'not handling the Word of God deceitfully'. We are ambassadors for Christ. It was in this ministry that Paul suffered affliction, necessities, distresses, etc. So may we be called upon to suffer many things in the days that lie before us, but our sufficiency is of God, Who hath given us this ministry."

The subject of the public lecture was "Crisis upon Crisis—Whither Mankind?". The speaker reviewed, before a moderate audience, the world situation since 1914 and spoke of the continued frustration of statesmen in their efforts to rectify matters. But God's time has come and the civilisa-

tion we know is being undermined and will eventually be destroyed; and then the prayer 'Thy Kingdom Come', which is no empty form of words, will surely be fulfilled. God has promised great blessings to all people, those in the grave as well as those living, the blessings of life, of liberty and of happiness. But before that time comes the present evil and unjust order of things must be swept away. The war of 1914, that of 1939 and the third war which so many fear and foresee will be followed by the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth, and this will bring about the condition promised in which there will be no more sorrow, no more pain and no more death.

Many of those present showed keen interest in the lecture and a good number left their names, indicating that they would like to know more about these things.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

A list of books available at Welling and suitable for gifts.

	s.	d.
DEVOTIONAL.		
<i>Comforted of God.</i> Art book of poems.		
<i>Call of the Bride.</i> Art book of poems.		
Both at 1/8 each; 6 for	8	6
<i>Daily Heavenly Manna.</i> Pocket size	2	9
<i>In Green Pastures.</i> Daily readings	4	6
<i>Streams in the Desert.</i> Daily readings	9	0
<i>Springs in the Valley.</i> Daily readings	9	0
CHILDREN.		
<i>The Ten Camels.</i> 138 pages, ten stories	3	9
<i>Bible Story Book.</i> 608 pages, 180 pictures and coloured plates	15	9
BIBLICAL.		
<i>The Mission of Jonah.</i> Interesting account of Jonah's life and work	2	9
<i>Bible Students' Hymnal.</i> Neatly bound in rexine, yapp (turnover flaps) Black, Blue, Red or Green	2	9
<i>Palestine and the Bible.</i> Useful book on Palestine customs	2	9
<i>Why be an Ape?</i> Illustrated book on Evolution	2	9
<i>Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah.</i> Full exposition of Book of Daniel	5	6
<i>The Man Who Did Not Sin.</i> A story of the Millennial Age	5	6
<i>Palestine the land of my adoption.</i> Fully illustrated, with colour plates	13	3
<i>Emphatic Diaglott</i>	12	6

The Hill of Olives

A MEDITATION FROM
THE LIFE OF JESUS

"Oh for the wings of a dove to fly far away and be at rest! Fain would I fly from it all, and live within the desert." How often have we expressed similar sentiments; the surroundings from which the Psalmist would escape have their counterpart in the hurly-burly which makes up life in this post-war world. "I have seen violence and strife in the city; day and night do these encompass it upon her walls; and wrong and trouble are in her midst; mischief is in her midst; guile and deceit depart not from her street." We think of another and greater than David who trod those same streets, and how much more must His perfect nature have revolted against the squalor, the selfishness and the scheming which met him at every turn. The Psalmist said "I would spend my night in the wilderness" (*Leeser*), but Jesus, to whom came trial and temptation in the wilderness, found sanctuary elsewhere. He spent many of his last days in this same city, but at night he left it and its distractions and ascended the "Hill of Olives". The calm dignity which elevated him far above the treacherous priests and the angry mob, and which called forth the exclamation "Behold, the man" was surely the outcome of those quiet hours spent in solitude upon Olivet. We say "in solitude" but we realise of course that while apart from human companionship, it was here that Jesus drew very near to His heavenly Father.

The record says "He went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives" and again "at night He went out, and abode in the mount of Olives." In John 8. 1 (*Moffatt*) we read "So every one of them went home, but Jesus went to the Hill of Olives". Yes, here Jesus was "at home"; after the strenuous labours of the day—teaching in the Temple, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, bearing with his disciples, and meeting the scorn of the "learned ones", Jesus found rest on Olivet. The tired limbs, the throbbing brow, the aching heart would preclude all possibility of sleep, but Jesus found rest and refreshment, not in sleep but in quiet and undisturbed communion with His Father in Heaven. Was there something sacred about this hill, so near to the city, yet so peaceful?

Centuries before, David, taking flight from Absalom, mounted the ascent of Olives, weeping as he went, until he reached the summit "where God was worshipped". Doubtless he worshipped God on this occasion, and later when he was "a little

beyond the summit" he received a gift of "asses for the king's household, bread and fruit for the troops, and wine for those who faint in the desert". Thus weeping was turned to joy upon Olivet. Do we ever mount the ascent of Olives weeping? The trials of this life, at work or in business, the multitude of problems which confront those responsible for the home, all tend to weary and depress us; but when we can leave the "city" and ascend the hill of Olives, "where God is worshipped", there we can release the mind from its burdens, there we find rest and peace, all the weariness and the heart-ache melt away, and we regain our poise and sense of proportion. Here too we find "asses for the Kings household"—aids for our heavenward journey—bread and fruit for the soul, and wine to drink when we would faint in the desert.

Returning now to our Lord's visits to Olivet, we note that there are three aspects of this hill which may be used to portray differing experiences in drawing near to God. From Jerusalem, figurative of all that is worldly, the pathway dips steeply down to the Kidron valley, then upwards to the garden of Gethsemane. From thence it continues to the summit, then down again to Bethany. Bethany—the scene of some of the happiest and most blessed of our Lord's earthly experiences, but also of the saddest.

Can we visualise the scene as the golden sun is setting over the great city? The humble home, kept clean and bright by the practical and industrious Martha, is filled with the sound of happy voices. Left behind are the labours of the day, and Jesus, with Lazarus by His side and Mary at His feet, converses quietly with them and His disciples. Martha, mindful of the needs of the natural man, enters with refreshments, and for a while a fitful silence reigns. Supper over, the murmur of voices in pleasant conversation arises again, giving way anon to the sound of voices blended in the sweet harmony of psalms and spiritual songs. Would that we might have been there; but it was not always thus. Gone now is the sound of happy voices raised in song, the lowly home is now filled with the sound of mourning. Lazarus is in the tomb, and Mary and Martha, hope all gone and faith departed, wait with heavy eyes turned towards the pathway along which their Lord will surely come. With his presence faith revives a little and hope stirs again, but silence reigns as the Lord of

all the earth weeps over that sad scene; but by the mighty power of God sorrow is turned to holy joy.

Space does not permit us to recount the scene at the house of Simon where Mary anoints the feet of her Lord, but the lesson is known too well to need reiteration, sufficient it is to note that Jesus knew that the hour of His last ordeal approached, as He commended her loving gesture. As the time drew nearer Jesus increasingly sought the sanctuary of Olivet and Bethany; it was on Olivet that He wept in sorrow over Jerusalem and foretold the destruction of the temple, it was here too that He uttered that wonderful discourse concerning His return and the end of the Age.

To Jerusalem went Jesus for the Passover, but after the Last Supper and His valediction He was drawn again to Olivet. There, in the garden of Gethsemane, He reached the awful crisis of His earthly sojourn, but with the ministry of an angel of the Lord His strength and courage returned. How he must have longed to continue over Olivet, to that sweet haven of rest at Bethany; but to the cruel city He returned, there to suffer and be condemned to a criminal's death. But the power that raised Lazarus from the dead brooded over the Son of Man and brought Him forth from the grave, the first born of a glorious New Creation. After a little while came the glorious culmination of the greatest chapter in the world's history; Jesus left this earth to enter the Heavenly courts, to receive a name which is above every name. Not from the city which had hailed Him as king, not from the Temple which was so defiled, did He ascend, but from Olivet. Opinions may differ as to the exact spot at which Jesus made His departure from this earth, but to Him Olivet and Bethany were all one.

We like to think of Him walking over Olivet for the last time, leading His disciples along the familiar pathway to Bethany, there to bid farewell to those dear ones who had contributed so much to His earthly comforts and joys, then retracing His steps towards the summit, taking leave of His friends and brethren from that hill which had witnessed His greatest joys, His deepest sorrows and closest communion with His Father.

If we would follow Jesus and share His heavenly reward we must follow Him daily up the ascent of Olivet, and continue on to Bethany as often as permitted to do so, then when the time comes for us to follow Him through Gethsemane to Golgotha, we shall pass the crisis safely, and wing our way from Olivet to dwell with Him through all eternity. Maybe much water must flow beneath the bridges ere this day comes; who knows what lies before us as we seek to follow our Master to the end? Even as Olivet and Bethany brought to Jesus the

highest joys and deepest sorrows, so we too will find that, as we seek to draw near to God and faithfully keep His law, so we shall ascend the heights and plumb the depths. The Apostle Paul followed Jesus up the ascent of Olivet, and on to Bethany too. He soared up into the third heaven to view scenes kept from the eyes of angels, he too was plunged into the darkest depths as he came to "know the fellowship of His suffering". He too must have spent many a happy hour at "Bethany"; it was he who urged the brethren at Ephesus to "converse with one another in the music of psalms, in hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life", and likewise to those at Colosse to "teach and train one another" in the same. Should we occupy our time thus, there would be less time for unseemly arguments about so-called "essentials to salvation".

Even as Jesus sought the quiet joys of Bethany as an antidote to the restless excitement of the city, so we should find time to relax and rejoice and, to the best of our ability, converse with one another in the music of psalms and hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life. We must not be surprised, however, if we find our deepest sorrows at Bethany too; in worldly affairs the greatest sorrow, the sharpest pang usually comes from those who are nearest, so in the spiritual life it may be among our brethren that we shall experience the greatest heartbreaks, the deepest distress; but so did our Master before us. It matters little whether the sun shines or heavy storm-clouds gather overhead, on Olivet we can rise above the "seen" things, and, with the eyes of faith, behold the things as yet "unseen". Going on to Bethany, whether it be to songs or to sighing, we shall find our Master there to share both joys and sorrows; then when our time comes to face the last ordeal, we too may mount the ascent of Olivet weeping, but in Gethsemane we too shall find the ministering angel, and gain strength and courage to face the loosing of the silver cord, and in the resurrection morning reach the summit of Olivet whence our dear Lord and all the saints shall enter into everlasting joys.

The brethren at Dewsbury are arranging a one-day Home Gathering for Sunday, November 30th. Details are not yet settled but if brethren who would like to attend will write to Brother Ellis Thurman, 1, Fir Parade, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks, full details of time and place, etc., will be sent as soon as ready. A warm welcome is extended to all.

* * *

The disciples once asked Jesus, "What do we get out of it?" The spirit of true Christianity is, How much can we put into it?

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

NO CROSS, NO CROWN

*The purple grape must be crushed
To make the sweet red wine,
And furnace fires must fiercely burn
The drossy gold to refine;
The wheel must cruelly grind,
Else where the jewel's light?
And the steel submit to the polishing
Or how would the sword grow bright?
How then, my soul, wilt thou
The Spirit's fruits possess,
Except thou lovingly yield thyself
To the hand that wounds to bless?
Then patiently let the fire
Consume all earthly dross—
Thou canst not hope to wear a crown,
If thou refuse the cross!*

ACROSS THE RIVER

We know not what the future holds for any one of us, and the rapidly changing events of to-day make it plain that no experience which God's faithful saints of old were called upon to undergo need be ruled out as impossible in these closing years of the power of man. May the stirring account of the passing over of Valiant-for-Truth be a true story for each one of us who, reading these lines, know that we too are soldiers of the Cross, pledged to a heavenly country and a Kingdom which shall yet be supreme among the nations.

"I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him who can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder." When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said "Death, where is thy sting?" (I. Cor. 15; 55.) So he passed over; AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE." (From "Pilgrim's Progress")

REVERENCE

"I always put on my court robes when I enter my observatory, because when I study the stars I stand in the Court of the King of Kings". (Tycho-Brahe)

SIN

Is your trouble the *Disease of Sin*? Not its guilt and doom, of course, if you really are a believer; for that has, for you, been already dealt with "in Christ." Yet, perhaps, sin has some daily power over you, some sinful habit holds you in bondage, and up till now, Christian though you be, you have not been able to break free. And all the while it stands written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you"—it ought not; it need not; please God, it shall not! His atoning death saved you from its penalty; and now His indwelling, resurrection life shall continually save you from its power.

WORLDLINESS

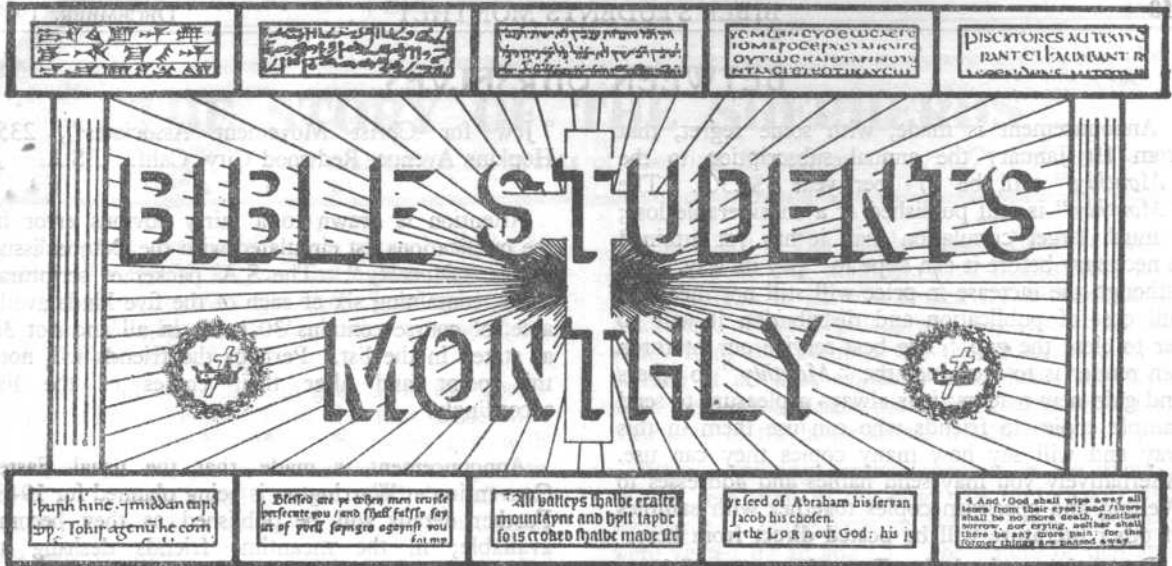
It is all too possible for the believer to be affected by the spirit of the age in which he lives. He can accept its maxims and adjust himself to its intellectual and social fashions. Perhaps, in the last resort, this is the real meaning of worldliness. To be a worldly Christian is to be a Christian who is unduly influenced by the spirit of the times in which he lives.

PROVIDENCE

Good when he gives, supremely good;
Nor less when He denies.
Afflictions, from His sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.

CONFIDENCE

*Father, Thou knowest best,
This thought is all my stay;
I see but just the step ahead,
Thou knowest all the way,
To me, as on I walk,
The way seems all obscure,
But Thou wilt guide my trembling feet,
And make my footsteps sure.
E'en though the darkness falls,
And hides the path from view,
Thy rod and staff direct me still,
And will my strength renew.
Father, the way seems long,
My strength is very weak,
Support me still by Thy right hand,
And words of comfort speak.*



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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Announcement is made, with some regret, that from 1st January the annual subscription to the "Monthly" will be 7/- per year (\$1.50). The "Monthly" is still published at a considerable loss; a much larger circulation than it has yet attained is necessary before it can hope to "pay its way," and although the increase in price will still not meet the full cost of publication and distribution it will go far to close the gap. The best service our brethren can render is to introduce the "Monthly" to others and gain new readers; it is always a pleasure to send sample copies to friends who can use them in this way and will say how many copies they can use. Alternatively you may send names and addresses to Welling and specimen copies together with samples of other literature will be posted direct from here.

Renewals sent in during December may still be at the old rate of 5/-. After the end of the year 5/- renewals will be entered for eight months and the full twelve months will cost 7/-.

It goes almost without saying, of course, that friends unable to afford the cost on account of old age, infirmity or other adverse circumstances are very welcome to have the "Monthly" sent free of charge. Please do not forego it, any of you, on the score of inability to pay. Naturally it is not expected that others, able to pay, will enter themselves on the "no charge" list, but it is very sincerely desired that no one who appreciates the "Monthly" will go without it.

* * *

The friends at Forest Gate announce monthly Home-Gatherings at the Bowling Club Pavilion, Aldersbrook Road, Wanstead, on 7th December and 4th January next. In each case there will be a Devotional Meeting at 11 a.m., a Bible Study at 3 p.m. and an address from a visiting speaker at 6.30 p.m. A warm welcome awaits all who attend.

* * *

Many of our brethren are acquainted with the Jewish Christian Community movement and its auxiliary, the Jerusalem Fellowship, which publishes the little monthly paper "Jerusalem." There is now a somewhat similar development in America, the "Jew for Christ Movement", which is being largely sponsored by certain brethren in Redwood City, California. The first number of their free monthly circular, "Jews in the News", is just to hand. It consists of short news paragraphs many of which will be interesting to us with our beliefs and expectations. The leaflet is sent freely to anyone interested, and friends who would like to have a copy regularly may write, making the request, to

"Jew for Christ Movement Associates", 235, Hopkins Avenue, Redwood City, Calif., U.S.A.

* * *

Attention is drawn to a fairly obvious error in the publications list circulated with the October issue of the "Monthly". The S.A. packet of scriptural cards, containing six of each of the five kinds available, of course contains 30 cards in all and not 36 as stated in the list. Perhaps the friends will note this point and alter their copies of the list accordingly.

* * *

Announcement is made that the usual Easter Convention at Warrington is being planned for 1948. Further details will be published as they become available; in the meantime friends desiring to reserve accommodation or make other enquiries may write the Convention Secretary, Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington.

* * *

The usual Scriptural Art Calendar for 1948 is obtainable as usual from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23. Two months to each sheet, with text for each day and Bible picture in colour for each month, it is up to the customary standard. The price is 2/9 post free; please order direct from Bro. Lardent.

* * *

Gone from Us

♦

Sister J. C. Burge (*Birmingham*), October, aged 63 years.

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

BOOK REVIEWS

Pilgrim's Progress. A striking new edition of Bunyan's masterpiece, published by the S.C.M. Press. This book has been designed to preserve the "Old English" atmosphere of Bunyan's own day whilst using modern printing methods and typesetting, and the result is a well-appointed production which makes an extremely handsome gift. It measures 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. x $\frac{7}{8}$ in., cloth bound in blue with gold lettering, and has 320 pages, including the story of Christian's wife and family as well as the more familiar story of Christian. There are 17 full size and 38 part page coloured plates illustrating the story, executed in modern lithography, a style which appears strange at first but is soon seen to be in keeping with the rest of the book. Price, from Welling, 13/3 post free.

THE STORY OF THE SHEPHERDS

A meditation on events of the first Christmas.

A. O. Hudson

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." (Luke 2. 8-9.)

Favoured men, the first to gaze upon the Lord's Christ! The wise men from the East came with their gifts, but the shepherds were there first with their homage, and for ever afterwards those Judean shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it had been told unto them.

It would seem that the wise men came much later. The shepherds found Him in a cave, lying in a manger. By the time the wise men arrived Joseph had secured temporary accommodation in a house for his young wife and her first-born son (Matt. 2. 11). The shepherds heard the wonderful news the same day that it happened; the angel had said "unto you is born *this day* in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". Perhaps even whilst he was speaking Mary was experiencing the never-to-be-forgotten wonder of taking her child into her arms for the first time. When the wise men ascended the steps of Herod's palace the child was perhaps already a few days or even weeks old, for their question was "Where is He that is *born* King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2. 2). Then there had to be a conference of chief priests and scribes to agree upon an answer to Herod's question that would afford the monarch the information he wanted without giving offence to his royal dignity. Even after the reply had been given, and doubtless further discussions, which have not been recorded, held between king and priests, the wise men were called again into the royal presence, and in receiving instructions to go to Bethlehem, were admonished to bring Herod word again.

Now all this must have occupied a long time; for Mary remained at Bethlehem forty days, the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses (Luke 2. 12), and then Joseph took her, and her child, to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him before the Lord. There was no fear of Herod as yet. There, in the Temple court, the aged Simeon took the child into his arms and praised God that, according to His word, he had set his eyes upon the One who was to be a light to lighten the nations,

and the glory of His people Israel. Likewise Anna, coming in at that moment, gave thanks also, and spake of Him to all who looked for deliverance in Jerusalem. Herod's palace was only just across the valley from the Temple, but the proud king knew nothing of all this; evidently even then, forty days after the birth of Jesus, the wise men had not found their way to the house where the babe lay.

What a striking contrast there is in the manner of this revelation to the wise men and that to the shepherds! Those were guided by a star, but these were visited by an angel! The nature of that star which led the three travellers from the East has never been satisfactorily determined. All kinds of theories have been hazarded, but no one really knows. One thing is certain; the star was of this material creation, one of the worlds of light that God had set in space in the dim faraway, ages before this world was, one of the "things that are made". The shepherds received greater honour, a personal visit from a special messenger of the Most High, a heavenly angel speaking with them and thrilling their hearts with the gladsome news. Once again God had reserved his choicest favour for the meek and lowly of heart.

Was it Gabriel, the archangel, who visited the shepherds that night? We cannot say for certain, but it is almost a foregone conclusion that he was the one sent. That expression "the angel of the Lord" in Luke 2. 9 seems to imply that the visitor was of exceptional rank in the heavenly realm, and the thought is supported by the coming of a "multitude" of angels to join him after he, alone, had delivered the message. He seems to have been a leader amongst them. There is no reason to think that the shepherds looked up and beheld angels flying in the heavens above their heads in the manner suggested by so many mediæval paintings and representations of this event. It is almost certain that they made themselves manifest in the fashion already so familiar to the people of Old Testament times, as men, standing upon the earth, glorious in shining raiment, assuredly, and quite certainly manifesting in their countenances evidence of their heavenly origin. The shepherds must have lifted up their eyes and seen the hillsides around them crowded with the serried ranks of those resplendent beings, the radiance of their concourse turning night into day, the music of their voices rising and falling upon

the still air like that of a vast choir, as they sang of glory to God in the highest, and peace upon earth to men. Then the radiance began to fade, the outlines of those beautiful forms become misty and shadowy, the hills and rocks and trees slowly to show up again, and the darkness settle upon the scene as the golden voices died away and were still. The angels had gone away into heaven; but those shepherds knew that what they had seen had been no fantasy; it was solid fact, and so with one accord they rose up to go without delay into Bethlehem to see for themselves this thing that had come to pass.

Why were these particular men singled out for this honour? Did God arbitrarily pick out a group of shepherds who just happened to be in the vicinity in order to vouchsafe to someone this marvellous revelation? Surely not! These men were the first human beings to greet earth's rightful king! They were privileged to extend earth's welcome to the One who had come from above. On behalf of the entire human race whom Jesus had come to save, they made obeisance. We are so accustomed to the words of John "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" that we forget that *the first men to see Jesus in the flesh did receive Him*, and talked about Him for the rest of their lives. The conclusion is that these men were men of God, waiting in hope and faith and expectancy for the promised Messiah, and—who knows?—probably of that band which "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2. 38). What more appropriate than that the Most High should apprise the "Watchers" of that day of the fact that the One for whom they looked had come at last?

"*And this shall be a sign unto thee*"—a wonder. Surely it was a wonder to men trained to expect Messiah as a great military leader and powerful King, overawing and destroying all the enemies of Israel and restoring the kingdom's former glories! "*Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*" But their faith did not stagger; there is nothing in any part of the account to suggest that they even questioned the apparent strangeness of this Messianic Advent, so different from all that they had been taught and led to expect. They came, they saw, and they worshipped, and went away to spread the glad news that the King had come.

Thirty years were to roll by before anything more was known of this strange happening. It is unlikely that many of the shepherds ever heard again of the babe whom they had been thus led to visit and adore. They were rural Judeans, and probably never left the vicinity of Bethlehem for the rest of their lives. The babe was taken away by his parents

within a few weeks and never returned. Thirty years is a long time; it may be that some of the younger ones among them, grown into old age, began to hear of the prophet who had arisen in Galilee, and of His baptism in Jordan, and connected the tidings with the scene they had witnessed a generation previously. At first they must have talked about their amazing experience often as they lay around their camp fires at night or drove their flocks together through the day, but as the years went by perhaps some, at least, of them, began to wonder a little . . .

Seven or eight weeks had passed since that night, and the wise men had come, and presented their gifts, and departed. The sojourn at Bethlehem was ended; Joseph, warned of God in a dream, made preparations for a hurried flight into Egypt. Herod's soldiers would very shortly be on the scene, searching for the young child. Perhaps the shepherds had visited the Holy Family more than once during those eight weeks. They would hardly have been likely to make no further attempt to offer worship to the Saviour of the world, their Messiah. Perhaps, seeing Him like that, and believing, they glimpsed something of the truth which the disciples of Jesus, thirty years later, found it so very difficult to accept, the necessity of a Coming in humiliation before there could be a Coming in power. They may have learned some things from Mary, and Mary in turn may have learned much from them, for we are told that she "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart".

So one day Bethlehem was left behind, and the young husband and wife, bearing their precious treasure with them, set out for Egypt and safety. Herod could not pursue them there, for Egypt lay outside his sphere of jurisdiction. And when, apparently only a few months later, Herod died and they returned, they passed by Bethlehem and settled sixty miles to the north, in Galilee, there to remain until the day of Jesus' showing to Israel.

Luke says nothing of the flight into Egypt; only Matthew records that. From Luke's account it would seem as if they went straight from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Why did he omit the part of the history relating to the flight? The obvious difference in the two narratives has given occasion for the assertion that one or the other account is unreliable, or even both, and that the historical value of both Gospels must be discounted accordingly. As with the majority of such statements, investigation usually reveals that the apparently contradictory stories can be reasonably well harmonised.

It is thought that Luke drew the materials for his Gospel largely from Mary the mother of Jesus.

We do not know how long Mary lived after the Crucifixion, but it might quite easily have been twenty years, for she was probably no more than eighteen or twenty years of age when the angel Gabriel appeared to her on the memorable night of the Annunciation. It is quite possible for Luke to have known her. Who knows but that the girl-wife, horrified and grieved at the massacre of the Innocents and the anguish of their mothers, and knowing that this calamity had come upon them because of her own child, had put the evil memory far away from her, and in after days either did not tell the details to Luke or would not have them included in the gospel which he was preparing? Matthew, of course, would have had it from Jesus Himself, and it may be that the overruling power of the Holy Spirit thus respected Mary's reticence whilst taking care that the account should be preserved in one of the Gospels. It is not wise to be dogmatic, but the explanation may lie along this line.

So passed the first Christmas, a season fraught with great joy and great sorrow. None of the principal characters in the drama knew of the tremendous consequences that were to arise from the happenings of those few weeks. None of them knew how many more Christmas seasons were to come and go before the song of the angels could become an accomplished fact. To-day, peace on earth and goodwill among men seems farther off than ever. But it will come.

Perhaps, as we enter into another Christmas season we may take time to think awhile of those simple Judean shepherds, who, one dark night, saw a great light, and in the power and inspiration of that light became changed men. They came to see and to worship; they returned glorifying and praising God for the things that they had learned and witnessed. We come to the Lord Jesus in like manner, but we see more than a babe in a manger. We see the King, resplendent in His power, taking to Himself the sceptre of authority, bringing this evil world order to an end that He might set up in its place His own everlasting Kingdom of peace. To the age-old angels' song there is added a new stanza: "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in*". Like those simple Judeans of old, we must needs return glorifying and praising God for the evidence of the coming Kingdom that we have seen, and telling of that Kingdom with such zeal, such certitude, such forthrightness, that, like the people of Bethlehem and the country round about at the time of that first Christmas, "*all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them*". The people of to-day are ripe for just such a message; the time is at hand, the angelic vision has appeared

to us; our eyes have seen the King in His beauty. What else can we do but go on in the power and wonder of that peerless vision, talking to each other about it, telling our neighbours and friends the tremendous story, looking in faith for the fulfilment of the promise, waiting, watching, hoping, praying; until the angels come again, this time to raise the strains of a song that never shall die away so long as the earth endures.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

A list of books available at Welling and suitable for gifts.

DEVOTIONAL.		s.	d.
<i>Comforted of God.</i> Art book of poems.			
<i>Call of the Bride.</i> Art book of poems.			
Both at 1/8 each; 6 for	...	8	6
<i>Daily Heavenly Manna.</i> Pocket size	...	2	9
<i>Streams in the Desert.</i> Daily readings	...	9	0
<i>Springs in the Valley.</i> Daily readings	...	9	0
CHILDREN.			
<i>The Ten Camels.</i> 138 pages, ten stories	...	3	9
<i>Bible Story Book.</i> 608 pages, 180 pictures and coloured plates	...	15	9
BIBLICAL.			
<i>The Mission of Jonah.</i> Interesting account of Jonah's life and work	...	2	9
<i>Bible Students' Hymnal.</i> Neatly bound in rexine, yapp (turnover flaps) Black, Blue, Red or Green	...	2	9
<i>Palestine and the Bible.</i> Useful book on Palestine customs	...	2	9
<i>Why be an Ape?</i> Illustrated book on Evolution	...	2	9
<i>Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah.</i> Full exposition of Book of Daniel	...	5	6
<i>The Man Who Did Not Sin.</i> A story of the Millennial Age	...	5	6
<i>Palestine the land of my adoption.</i> Fully illustrated, with colour plates	...	13	3
<i>Emphatic Diaglott</i>	...	12	6

To be a true witness for Jesus I must be much in His company, hear His voice, and observe His ways. How can we know the character of one with whom we have but little intercourse?

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

SUFFERING

From vintages of sorrow
Are deepest joys distill'd,
And the cup outstretched for healing
Is oft at Marah filled.
God leads to joy through weeping,
To quietness through strife;
Through yielding unto conquest,
Through death to endless life.

CHARACTER

Character never can be strong, noble, and beautiful, nor can conduct be worthy of intelligent beings bearing God's image, if Scripture truth be not wrought into the very soul by personal search and pondering. Let us not stay for ever in the primer of religious knowledge, amid the easy things that we learned at our mother's knee. There are glorious things beyond these: let us go on to learn them. The word of Christ can get into your heart to dwell in you and transform you only through intelligent thought and pondering.

WITNESS

"Ye shall be My witness . . ." was the promise given by our Lord to those who were with Him before His Ascension. So often, these words are interpreted to mean that the Apostles would become preachers of the Word, but such interpretation is only part of the whole meaning of witness. Instead of confining the idea of "witness" to the evidence given in a court of law, we should remember that we use the word in other senses, as, for instance, when we speak of a spectator as a witness. Probably the best sense of the word, however, as far as Christianity is concerned, is that implied by the Psalmist when he says, of the moon, that it is "a faithful witness in heaven." That celestial body witnesses to the sun by reflecting the light of the sun. The Christian's duty, therefore, is to reflect His Lord, and to be the faithful witness of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world.

ALL JOY

The Apostle James says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." He does not say, "Feel it all joy . . ." You cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, but you *can* rejoice in the Lord always. God may not change your circumstances, but He will change you, and give you victory in those circumstances.

NEEDS

We do not all need the same things at the same time. Our needs are different in youth, in middle age, and in advancing years. Someone has pointed out that one reason why God is referred to continually in the Old Testament as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is in order to illustrate that He is the God of every succeeding generation and the Friend of every age. This indeed is gloriously true, and we may well rejoice in it.

WISHES

What can I wish that this week may bring to me? A few friends who understand me, and yet remain my friends. A work to do which has real value, without which the world would feel poorer . . . an understanding heart . . . a story of something beautiful the hand of man has made . . . a little leisure and the patience to wait for the coming of these things, with the wisdom to know them when they come.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

The sun sank behind the horizon in a blaze of glory. Fiery tints glinting across the placid sea struggled for an instant with a deeper reflection from darkening skies. Quietness descended upon the earth and the evening stars began to twinkle, shining with increasing brilliancy as the radiance died out of the western sky.

Down in the valley lights gleamed, and here and there doors closed as families came home for the evening meal. Up amongst the rhododendrons a pack of wolves wandered about a little and then snuggled down into the undergrowth and were at peace. Upon the still air came a faint sound of music from those houses in the valley.

*"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,
We thy children praise Thy Name and joyfully adore.*

*Holiness triumphant reigns on earth before thee,
Peace on earth, goodwill to men shall be forevermore."*

The friendly stars shone from the velvet sky. One by one the lights in the valley disappeared. A gentle breeze ruffled the tree tops and the wolves stirred a little and were quiet. The earth slept; and angelic guardians, keeping ward from on high, watched over a sinless world in which everything that had breath lived only and for all time to the eternal praise of God Most High.

"The Elders . . . ye younger"

A discourse on 1 Peter, 5. 1-5

T. Holmes

The Early Christian Churches were not less prone to difficulties than are ours to-day. No ecclesia of which we have received knowledge through the Scriptures was immune from its frictions and jealousies any more than they have been throughout this Gospel Age. Even that most exemplary and sympathetic Church at Philippi had its little rift in the harmony—Syntyche and Euodia being the particular participants in its spot of discord.

There is probably no community of men in the whole wide world where the music runs smoothly all the time. Even in the cloisters where implicit obedience was imposed by solemn vow, unspoken discontent has been known to smoulder over long years and then burst into flame under moments of intense strain, producing disruption and strife between Abbot and monk, or between Abbess and nun. Temperamental differences in men and women make harmonious contacts over long periods extremely difficult to maintain. Such differences are not always due to perversity or cantankerousness. They more often arise out of variations in the mental and physical structure of the individuals concerned. Differences in the density and quality of the structure of the brain, or the different teaming-up of the several tiny glands located in the cranium and other parts of the body, could pre-dispose different individuals to manifest differing dispositions. These things usually determine and govern personality—and as no two personalities are quite identical (even as no two facial countenances are identical) the result in our lives—that is, in our own particular ways of thinking and doing things—is that we tend to approach and assess the facts of life a little differently all round. This is a state of things which cannot be evaded or avoided, since, possessing, as we each do, a limited degree of freedom of will, as well as of the mind, we each tend to exercise these faculties as we each deem best, and that usually means a little differently in every case. Ingrained habits, together with strong personal preferences, often make a person "hard to get on with". Human nature being what it is, adaptation and adjustment, each to each, is an absolute necessity in any association where men and women come together for communion and fellowship. Even in wedded life—the closest bond this earth can know—adjustment and adaptation, mate to mate, is as essential to mutual health and happiness as the air they breathe.

Everywhere, among people of every class, each society or community of men has to use compromise and adaptability as the cement to give cohesion to the whole, be the community great or small, domestic or national.

Even when we come together in the name of the Lord the same difficulties will intrude themselves. Mutual belief in the Cross of Christ does not cancel out, automatically, all the incompatibilities that arise from personality. Even those called to be saints can still rub and fret and chafe each other till they become raw in some part or other of their sensitivity. It is to help us in these times of difficulty that God has provided for us a "regulator"—His own good Spirit!—to enable us to discern and apply the necessary adjustments between members of a Church, and to mollify and soothe, as with holy anointing oil, the sores which friction could inflame and mortify.

With the Holy Spirit shed abroad in each heart it ought to be possible to see the mutual intercourse between Christian men at its highest level, and yielding its most edifying results. Unfortunately things do not just work out that way, because there is not always heart-room sufficient for the supply of the Holy Spirit necessary. Sometimes we are like an engine that will not work, because there is not enough power to make it work.

It seems to have been something like that in Peter's day. From the evidence he gives, some of the Churches of the "Diaspora"—that is, of the strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Pet. 1. 1.) had been experiencing difficulty from these natural human causes. Elders had been applying regulations and controls rather stringently, and the younger element seems to have been in revolt, and Peter sought to remind them of the need of suitable adaptation to each other for the sake of the flock of God. (1 Pet. 5. 2 & 5.) Obviously the Churches there had been up against a problem as old as man; the thrust and drive of youth at variance with the maturing sedateness of advancing years. In communities cradled and reared in the traditions of patriarchalism this was remarkable, and seems to indicate how severely the Elders had been lording it over God's heritage. Not lightly would the younger men raise revolt, yet this is just what the context seems to indicate.

Peter had a word of exhortation and advice for the "Elders which are among you", basing his appeal on his own seniority, and upon remembrance of the price his Lord had paid to free them all from sin and make their Christian fellowship possible. He also had a word for "Ye younger", because there was both precedent and propriety in their proper subjection to maturer men. He besought both old and young to be clothed with humility, seeing that God would reject either old or young who ventured to assert his pride by placing self-assertiveness before the best interests of "the flock of God"!

The same "*joie de vivre*" that makes the lamb skip and gambol in the field also prompts the youthful member of the human tribe to seek outlets for his up-surge of energy and enthusiasm. Experience and observation have shown that if the young cannot give effective vent to its joy in life in acceptable righteous ways, it is likely to do so with gusto and exuberance in other ways. The "sowing of wild oats" has often been, alas, the outcome to some over-strict, over-careful parent's indiscreet attempt to protect and shield its off-spring from the "world". Undue restraints, in bygone days, applied with too much stringency by a too austere presbytery, has driven forth into rebellion and sin, thousands of young lives which the Church could ill afford to lose. The Puritan attitude of old, which made the whole life—not merely the garb—a drab thing (even to forbidding the young, because it was the Sabbath day, the pleasure of puckering their lips to whistle off their joy), tried, and tried in vain to dam up the blithe exuberance of youth, and had much to do with making England the sink of wickedness which Wesley found when he ventured forth to visit the extensive parish which he claimed for his own.

Adaptation and adjustment is always essential where two or more people come together in the Name of the Lord, but it is even more essential when the "comers together" are both old and young. The wisdom of the "Seniors"—the Seniority, for that is the term which in this place contrasts best with the words "ye younger"—is put on its honour as Christian men, to advise, suitably and understandingly, as to the avenues in which the "younger" can unleash its drive and energy so that it can be of service to the entire flock. Such advice, rightly directed and conditioned, is the thing that Peter here advises as requisite to make co-operation between old and young a realistic experience for all, and for the flock of God.

Let us see what it is that Peter has to say to both old and young. The A.V. text says "*Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be ye clothed*

with humility." (1 Pet. 5. 5.) That rendering is considered doubtful by the Diaglott, yet other versions give renderings very similar to the A.V. It reads as though the "elder" and the "younger" were to take turn and turn about in their subjection each to each. But such a notion is at once ruled out by the first word of the verse—"likewise". Evidently Peter had exhorted and advised the "elders" to submit themselves (not to the younger, but) to the "Shepherd of the flock", and serve both *Him* and *it* out of a ready mind, and of a good free will. Not for greed or gain, nor yet to satisfy a dictatorial craving, but as servants and under-shepherds serving under Him who has the care of all the flock in His heart. And in like manner as "they" submit themselves to the leading of the Lord, so were the younger to submit themselves for guidance to the leaders of their seniors. This is where the "likewise" comes in, and thus throws upon the seniors the grave responsibilities both of copying the Lord aright, and of serving as examples to the younger element, so that they can follow in their steps. If then the Elders take their cue and pattern from the Lord, the words of Peter expectantly assume that the "younger" will copy them, taking their advice with profit to themselves and to the whole flock of God.

There is some little variation in the second part of the text in the various translations we have available. The Diaglott reads "*Be ye clothed with humility*". Knox says "*Put on humility which is the 'livery' you must wear*". Twentieth Century reads "*Put on the 'badge' of humility in mutual service*". Rotherham and Weymouth both have "*Gird yourself with humility*". Evidently the exact shade of meaning has not been easy to discover, seeing that these translators have these different ways of defining it. "Clothe yourselves", "Gird yourselves", "put on the badge", and "put on the livery", while related so far, are all different in the precise mode of enrobing with humility. But Weymouth in a foot-note gets down to the exact thought—he says "the Greek means *as with the apron of one who waits upon others*". Moffat comes right out with this thought in his text. He translates:—"*Indeed you must all put on the Apron of humility to serve one another*". Here we have a definition that suits every translator's thought. The Apron was the "badge" of servitude; it was the "livery" of all who serve; it could be "girded" on, "put on", and with it a servant could be "clothed"!

THE ORDER OF THE APRON!

It was the custom of both Greek and Roman households for a slave to don an apron to protect his flowing tunic in his working hours. It was intended to shield him from any contaminating

substance met with in the course of his task—much as Mother finds it to do to-day when doing her household work. It caught all the smears and dirt, but shielded the drapery beneath from becoming soiled or grimed.

Peter desired to see his brethren gird themselves for the task on hand, both old and young, with the slaves' "livery" and "badge", remembering the while, that both the elder and the younger elements were responsible concerning the flock to the Shepherd of the flock. But it is quite possible that a deeper illustration ran through Peter's mind than that of a Grecian slave. The girding of the Apron would recall for him that fateful night when the great Shepherd of the flock Himself took basin, water and towel to wash their road-stained feet. Taking for Himself the opportunity which every follower despised, the Master girded Himself with "the Order of the Towel", and set before them the lesson, once for all, that lowly service was sweet and precious in His sight. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" said the lowly Man of Sorrows to this very man himself—nor had Peter ever forgotten that scene, nor the lesson it was intended to teach. He *had* come to "know hereafter" what it all implied. "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet" said the Master in the upper room.—"Ye all should put on the apron of humility" said Peter to his own followers—it seems to have been just his way of repeating the Master's words!

"The Order of the Towel" (if we may not irreverently describe the scene in the upper room) had but one member in its illustrious rank—the "Order of the Apron" stands open to all who will don its badge and insignia of surrender and servitude to the Shepherd of the flock. It is the badge of sincere under-shepherd care for the sheep of His pasture lovingly and faithfully rendered as unto Him. If then the "younger" see this badge faithfully and lovingly worn by the "Seniority" they too will come with ready zeal to throw all their fresh young energy into their desire to "Copy Him"! Wise old Peter! How well he knew that you must bring the "young" face to face with the Lord Himself, if you would enlist their thrust and drive in the work of the ministry. He knew and understood that their glimpse of Him—of His life and death, His resurrection and Shepherd care—would control and restrain them better far than all Church restrictions or Board-of-Elder regulations. The "One" they would obey with joy, immediately; the other they might defy, with sullenness, continuously.

So much, then, for the wearing of the "Apron" itself—but what is that grace, that quality, that

virtue with which it is associated? What is this humility? Is it not that attitude of self-depreciation which rises in a Christian's heart when he realises his utter inability to repay the debt he owes to God for his redemption? Is it not also that sense of insufficiency that grips the pastor's mind when he comprehends the immensity of the task to which he has been called? The humble mind is the one that both knows and confesses that any natural endowment, or any deeper understanding, or any more mature development which he may have attained, more than another of his brethren, is owed entirely to the Bounty of the Lord and not to his own achievement. He will always say "What have I that I have not received as a Gift from God?"

Seeing then that all, both old and young, are under a debt to God we can never pay; seeing also that all we have attained is a gift from His hands, what ground have we for pride or self-conceit in our service for the flock of God?

God's pattern of humility was seen at Calvary, when One who was rich emptied Himself of all His glory to serve the Plan of God, even unto death! The recognition of those sufferings—as Peter asserts (v. 1.)—is enough to subdue our vaulting pride, and all our braggart airs when we remember that it was that precious blood and not our own worthiness that opened wide to us the gateway into the Fold.

The head we may be apt to carry high will bow before that Sacrifice in utter self-abasement and prompt us to appreciate the Grace that called us to follow in His steps, and wear the "badge" of service in the same great Cause.

Thus Peter's words takes all "the elders which are among you" and "ye younger" also to the scene of their Redemption, to remind them, each and all, of the Infinite Price that He has paid; to assure them of its present outcome in the existence of a "flock of God", and to invite them, old and young, to gird themselves with the "apron of humility" that they may serve that flock of God with faithful loving service to the end. With right appreciation of the Great Sacrifice pervading every heart, both "Elder" maturity, and "younger" enthusiasm can be linked together, under God's Hand, to serve its every need. Thus beneath the great Shepherd's care, all the little differences that arise from variations in personality can be blended into a greater unity to serve a mutual need.

Brethren all! the invitation to us all is to "The Order of the Apron"! Let us see to it that neither youthful exuberance or assertiveness, nor senior sedateness or rigidity, shall mar or smirch the "insignia" of our noble profession in the Lord.

THE DISCUSSION CIRCLE

A question regarding the sufferings of the animal creation was ventilated in the August "Monthly". The following further comments have been received.

* * *

ANIMAL SUFFERING

Suffering, as we know it, results from sin. The lower animals did not sin and could not suffer on that account. Possibly prehistoric animals which, we are told, fought and destroyed one another, were insensible to suffering. But the sufferings we see among the lower animals are linked up with the sinfulness of men.

Originally Adam and the animals were in perfect harmony with one another and with their environment. Whatever order God adopted in creating the earth, the results were always perfect. Adam was the crowning feature of its creation. The animals and their surroundings were perfectly fitted to his requirements and well-being. It may be that those which immediately preceded him put the finishing touches on Eden, making it fruitful and healthy for Adam; for Eden must have been perfect before he appeared. Whatever his earthly functions, man could not alter or disturb what God had done. His lordship consisted in the fact that all things (including the animals) ministered to his needs. It is recorded in the Bible that Adam mingled with the animals and "named" them. Surely it indicates a mutual response and understanding—calling them by name. By their ministrations they instinctively recognised man's superiority and kingship. We might reasonably suggest that the extension of Paradise to the whole of earth's surface would have come about by the animals multiplying and spreading outwards; preparing the way for the increasing family of Adam. But all this was disturbed by Adam's faithlessness and the consequent sinfulness of the human family.

Animals were not intended for human consumption. Their sufferings arose from the fear of men who hunted and killed them for sport or food. Many left his habitations and became his enemies—distrustful and wild. Certain kinds were herded together for selfish ends, upsetting the balance of nature and frustrating the intentions of their Maker. Such unnatural conditions brought them discomfort, disease and suffering.

It is significant that God, in shewing Israel the results of sin, commanded them to load their iniquities upon animals which were compelled to suffer for them. How dreadful to lead innocent lambs, goats and bullocks to the slaughter! How revolting to a healthy mind! True, they were pictures of the more exalted "Lamb" who was to bear and bear away men's sins—restoring life. Neverthe-

less it may be found that the material basis of Paradise will be restored, not by man controlling the earth, but by nature readjusting itself and co-operating with the will of God as at the beginning; the animals playing an important part—symbolically bearing away the evils of earth.

Adam must have been very fond of the animals; so must all lovers of beautiful things. The nausea arising from the sight of crows pecking out the eyes of lambs is evidence of our love for God's creatures. But, seen in its true perspective, it is also evidence of our abhorrence of sin in man, the results of which God allows us to see in all its horror, for our spiritual education and ultimate good.

G.H.T.

* * *

Where is the Scriptural basis for the belief that the lower creation suffered violence before the Fall of man? I have been taught that, as man committed a mortal sin against the Divine will, the orderly justice of God demands that ultimately the penalty of deviation from the straight path of perfect obedience must show itself in its full clarity. Thus, man, having had placed under his "dominion" and guardianship the more helpless "young" of his own kind and the weaker material creation, when his habitation is cursed all connected with it suffer. Now love demands that all sufferings of helpless creatures must be "made up" on their behalf and we can leave this safely in the hands of Him whose thoughts are higher than ours.

(E.G., Australia.)

Ed. Comment. The evidence that there was suffering among the lower creation before the Fall lies, not in the Bible, but in the rocks. Remains of beasts of prey, such as the sabre-toothed tiger, said to have been the most ferocious animal ever to appear upon earth, and many of which had become extinct by Adam's time, show that. The fossil remains preserve the evidence; it remains only to interpret it. Authorities say that no animal is nearly so sensitive to pain as is man; that may supply a partial answer. It is obvious, however, that animals do suffer to an extent. It is known that they have no power of anticipation and reflection (instinctive reaction to a call which they have come to associate with feeding-time, for example, is neither memory nor anticipation in the human sense). That fact must mitigate their suffering. It seems that we must regard past suffering of animals, like that of man, as intended to play a part in the development of God's creation, and look forward to the time when there shall be no suffering either of man or beast, for the former things will have passed away.

AFFLICTION'S GOOD

When a blade of wheat springs up, and all is promising well, sometimes the wheat-fly pierces it, and lays its eggs within. Then the grubs come out, and devour it all. Now we might suppose that with its only stem thus nipped in the bud the wheat would be destroyed. But not so. The seed corn possesses an inherent power of recovery, and what at first seems fatal to its fruitfulness proves to be for its greatest good. The plant, by the death of its first shoot, has time for its new lateral feeders to become more firmly established in the soil; and, in place of the one ear that was destroyed, from its stronger root, now puts forth many.

It is often thus in the life of the Christian. All his plans and purposes are suddenly undermined. God in mercy sends a worm, as he did to Jonah's gourd; then it withers away in a night, and all seems lost. But not so. He who has "the root of the matter" in his heart, finds that root of faith and love now rendered stronger and firmer by the painful process.

Moses was far more fit for his mighty work after forty troubled years of disappointment and humiliation, spent as a humble shepherd in the lonely deserts of Midian, than upon the morning of that day when he first assayed his people's deliverance with all the prestige of Egypt's royalty. David, hunted as a partridge in the mountains, and reduced almost to despair, was nearer the throne of honour

than when he formerly dwelt at ease, the flattered favourite of Israel's king.

Peter indeed thought himself well able to defend his Master on that evening when, moved by love, zeal, and courage, he uttered the eager resolve, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." But the night of failure, shame, and anguish that followed his self-confident cry, and the after-days of darkness, left him a wiser, stronger, braver man. He, who had once quailed in the presence of a maidservant, bore a fearless testimony to his Saviour before that very court which had crucified Jesus, and was openly bent on the destruction of His followers.

The lives of most of God's servants have been alike trying and eventful. The divine rule of promotion is, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The reason for this is given by the Apostle Paul, and it serves to solve much of the great mystery of pain. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." In God's good time the blighted purpose and disappointed life prove a tenfold increase of true Christian fruitfulness, which could not have been otherwise attained.

(Selected.)

House of My Pilgrimage

"Thy Statutes have been my song in the House of my Pilgrimage!" (Psa. 119. 54.)

* * *

"House of my Pilgrimage"—What lies before me? As milestones are passed—be they many or few—Storm-clouds and grey skies may be hanging o'er me; The Light of the New Day we see shining through.

"House of my Pilgrimage"—What lies behind me? The Word of Jehovah has been our sure Guide! Thus guided and led by His own Word of Promise, We boldly press forward, whate'er may betide!

"House of my Pilgrimage"—Lonesome and dreary—

Brambles and thorns beset the poor "Feet", Yet there is comfort to those who grow weary, When on the way Fellow Pilgrims we meet.

"House of my Pilgrimage"—I must hie onward! Rough and steep is Life's winding road— A rose-strewn path might lure us to linger; Briars and thorns may serve as a goad.

"House of my Pilgrimage"—still pressing forward, The struggle gives strength as we climb the Hill; His Promise sustains us—whate'er be the conflict— That "Mercy and Goodness shall follow us still".

"House of my Pilgrimage"—soon to lie shattered! A permanent Home await the dear "Feet", Wayworn and weary—by distance now scattered— Joy of re-union will then be complete.

"House of my Pilgrimage"—Glad Compensation! When the warrior wins the Victor's Palm— And those who went forth to toil, or suffer, Find their reward in rest and calm.

"House of My Pilgrimage"—Calm retrospection! If the Fight was fierce and the way seemed long, We surely can say:—"Jehovah hath led me— His Statutes have been my Pilgrimage Song."

"Home of Jehovah"—O, blest Habitation! (No longer in "Pilgrimage House" to dwell)— Our "Feet" shall stand in that long desired Haven— And give Praise to Him Who hath done all things well!

R.W.

Peace is love in flower—it is love reposing on the green pastures and beside the still waters. It is that sweet restfulness that can leave everything in a Father's hand and be satisfied. I believe that "everything" means *every* thing, and that nothing is excluded. Peace is that calm confidence that trusts the Lord's goodness and wisdom "at all times." (Psa. 34. 1.) It is the abiding sense of His love that does not lose heart, because others are disturbed or unreasonable. It is the "very" peace God puts into the heart; and can that be ruffled because circumstances are trying, or because people don't suit us, or because our wills are crossed? No! God's peace is not a happy sensation coming now and then, but it is an abiding thing, a habit of soul and mind which makes the possessor wondrously independent of man. (Selected)

CHRISTMAS MEMENTOS

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