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SPECIAL ISSUE.

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

An outline of the Divine Plan.

God so loved the world,
that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him
should not perish,
but have everlasting life.
(Jno. 3. 16).

Rejoice, O earth, the Lord from heaven comes,
Now in the fulness of prophetic time;
He comes, not with the sound of war-like drums,
But in the plenitude of grace sublime.
He comes to bind in adamant chains
The mighty adversary of our race;
To purge the nations from their sinful stains,
And all Satanic influence efface.
To bend mankind to His benignant sway,
And win by truth and righteousness His foes:
To drive all want and misery away,
And make the desert blossom as the rose.
He comes, He comes, our great Emmanuel,
To bid the world its angry clamours cease:
He comes all forms of tyranny to quell,
And usher in the thousand years of peace.
The hour approaches—yea, is now at hand,
The bright Millennial dawn its splendour flings:
Lift up your longing hearts, expectant stand,
And hail the presence of the King of Kings.

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A Word of Explanation

The usual presentation of varied Biblical subjects has this month been waived in favour of a detailed exposition of the Divine Plan written especially for the benefit of those to whom the beliefs and outlook for which this journal stands are new. The understanding of the Bible set forth in the following pages is, in its main features—not necessarily in every detail—assented to by Bible study groups in many parts of the country, finding common ground in the conviction that God purposes an Age of Divine rule to follow this present unsatisfactory state of

society, an Age in which the living and the dead will have abundant opportunity to hear and accept the gospel of Christ without the handicaps of the present. With the exception of this particular issue, the "Bible Students Monthly" normally contains articles on various aspects of Bible interpretation and on matters of interest to all sincere Christians; sample copies of the usual issues will be sent gladly upon request, and, if desired, addresses of local meetings where these things are taught and studied.

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is heaven"

1. Purpose of the Ages

One of the greatest discoveries of the nineteenth century has been the fact that God is working to a plan. We call the realisation of that outstanding truth a discovery because that is precisely what it is. In a century which opened an era of invention and knowledge such as the world had never previously known, that stands out as a most important achievement, full of tremendous meaning for the future of mankind. Christianity has been left with a sad legacy of inadequate understanding of God from the time of intellectual decline that we call the Dark Ages. During the slow progress of nearly a thousand years the clear faith and fervent hope that had inspired the Apostles and the early Church became obscured, and in large measure was lost in the chaos and confusion that followed the break-up of Roman civilisation in Europe. The rise of Latin institutional Christianity, adulterated as it was with the ritual and the doctrines of the pagan religions it superseded, did little to preserve the plain and simple faith of Jesus, but much to darken His teachings and those of the prophets His predecessors. The hosts of the Moslem world, sweeping across Europe in the eighth century; the Asiatic hordes that succeeded them; and the feudal serfdom into which all of Europe was plunged, during those dark times, all but blotted out from the minds of men any real understanding of Christianity, despite the persistence of religious observances and church worship. Only in a few monasteries and abbeys—such as that at Jarrow, in this country, for a great time the leading centre of knowledge in the land—did any kind of learning survive. A few saintly men of God in such

institutions endeavoured to preserve the sacred books, which they realised contained the word of life; a few equally understanding individuals among the people outside passed down from father to son stories of Jesus and of His life; but for the most part Christianity and superstition were inextricably mingled and anything like an orderly conception of God's ways was unknown. At a time when nearly every monastery or other centre of ordered life was subject to raids and despoliation by robber barons and unscrupulous kings it is not surprising that the emphasis fell upon spiritual contemplation of the next world in the endeavour to escape from the wickedness in this. We ought not to be surprised that those times fostered the idea which has wrought such havoc in the Christian Church, that the only aim and purpose of the Christian life is to gain ultimate entrance to heaven and inherit the white garments and golden harps, and witness the burning up and utter destruction of this world as a thing too wicked to endure.

All this is now out of date. We see that God's whole scheme is one of purpose; God is ceaselessly working and creating. We inhabit a world that is made for a purpose; we ourselves are creatures of purpose. That purpose is yet unfulfilled, but God is working towards its achievement and it will be consummated at length. The increasing light which has illumined the Word of God in the Bible in these latter days enables us to see more and more clearly where we as individuals fit into that purpose, what place God has for us, and what He means us to do. The greatest of all things in this life is to find one's

place in the present purposes of God, for then we are co-workers with Him in the things He is doing and are ourselves assisting in the accomplishment of Divine purposes. There can be no higher level of public service than that !

Now the modern understanding of God's fulfilling purpose has come only within the last four centuries, since the time of the Protestant Reformation, and it has come in stages, each one a foundation and preparation for the next. The first work of this time of increasing enlightenment was the restoration and illumination of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the principles governing the Divine relationship to man, the fact of man's fallen sinful condition, the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ, and of personal holiness and dedication of life to God's service. That was the work of two centuries following the Reformation, say, roughly, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of our era. This was the period of Bible translation and of the publication of the Authorised Version, with all that was thus entailed in the opening of the Scriptures to ordinary people; the time of men, Christian thinkers and leaders, like John Bunyan and George Fox, whose influence has been so profound from their own day to ours.

The second phase was that of the great increase of scientific knowledge which had its start at about the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the work of pioneers like Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston, a knowledge which led directly to a more accurate understanding of the facts behind Scripture history. Stories such as that of the Creation began to be examined in a new light and understood much more clearly. The relation of the Scriptural narratives, dealing mainly with the nation of Israel, to the secular records of other nations was established, and a much more definite view of God's actions on the stage of history was the result. A great deal of superstitious belief was expunged from the faith as the result of this work and men's minds were prepared for the realisation that the Divine purpose includes all of mankind and that all recorded history shows evidence of His overruling power. This second phase, covering the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminated in a flood of archaeological investigation which, commencing with the work of Layard, Rawlinson and Oppert in the early part of the nineteenth century at Nineveh and elsewhere, still continues, and to an ever increasing degree illustrates and confirms the accuracy of the Bible. It is not only that the ethics of the Bible have been clarified and proved unassailable; its historical narratives have had their veracity demonstrated. In all these things the conclusion has been driven home that not only is the Bible a Book upon which

one may absolutely rely; it is also a Book with a message which at this present time is of supreme importance.

The third phase of Christian understanding came with the rise of the Bible Societies at the commencement of the nineteenth century and the tremendous impetus given to Christian thought by reason of the very general expectation, characteristic of that century, of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. There was much intensive study of the Scriptures and almost every theologian had his contribution or suggestion to make regarding the manner, or the time, or the purpose, of that great event. Evangelists like Dwight Moody found ready audiences waiting upon their words; Christian writers and commentators found an eager demand for their books. It was an age of open enquiry and increasing enlightenment. On the crest of this wave rode the realisation that God has a Plan, that history as we know it is but the operation of this Plan in the past, and prophecy as we have it is the operation of that Plan in the future. The Bible was explored and studied from a new viewpoint and in consequence yielded hitherto unsuspected secrets, opening a prospect almost undreamed of since the days of the Apostles. God has a Plan ! We now have a tolerably detailed map of the entire scheme, with comparatively few gaps, and even these are being closed as our studies continue and our perception brightens.

In this present dark day when there is so much to discourage and induce apprehension, when the world we know is falling to pieces and all the endeavours of the best of men are insufficient to restore it, and the prospect before mankind is one of unrelieved gloom and despair, this knowledge of God's fulfilling purpose shines like a beacon light in the heavens, a golden star of hope whose radiance leads us onward, like the three Wise Men of old, toward the fulfilment of that which God has promised. God grant that it lead all of us, as it did those same three Wise Men, to the feet of the Saviour Himself, for there indeed shall we find that evidence of coming peace and goodwill to all men for which serious thinking people are longing.

The evidence for God's fulfilling purpose is strong to-day, adequate for all who will examine it with impartial mind, but that evidence cannot be appreciated nor the outcome to which it points be accepted as logical and one to be expected until we have commenced where the Bible commences, and traced its outworking step by step as the Bible does. Neither may we expect fully to understand it unless we first master the principles of Divine government, those laws that define God's relationship to man, and man's relationship to his environment, the

earth. If we are to appreciate the nature of mankind's everlasting destiny we must become familiar with the laws by which that destiny is to be achieved. So we must go right back to the story of Creation in the Book of Genesis.

This is not the place in which to discuss the theories of evolution and their connection with the origin of the earth and of mankind. Suffice it now to say that the Bible need not be thought to dispute the findings of scientists respecting the immense age of the earth, the slow development of this ordered planet from primeval chaos, and the emergence upon that planet of life. The Divine principle is, as expressed in the Gospel of Mark, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear". That principle is well exemplified in the formation and consolidation of the materials which compose the earth's structure from the first primitive elements; it is well exemplified in the wealth of trees, plants, grasses and seaweeds which have sprung from the first few varieties of plant life traceable in the fossil remains; it is well exemplified in the marvellous variety of animal, bird, fish and insect life which again appears to have had its origin in a few well-defined typical forms which appear at certain periods in the history of the rocks. But when we come to consider man we have to realise that here is another case where God made a fresh start. Just as there are factors in the living thing which mark it as separate and distinct from the non-living mineral with a boundary line that cannot be crossed; just as the same separateness distinguishes non-sentient vegetable from sentient animal, so there is a gulf between animal and man which has never been and can never be bridged. Man possesses certain qualities and potentialities which make him a fitting candidate for everlasting life; he has powers inbreathed by God which are shared with no other terrestrial creature. When God made man an expression is used which is used in no other connection "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". (Gen. 1. 26) In this creation God made something new; once again there is an instance of direct Divine intervention in the course of the world's development and the commencement of a new order in creation which in its turn is to progress and develop through the "blade", and "ear", and "full corn in the ear", stages. (See Mark 4. 28.)

Man started off therefore complete and perfect in his own sphere, admirably fitted to his environment, not emerging or developing from the brute beasts but on the contrary being placed among them as the lord and head of all things terrestrial. The animal creation was part of man's environment, made to occupy its own place in the Divine scheme of things, to minister to man's needs and be for his pleasure,

but constituted inferior to man and in no sense progenitor of man.

Mankind as originally created was physically and mentally perfect, in possession of the ability to live continuously and for ever the while he remained in harmony with Nature's laws, which are also the laws of God. But he was not yet ready for God's ultimate purpose. Those splendid beings who first opened wondering eyes upon the fair garden of God's planting represented the beginning and not the end of God's work with man. A long period of growth and development lies between that beginning and the ultimate goal of God's purpose. Neither had the earth as yet progressed to the point at which it could be said, as it will one day be said "I will make the place of my feet (the earth) glorious". That is the inner meaning of the story of Eden. The earth must be adequately populated and brought into subjection to man. Man must be educated and trained and qualified, not only by reception of theory but in the hard school of practice and experience to know how he must live his life and administer his inheritance. And that involves a thorough and adequate knowledge of the difference between good and evil.

2. The Permission of Evil

The mystery of the permission of evil is still a mystery. All of our explanations are inadequate; they all leave something unexplained. But that the permission of evil is for a wise purpose and has been foreseen and provided for in the Plan of God no one can gainsay. It is no mystery that the endurance of suffering and experience of evil has beneficial results in the long run. It is a true saying that is found in the New Testament "now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". (Heb. 12. 11) Of Jesus Himself it is said that He was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 5) and again, that He became a merciful and sympathetic High Priest by reason of the things which He suffered. There is evidently something in the endurance of suffering and evil which has a direct effect on the development of man in the direction of the Divine ideal. It must be accepted that suffering is the result of sin, and that sin came into the world, not by any action of God, but by the deliberate choice of man; at the same time we have to admit that in some wonderful manner which we do not at present understand God is using this suffering in the accomplishment of His purposes.

It is here that we must enter upon the subject of human free will. It is essential that man enjoy the exercise of free will if he is to be a responsible unit

in God's creation. This is one of the respects in which man differs from the animals. They have their own orbit in which they live and move and have their being, an orbit out of which they cannot move, circumscribed as they are by the limitations imposed upon them by their instinct. They have no option but to obey the rules of their own life cycle and no one would dream of imputing any kind of moral responsibility to an animal for its actions. With man it is different; he has the ability, within certain limits, to please himself whether he will follow laws of righteousness or laws of evil, and he can intelligently and knowingly co-operate with God, or fight against God, as he will. God made the first man with that ability to choose between good and evil in order that he might be in fact the lord of all earthly creation, living in harmony with the laws of God and discharging his obligations as a citizen of earth not blindly nor of constraint, but willingly and because of full sympathy with, and endorsement of, God's laws of righteousness. So man embarked on his new life of experience, having the power to choose between good and evil. He chose evil, and fell.

We need not be dogmatic as to the precise nature of man's first lapse into sin. In the story of Eden it is represented as the eating of forbidden fruit, the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We may be tolerably sure that the story at least intends us to know that man committed a fundamental breach of Divine law. The action, whatever its nature, involved violation of the very law of his being, and the result of his act was that death entered into his physical and mental structure. Because his posterity were as yet unborn the same processes of death passed upon them. Thus, says Paul, death passed upon all men, for that all were sinners.

Humanity was thus committed to sin and consequent suffering the while it multiplied and spread over the face of the earth. Sin was destined progressively to devitalize the human race and obliterate the knowledge of God from men's minds. But always there remained the inherent goodness of human character, implanted in man at creation, urging to better things. It was in this soil, after the first shock of the Fall had passed, that the search for the way back to God could take root and discover real values.

Here came the first lesson for human learning. Man cannot exist without God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" said Paul to the Athenians. That may be much more literally true than our finite human minds are capable of comprehending just yet. But a truth that men must learn is that life everlasting and life in perfection can only

be attained and enjoyed when the life is brought closely in tune with God and lived in conformity with God's law. "He that believeth on Me" said Jesus "hath everlasting life." (*John 6. 47.*) During the first few millenniums after the Fall the opposite was true; the practice and power of sin increased, the span of human life shortened, the physical vitality of man decreased, and his mental powers and intelligence declined. To this period belongs the degeneration of human types, from the splendid physique of the first men, to those miserable, almost sub-human creatures, remains of which have been found by scientists in various parts of the earth. Among the groups that did not descend to savagery but retained some semblance of culture and civilisation there arose mythological religions to supersede what was left of true knowledge of God. By the time of Abraham, two thousand years before Christ, there was very little real understanding of God and His ways in the world.

3. The Call of Abraham

It was with Abraham that the first indication of a change became apparent. Abraham comes just within the historical period of man's history. Back to Abraham our knowledge of world history is fairly complete and detailed; prior to his day we pass into the mythical period, the age of tradition and legend. All that we really know of the world before Abraham is summed up in the burning words of Genesis "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." (*Gen. 6. 5.*) But it must not be thought that there were none who strove for better things, nor that none of Adam's race had inherited sufficient of the primal uprightness to seek some better knowledge of God. Some of the old Sumerian penitential psalms, going back half a millennium before Abraham, breathe a fervent longing for reconciliation with God, for a way whereby the consciousness of sin might be erased and the sinner given peace of mind and rest of body. It was crude, but it was there, and no doubt can exist that when at last God spoke to Abraham and revealed that the tide of affairs was about to turn it was more than an arbitrary decision on His part that He would now do something for mankind. Much more apparent it is that men were about ready for the first step in the Divine scheme of salvation, and God responded by calling the man best fitted for His immediate purpose.

Now here is something that appears for the first time in the written records of human history—the story of a man who is utterly and continuously devoted to the service of God. It is related of the famous revivalist Dwight L. Moody that upon one occasion, in his youth, he sat in a meeting and heard

the preacher say "the world has yet to see what God can do in, and through, and by, a man who is utterly consecrated to Him and His service". "God helping me" said Moody to himself "I will be that man." The achievements of his later life showed how thoroughly he fulfilled that resolve. But he was not the first. Here in the story of Abraham we have a similar record, and after reading this story it is easy to see why in after days the famous patriarch and progenitor of the children of Israel was called "the father of the faithful".

It was to this man, citizen of the oldest and in many respects the finest civilisation of the ancient world, that of Sumer, that the next fundamental principle of the Divine Plan was revealed and through whom it was exemplified. The first, demonstrated in Eden, was "the wages of sin is death" (see Rom. 6. 23.) and for several millenniums that principle had been quite evidently in operation amongst mankind. Now came its complement "the gift of God is eternal life". Abraham stood and heard the Divine promise that in him and in his seed all families of the earth were ultimately to be blessed. (Gen. 12. 3 & 22. 18.) There was no intimation, at the time, how it was to be done; but there was the assurance that a future of happiness was planned for all men and that Abraham and his descendants were to be the Divine instruments in that purpose. Such a promise could only be realised if sin and evil were at the same time abolished, for while these scourges persist happiness can be neither complete nor lasting; hence this promise, made to Abraham four thousand years ago, is the first clear intimation in history that God does plan to abolish sin and evil.

From this point, almost half-way through the span of human history as we know it, the apparently hopeless course of humanity was checked and an upward trend, the infusion of some hope of better things, is discernible. It is true that the evil propensities of the human character still had free range, and in many respects the wickedness and cruelty of men continued to increase, but there was a new spirit and a new incentive in the hearts of some, even though only a few, a spirit that was destined to extend its influence and capture the hearts and inspire the lives of an increasing number as the years passed by. For a long time, so far as one can gather from the Bible record, which is the only detailed history of those days extant, this consistent seeking for the knowledge of God's plans and this intelligent giving of the heart and the life to God in full consecration of purpose and endeavour, which had been so characteristic of Abraham, was limited principally to his own direct line of descendants—and not all of them. Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brethren, were men of faith, but their faith was a simple one, their lives built around little more than a complete and unreserved acceptance of the absolute supremacy of God in the world and affairs of men. But that was an important advance, a very necessary foundation for the more detailed knowledge of God and of His plans that was soon to follow. To the peoples before Abraham God was known as *El Elyon*—the Most High. To Abraham and the patriarchs He was *El Shaddai*—the Almighty. To Moses and the Israelites He was *Yahweh*—the Eternal—; but that last conception required the attainment of a stage of development which had not been possible in the patriarchal age.

It was when the descendants of Jacob in the fourth generation, grown to a community of several millions of people, were ready to be welded into a nation that the next phase of the Divine plan was revealed. Moses led, from Egypt to Sinai, a mixed collection of tribes having little sense of unity and none of purpose, and only a very dubious belief in God. They had been born in Egypt, their fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers had been born in Egypt, and they knew of no other condition of life than that which was traditional to them in Egypt. They came out with Moses, not because they perceived a Divine leading and a Divine purpose in their coming out, but because life in Egypt had become intolerable and the opportunity of flight under Moses' leadership offered a prospect of release. But away there in the desert of Sinai something happened! Moses led, from the historic mountain and toward the Promised Land, a people, a nation, welded together by the bond of a common ideal, a common purpose. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant" the Voice had said out of the darkness that covered the mountain "then ye shall be a chosen treasure unto me—for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." (Exod. 19. 5-6.) To that the people had enthusiastically responded "all that the Lord hath spoken we will do". The nation of Israel never really forgot that momentous beginning to their nationhood. They never really repudiated the contract, although they violated its provisions scores of times. To this day the lineal descendants of the hosts that once surrounded Sinai, the Jews, in their saner moments claim the ancient privileges and proclaim themselves the "people of the Book"—a phrase invented by Mahomet, the prophet of Islam, in the seventh century A.D.—and look forward to the day when God will fulfil His word and make use of them to be a light to the nations, to declare His salvation to the ends of the earth.

The period between Moses and Christ was a training time having that end in view. It was necessary that some clear-cut definition of God's law be given to the world but at that comparatively early time in human history it was not possible to reveal that law in its entirety; none would have been found able to comprehend it. Even to-day, after two thousand years of Christianity, comparatively few really do understand it. The Divine method, therefore, was to select one nation—Israel—already measurably prepared for God's use, and by imposing upon that nation a code of laws and a rule of life based upon strict adherence to certain well-defined principles, to begin to accustom men's minds to the main outlines of that world which is yet to be when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. The nation of Israel, with all its affairs, was intended to illustrate, as far as imperfect men could illustrate, the Kingdom of God which will eventually be set up on earth to consummate the Divine Plan for mankind. There was one salient difference. The Kingdom of the future is to be a world of free men, serving God and living the life that has His approval willingly, voluntarily, in the light of a full understanding of His laws and a full acquiescence therewith. That aspect of the future state could not be exemplified in Israel because they were by no means wholly converted to God, and the processes of sin working in their members rendered it quite impossible for them to keep the Law in its entirety even if they had perfectly sincere intentions; and for the most part they had not even that. It follows therefore that the most pronounced feature of Israel's national life was its perpetual obligation to a law principally expressed in the negative, the prohibitory, sense; "Thou shalt not". In their then state of development that was the only way in which the laws of God could be understood or appreciated by them.

At the same time this same law did accustom them to the idea that they had become a separated people unto God, called out from the world in general to occupy a special place of responsibility toward Him and to assume particular obligations with respect to His work amongst mankind. They regarded themselves as the peculiar instruments of God's purposes in a much more intense sense than did the nations around them with respect to *their* gods. That made them a better and a nobler people than their neighbours, even although it also bred in them an egotism and self-complacency, a spirit of haughtiness and exclusiveness, which the later prophets never wearied in denouncing.

Viewed against the wider canvas of God's all-comprehensive Plan, this period of the life of Israel shows up many grave defects. There was here no

general appreciation that God is love: the Hebrew deity was one of stern, unbending justice, demanding an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and exact retribution for every wrong committed. "He that despiseth Moses' law, that man shall die", was the epitome of the theology of the day, and any idea that God had created man for a purpose, and was steadily working out the details of that purpose, was still very far away. To this period belong the Old Testament stories of the "wars of the Lord", of the pitiless slaughter and destruction of the "Lord's enemies", of swift and unmerciful judgment upon apparently trivial acts of transgression. It is easy to see that the histories, written by men who, however sincere and God-fearing, were nevertheless men of their times, reflect very faithfully the spirit and temper of their Age. The day was still far distant when a sublimely authoritative voice was to say "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . hate; . . . but I say unto you . . . love! . . ." (*Matt. 5. 21, 43*). Jesus reproved His own disciples for manifesting the spirit of, and desiring to emulate, men who in an earlier age were but acting up to the limit of the light they had and in fact were already far in advance of those who had been before them.

Another fundamental principle which emerged from the semi-light of this Israelitish Age was the great truth that the supreme purpose of human life is to serve God, that human beings have been called into existence by the will and power of God that they might occupy a definite place in His scheme of creation, and fulfil the destiny that He has planned for them, in full and comprehensive acknowledgment of His omnipotent power. It was not until after Christ that the details of that future destiny were made plain, but the effect of the Law of Sinai was certainly to clarify the question of man's intended relationship to God. God is the centre of all life and He colours every affair of life. To the extent that any man leaves God out of his life, to that extent he is deficient in purpose and vitality in life and must one day be brought face to face with the alternative of accepting continued life on the basis of this principle, or losing what he has of life altogether. Israel never lost that understanding, once they had attained it. They always built their national polity around the consciousness and realisation of their special responsibility towards God. Even in this present materialist phase of modern civilisation, the chiefly agnostic and unbelieving immigrants who are building the new land of Israel have a nucleus, a core, which is calling attention to the old standards of Israel and creating a factor in the government and administration of that rapidly growing land which is not to be found in other of earth's sovereign peoples.

4. Preparation for Messiah

Halfway through this period which had its beginning in Moses and its ending in Christ there came into prominence a development that was to be of the utmost importance in the outworking Plan of God. That development was the emergence and the work of the body of men known as the Hebrew prophets. Over a period of some four hundred years, from the ninth to the fifth centuries B.C., a succession of stalwart and fearless men arose characterised by a strong and inflexible faith in God and a most remarkable insight into His purposes. The New Testament declares (2 Pet. 1. 21) that these men were influenced by, and owed their enlightenment to, the power of the Holy Spirit, and there can be no dispute that this statement is literally true. It has become the fashion in certain scholastic Christian circles to-day to picture these prophets as visionary ecstasies, wandering the countryside in an excess of fanatical zeal and pouring out torrents of pious invective or apocalyptic imagination which the people received as the veritable words of God. Nothing can be farther from the truth. These men were serious minded, deep thinking students of the ways of God and the ways of man, and what they had to say was the combined result of their own experience and observation and their inward illumination of mind consequent upon their possession of the Holy Spirit, which in turn was theirs because they were men in whom God could put His Spirit. Not all men, and not many men, are like that. The fact that some of them, like Elijah and John the Baptist, habitually attired themselves in the most primitive of animal-skin garments and lived on simple and frugal fare no more denotes an unbalanced mind or sub-normal mentality than it did in the case of one of the greatest men of the twentieth century, the Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi, who ordered the outward trappings of his life in much the same fashion. And the contribution these prophets have made to human progress and to religious thought is incalculable. Judaism found its culminating point in their work. Christianity is founded and rooted in it. The whole Plan of God is revealed in it, and a complete picture of the coming Age when God's purposes will converge at last in the complete happiness of all creation is forthshown in it. The Hebrew prophets took the legal, formalistic conception of God and His ways which the Israelites had learned from Sinai and clothed it with the dignified and graceful outlines of a Plan which reveals the love and wisdom of a beneficial Creator.

Here, more than anywhere else, is to be seen the beginning of preparation for the coming of Christ. The Law of Sinai had given Israel a consciousness of ritualistic guilt which could be expiated by animal

sacrifice. Year by year continually the smoke of burning beasts went up from the Temple altar and all Israelites went home satisfied that God had accepted the offerings and they were free from sin. Now the prophets gave them a consciousness and realisation of sin which only a greater sacrifice could blot out. They began to perceive and to tell the people that God has no pleasure in the offering of slain beasts, but looks rather for obedience and devotion. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (1 Sam. 15. 22). "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering . . . the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. 51. 16-17.) "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6. 8.) This was strong meat indeed to a nation whose whole tradition was one of ritual observance, and it is not surprising that as a nation they never did reach up to the heights scaled by their prophets. The important thing is that these prophets were speaking and writing, not only for their own people among whom they lived and to whom they ministered, but also for the Christians of two thousand years of Christianity later on, and it is that ministry of theirs which has had the more far-reaching results.

The work of the prophets reached its culminating point in Isaiah, who is the prophet *par excellence* of Christ. Whilst he did, in common with the others and to a greater extent than most of them, describe the inevitable judgment that must one day come upon the world in consequence of its godless course, and the Age of righteousness and sinless life that will follow the judgment, he also brought to light a new and totally unexpected truth that, had it been rightly understood by men at the time, would have furnished the complete explanation of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and the reason for His seemingly strange life and death, and enabled many to accept Him who did, in fact, reject Him. That revelation was Isaiah's proclamation of the theme of the "suffering servant".

Throughout a great portion of his written work Isaiah insists that the redemption of mankind from the sin and suffering in which it lies can only be by means of one who is himself both able and willing to suffer in like manner. This one, insists Isaiah, must himself be innocent and yet willingly take upon himself the burden and the suffering of the guilty. He must be greater than man and in every respect superior to and infinitely above man, and yet prepared to lay all that on one side and become like as man that he might in every respect appreciate

man's fallen condition. He must have all power so that he need not be hurt of any enemies, and yet refuse to exert that power even though those enemies work their will upon him, nor use that power in self-defence nor until he can use it for their good. He must be altogether and completely devoted to the service and redemption of his fellows so that by means of his suffering they may ultimately be released from theirs. And the object of the whole of this is that those for whom the "suffering servant" thus gives himself even unto death may eventually renounce their own condition of alienation from God and come willingly into full harmony with Him. So will evil and sin and suffering be finally and permanently overcome.

Isaiah was perfectly clear about all this. He knew that such an one would come and he saw him in vision as clearly as though he actually stood before him. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." (*Isa. 53. 7-11*) Isaiah's great achievement was this realisation that the Redemer's unjust death was not the end; there would be a resurrection from the dead and the One who had allowed Himself to be put to the extreme of suffering and death upon man's behalf would come again with all power in heaven and earth to lead those same men to the heights of His salvation. The latter part of Isaiah's work is a vivid pen-picture of the Messianic reign, when the One he had first beheld in the guise of an unresisting lamb is seen again as an all-powerful King. The glory of the vision is that this King, alone of all men who have ever lived, has given practical proof that He is of all men the One to be trusted with full power over mankind. He refused to use that power for Himself; He is therefore to be trusted to use it wisely and well for the happiness of others.

That Messiah whom Isaiah saw in vision is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. Seven hundred years were yet to elapse before the reality came, and for three hundred years after Isaiah's own death the Hebrew prophets were to continue the work of "making ready a people prepared for the Lord". They finished their work, the task for which God had called them in the development of His fulfilling purpose. The prophets came to a nation believing only in a God of justice. They left as their legacy to the future a nucleus of people who believed in a God of Love. It was to that nucleus that Christ came and was received, and out of that nucleus that Christianity was born.

5. Nations Without God

In the meantime the other nations of the earth had been experimenting, each in its own way, and all unwittingly playing their part in the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. Throughout all the millenniums of human history the race has been spreading outwards from its common centre, multiplying and increasing exceedingly. There is no doubt that the land now known as Iraq was the original centre from which the races of mankind radiated and in so doing became differentiated. This differentiation is a most important factor in the development of mankind racially and only in recent years has it been realised how important it has been. Anthropologists have noted that human history includes a long period, now in the past, wherein men were spreading into the uninhabited parts of the earth, taking on new physical characteristics as they did so, until the earth presented a spectacle of many widely divergent human types all more or less separated and having little intercourse the one with the other. Then, in more recent times, as means of travel became common and the continuing ebb and flow of racial groups in a rapidly filling earth brought the various types into more frequent and more permanent contact with one another, there has been progressing an assimilation and combination of formerly different human types. The result of this process has been the emergence of many varied characteristics amongst mankind, suited to the varied localities of man's home, the earth. From the simple creation of one human species at the beginning there has developed a variety fit in every respect to rank with the variety in other spheres of Nature which was developed by God before man existed.

Now although mankind at large has been quite unconscious of the fact, this development into variety as men have wandered across the face of this planet and chosen for themselves new territories in which to dwell, has been part of the Plan of God, and men have in this way been fulfilling that Plan. A Bible reference to the process is found in the Genesis narrative of the Tower of Babel (*Gen. 11*). In that story certain men had refused to obey the Divine command to spread themselves abroad on the face of the earth, and determined instead to remain a compact community. God's commission to man was to multiply, to fill the earth, to bring it into subjection and fruitful productivity. His intention was—and is—that the perfect race which is ultimately to inhabit the earth shall be one of varied characteristics, wide experience, and ability to withstand every type of adverse circumstance. It is to be adapted to every different environment which can be encountered on this planet. To this

end God planned, first, differentiation by means of separation as various groups and tribes of men wandered away from their parent bodies and struck out for themselves into the unknown, and then, after the earth had thus been covered with tribes and nations of men, consolidation of the varied characteristics thus acquired by intermingling and intermarriage to produce a race having all the desirable qualities thus induced. The story of Babel shows man's refusal thus to separate and God intervening to compel them to do so; in reality, this process has taken place and is now measurably completed—just in time for the coming Kingdom.

It is not usually realised how recently much of the earth's surface has been populated. The Australian aborigines first landed in Australia about A.D. 1300, only some three hundred years before the first white men. The Pacific islands and New Zealand had never known human beings until about the same time. The first men in South America were probably no earlier than a few centuries B.C., and Japan was colonised from China only two centuries before Christ. The part of the world that appears to have been inhabited from any more remote antiquity is the belt stretching from Central America, across the Mediterranean basin and its surrounding lands, into China. Here were the oldest civilisations, here the many mythologies of "gods many and lords many" which must in the first place have had their origin in some early distortion of the primitive worship of the one true God, and here the records of human history as it impinges on the records of God's own plans in the Book He has preserved—the Bible.

But all these peoples, whether near to or far from the cultural or ancestral centre of the world, whether rooted in the soil of an ancient civilisation or seeking to lay the foundations of a young community in some newly-won virgin territory, were equally devoid of real guidance and understanding as respects the riddle of existence and the destiny before them. They, or their ancestors, had long since lost the light, and although there was an endeavour in part to struggle upward, as is witnessed by the lives and work of great philosophers and teachers like Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Zarathustra, Lao Tse, and Socrates, the attempt was foredoomed at the outset. Weighed down as they were by the burden of human frailty, by disease, violence and death, all the nations and all men and women were in the position of "having no hope, and without God in the world". (Eph. 2. 12.) All their progress, such as it was, could avail them nothing in the hour of death, and none of them had found a way to abolish death. All,

Jews and Gentiles alike, needed a Redeemer. And only God could provide one.

6. The Coming of Jesus and the Call of the Church

So, in the fulness of time, Christ came !

That signal happening is the most outstanding event of human history. It was a direct Divine intervention in the affairs of mankind; the greatest example of Divine intervention the world had known, for although in times past there had been communication between the spiritual and the material worlds by means of messengers from God, sent to earth to execute some Divine commission toward men, never before had there been anything like this. One proceeding from the Father's right hand appeared on earth in the form of man. More than that, He *was* man. Many times previously had angels assumed human form in order to make themselves visible to, and hold converse with, men upon earth, but Jesus Christ was more than that. He became true man. He took human nature upon Himself and for thirty-odd years lived the life of man, only resuming His spiritual being, the "glory" He had "with the Father before the world was" (John 17. 5) after His death and resurrection.

He was born of a virgin—it is essential to accept that fact. It may well be that we do not understand how such a thing can take place; that no other instance of such a happening is credibly recorded; that we do not perceive why such a mode of entrance into this world is necessary. It is essential to accept the fact because Jesus, in order to be the Saviour of men, must trace his fatherhood directly to God and not through Adam, sin-stricken and imperfect. His manner of coming into the world was not that of men; He came from God the Father and in that affirmed His heavenly origin; He came by Mary the Galilean maiden and in that affirmed His humanity. While He was upon earth He was perfect man, complete and perfect in his humanity, as was Adam before he sinned. After His resurrection He was re-invested with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. There need be no mysticism or deep theology about that. His humanity was left behind at the Cross, and the Christ Who ascended into the presence of the Father was the "Lord the Spirit" Who comes again in the full glory of that spiritual nature at His Second Advent.

There was a dual purpose in the First Advent of Jesus. He came to provide the means of redeeming mankind from the curse of sin, and he came to preach in plain terms, and to demonstrate in the sight of men, the way to life. As to the first purpose, and despite all the philosophy that has been woven

about it, we still do not understand it fully. In just what way the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth redeemed all mankind from sin we are almost as ignorant as were the first believers; but we can be no less dogmatic than were they that it *did* redeem men. The Apostle Paul says that the man Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom, "a corresponding price", for all, (1 Tim. 2. 6) and in the use of that word he linked the act by which Jesus saved mankind with the process by means of which Roman slaves gained their freedom. The slave could be released only by being bought by the god, and the purchase price, the ransom or "*antilutron*" or "corresponding price" had to be paid into the temple treasury, and from thence was applied to the purchase of the slave from his former owner. Technically, the slave became the property of the god, and in that situation found his freedom. So Jesus gave His humanity as the price to purchase all mankind. They had all been condemned in Adam; in purchasing or redeeming Adam, Jesus redeemed them also.

But having purchased them from the power of sin He must do something for them, for the purchase of itself does not make new men and women of them; they have still to be shown the better way and given a full opportunity to accept and follow the better way. The preaching and ministry of Jesus was after all but a prelude and a foretaste, on a miniature scale, of His Kingdom, to be set up at His Second Advent, when all men will learn of His ways and eventually exercise their prerogative of free, unfettered choice between good and evil, life and death. But something else has to come first.

Before Jesus initiates this new world of righteousness in which all men are to hear of His principles and be helped to overcome their weaknesses and sins, it has been decreed in the Divine counsels that a body of teachers and leaders should be prepared. After all, the wholesale conversion of a world of human beings, to include not only the living nations, but all the restored dead, is a task of immense magnitude and it is not surprising to learn that God has arranged for it to be achieved along quite familiar lines by the employment of a great number of previously qualified missionaries. The interval of time elapsing between the First and Second Advents is designed for the training and preparation of these missionaries, and the collective name given to them is the "Christian Church".

This is where the distinction between the spiritual and earthly phases of the Divine Plan came to light. Prior to the time of Jesus, the Jewish people, looking for the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, had visualised an earthly kingdom of righteousness and peace presided over by their Messiah, they

themselves to be the ruling class exercising jurisdiction over a world of righteous and submissive Gentiles—all the wicked Gentiles and the enemies of God and of Israel having been destroyed! Their conception of a future life and of everlasting life was restricted to this earth. Jesus showed His disciples that although God certainly does plan an everlasting home on the earth for the perfected human race in general, He has also provided for a heavenly salvation in the celestial realms for those of the Christian Church who are faithful to their calling and are found worthy at the end to be thus used in the Divine purposes. It is this spiritual company, the members of the Church, changed at death to be made like their Lord, Himself in His glorious celestial life not perceptible by human sense and not perceived by human sight, that is to exercise authority over the earth during the Millennial Age and restore mankind to righteousness.

It has been the work of the past two thousand years, ever since the Day of Pentecost, to select and gather the individual members of this body. God has "visited the nations", as James the leader of the first Jerusalem Church declared at the Council whose proceedings are recorded in Acts 15, "to take out of them a people for His Name". It is after this, James continues—and he buttresses his position by a quotation from the prophet Amos—that God will turn His attention to the natural House of Israel, which is broken down, and in building it up and restoring its nationality and independence, open the way for all mankind to turn again to Him and call upon His Name. For these last nineteen centuries, therefore, the fulfilling purpose of God has been diverted to the calling, the training, teaching, preparation and perfecting of these who have given their hearts and lives to God in whole-hearted consecration, that they might be used by Him in the next Age for the conversion of the world.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren" cries Paul in Rom. 12. 1 "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "If any man will come after me" said Jesus "let him take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16. 24.) The call of this Age is one of absolute surrender and devotion to the will and the service of God; that is the Christian call now. God seeks those who are prepared, not merely to express belief and faith in Christ and endeavour to conform their lives in a general way to His teachings, but who are prepared to set aside, or relegate to second place, every other conceivable interest and attraction, that they might be the better able to grow up in God-likeness,

manifest His character and proclaim His plan in life now, be His ambassadors in this world, and at life's end be fitted by reason of their growth in grace and character, and their lives' experience, for His future purpose.

For this reason the period of time between the First and Second Advents is sometimes called the "Gospel Age". It is a period during which the Gospel is preached—Jesus said it would be preached in all the world before the end should come (*Matt. 24. 14*) and so it has—but relatively few have fully accepted that Gospel and made it a power in their lives. Those who have accepted it have found that a great stride forward in understanding has been taken. In this Age the emphasis is on the love of God rather than on His justice. The old law, of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, is abrogated and replaced by the Golden Rule "Do unto others what ye would they should do unto you". Selfishness is replaced by self-sacrifice. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (*John 15. 13*) Stress is laid upon moral persuasion rather than ritualistic compulsion. "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (*Rom. 3. 20*) was a revolutionary idea in the days of the First Advent, but it was a necessary advance in man's conception of God and it came to stay. A completely new scale of standards for Christians was set out. Whereas Israel in the B.C. centuries was consecrated to God in a national sense, as a nation, consecration now became an individual matter and each man stood by himself before God. So, as the Age progressed, men and women of the calibre God is seeking lived out their lives with more or less of persecution and sorrow, or commendation and triumph, according to the manner in which they were received by their generation, and were laid aside to wait the day when God should gather them together into one glorious all-powerful company qualified and ready to come forth and convert the world.

7. Judgment on the Nations

Meanwhile sin continued its devastating course. The message of life preached by Jesus when upon earth at His First Advent laid down the principles by which men will one day live but it did not appreciably arrest the all-devouring influence of sin. Men were as selfish and unjust and cruel and wicked after His death as before His birth; in a good many directions evil has seemed to increase rather than decrease. But there is no evading the inevitable harvest of evil. Jesus declared that the Age which was dawning in His day would be characterised by wars, famines and pestilences of unprecedented and

increasing severity, and His words have been realised. The human race has known no greater disasters—the Flood of Noah's day alone, perhaps, excepted—than it has experienced during the last two thousand years. Many of those disasters—in fact, nearly all of them—are attributable to mankind's own evil course. All of the wars, nearly all of the famines and pestilences, could have been avoided had man not been wedded to selfishness and sin. Foreseeing all this, Jesus also said that the Age will end in a harvest of evil in which the world as we now know it will disintegrate and collapse in ruins on account of its own corruption. The evil world system which men have built up through the centuries contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and destruction will inevitably come.

To-day we are entering into that bitter harvest. The herding of men and women into crowded and insanitary cities; the adoption of unnatural ways of life consequent upon new habits necessitated by the modern economic and social order; the tremendous nervous tension under which life is lived and the haste and speed characteristic of this present civilisation; all have promoted the incidence and extent of pestilence and disease, physical and mental. Consistent and widespread spoliation of the products of Nature and extravagant use of the earth's natural resources have created dust bowls and deserts where once flourished fertile fields and forests, and have caused famine and shortage of those necessities of life which can only be produced in sufficient quantity by an intelligent co-operation with Nature. The great advance in scientific knowledge and invention characteristic of our Age has led to a very general attitude of apathy and ignorance toward the things of God and the higher interests of life, and so has the mad rush for amusement and petty immediate self-indulgence, the determination to obtain every possible sensual satisfaction out of life irrespective of the interests of others or of mankind as a whole. The result of this arrant selfishness, working upon the mind, corrupts the nervous system and leads in many cases to insanity. The greed and hate of man breeds war between nations and saps individual men's physique and destroys men, and the earth with men. Their neglect of God and impatience with God and opposition to God causes the loss of moral sense—despite the specious claim nowadays put forward that man can evolve a satisfying religion out of the basic values of truth and uprightness without invoking the help of a mystic God outside of man whose existence cannot be demonstrated by physical science—and in consequence crime and violence reigns unchecked and is increasing with each successive generation. Children to-day do wrong, not knowing they are doing wrong, because

their parents have never told them. Parents are cruel to children often because they themselves do not know any better. The Divine standards of right doing and good conduct have been cast away and men have nothing to put in their places—and without any real compelling force of righteousness the new pagans are sinking to excesses which have not been since Christianity ousted Roman paganism from society sixteen centuries ago.

Science, made to do service to human beings who are not yet fit to receive its blessings, is responsible for deterioration in another field also. The human race is becoming the slave of the push-button. Men are rapidly losing the ability to do things for themselves. They have already lost the wonderful artistic talent of earth's earliest ages, and can only goggle at exhibits in museums the craftsmanship of which they cannot reproduce. Machinery has destroyed individuality, and independent thought has given place to mass impulse, crowd psychology directed by skilfully planned propaganda. The Welfare State, or the Dictatorial Regime, as the case may be, is destroying man's inherent creativeness and his individuality, and is making of him a thing of clay, easily moulded to the form desired by authority, a clockwork automaton which responds only to stimuli from without, the very opposite of the Creator's intention and plan for man.

But no dictator or Cabinet of governors drawn from amongst men can continue the administration of this complex world on such a basis. God designed it to be a co-operative commonwealth, its every part and aspect, vegetable, animal and human, working together in precise adjustment for the common good. The world can only continue indefinitely by means of the harmonious labours of all the creatures that dwell therein. The dictators and the planners who have dictated and planned without God have ignored that fundamental principle and in consequence the world is running down to a stop. Its institutions, built upon unsound principles, are tottering to their fall. Unrestrained war and irresistible disease and pestilence are fast bringing the present order to ruin. Man cannot avert the irretrievable destruction of his own world by the very forces he has himself created. He is going to destroy his world and well-nigh destroy himself, and there is no human way out. He has come to the end of his tether. It is the end of the world!

Now this is where God's fulfilling purpose demands that He step in and take over. Once more, and for the last time, there will be Divine intervention.

The last age in the history of man's conflict with sin, although, thank God, not in the history of humanity upon earth, is the Millennial Age, the time

of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Man has had a full experience of the evil results of self-government without God. He has been allowed to give full play to his uncontrolled instincts of selfishness and hate and cruelty, his unthinking wastage and destruction of the things essential for his continued life upon earth, his heedlessness of God and of the principles of truth and justice, and he has in consequence come within an ace of destroying himself and the earth also. God will come in the nick of time. God, Who has been waiting through the ages for such a time as this, knowing that it must surely come, will step in at the moment of apparently irretrievable disaster and save men from themselves. The Apostle Peter, speaking of this moment from his vantage point of two thousand years away, said "He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." (*Acts 3. 21.*)

8. Times of Restitution

Times of Restitution of all things!

This "Millennial Age" is to be an age of restoration and reconstruction. The earth will be restored to its pristine beauty and fertility, and man to that original perfection and harmony with God which was enjoyed by the first human beings at the time of Eden. The object of this Kingdom of God upon earth is the conversion of all men to Christ and the establishment of everlasting righteousness. That purpose includes the resurrection of all the dead, their re-creation in new human bodies and restoration to conscious existence upon earth, in order that they as well as the living nations may share in this wonderful opportunity which God purposes to give the human race. The missionary and educational work of that Age will therefore be on a colossal scale, exceeding by far anything that has ever before been known. It would not be possible of accomplishment were it not for the fact that it will be carried on by the power of God and that all opposing and hindering influences will have been removed.

That latter fact is perhaps difficult to understand. Most people realise to-day that there are many powerful institutions, firmly entrenched, whose interests lie in the direction either of suppressing or actively opposing the moral uplift of the human race. By what power are these forces going to be restrained?

The same breakdown of human government that marks the ending of this present Age and indicates the imminence of the Millennial Age will be responsible also for the failure of all evil or quasi-evil institutions. Jesus declared that this present Age will end in a great Time of Trouble such as "was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever

shall be." (Matt. 24. 21). It is in this great time of trouble that all unrighteous human power and authority, whether political, ecclesiastical, financial or social, will be swept away and the evil content of present human society be dissolved. It is upon the remains of that ruined world system that Christ will commence to build the edifice of His Kingdom. The outward evidence of that re-building, apparent to men who have eyes to see even before Christ Himself is manifested as having taken His power, will be the constitution in the one-time "Holy Land" of an earthly missionary nation supremely confident in the imminent revelation of the purposes of God, and ready to play its part in the evangelisation of the world. Three thousand years ago the Hebrew prophets spoke of this time, when the people of Israel, purified and truly converted to God by reason of the fiery experiences through which they as a nation have passed, would stand forth to be the servants of all the world in the things of God. It was out of Israel and Jerusalem that the saving power of God first came to the world in the person and message of Jesus Christ; it will be out of Israel and Jerusalem that the saving message will come again, and this time the world, sick at last of its own failure, will give heed.

To claim that the vigorous young nation at present building the political fabric of the State of Israel is in any sense this new missionary nation which the Lord is going to use would be a travesty of the truth. The power that has set up a new political entity in Palestine under President Weizmann and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion is one of the "kingdoms of this world" like its Gentile neighbours. But, unknowingly to themselves and to their neighbours, those busy workers are preparing the way for the converted and devoted people that will, at a later date, be manifest in that land and proclaim the law of the Lord. What is transpiring there at this present moment is a living witness to the surety of that which is coming. Vernon Bartlett, the celebrated commentator on world affairs, wrote this in 1950 "*It has been my good fortune during the past thirty years to move a good deal around the world. Israel stands out from all the other countries I have ever visited as the one with the happiest people. A miracle has happened to the Jew*". These things are being noted by farseeing men of this world, and they cannot be explained in any other way than that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes". (Psa. 118. 23.)

These signs, then; the obviously imminent breakdown and collapse of world civilisation; the patent fact that without outside intervention the human race will shortly destroy itself from the face of the earth; the visible preparation now going on in God's

"Holy Land" for its ultimate use as the seat of Divine government in the earth; all this, to those who will soberly consider its implication, constitutes sure and definite evidence that the long-promised Kingdom of God upon earth is about to be inaugurated. Jesus promised that those living—and watching—when the time became due would be cognisant of the fact. We, viewing these events in the light of Jesus' words, the foresight of the Hebrew prophets, and above all things, on the basis of God's immutable purpose, must accept the fact that now in our own generation we stand upon the threshold of stupendous world-changing events. Whether the actual transfer of power from the "kingdoms of this world" to the "kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11. 15) comes during this present generation, or the next, or is delayed even to the one after that, it is plain that the disintegrating process which marks the end of this world is well advanced and that the Divine summons to give heed to the laws of the new Kingdom may be anticipated at any time.

It is hardly to be expected that the old order will give way without a struggle. Satan will go down fighting. There are apocalyptic passages in the Bible telling in picturesque symbolism of the kings of the earth and the wild beasts of the earth gathered together to make war against a warrior named "Faithful and True" who appears from heaven riding on a white horse. The issue of the conflict is never in doubt. The evil powers of earth are defeated and destroyed and the heavenly Rider stands victorious. Whatever of opposition may be whipped up to the incoming Kingdom of Christ when the signs of its approach are much more outwardly manifest than at present, the onward progress of the Divine programme will not be delayed. God's fulfilling purpose, rolling irresistibly on to completion, will sweep all opposition from its path.

The world, then, disheartened and despairing, its whole system of life lying in ruins about it, will behold the amazing spectacle of a virile and vigorous nation appearing as it were from nowhere, in possession of the Holy Land and acknowledging leaders who will quickly become known as men of superlative qualities and truly marvellous governmental powers. Whether the world in general does or does not accept the claim made for these, that they are noteworthy men of God of past ages, raised from the dead to initiate the work of the new Kingdom, there will be no disputing the fact that they will have to obey. The moral power exerted by these men will be of such an order that humanity in general will have no choice but to give heed. And the fact that earth's new rulers will be incorruptible, just, and merciful, possessing keen insight and

shrewd wisdom, and that their administration will immediately begin to restore much needed order to an anarchistic world, should without doubt quickly range many of earth's peace-loving citizens on their side.

It is difficult for men and women who have only known an order of society where right-doing is largely a matter of refraining from evil for fear of punishment at the instance of the law to understand the nature of this new rule that will hold sway over the earth. In this our day the number of citizens who conform to laws made for the general good because they understand and sympathise with those laws is relatively small. The majority either make no attempt to understand the law or they deliberately seek to evade its penalties. The law, on its own part, is not altogether effective, for it is not always able to detect and apprehend the law-breakers; hence some are able to break the law with impunity. In the next Age, on the contrary, the psychological effect of the new principles of rulership will be to create a new respect for the law—which will be Divine Law; the laws of Nature, the laws binding upon man, and the laws of God, will be one and harmonious, working all together—and the inherent good in man will rise more easily to the top and find a much more congenial atmosphere in which to flourish than is the case to-day. The tendency will be towards doing good instead of doing evil; in fact, in almost every respect in the field of human conduct the next Age will be the reverse of this. So far as the deliberate evil-doers are concerned—for it is not suggested that all men become converts to the new way of life at once—the administration of the new rulers, backed as it is by spiritual forces of which the world's present princes know nothing, will apprehend the evil-doer, not only before he has been able to profit by his evil-doing, but before he has been able to harm his intended victim. A ruling power that can detect crime while as yet it is nothing more than a determination in the criminal's mind will not only fulfil the prophet's declaration that in that Age "*nothing shall hurt nor destroy*" but will also be able to convince even the most hardened of wrong-doers that "*crime does not pay*".

This then is the general background of the Millennial Kingdom, a state of society in which righteousness will flourish, evil will be shown up for the hateful thing that it is, and there is complete freedom from fear because the rulers of earth will be able adequately to protect citizens who are law-abiding against those who are not. This is not the final state of the Kingdom; it would be a poor consummation of God's purpose if the world attained to a level no higher than that of a kind of benevolent

concentration camp where the inmates do right because they can neither escape nor are allowed to do anything that is not right. God intends that ultimately all men shall do that which is right, and take their place in His final creation, voluntarily and of free and assenting will; but that high ideal can be attained only by a series of steps.

9. Resurrection

It will probably be a long time before any further outwardly startling circumstance becomes obvious. A partially wrecked world containing two thousand millions of partially or almost wholly wrecked human beings will take a good deal of hard work to get on its feet again, and before there can be talk of adding to earth's millions from the ranks of the dead there is the matter of food and housing, and presumably clothing, to consider. There will therefore be a great setting of people to work, in the restoration of the earth, the reclamation of waste land, the irrigation of deserts, the preparation of homes not only for those then living who need homes but for those who are to come. All this will be an important part of the education that every man must have, but concurrently with this will be his spiritual instruction, his being made aware of the deeper principles that underlie his existence, the purpose for which God created him and the means by which that purpose is to be achieved. It is for the imparting of this instruction that God will have made ready the "Church".

With the ending of the old Age,—this present Age in which we live—the company of Christian disciples which began in the upper room at Pentecost and concluded its earthly career in the troubles that end the Age is gathered as a united company into the spiritual world, made like the Lord Jesus Christ inasmuch as spiritual nature is concerned, as the Apostle John said "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3. 3). Being thus raised from the dead to participation in that spiritual realm, the powers and attributes appertaining to these are infinitely greater than anything known to man; but what is of first importance in the immediate connection is that these who have thus attained personal association with Christ in this work amongst mankind during the Millennial Age are to become the servants of mankind for their instruction in the higher things of life. It comes strange at first to think of those of whom John said "They lived and reigned with Christ" (Rev. 20. 4) and Paul "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6. 2.) as being servants to men, but it was Jesus Who explained the seeming paradox when He said "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20. 27).

Hence the outcome of a Christian life lived to-day in patience and integrity, in doing good and speaking the thing that is right, in emulating Jesus in all things despite the sneers or pity of the unsympathetic, in suffering grief or wrong in consequence of a firm stand for right principles, is the honour of serving mankind in spiritual instruction and turning the hearts of men to Christ that they may at last see the error of their ways and come fully into line with God's purposes.

It will not be an easy task. The mending of men's bodies and the improvement of their outward environment will be child's play compared with that inward regeneration which is vitally necessary if they are to be delivered from death and confirmed in life, reclaimed from Satan and reconciled to God. It will only be because the members of the Church have passed through that same experience themselves in their past lives that they will be able to speak and teach and urge with authority and with conviction. The work of Christ in the hearts of men in the Millennial Age will be effected by these, working on the minds of men, counselling, teaching, urging, converting men to Christ and leading them to reconciliation with God.

There will thus be a two-fold work in progress, the rehabilitation of men's bodies proceeding in step with the renewing of their minds. There is not much doubt that the latter will exercise a powerful effect upon the former; that in proportion as a man seeks intelligently and willingly to come into alignment with righteousness and yield himself more to the service of Christ, his physical organism will progress toward that perfection which empowers him to live everlastingly.

The world will therefore already be a much fairer place, and mankind already happier and living measurably at peace, when the general resurrection of the dead commences. "All that are in their graves," said Jesus, "shall hear his voice" (that of Jesus) "and shall come forth" (*John 5. 28*). Some of those dead breathed their last thousands of years ago and not one atom of their earthly bodies survives in its original form; but God, who formed the bodies of the first human beings and arranged the processes of Nature to build the bodies of all who have lived since, is able to provide bodies for these resurrected ones, even in a moment of time, if need be. There can be no doubt about this; *the dead shall return*. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust," cries Isaiah the prophet in ecstasy, "for the earth shall cast out the dead." (*Isa. 26. 19*).

The usual objection to the literal acceptance of these plain statements of Scripture is that the earth

could not support the multitudes of men and women that have lived. It is not generally realised that only in the last few centuries has this planet housed any considerable number of human beings. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of the globe was less than half what it is now, and a century earlier it was only one quarter. Professor Julian Huxley has estimated that in the days of the Roman Empire, two thousand years ago, there were less than one hundred millions inhabiting the earth. From what is known of the subject it can be confidently stated that even if man has been upon earth for as long as eight or even ten thousand years—which is the longest period allowed by responsible anthropologists aside from the "missing link" enthusiasts, who still talk in terms of millions of years—all the men and women who have ever been born would, if they were raised from the dead at once, find the existing land surface of nearly sixty million square miles afford adequate space for life and sustenance, especially when it is remembered that the earth is to be made far more fruitful and productive than it is at present. It does follow, of course, that the further propagation of the human species will cease: the purpose of God in endowing human beings with procreative powers is revealed in the Book of Genesis to be entirely and solely for the adequate peopling of the earth, and when that object has been achieved it is but reasonable to expect that those powers will atrophy and disappear. The force of God's original declaration "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help (companion) meet (fitting) for him" (*Gen. 2. 18*), and His subsequent ordaining of the marriage relation to be the normal condition of perfect, ideal human life is not invalidated by the fact that children will no longer be born. The story of Eden enshrines the principles of Divinely ordained human society, and the ultimate completion of God's purpose will surely witness the ideal companionship instituted in Eden, and so quickly marred and destroyed, restored in its fulness, never again to be disturbed.

By the time that the earth is ready to receive its dead back to life and to feed and shelter the myriads who have been sleeping in the grave, waiting for this day, men in general will have got much more accustomed to the idea. In all probability it will not be necessary to ask, as did the Apostle Paul on a certain historic occasion (*Acts 26. 8*) "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" There will have been so many signal manifestations of Divine power at work in the world that there will no longer be any real denial of the possibility of

such things. And without doubt there will be a great many who will have given themselves wholeheartedly over to the furthering of the interests of this new Kingdom upon earth, who will enthusiastically prepare for and receive the newcomers from the grave as they return, furnishing them with food and clothing, explaining to them the meaning of their re-awakening, how that the long nightmare of sin and death is past and that God now calls all men to righteousness and life. Every family, every individual, will have loved ones, relatives and friends, over whose death they have mourned or grieved in the past; it may well be that the resurrection will be in the reverse order to that of death, and that the coming back of individuals will be largely in response to the prayers of those living, so that the newcomers to the "Millennial" earth will find familiar faces to welcome them on their awaking to conscious existence, and well-remembered voices to explain to them the meaning of the new conditions in which they will find themselves.

In harmony with this presentation the Bible, rightly understood, is quite clear upon the present state of the dead, that they are asleep awaiting the resurrection, not spending the interim period between death and resurrection in a state either of conscious joy or conscious wretchedness. Mediæval theology has been seriously at fault here in failing to disentangle the plain teaching of Jesus and His Apostles, based upon the equally plain teaching of the Old Testament, from that mass of Greek philosophy which from the second century before Christ and onward began to encumber men's beliefs regarding the state of the dead. Modern theologians have done little to clarify this issue, largely, in all probability, from fear of disturbing established ecclesiastical tradition, although the recent pronouncement by the Established Church laying down that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul need no longer be considered an essential doctrine of the Christian faith is certainly a step in the right direction. From the Bible standpoint the whole of the interval between death and resurrection is a sleep, and for men in general, for all humanity with the exception of the Church, who themselves are resurrected to a spiritual sphere of being and are no longer confined to this earth, resurrection is to renewed and everlasting life upon the earth. Throughout earth's ages men and women have died under a variety of circumstances, some of extreme tragedy and injustice, but the awakening of the resurrection will nullify all that has gone before, and in radiant expectation of future happiness and achievement in life, unshadowed by fear, all who will may throw off the yoke of the past and move

forward toward their glorious destiny.

10. Ages of Glory

Even this sunlit Age has its shadows. Sin will have been dethroned but not yet overthrown. God will have showered His abundant blessings upon men, removed the immoral systems that have oppressed them for so long, banished the spectre of fear, caused men to dwell in peace and security, taught them to control and utilise the earth so that it brings forth abundance for all, given them intellectual and spiritual instruction so that they can, if they will, make the utmost possible use of the life that is theirs. But with all this they will not necessarily have renounced sin, not necessarily have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, acknowledged that all they have and are is due to Him, and become reconciled to God through faith in Him. And none of the blessings they enjoy can continue if they remain thus unreconciled; nay, they will not even attain to the fulness of Millennial blessing unless their hearts have been made right with God. The law pronounced so long time ago "the wages of sin is death" stands as an immutable principle which can never be abrogated. The very basis upon which God's universe is built demands that righteousness and only righteousness shall endure eternally. That which is evil, sinful, basically opposed to the Divine principles that govern continuing life, must, even although it endure uneasily for a time, eventually pass out of existence. No power in all creation can preserve it. It follows therefore that the man whose heart is sinful, who deliberately sets himself against the forces that are making for righteousness in God's new world, must himself suffer the fate that was expressed by the prophet Ezekiel half a millennium before the Christian era: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die!" (*Ezek. 18. 4*).

A little thought will suffice to convince that the man who deliberately refuses to take his place as a citizen of the world, to discharge his due obligations and assume his share of the world's work, fulfilling the Divine injunction to love his neighbour as himself, acknowledging his Creator and God as the One in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being (*Acts 19. 28*) can be a source of happiness neither to himself nor others. Such a man, exercising to the last the inalienable right of free will with which his Maker has endowed him, can resist God to the last, and turn resolutely away from every endeavour God makes for his conversion. We may be quite sure that not one such individual—if such there be—will be left to incur the logical sequel to his elected course until God has, as it were, exhausted

every persuasive influence within His power to win the obdurate one from the error of his way. But if God at last turns aside, it can only be because the case is hopeless; He will not coerce the will and condemn this unhappy man to an eternal life from which he cannot escape and the conditions of which he resents and cannot endure. God, Who holds in His hand the breath of every living thing (*Job 12. 10*) will—sadly, we may be sure—allow sin to bear its final fruitage in that man's life, the exquisite mind and wonderful organism to falter and fail, and the shades of eternal sleep to close round him.

It is hard to think that, with all the incentive to righteousness characterising the Millennial Age, there will be many such. Time will prove, but that the Scripture states the principles upon which alone everlasting life may be attained there can be no question, and that eternal death must inevitably be the portion of all who, after full and fair opportunity, refuse to accept the Lord Jesus and conform to the Divine laws, the Scriptures are equally emphatic.

So, with the passing of the last of sinners, there comes the end of sin. Men will have been so fully tested and confirmed in their allegiance to God by their long experience, of sin in the first life and righteousness in the second, that there need be no fear that sin will raise its ugly head again. Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man, will trouble humanity no more. The last book of the Bible, in one of its parabolic utterances, speaks of a final attempt to deceive the nations at the end of the Millennial Age. It is an obscure little passage but it is clear upon one thing; that the sequel to the attempt is the destruction of the last traces of evil in the earth. From that time and forward all things, on earth as in Heaven, are "holy unto the Lord". The prospect before men will be one of progressive and never-ending increase in knowledge and experience and intense joy in the continuance of everyday life under conditions of idyllic happiness.

So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful and mankind attains to a better and more complete understanding of the message of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background—never forgotten, an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin, but no longer having power to hurt and destroy. The song of the angels at Christ's birth—"peace on earth, goodwill among men"—will be realised in fact at last. Human beings will look upon each other, fair of form, virile of body, magnificent examples of the

creative power of God. Conscious of the eternity of supremely happy life that is before them, they will rise at every dawn to prosecute with unflinching minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world's work will continue—men will till the soil and reap the fruits of their labours; they will foregather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal; they will travel the world and rejoice in the varied glories of Nature and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with one another and with God.

Will then the earth abide for ever? The Bible says it will, that God formed not the earth in vain, but intended it to be inhabited (*Isa. 45. 18*). One who appraises at its true worth the marvellous co-ordination of natural processes that gives us the earth as we have it to-day, with all its vegetable and animal wonders, so fitting and admirable a home for man, cannot but feel the apparent futility of it all if God intends eventually to destroy so much loveliness. The popular idea of the ultimate destruction of the earth is based, of course, firstly upon mediæval theology, which not only placed undue emphasis upon the lurid symbols of certain Biblical books describing the "end of the world", but also regarded all material matter as inherently evil and fit only for ultimate destruction—both of which attitudes are now quite discredited by well-informed Christians—and secondly by eighteenth and nineteenth century physical science which explained the constitution of the universe by a set of theories which demanded the eventual destruction of the earth—either by freezing or by fire!—and indeed, of the entire universe as far as it was then known. Physical science, as well as the science of the Word of God, has taken great strides since then, and the present conclusions of the latest scientific investigators go much farther than did those of their predecessors to corroborate the purposes of God revealed in the Bible. It is considered by many scientists nowadays that the universe, so far from hastening towards an "end" not infinitely remote in time, is in fact capable of continuing indefinitely by its own processes of converting matter into radiation and radiation back into matter. This is not the place in which to embark upon a prolonged dissertation upon such a subject; the purport of this treatise is to give an outline of the revealed purpose of God, but the fact that serious scientists, basing their pronouncements solely on what they discover from their researches, can see the possibility of the earth continuing "under its own steam", as it were, into infinity, is enough to render any query as to the possibility of everlasting human life upon earth quite unnecessary.

Thus, at last, God's purpose is fulfilled. The earth will continue, the eternal home of supremely happy human beings, satisfied with their lot and living their lives in complete harmony with the laws that God has ordained for their well being, always finding new heights to scale and new fields to explore in the continually opening vistas of human experience. The heavens will be the eternal home of those from amongst mankind who in this present Age have been Christian disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, their mission of reconciling men to God during the Millennial Age successfully completed. The angelic hosts, spectators through many long centuries of this drama that has been worked out on earth, will continue to occupy their ordained position before God. This earth, a speck only in the immensity of God's material creation, will have become what He always intended it to be, and its citizens, perhaps—who knows?—forerunners of other intelligent material beings on other planets likewise devoted to the worship and reverence of God. It is idle to speculate on the possibilities that lie in the eternal ages of the great Beyond; the Bible takes us to the completion of the Divine purpose with mankind on earth and leaves us there. It may be that just because God is essentially a Creator there will never be any end to His creating. Of one thing we may be sure; evil, once overthrown and banished, its lessons experienced and placed on record for the instruction of all reasoning creatures for all time, will not raise its head again. From the time that the Divine purpose with man has been completed at the end of the Millennium, it will be true that "everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord", and there will be no discordant voice in all His wide domain.

Is it just wishful thinking? Is all this but a kind of mental sop, a beautiful dream, wherewith to dull the senses to the harsh realities of to-day, a means of refusal to face the grim inevitable destiny against which heart and mind cries out in impotent despair? BY NO MEANS! *These things shall be!* God has been silent, screened from the vision and the sense of men, approachable only by those who have sincerely desired to know Him and have been prepared to devote their lives to His service and to die for the sake of His ways if need be; but He has nevertheless been working ceaselessly and tirelessly for the ultimate good of all men. The record of His work as well of His plans is to be found in the Bible, but here again, only the sincere and earnest of heart will be able to read its pages aright and understand them. God is calling all such now, to-day, to give themselves to Him through the channel of faith in, and acceptance of, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Leader, and He will then assign them some position and work in the execution of His fulfilling purpose. It was in the realisation of that call that the Apostle Paul entreated "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . and be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." (*Rom. 12. 1-2*). That is the call still. If you, who read these lines, decide that this is a reasonable solution to the apparently insoluble enigma of God's seeming failure to deal with evil, that here is the explanation of the mystery of His dealings with mankind, consider carefully within yourself whether you too will not come closer to God than ever you have done before, yielding yourself in glad submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, that in so doing you might yourself play some small part in bringing about, at the last, the realisation of God's eternal purpose.

*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.*

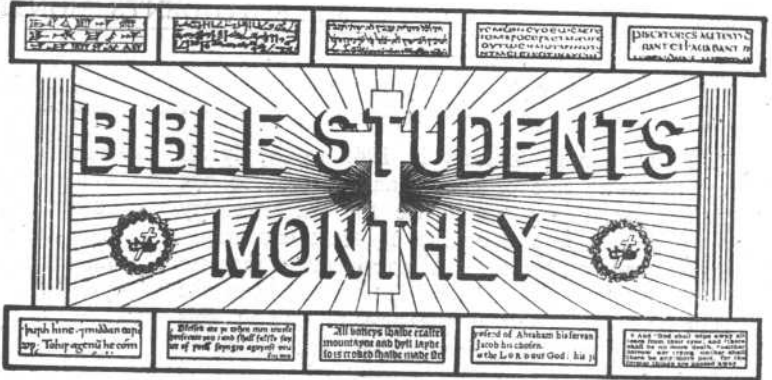
*When the dread forces of the gale
His sterner purposes perform,
And human skill can naught avail
Against the fury of the storm,
Let loving hearts trust in Him still,
Through all the dark and devious way ;
For who would thwart His blessed will,
Which leads through night to joyous day ?
Be still beneath 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.*

Further literature on these subjects, or details of regular meetings, will be gladly sent on request. Please write.

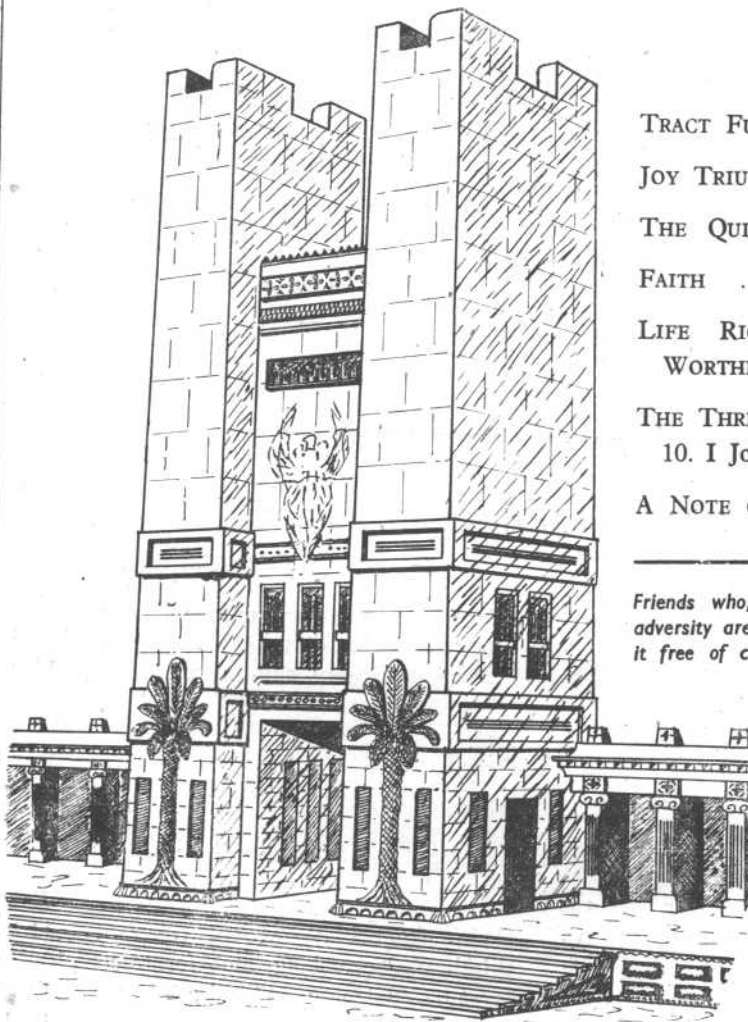


Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



Vol. 28, No. 2

FEBRUARY, 1951



Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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FREE TRACT FUND REPORT—1949-50

The decision taken early in 1949 to supply all tract literature free of charge and to look to our Master's overruling providence for the necessary provision has been a source of great encouragement to all concerned. A considerable increase in the number of tracts distributed has been the result and it is a real pleasure to submit this report to all who have been actively interested.

It is our hope that all those who have at any time donated gifts to the Free Tract Fund will accept this statement in lieu of a personal copy sent by post; this will ease our office work at a time when we stand in need of such relief. Since the pressure of other work precluded the issue of a report at the end of 1949, this report covers the past two years.

The bulk of these tracts have been distributed in this country but it is an added joy to report that some have gone to meet the requests of brethren in Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and South America. "Millennial Message" has been distributed in all of these lands.

The result of this distribution has been that quite a number of enquiries have been received;

some few have at their own request been put in touch with local meetings, and others have become readers of the "Monthly" and in various ways have manifested their continued interest in the understanding of the Divine Plan which it is our privilege to proclaim.

We now express very sincere appreciation of the loving zeal of all those whose gifts have made this work possible and look forward to its continuance just on the scale—no more and no less—that the Master sees fit to assign to it in the coming year. We still have plenty of tracts in stock and brethren are welcome to ask for as many as they can profitably use.

QUANTITIES SENT OUT

1949—Tracts (chiefly "Millennial Message No. 3")	...	...	52,760
12 and 16 pp. booklets	...	...	9,420
1950—Tracts (chiefly "Millennial Message Nos. 3 and 4")	...	...	71,190
12 and 16 pp. booklets	...	...	6,148
Total for two years	...	...	139,518

FREE TRACT FUND—FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1949 RECEIPTS.				EXPENSES.			
		£	s. d.			£	s. d.
Donations	...	160	7 8	Printing, blockmaking, etc., for various tracts and booklets	...	156	12 1
				Postage, stationery and miscellaneous	...	14	16 7
						171	8 8
				Deficit	...	11	1 0
		£160	7 8			£160	7 8
1950							
		£	s. d.			£	s. d.
Donations	...	144	13 0	Deficit from 1949	...	11	1 0
				Printing, blockmaking, etc., for tracts	...	109	6 9
				Postage, stationery and miscellaneous	...	13	9 7
				Balance in hand	...	10	15 8
		£144	13 0			£144	13 0

JOY TRIUMPHANT

A Thought
for the Month

"And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."
(Luke 24. 52-53.)

That was the foundation of the Christian Church!

A handful of men and women, quite ordinary men and women, subject to the same failings and weaknesses as are we ourselves, initiated and commenced the building up of the most wonderful society the world has ever known—the Christian society. They discovered a power which enabled them to brave the most intense opposition and endure the most incredible hardships without ever losing the happiness and joy for which they became proverbial among their enemies. They underwent experiences that ought by ordinary standards to have made them the most miserable of people and yet by the testimony of their opponents as well as of themselves they were of all men the most happy. True to the words of their departed Leader, their sorrow had been turned into joy and their joy no man could take from them. Where did they get it from?

It all started on that memorable day when a few of them watched their dearly loved Lord ascend before their very eyes into the heavens. The time past had been one of sorrow and grief, doubt and perplexity. They had believed that this Jesus whom they had followed and in whom they had put their trust were indeed he that should deliver Israel. They had been so certain they had found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. Then came a time when they were not so sure, when like John the Baptist, long since laid to rest in his grave, they wanted to ask "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Then there had been that crushing blow, the arrest and death of their Master. That had put an end to everything. All their lives' hopes and all their expectations for the future had been pinned on this gracious figure that had come into their lives, and now those hopes and expectations had all been dashed and shattered, and life no longer held any meaning or offered any purpose. God had forgotten to be gracious and turned His face away from those who served Him; so it had seemed; but then had come that wonderful happening on the third day that, despite its mystery and the measure of perplexity to which it had given rise, had rekindled their hope and faith and planted

their feet once more upon the path which had led them to this position of joy which now they occupied. It was Jesus, their Jesus, back again from the dead, present with them as of old, and yet not in just the same old way. There was a difference, a difference none of them could define or explain, but nothing of that mattered in the light of this glorious realisation that had come to them. Jesus was theirs; He had indeed come as the prophets had promised; nothing could ever happen to alter that one inescapable fact. The days of waiting, of hoping, of expecting, of longing, were all in the past. *Jesus had come!* The powers of evil might rage and manifest their fury as indeed they were doing but that did not matter. *Jesus had come*, and the days of evil were numbered. True, Jesus had gone away again, into the skies, and the magic of His voice and His touch no longer thrilled their earthly senses, but of what consequence was that? *Jesus had come*, and life henceforward held a joy and a confidence that coloured everything in the world with brighter hue than ever before had been known.

They returned to Jerusalem with great joy because they knew that even although Jesus had left this world to return to His Father, His presence was still with them and would always be with them. In the power of that knowledge, and in the inspiration of that abiding presence, this handful of men and women went out in joy and gladness and conquered the world. In less than six generations a thousand years of Roman paganism, backed by all the might and power of a world-wide empire, was crashing to its ruin before them.

We do well to heed the characteristics of this primitive Christian community. There is something here that we need in our own Christian lives and our own Christian fellowship, something that we must have if we are successfully to challenge the new paganism of our day which has so much in common with that of Ancient Rome. It must be with more than passing interest therefore that we turn again to the story of those few earnest disciples making their way back to Jerusalem from the slopes of the Mount of Olives. And as we go once again over the well-known story we are impressed by the fact that the faith by which we live began, on that memorable day, in five things:—blessing, worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving. Those five manifestations of the human spirit in

its stand before God are vital. First of all there is blessing; not only the blessing of God coming upon His people just as the blessing of Jesus came upon the few disciples standing before Him on Olivet, but the consecrated, devoted attitude receptive to blessing. On our part we need to be in the condition of heart that has faith in the coming of the blessing, stands ready to receive the blessing, and rightly appreciates and esteems the conferred blessing. The Lord our God will bless us; of that there is no doubt, on the authority of His Holy Word; but we must needs be open and amenable to receive the blessing, apply it to ourselves and make manifest its fruits in our lives.

Secondly comes worship. They worshipped Him after receiving His blessing and before returning to Jerusalem. Worship is a vitally important thing in the life of the Christian. We do not esteem it as we should. God is not pleased with thousands of slain sacrifices and ten thousands of rivers of oil. He asks for our own heart's devotion and that we render to Him in outwardly ceremonial fashion when we come to worship Him. It is not necessarily that we must go into some great and ornate building to render our worship, nor join with some mighty congregation and well-drilled choir. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," said the woman at the well, "and ye say that in Jerusalem is where men ought to worship". "Believe me," said Jesus earnestly, "the hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem . . . for they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for God seeketh such to worship Him". Nevertheless, there is much to give strength and encouragement to us in difficult times in the habit of meeting together for orderly and fervent worship. We are bidden not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and in that assembling we do well to worship Him that made the sea and the dry land, in whose hands is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. Surely it must give pleasure to the heart of the Everlasting Father when His children assemble before Him to yield Him their worship. The Early Church were in no doubt about the matter; they gathered together often for worship and adoration and their lives were enriched thereby.

Thirdly, we travel the Christian way with joy. As the little group made its way back into the city it did so "with great joy". If that ascent into heaven which they had witnessed a few minutes previously had been construed by them as involving a parting there would hardly have been this atmosphere of outward, ebullient joy, so obvious as to be recorded by the historian many years later. The

conclusion is irresistible that they did not picture Jesus as having left them at all; He was still with them, only invisible, and He was going to be with them for the rest of their lives as they went about the fulfilment of His commission to preach the glorious gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and make disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. No wonder they were joyful.

Joy leads to praise. It can hardly do otherwise. The joyful frame of mind can find its logical outlet only in one way; the giving of praise to God Who has given the cause of joy. So it comes about that the fourth element in this early enthusiasm was praise. They had gratefully received the blessing, they had worshipped, they had returned to Jerusalem with joy. Almost immediately they were found in the Temple, praising God. What more natural place could there be for them? Instinctively they went into the House of God to render praise to Him for their great blessing. And they were there continually; this was not just an isolated act of worship, a formal acknowledgment to God of the privilege and power He had bestowed upon them. This was a condition of mind which could only be satisfied by an actual residence in the courts of God, an instinctive realisation that the outward environment should correspond so far as was possible with the inward thought of the mind. They were continually in the Temple because that was the right place for them, and they were continually praising and blessing God because they could do nought else.

That expression "blessing God" can only mean thanksgiving. The grace of gratitude must surely have some place in this account. Just as the child of joy is praise, so the child of praise is thanksgiving. After all the experiences, the heartaches, the disappointments and disillusionments of the past the disciples had now been ushered into a condition of conviction and certainty, and although they had been told that life would henceforth be hard for them—pitifully hard—yet they lifted up their voices with one accord and gave thanks to God.

Blessing; worship; joy; praise; thanksgiving. These five are the keynotes of Christianity, the hallmark of the Christian society, the evidences of Christian fellowship. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but joy, righteousness and peace in the Holy Spirit." The extent to which we as a fellowship of Christian believers neglect or lose these things is the extent to which we lose our usefulness to God and our standing before God. If Paul, having all knowledge, but without love, could be nothing more than sounding brass or a

tinkling cymbal, how much more are we hollow and empty in the Lord's sight if, despite all our knowledge and all our activity and all our protestations of loyalty to Him, we have not succeeded in preserving these things in our own communal life? If it was by the power of such things that the early Christians challenged the evil forces of their day, and triumphed, how can we expect to challenge and triumph in our turn without them?

The newly-won converts who gathered around the Apostles after Pentecost quickly found themselves absorbed into the same spirit. The influence of Olivet remained after Pentecost and coloured the whole life and outlook of the infant Church. "*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.*" (Acts 2. 46-47.) Here is worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving again, just as on the former occasion. The wonder and the magic of this new fellowship into which they had come was born out of these things—and with the loss of worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving, the wonder and magic goes out of the Christian calling. We must preserve these things and increase these things within us and in our midst if we are to abide a people fully exercising the wonderful privileges that are ours.

This then was the impelling power behind the marvellous achievements of the early Church; this the faith that enabled them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. It was their certainty, not that Christ *will* come, but that He *had* come, and that they were now engaged in a work of witness and in the building of a Church that could not have been commenced until He *had* come and could not be continued except by the power of His abiding presence. Their faith was rooted not so much in the promises of the future as in the events of the past. They believed in the coming of the Kingdom and in the Second Advent of their Lord; but the theme which was so often upon their lips and which formed the mainspring of their lives was that which is best defined in the words of Paul "*Remember ye the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said . . .*" They had seen the Lord; He had been with them and set them this commission to fulfil; true, He now was invisible, but they knew that He was with them. "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age*" He had said, and they believed Him. It was because they believed Him that His power, the power of the Holy Spirit, was in them and manifested itself through them. So the early Church grew and multiplied, and men began to take notice of this

new force that had come into the world. A small provincial movement became a world-wide community; what had seemed to be but a minor sect of Judaism developed into a universal Church.

That first primal impulse never left the Apostles throughout life. Peter, thirty-five years later, told his brethren "*we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus, but were eye witnesses of His majesty*" (2 Pet. 1. 16). Peter saw no reason, at the end of his life, to retract the things he had said or disavow the vision he had seen in earlier days. True, he had progressed in knowledge as well as faith and doubtless there were many relics of his old Judaistic doctrinal beliefs that he had discarded as the years passed by and revealed the truths of the Gospel in clearer light. But he never lost sight of the one central fact that dominated his life; *Jesus had come*; and all that Peter was and hoped to be hinged upon that one inescapable fact.

Paul, at the end of *his* life, avowed to his son-in-the-faith Timothy "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded*" (2 Tim. 1. 12). There was no doubt about the matter in Paul's case either. He too, knew that Jesus had come, and appeared to him on the Damascus road, had commissioned him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and laid upon him great sufferings for His Name's sake. Paul never wavered; the vision he received at the beginning remained with him and illuminated his course throughout life. The abiding spiritual presence of Jesus was a very real thing to Paul. "Whether we wake or sleep" he said "we live together with Him."

The saintly John, last of all the Apostles, was not one whit behind his fellow-labourers in the constancy of his faith in this central fact. "*Abide in him*" he exhorted his spiritual children "*that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at His coming*" (1 John 2. 20). There is a subtle shade of meaning here surely. "When He shall appear (*epiphaneō*—be manifested as it were openly) ye shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (*parousia*—presence). Does this mean that if we abide in Him we may have the joy of being aware of His presence even before His open manifestation? That is the thought of many and it harmonises well with those other Scriptures that tell of His coming for His own silently and unobserved, before the world at large are aware of His Advent. But at any rate there is no doubt in John's mind that in the meantime, while as yet they are to wait for His coming, they may and must "*abide in Him*". That demands a recognition of His spiritual presence

with them "even unto the end of the Age" which is quite a different thing from His invisible presence at the end of the Age.

This joy persisted as the first believers spread abroad and converted others "afar off" to the faith. Paul and Barnabas, leaving Antioch of Pisidia and going into Iconium to minister there "caused great joy unto the brethren" (Acts 15. 3). When the messengers from the conference of Jerusalem (Acts 15) returned to Antioch of Syria with the considered judgment of the Apostles and elders on the questions that had arisen for discussion, the Antioch brethren "rejoiced for the exhortation" (Acts 15. 31). This Antioch Church, where the disciples first gained the name "Christians" was evidently the most virile and progressive of the churches of that day. It was so, because it had the spirit of joy; joy in the Lord, joy in the Truth, joy among the brethren; and one of the outgrowths of that joy was the sponsoring of missionaries to go out into Asia and spread the glad tidings. Missionary zeal has its birth and origin in joy. A sad and miserable community can never summon the zeal to go out and make converts to the Gospel of Christ; and if it did its Church life would probably repel the converts. It is the happiness and the spontaneity of the Christian good news that attracts men and women from a world that in Paul's day, as in ours, has little of either. That ought to be a pointer to us in our own endeavours to witness for the Master.

It was Nehemiah the zealous patriot, who coined the immortal phrase "*the joy of the Lord is your*

strength" (Neh. 8. 10). He was calling his people then, as a certain famous statesman of our own day called our fellow-countrymen not so long since, to "blood and toil, tears and sweat", but he added something that no statesman of this world, however far-sighted and vigorous, can give, "the joy of the Lord—your strength". We need to take that to ourselves also. The discouragements and disappointments and disillusionments of this our day, in this our Christian walk, are so great and forceful that we need a power in our lives able to withstand their assaults. That power is our possession of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of faith and of hope, and, too, the Spirit of joy. Our joy in the Lord lightens the severity of our trials and illumines the darkness of the clouds. In that joy lies our strength, the ability to "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible". In Nehemiah's time it was that spirit of joy, that joy in the Lord, which enabled his people to defy the mandate of the king of Persia and go forward to the building of a Temple and the creation of a nation. We in our day also are building a Temple and creating a nation. God grant that we realise, as did Nehemiah, that our strength is in our joy in the Lord. God grant that we take to ourselves the lesson of Olivet and create within our fellowship an atmosphere of worship, of joy, of praise, of thanksgiving. Only thus shall we be able to go forward in full assurance of faith, a happy band of pilgrims, realising in joyful fellowship together the lightness of the afflictions which, rightly accepted, shall one day win so great a prize.

PREJUDICE

Prejudice is pre-judgment. It is forming an opinion without examining the facts; it is hastily accepting a conclusion without investigating the evidence upon which it rests; it is allowing ourselves to be hood-winked and deceived, when the slightest reflection would keep us from such a mistake; it is being satisfied with hearsay, when we should demand the proof; it is rejecting everything at first sight, which does not confirm our former convictions or suit our former tastes or agree with our preconceived ideas; it is a revolt against the unpalatable and distasteful; it is a deep-seated reluctance to part with that to which we have been accustomed—a persistent hesitation to accept as true what we have not hitherto believed; a wicked unwillingness to admit that we can be wrong and others right. It favours or condemns upon the slightest pretext; it recoils or embraces

as it is moved by caprice. It is not limited to persons—has to do with places, and creeds, and parties, and systems: hence its influence is extensive, and its evils manifold. Prejudice does not hold opinions: it is held by them. Its views are like plants that grow upon the rocks, that stick fast, though they have no rooting. It looks through jaundiced eyes; it listens with itching ears; it speaks in partial and biased accents. It clings to that which it should relinquish and relinquishes that to which it should cling. When beaten it remains defiant; when disproved and vanquished it is sullen and obstinate. There is nothing too low for its love, or too noble for its hatred; nothing is too sacred for its attacks, or too deserving for its aspersions. It is cruel as it is universal, as unjust as it is relentless; as unforgiving as it is conceited and ill-informed.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

TRULY BEAUTIFUL

*Beautiful hands are they that do
The work of the noble, good and true,
Busy for them the long day through;
Beautiful faces—they that wear
The light of a pleasing spirit there,
It matters little if dark or fair;
And truly beautiful in God's sight,
Are the precious souls who love the right.*

UNITY

The unity of this Church of the Living God may be compared to a chain stretched across a river; you see it at either side, but it dips in the middle, and you might suppose that the chain had given way at the centre. So is it with the Church of God. It was seen to be one and indivisible at the beginning; it will be seen to be one by and by; and it is, in God's sight, one now, though the unity be not visible to mortal eyes.

TRANQUILLITY

Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life. It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what misfortunes come to those possessing these blessings, for they are always sweet, serene, and calm. The exquisite poise of character which we call serenity is the last lesson in culture; it is the flowering of life, the fruitage of the soul. It is as precious as wisdom, more to be desired than gold—yea, then even fine gold.

How contemptible mere money wealth looks in comparison with a serene life—a life which dwells in the ocean of truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of tempests in the Eternal Calm.

How many people we know who sour their lives, who ruin all that is sweet and beautiful, by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of character by bad blood; in fact, it is a question whether the great majority of people do not ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are well balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character.

—Author unknown.

CHASTENING

Every child of God will need chastening. If we wander from the paths of righteousness, we need chastening to bring us back; but, even if we did not wander, we should still need chastening, that we might learn obedience. Our Lord Himself learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Heb. 5. 8.) Of St. Paul the Lord said, *"I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"*. The Apostle was put through disciplinary experiences because he was a favourite child of God.

GOD'S MEN

How are God's men matured, and what are they like? Take an example and listen to the sheer audacity of Elijah in a moment of national crisis—*"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"* (1 Kings 17. 1). Who is this at whose word heaven's doors are to be shut and earth's springs to be dried up? A simple man who has emerged from obscurity; there does not seem to have been anything particularly striking about him, except his confidence in God. He was entirely unknown to the world because, of course, the world cared nothing for Elijah's God. How is it that he can stand with such boldness before King Ahab, and speak with such authority and power?

(Alan Redpath)

TRUE RELIGION

If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain. (Jas. 1. 26.)

A heart filled with the spirit of love, the spirit of God, the spirit of truth, the spirit of the Master, will be sure to overflow that which is within, for, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"*. An evil mouth, therefore a mouth which does injury to others, either to fellow members of the "Body of Christ", or to those who are without, indicates an evil heart, implies that the heart is not pure. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

FAITH

A DOCTRINAL ESSAY

In considering this subject, we must ask ourselves the question "What is faith and how can it be defined"? I have looked at many definitions and the one that appeals to me most strongly is:—*"A spiritual apprehension or voluntary acceptance of Divine revelation, apart from absolute proof"*. Faith is also well defined in Heb. 11. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Having accepted these definitions, I will by the grace of our Heavenly Father, and the love of Christ Jesus our Lord, paint a word picture of this virtue, and in order to do so, I cannot do better than secure myself down to one of the anchors of the New Testament.

1 Cor. 13. 13. "And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity", charity being Love. We have here three facts which bear close relationship.

Charity or Love springs from the Father.

Hope—Confidence in a future event, and that event being the Second Advent of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Faith—While of God, it is the only manifestation of man which is acceptable to the Father, our works, which are not of the Spirit, He does not want, but of this more anon.

The Divine revelation is contained in the unfulfilled Covenants which God the Father has made with mankind, chief among these with which we are directly concerned being the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant.

Faith is the fruit of the Spirit and is a part of the inheritance of the Ecclesia, the New Creation at the present time. Faith must be ours before we can become the children of God, as we are justified by faith. Faith is the exercise of our minds concerning God's promises to us.

The call of the present age, the Gospel age, is to those who will walk by faith and not by sight, and whoever cannot or will not walk in this manner now, cannot walk with God, and this is epitomised in 1 John 5. 4. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith", namely to walk with God.

Faith in God is that which thrives, grows, and sustains itself upon the Divine promises, amongst which the apostle declares in 1 Cor. 2.8, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath

in reservation for those who love him". What can the eye of faith discern? Foremost is participation in the First Resurrection, the establishment of the Kingdom, partakers as joint heirs with Christ Jesus on His throne in the presence of the Father, the commencement of the reign of righteousness, participation in that grand and glorious work of spreading the knowledge of the Lord, and the word and the love of God, until it covers the earth as the waters cover the deep, until conditions obtain, in one respect at least, as outlined in Jeremiah 31. 3-34 and Heb. 8. 8-12, which latter verses I quote, "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more". Furthermore we shall participate in everything that will co-operate to the glory of God, and be in accordance with the Divine law of love, the climax being to bring humanity up the highway of holiness, Isa. 35. 8-10 "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the highway of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein, no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrows and sighing shall flee away". They will be SHEPHERDED to and along this way by a ROD OF IRON. Shepherded with Iron, but that Rod of Iron will be the inflexible rule of Love, the Golden Rule, love in its most complete and transcending form. The weaker

brother will have many a blessing. It will be the case of the TENDER SHEPHERD WITH THE WEAK LAMB. Do not, however, think for one moment that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is "mushy" and "soft" about this; I do not think any "New Creature" would think this for a second, because he already realises that although by the love of the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the yoke is easy, the Cross must be borne, and that the way is hard and beset with many pitfalls, which are to be avoided before one attains to that holy and blessed state.

As far as the transgressor is concerned, his fate is foretold in Psa. 2. 9 "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel". If, however, anyone entertains doubt about anything, our Father is long-suffering and of great goodness, which is borne out in Jas. 1. 5-8 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him, but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways". Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; by it things that are not yet seen become tangible to our minds as things which are seen. Faith is strong, and while tangible to the mind, is intangible to the sight, and yet it is as fine as gossamer. If the facts which promote faith are mishandled, distorted or twisted, faith can be ruined, and it is the intention of the Prince of this world to endeavour with all his might and main to distort and twist the real meaning of the fundamental facts concerning the love, the will and the plan of God the Father, an outstanding example of this being the fall of man from his perfect state. It is now during the present time of darkness, when sin abounds and Satan rules, that the highest premium is put upon our faith by the Lord, concerning the fulfilment of God's plan and Divine purpose. Listen to these Scriptural gems: Matt. 9. 29 "According to thy faith be it unto thee", and again Jno. 15. 7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you".

The basis of Christian conscience is faith in God, and acceptance of His will as being absolutely right, and acknowledgment of our proper obligation to be thoroughly and heartily obedient to the Divine will. Conscience needs just such education as the word of God affords, and the developed "New Creature" is for this reason to have "the spirit of a sound mind", his conviction as to what is right and what

is wrong expanding and clarifying in proportion as he grows in grace, and in knowledge and in the spirit of love.

Now such a faith, while it has strength to bind us in unbreakable bonds to the Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord, yet when mishandled, misrepresented or misplaced by us, can do untold injury, therefore in manifesting our faith we must be sure that we are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Examples of outstanding faith are recorded for us in Holy Writ, exemplified in the lives and actions of the Ancient Worthies and the Apostles, the chief example of course being our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

The manifestation of faith by Christ Jesus our Lord is forcibly impressed upon us by His reliance on the Father in all things, and His intercession with the Father in prayer, on behalf of those with Him, in prayer on behalf of those given to him by the Father, and also in prayer on behalf of Himself. Our blessed Lord is an example of complete faith in the Father, as well as complete faith in subjection to the *Will* and *Love* of the Father. That this is so, is borne out in Jno. 3. 35 "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel". Further attempts to eulogise the faith of our blessed Lord and Saviour could be found galore in the New Testament. It is a case of perfect faith.

Nevertheless, faith which has not proved itself to be perfect, as His, is commended by our Lord and Saviour and an outstanding example of such faith is afforded us in Peter, and here I quote Matt. 16. 15-17 "He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?' and Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', and Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'" Such faith was in one that denied Christ, so the weaknesses of the flesh do not eliminate or debar faith. Neither must we think that the faith of the exalted only is recognised, a shining example of modest, humble though great faith is exemplified in Matt. 9. 20-22 "And behold a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, 'If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole'. But Jesus turned about him, and when he saw her he said, 'Daughter be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole', and the woman was made whole from that hour".

Of the Ancient Worthies, great exponents of faith are contained in Heb. 11, but of those holy men of

old not mentioned in that list, is one that always attracts and commands my earnest attention, and that is Job. One who was tried with all the afflictions and trials to which we individually are prone, yet after all his trials and tribulations, and before he was reconciled to God, found it in his heart to cry out and declare "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me". Those words are to be found in Job 19. 25-27, and this declaration was made approximately 3,500 years ago.

Proceeding onwards we must consider how we may manifest our faith, and this can only be done by thought, word and deed, but as thought and deed mean action, action in this sense means work. Now work may be split up into three categories, and I shall endeavour to illustrate each category from the Bible.

Firstly—Works of the vainglorious man, a great example of which is Nebuchadnezzar, who conquered and ruled a mighty empire, Babylon, wherein he attempted to unify the religions of his empire by self-deification: Dan. 4. 30-34 "The king spake, and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and the honour of my majesty?' While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, 'O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will'. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation". That quotation needs no further comment, as it speaks for itself.

Secondly—With regard to the works of man, we learn in Heb. 11. 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh". In Gen. 4. 2, we are told "Abel was

a keeper of sheep and Cain was a tiller of the ground". We know that Cain brought the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought the firstling of his flock to the Lord. Now both products were the work of the Lord, so we cannot offer Him anything in the way of such works that are not already His, but Abel's sacrifice being a blood sacrifice indicated by what method mankind would be redeemed, and it was this perception by faith that was pleasing to the Lord.

Thirdly—Works of the Spirit. My first quotation in this respect is from Rom. 10. 10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation". Righteousness here means the righteousness of God, which is judicially reckoned to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believers are *righteous*. And again, Gal. 3. 22, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, and the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe". Then in Jas. 2. 20 we have these words, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead". How then shall we manifest our faith? The answer is found in Heb. 11. 6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him". To do this we must dwell in the Spirit of the Father, and in all things be guided by the Spirit, and "the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness and Faithfulness" (Gal. 5. 22).

While up to now it has been endeavoured to illustrate faith manifest in its fullest splendour, one must not be discouraged if one wavers or even fails momentarily, because there are five such occurrences recorded for our guidance in the New Testament:—

Firstly—The cure for anxiety is faith in the Father's care, which is so amply illustrated in Matt. 6. 25-34. The words contained in these verses convey in no small measure the love of our Heavenly Father for us. Next to His manifestation of love for us, through the bestowal of His only begotten Son "in whom I am well pleased", this declaration may be considered next in magnitude. His constant care for us, which is again illustrated in Isa. 27. 3, when speaking of the branches of the vine, which constitute the elect, "I will water it every moment, and lest any hurt I will keep it by night and by day".

Secondly—Jesus interprets the symbol of leaven to the disciples, warning them of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Matt. 16. 6-12). This illustration of lack of faith is one to which every "New Creature" should give much thought and care. Leaven may be described here as an influence tending to cause general change, and when

applied to bread, it is an action of fermentation which permeates the dough in order to make it lighter. Its action is quiet, slow, insidious yet penetrating, therefore we must watch and pray and be ever on our guard, against the wiles of the Evil One, for the leaven of Satan is also quiet, slow, insidious and penetrating. We can only overcome this leaven by the aid of the Father through Christ Jesus. Again this is declared in Isa. 27. 3 "lest any hurt it, I will keep it by night and by day".

Thirdly—The impetuosity of Peter, which is so well illustrated in that incident when he sees our blessed Lord walking on the sea. (Matt. 14. 22-32). From this we see that by faith even walking on the sea can be accomplished, for Peter came down out of the ship and walked on the water. What assailed him? The boisterous wind and the tempestuous sea, comparable with Satan working through the minds of men in the different Societies and Organisations of this world, in an endeavour to undermine the faith of the elect! Sometimes these bodies are virulent and vehement, which illustrates the confusion of the world. When our faith is weak through forgetfulness or thoughtlessness of our Heavenly Father, it is possible for us to be temporarily overcome by the enterprises of the world.

Fourthly—The fear which entered the hearts of the disciples, and who were fisherfolk, when their ship was severely tossed about during a storm, while Jesus was on board and asleep (Matt. 8. 23-27). This illustrates so vividly what fear can do to mankind. It is quiet and insidious and in many respects comparable with the vice "the leaven of the Pharisees". The protection here again is "Watch and Pray", and a thought that will come to the minds of many will be an oft quoted saying, "*Fear knocked at the door; Faith opened it; and no one was there!*"

Fifthly—That event which took place during the transfiguration on the mountain, when Jesus was there with the three disciples, Peter, James and John his brother, the remainder having been left below, and failed in their attempt to cast out a devil; but this is far better recorded in Matt. 17. 14-21. This illustrates that though our faith may be well grounded in our hearts, yet it must be constantly exercised of our Heavenly Father, by constantly watching and praying. Instances may be quoted of the expulsion of evil spirits from the homes and the lives of many people, even at the present time.

Our faith need only be as a grain of mustard seed, provided we tend and care for it, therefore in our consideration of the subject of faith we must

give thought to the question of how our faith may be assailed or attacked, as there is a continual conflict between the forces of good and evil. Consider the words to be found in 1 Tim. 6. 12 "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses". To illustrate this point, what happens before a battle in modern warfare? The commander of the forces to be employed in the attack first carries out what is known as "Raids in Force". The purpose of the raids, which may be many, is not to enter into direct conflict with the enemy, but simply to ascertain the deployment of his forces, what troops are to be encountered in the attack, whether they consist of crack regiments in the various arms of the services, to bring back a limited number of prisoners from whom as much information as possible may be obtained concerning the morale and state of the troops, and from a topographical point of view, what obstacles and where they are located in the line of advance, such as streams and natural strong points and what positions which may be held more or less securely whilst employing little manpower. Having gained all this information, the commander next considers his own forces, who have been trained up to the last ounce, and in whom he has complete confidence (FAITH). He then deploys these forces along his own front according to the demands caused by the disposition of the enemy and also natural obstacles. Supplies of every description necessary for the operation are distributed along the front, where the need is anticipated to be greatest and from which points dispersement can be most easily carried out. Everything now has been carried out in a prepared manner. The initiative for the attack rests with the commander. It is usual for big offensives to be launched at dawn, with as much surprise to the enemy as possible, in short, take him off his guard. Well, we may consider that Zero hour has arrived and the battle has commenced. Everything must go according to plan; if a stream cannot be forded by the troops, the Royal Engineers are rushed in to erect a temporary bridge; if the advance is held up at some natural strong point, a signal is sent back to Headquarters, the nerve centre of the organisation, and all artillery will be brought to bear on this point until it is liquidated, and the advance continues. During the advance, although an individual soldier may be one of hundreds, it is surprising how a sense of loneliness arises. In the course of events he has been unaware that comrades by his side have been struck down, and in spite of this fact and that feeling of loneliness which persists, he presses on to the objective. Being a well

trained soldier, his actions now become instinctive and automatic, and finally all objectives are attained and a signal is sent back to this effect.

Well, what has this battle to do with Faith?

It points out many things.

Firstly—Our Commander is Christ Jesus our Lord, who always holds the initiative for the attack.

Secondly—The enemy is the Prince of this world—Satan.

Thirdly—We individually and collectively are directly concerned, because we are the troops and under the guidance of our Commander; we must see that our training and armament is not neglected in any way. We must put on the whole armour of God. Eph. 6. 12-17 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".

Fourthly—The "Raids in Force" have been carried out for us, by Jesus Christ, the Ancient Worthies and the Saints of the Church of Christ, so we know generally where the enemy lies, and we have encountered some of the obstacles.

When we come across that river that has to be forded, or that strong point which is holding us up temporarily, we must signal to our Commander the circumstances of the difficulty, ever remembering His words "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Be removed and be thou cast into the sea', it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive". Matt. 21. 21-22.

We are not to heed the circumstances of the battle, as our faith is centred in Christ Jesus our Lord, and He will not let us down, and furthermore, He has the forces which will always prevail. Whatever the difficulties are we are His, and in the midst of our tribulations, we can rely on words contained in Ps. 91. 4-5 "He shall cover thee with his feathers", metaphorically speaking, all those bless-

ings which he bestows upon us, which are given before our request is finished, His grace which consists of unmerited favours. "And under his wings shalt thou trust"; here again the metaphorical significance of these words is, that His wings are the Old and New Testaments and all the Covenants that those books contain. "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day". So that if at times we experience that sense of loneliness during the battle, we must press on towards the Mark without fear or trepidation, and having done all things well according to our light, we can signal our Commander that the objective of the battle has been achieved.

Let us now return for a few moments to see how the earthly battle is getting on.

In both cases that we have considered, the earthly battle and our own spiritual battle, the objectives have been taken. The battle has been won. What now? Are the bells to be rung? Is the town band to be called out to assist the populace in celebrating the victory? God forbid, the battle has been won but the war is not over. That well trained soldier we have been considering will still carry on instinctively, and will not stop until his position has been consolidated, because he very well knows that as soon as the enemy has recovered from the shock of the battle, he will regroup his forces and counter-attack with all his might and main. Now as dawn was the optimum time for opening the offensive on the enemy, and advancing with the increasing light of day, so with the enemy; dusk is the optimum time for counter-attack, because he knows the ground he has lost, every inch of it, as previous to the attack he held it, consequently, if his counter-attack is successful under the cover of darkness, he can throw his opponents into confusion and drive him out of the territory just gained. But if the good soldier has consolidated his position, he can throw off the element of surprise, the counter-attack, and send up his flare or rocket to signal to his Commander what is happening, and he will come to his aid with artillery fire on the enemy's back area to break up his formations which he could use in battle, and thus frustrate and dispel the counter-attack.

Well, what about our spiritual battle? How well trained are we? We have taken our objectives, what do we do next? Have we forgotten our drills? Our Commander Christ Jesus has not left us without our consolidating orders. What are they? They are contained in Matt. 26. 41 "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak". If we disregard this order, the Adversary, the Prince of the world

will surely counter-attack under the cover of darkness and will beguile those not on their guard. We must not forget that when faith is weak, the light of the Gospel does not burn brightly, and where this condition obtains, it is there that darkness prospers, and it is there that Satan will prevail and do his ugly work. We, the attacking force in this case, are in alien territory. The Psalmist says that "the days of our years are three score and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away". The Prince of this world has reigned for six thousand years, so our allotted span is very small compared to his reign, so we are

in very truth in alien territory and must necessarily take every precaution not to be outwitted, but as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15. 57 "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". So when our battle is over, we can with confidence throw the torch from falling hands, to be borne high by those who follow and are beside us, and can with joy in our hearts cry aloud with Paul (2 Tim. 4. 7) "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing".

The Life-Rights of the Ancient Worthies

A Reprint

Right to Life is one thing, but right to eternal life is another. Adam had the right to live, which would have been eternal if by obedience he had demonstrated his worthiness to live forever. So with the Ancient Worthies; when raised from the dead they will have the right to live, but only through the Mediator. They will not have life-rights of their own, for there are no such rights except those which are recognised by the Father. The Apostle Paul tells us that already the Ancient Worthies have the Divine approval. But although they pleased God, He did not give them eternal life; and although they shall please the Mediator, He will not turn them over to the Father, until the end of the Millennial Age.

The Scriptures say also that all live unto God (Luke 20. 38), for from His standpoint they only sleep. (See Deut. 31. 16; John 11. 11, etc.) Not the Ancient Worthies alone, but the rest of the world live unto God in the same sense, although they were not counted acceptable to Him. He has made provision for them through the Mediator, but that provision will not be complete until the end of the Millennial Age. The Ancient Worthies, approved of God, had this testimony, that they "pleased God", in that they came up to the standard—perfection of heart-intention and obedience to the extent of ability. While He approved them, nevertheless they did not have eternal life given them nor was any right to eternal life recognised.

God has, however, made provision whereby all of Adam's race will be redeemed and have the opportunity of gaining eternal life. This provision will,

of course, include not only the Ancient Worthies, but also the remainder of mankind.

This arrangement made by God is not, however, outside of the Mediator, for through the Mediator alone will mankind, including the Ancient Worthies, obtain eternal life. (The only exception to this provision of the Mediator is the Church Class, who come to the Father through Christ's acting as their Advocate.) Hence the Ancient Worthies cannot come by any different route. They must be recognised of the Father through the Mediator; for since they are not joint-heirs with Christ, they must come in under the other class, during the period in which the Mediator will deal with the world as a whole. The process of dealing with the world as a whole will go on, and not until the end of the Millennium will Christ deliver any of them over to the Father.

The Lord has made a plan by which he can, through His Son, deal with mankind. That plan is that "*The Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*" (John 5. 22.) Hence the Father, aside from His Son, did not judge the Ancient Worthies. But they may expect a blessing in God's own time and season—in "due time"—when Messiah will have taken His power and begun His reign; and particularly at the end of that reign, when the Son shall have delivered up the Kingdom to the Father. (1 Cor. 15. 24.)

The Father is not taking any cognisance of this arrangement for the blessing of the world, but is leaving it all for the great Messiah, who will be

their Mediator, their great High Priest, making reconciliation, mediation. When the mediation, arranged for from before the foundation of the world, shall have been accomplished, it will be satisfactory to the Ancient Worthies, who will have been "rulers in all the earth", and to mankind as a whole.

The question as to whether the Ancient Worthies will have life-rights when they come forth, may be viewed from different standpoints. According to the teaching of the Scriptures, whoever is perfect is worthy of eternal life. We understand the Scriptures to teach that the Ancient Worthies will come forth from the tomb perfect, lacking nothing. We would be inclined to say, then, that being perfect they would come within the Divine arrangement that whoever is perfect shall live. But we must remember that God is the Judge of all. (Heb. 12. 23.) Yet, even so far as the Ancient Worthies are concerned, they will not have direct dealings with God during the Millennial Age. Personally, they will be ready thus to deal; but God in His wisdom has seen fit to deal with them through the Redeemer, the Prophet or Teacher, the Priest, the Mediator of the whole world of mankind. And since the whole world of mankind is not ready to be turned over to the Father, the Ancient Worthies must wait until the remainder are delivered over into the hands of the Father, the Great Judge of all.

At the end of the Millennium, the whole world of perfected humanity will be turned over to the Father. (1 Cor. 15. 24.) As soon as He accepts them they will stand in the same position in which Adam stood when He was perfect. But as Adam was required to be tested, so the whole world of mankind will be tested in that same condition of perfection in which Adam was. Divine Justice must test their worthiness of life eternal before it will be granted.

The various statements regarding the Ancient Worthies all give the impression that, by their voluntary course, they reached the point where they were pleasing to God. And the Apostle Paul declares that these Ancient Worthies all died in faith, not having received the blessing of eternal life, because God had some better thing for us, the Church, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Heb. 11. 13, 39, 40.) In other words, while they had the testimony that they pleased God, they are not to have first rank, but second, in the work of salvation. They could not receive their blessing, their perfection, until, in the outworking of the Divine Plan, Messiah has taken His Kingdom and His Bride has been perfected. Then they will have their restitution blessings.

The fact that the Apostle says also that the Ancient Worthies desired "a better resurrection", implies that the resurrection given to them will be better than that given to the remainder of mankind, in that they will be worthy of having perfection of life at the time of first coming forth from the tomb, while the resurrection of the others will be gradual after they come forth. "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets"—all the Ancient Worthies—will be awakened from death fully restored to human perfection; and will not require a "resurrection by judgment", a thousand years long, as will the residue of mankind.

These Ancient Worthies will come back in exactly the same condition that Adam was before the fall; but they will have the advantage of greater experience than he had. Adam was perfect; these will be perfect. Adam had no experience with sin; these will have had much experience with sin. These experiences tended to develop character; that is to say, they brought about a favourable determination in respect to righteousness; the testing that came to them was to demonstrate their obedience to God, their loyalty to His will. To maintain this loyalty many of them laid down their lives.

While these Ancient Worthies will have neither part nor lot in the spiritual Kingdom, because not called thereto—that high, or "Heavenly calling" not being possible until after the Ransom had been laid down by our Lord Jesus—yet they will occupy a position of preferment above the world, having attested their faith and love during the reign of evil, in a manner approved of God. Thus they were prepared and proved worthy to be the earthly ministers and representatives of the spiritual Kingdom. In harmony with this it is written by the Prophet David, as addressed to The Christ—*"Instead of (being longer considered) thy fathers (they) shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make Princes (chief ones, captains) in all the earth"*. (Psa. 45. 16.)

The resurrection of these Ancient Worthies will also be "better" than that of the remainder of mankind in that they were tried severely during their life and received a "good report through faith", and will have attained the reward of that faithfulness. They will be perfect men, having completely restored to them all that was lost in Adam—mental and moral likeness to God, and perfection of physical powers.

If these Worthies of the past have had large experience with sin and have proved themselves faithful in that they remained loyal to God, even unto death, why should they not receive life-rights

as well as perfection of life at once? Why should they be obliged to wait until the end of the Millennial Age for recognition by Jehovah, instead of receiving it at the beginning? The answer is that God has included the whole world in the Mediatorial work of Messiah, as He had included all the Church in the preparatory work of the Royal Priesthood, through the great Advocate, the Redeemer; and the Mediator's work will continue for a thousand years. Hence, all who come under that work will be obliged to wait for the end of that Epoch before the recognition of any of them will be effected.

The Ancient Worthies "had this testimony that they pleased God". They pleased Him in that when they ascertained His will they set about doing it, even before He gave it to them as Law, or obligation, even before He could ask them to obey Him and promise them eternal life for their obedience. Abraham, one of these, manifested his faith in God although there was no redemption yet accomplished in the world. Christ had not yet come. And although Abraham was not on trial for life or for death, God granted him His favour and declared that He pleased Him. He and all those Ancient Worthies will have this resurrection to human perfection. But since human perfection—to the world of mankind—will come only under the Mediatorial reign of Christ, the Ancient Worthies cannot be introduced to the Father until the close of the Millennial Age.

Hence they will not have life in its fullest sense until the time when at the close of the Millennial Age the Kingdom shall have been delivered over to the Father. What they will have in the meantime—during the thousand-year period—will be perfection of human nature and all the blessings that God provides for mankind through the great Mediator.

If perfection of organism makes character, then Adam was perfect in this respect. He was created perfect in mind and body. His mind was in the image of God; no blemish was there, no preference for sin, but the reverse of this; he had an appreciation of righteousness and a tendency toward it; he was all that would constitute a good man, for *God, so made him*.

In another sense, Adam never had perfect character; that is, he had no character developed, tested and proved. God tried him, and because of his inexperience he failed, even though his character was good and his organism perfect. He failed in the very first feature of his trial. So we might wonder in what manner the Ancient Worthies received any testing which would constitute a full

proof of character. When we examine the records of these men we find that they manifested great faith, and that they endured some severe ordeals and testings of their loyalty to God and their confidence in Him. It does not surprise us, then, that the testimony that they pleased God was given respecting them. This assures us that they had considerable character development. God must have seen their hearts to be very loyal, else He never would have considered them worthy of a better resurrection. Yet we believe they will have need of further experience and testing.

These Ancient Worthies will not be begotten of the Holy Spirit, as is the Church; but we are informed that "after those days" God will "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2. 28; Acts 2. 17). The Ancient Worthies lived prior to the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, therefore, if they receive any measure of this blessing to come upon "all flesh", it must be in the future, and the giving of the Holy Spirit to them will have much to do with fixing, establishing, crystallising their already perfect characters. They will be brought to greater knowledge, and having already endured severe testings and having proved their thorough heart-loyalty, they will have to learn only how to use their talents and powers in fullest conformity to the Divine will.

While this class will be mortal and hence liable to death, it is unthinkable that any of these would come short of eternal life. Men who have stood crucial tests under conditions of ignorance and superstition, who have endured temptation from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and proved loyal under such conditions, would, it is only reasonable to suppose, maintain their perfection under the more favourable conditions of the Millennial Age.

Summing up, we would say, the Ancient Worthies will not come into actual and personal relationship to God, so as to be determined worthy of eternal life, until the completion of the Millennial Age, because that Age is set apart for the very purpose of determining who of all mankind may have eternal life—aside from the spirit-begotten ones of the present time. Since the Ancient Worthies will be a part of the world under the New Covenant arrangements, it follows that they will not have the decision of the Divine Court, Divine Justice, respecting their worthiness of eternal life, until the completion of the Millennial Age, until the conclusion of the trial at the end of that Age, which will bring to them, as it will bring to all others who are faithful, the great reward of life eternal.

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

Part X. I John 3. 1.

The third chapter of John's first epistle opens up a new subject. It has already been observed that the first two chapters are complete in themselves and may, for all that we know, have originally constituted a separate letter. The end of the second chapter concludes one line of argument quite definitely and the beginning of the third as clearly commences an entirely fresh line of thought. The theme of the first two chapters is constancy—abiding in God, in Christ, in the light, in the Truth. The theme of the remaining three chapters of the epistle is love—God's love for us, our love for God, for Christ, for each other, for the Truth. John wants us to know that not only is Christian constancy, "abiding in Him", necessary, if we are to attain the "prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus", but also the supreme quality of love, love in all its aspects and its powers. Just as in the first two chapters he tells us that it is little use a man claiming to be walking in the light when there is darkness in his own heart and mind, so now he tells us that we sadly deceive ourselves in claiming to love God if we have not love for our brother. And the love that we have for our brethren must be of the same quality as the love that God has for us. That is a sobering thought. No mere feeling of good fellowship, this: no tacit acceptance and toleration of our brethren without any deeper or more personal feeling. Those whom we recognise as fellow members in the Body of Christ must needs be of as great concern to us as we ourselves are to God.

But before coming to that heart-searching thought John seeks to establish the foundation of our fellowship together and shows that our whole acceptance before God is based upon love: not, at first, our love for Him, but Him for us. "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*" (ch. 3 vs. 1.) In that simple sentence of twenty words John preaches a most eloquent discourse enshrining the whole truth of our acceptance with God. It is of His love, a love greater than man has ever known or can ever conceive in relation to any other thing, and its outcome is that we, weak, puny things of earth,

are become sons of God, offspring of the Most High, having the right of entry to His presence as children have the privilege of access to their natural fathers. When one compares the insignificance of mortals, inhabiting this grain of matter floating on its way through the vast recesses of space, with the majesty and magnificence of the One Who is King of kings and Lord of lords, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, the words of John seem all too inadequate to express the feeling which he has at heart. "*Behold what manner of love*" that has raised us to so lofty a position of honour and privilege in His sight!

What love is this? We know that the love of God extends throughout all His creation. None of His erring creatures are debarred from a share in the redeeming power of that love if they will. The most famous text in all the Bible tells us that God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son for its redemption. The text is so well-known, and so familiar, that we tend to lose sight of its significance. We think of the gift and to some extent fail to realise the depth of the love that inspired the gift. We reflect upon the love of Jesus Christ Who came to seek and to save that which was lost and we measurably overlook the love of the Father which inspired that coming. Of course both those manifestations of love are really one and the same love, for this is only one of the aspects in which "I and my Father are one" (Jno. 10. 30). And this oneness which subsists between the Father and the Son demands that we reject completely and for ever the old theological idea that Jesus waits to be merciful to the sinner whilst God demands only judgment upon the sinner. The old mediæval paintings that depicted Christ protecting the fallen world from the vengeance of its angry God were little short of blasphemous; their creators can only escape that charge on the plea of ignorance. We in our day have no such excuse and we must realise, as in the main we do realise, that the entire Plan of Salvation is permeated through and through with the love of God, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. God is just; there can be no doubt about that, and Jesus is just also, for He is one with God; but God is also the justifier of him which believeth

in Jesus, and Jesus Himself has said "*he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (Jno. 6. 37). These sublime words before us could never have been coined by John if he had believed, as many ill-instructed disciples in later days have believed, that Jesus' death on the Cross was a blood-sacrifice offered to God in order to appease His wrath with man. That view is occasionally met with even to-day and it is rank blasphemy. The wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness cannot be appeased by anything short of the elimination of the sin that has provoked the wrath, and that wrath is directed against the sin and not the sinner. Hence the saying that is familiar to some of us "*God hates the sin but loves the sinner*". Those eight words at any rate express sound doctrine and true theology. When God the Father loved the sinful race of men, Jesus loved them too and came to save them; when Jesus the Son suffered as He must suffer, in the course of that act of redemption, God the Father suffered too. It could not possibly be otherwise and still be true that "I and my Father are one".

It is this love of God that is the guarantee of an opportunity for all men in the coming Age. He made men for life and not for death, and even although death must ever remain the penalty on wilful and irrecoverable sinners it is going to be a hard thing for those same sinners to steel themselves against all the persuasive influences God will bring to bear upon them during the Millennial Age. It is sometimes urged, as a reproach, that the gospel of the Millennium is a gospel of a second chance. There is no doubt at all that our God is a God of the second chance, and we do not need to apologise for the fact nor attempt to whittle it down by arguing that under present conditions of sin, no man really has had a fair "first" chance. The Prodigal Son in the parable had a second chance and the story ended happily. There are many Biblical characters whose histories show that they had a second chance to recover from past failures and demonstrate their loyalty to God. "*How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him*" asked Peter "*till seven times?*" How positively and forcefully came the answer of Jesus to him "*Nay; until seventy times seven*" (Matt. 18. 21-22). Jesus knew Himself to be fully in tune with the Father when He laid down that principle. Not until the deliberate sinner has rejected every incentive to righteousness the Heavenly Father can possibly put before him will Divine love return to itself and leave the sinner to the inevitable result of his wilful sin. Even that will be the final proof of love; the love that withdraws this gift of life, that the recipient neither desires nor can use aright,

granting him what is really a blessing to him, eternal sleep, the only alternative to continued life in an environment which he resents and into which he will not fit.

God's great love for man, then, is shown in four main aspects.

The first is His provision for man in creation. The earth and all it contains is so admirably fitted for the use and enjoyment and continued life of perfect humankind that we cannot but see here evidence of God's great love. Very soon after the beginning, we read of the first man to work and make articles in copper and iron; but it was God who stored the copper and iron ore in the heart of the earth, vast ages before Eden, for man to find in due time and convert to his use. We obtain our light and heat and power in this modern age almost entirely from coal; it was God Who caused to grow those rich forests of the Carboniferous Era, long ago, that they might eventually provide the black mineral that is so essential to our needs to-day. Upon the earth, below the earth, in the sea, in the air, everywhere we look, we can see evidence of God's love for man in the preparations that He made for man's well-being before ever man was.

Secondly, God's love is shown in His forbearance with man's sin. It is idle to pretend that the "high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity" looks down with indifference upon the wickedness and cruelty of man. Surely it is only His infinite Wisdom—and His great Love—that restrains Him from doing what the prophet Isaiah upon one occasion besought Him to do, to rend the heavens and come down in swift judgment. True, from time to time He has intervened in judgment—Eden, the Flood, the Exodus; many are the instances of such judgments—but always they have been part of His calculated Plan and never has Divine judgment made an utter end. It has always left the way clear for a fresh start. That is a striking evidence of God's love for this sinful race.

Thirdly, God's love is shown in His plans for man's future. So very few know of these; we who hold this precious knowledge ought to esteem very highly the privilege that is ours. "*As truly as I live, saith God, the whole earth shall be full of my glory*" "*The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*" "*And my people shall dwell in a quiet habitation*" "*The tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them.*" All these and many more are promises yet to be fulfilled and promises that are sure of fulfilment. They are all evidences of God's love for man and His determination that mankind shall yet attain to the con-

dition of perfection that He has all the time intended.

Fourthly, God's love is shown in His contentment with man in the Ages of glory that are to follow the ending of the Millennial Age. The very phraseology of Scripture breathes the spirit of expectancy and anticipation which God manifests as He looks forward to that glad day that sees the consummation of His Plan upon earth. *"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord"* (Isa. 66. 23). It is impossible not to sense the spirit of satisfaction with the completed work that pervades those words. *"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, for the former things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the Throne saith, Behold, I make all things new"* (Rev. 21. 4-5). Just as Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied (Isa. 53. 11) so will the Heavenly Father behold all that He has made, and say once again, as He did in the day of Adam's creation, *"Behold, it is very good!"* In that eternal contentment with all that He has done with man and made of man in this earth we have a grand manifestation of so "great manner of love" bestowed by Him upon His earthly creation.

Then if this be so with mankind upon earth, how great must be the love our Father cherishes for His spiritual family, the Church! The human race will spend eternity before the Throne, content in the radiance of His presence, but those who have been faithful to their covenant of consecration with Him in this Age are to spend eternity in the Throne, members of the family of Heaven, having always direct access to the God and Father of us all. As members of the "Bride" of Christ, of the glorious celestial company that is to be associated with the Son in all that hereafter He is to do, there is surely a very intense sense in which the love of God is their portion. Although we cannot admit for one moment that God has "favourites", in the sense in which the world understands and uses that term, yet just as on earth there are family affections and loves that mean so much more than the affections of the wider circle, because of closer affinities and interests and sympathies, so it must be with the Most High and those whose hearts are given exclusively and wholly to Him. In the experiences of an ordinary life, those with whom we have gone through the most trying or dangerous experiences, those with whom we have laboured the most intensely for the attainment of some cherished ideal, are the ones for whom we normally have love of a depth and character that we do not find in us to extend to others. It is a love that has found its

root and its sustenance in those common experiences and trials and strivings, and without them it could never have been. So with the love of God to His sons; without our coming to Him and our whole-hearted consecration of ourselves to His service and our sincere endeavours to be conformed to His image, the image of His Son, He could never enter with us into this experience of Divine love of such degree. We Christians have believed in God and witnessed for God and sacrificed for God when all has seemed to be against Him; we have held to our faith, enduring "as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11. 27); is it not to be expected therefore that there should be some reflection of all those things in the love wherewith the Father loves us?

This "what manner of love" that the Father has bestowed upon us therefore has two aspects. It is first of all of His great and abiding love for mankind that the opportunity of becoming the sons of God is offered to us. It is of His love for all mankind that He has provided that some may become sons of God in this Age, that they may be the means of reconciling to God all who will, in the next Age, and so complete the great purpose which was inspired by and is the embodiment of God's love. It is of that love that provision was made in Jesus that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jno. 3. 16), that in consequence we whose hearts are turned towards God may come to Him now in confidence, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10. 19) and so come into this hallowed condition of sonship. And having thus entered, we shall experience as the years pass by, more and more of that other aspect of God's love that is strengthened and deepened by our lives' conduct before Him and our devotion to Him. When the Apostle speaks of our being presented before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy he is using no empty phrase; there will be joy, exceeding joy, on both sides. "The Father himself loveth you" said Jesus, and the Father Who so loveth will most surely manifest "exceeding joy" when those who have loved Him supremely are at length conducted into His presence.

Gone From Us

Sister G. Weaver (*Streatham*).

" Johnson (*Ipswich*).

" M. Brindle (*Wallasey*).

" M. Moffatt (*Dartford*).

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

A NOTE ON HEB. 2.5

Several Greek words are rendered "world" in the New Testament and each one has a distinct meaning. Sometimes to know just what meaning is intended makes all the difference to one's understanding of the text. So it is with this one in Hebrews "*Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak*". (Heb. 2. 5.) The Greek word here is *oikoumene*, and this word had a very special meaning in the days of our Lord. It denoted that part of the inhabited earth which was known to the Greeks and Romans. They knew that quite possibly there were other lands and peoples as yet unknown to them, but the "*oikoumene*" was that part which they did know. A quotation from the Greek geographer Strabo bears on this point. (Strabo lived at the same time as Christ and wrote his books on world geography whilst Jesus was a boy at Nazareth.) He says "By this term" (*oikoumene*) "we mean only that portion of the temperate zone where we dwell, and with which we are acquainted. But it is quite possible that in the temperate zone there may be two or even more habitable earths (*oikoumene*) especially near the circle of latitude which is drawn through Athens and the Atlantic Ocean" (*Strabo's "Geography", Book 1, chap. 4: 6*). America, Australia and the Far East were all unknown in Strabo's day; he came very near to guessing of their existence in the above quotation.

When therefore Luke tells us that there went a decree from Cæsar Augustus that *all the world* should be taxed (Luke 2. 1), he meant the Roman world. So with his statement in Acts 11. 28 that there should be great dearth throughout *all the world*; the cry of the persecutors "these men that have turned the *world* upside down are come hither" (Acts 17. 6), and of the Ephesians "Great is Diana of the Ephesians, whom Asia and *all the world* worshippeth" (Acts 19. 27). The kingdoms of the *world* shown to Jesus in his temptation (Luke 4. 5) were the kingdoms of the Roman world, and the world that Paul told the Athenians God will judge in righteousness was that same world whose gods many and lords many Paul had just reproved—the world of his own day.

But where Strabo reflected the views of educated Greeks and Romans of the time of the First Advent in saying that there might be two or three "worlds" on the earth, unknown to them, the inspired

writers, looking forward to the time of God's intervention in human affairs, saw that God knows only one world, the world of all mankind. So "*oikoumene*" in Hebrews and Revelation is used by them to mean much more than just the Roman world. Rev. 12. 9 speaks of Satan, who deceiveth the *whole world*, and Rev. 16. 14 of the kings of the earth and of the *whole world* being gathered together to the final conflict. Jesus spoke (Matt. 24. 14) of His gospel being preached in *all the world* for a witness. The writer to the Hebrews refers first to God bringing His Son into the *world* (Heb. 1. 6), and then, coming to the text which is the subject of this note, speaks of the "*world to come*". In all of these instances the sacred writers spoke of a world vaster far than anything the Greeks and Romans of their day could possibly understand their word "*oikoumene*" to mean. They knew only of their own generation and the eight or ten centuries of Greek and Roman history enacted in those lands lying around the Mediterranean Sea. The Apostles knew of a wider sweep of history, going back to the beginning, and of prophecy, going forward into the days of the Kingdom, and they knew of past and future generations of men and women, the entire human race, all condemned in Adam, all to have opportunity of salvation in Christ. So much wider than the wisdom of this world was the vision that inspired those early disciples as they wrote and taught, and so much wider the meaning they could attach to this word "world".

The brethren of the Central London class wish it to be known that their Wednesday evening meeting has been transferred, as and from Wednesday, 3rd January, 1951, from the North Room to the Club Room both of which are in the Conway Hall building, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.

ALSO that, at the request of several brethren a SUNDAY meeting is now held at the Minerva Club, 28a, Brunswick Square, London, W.C.1. The time of this meeting is 3 p.m. and the subject of study is the prophecy of "Revelation."

* * *

Last month's special issue "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" is now available in quantities at 3/6d. (50c) per doz.; 12/6d. (\$2.00) for 50; and 22/- (\$4.00) for 100. It is hoped that this magazine issue will be widely used in preaching the message.

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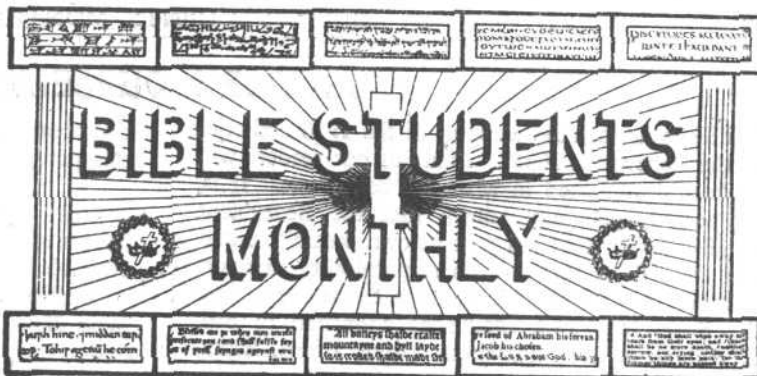
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



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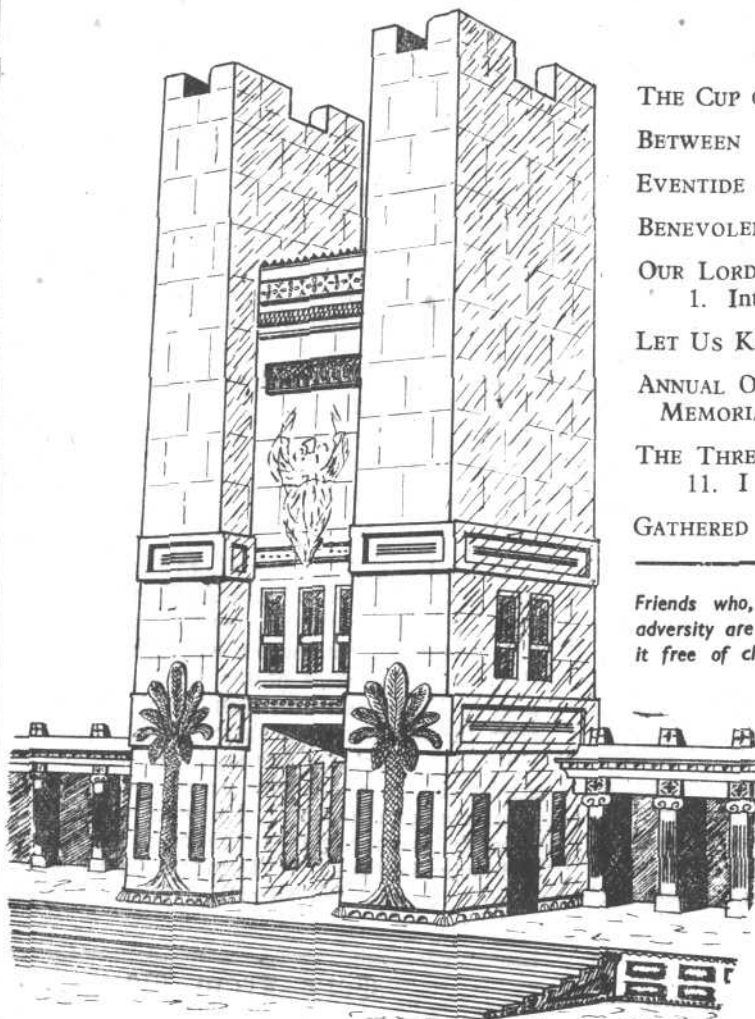
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

This issue includes a report of the 1950 activities of the Benevolent Fund. Many of our readers will be keenly interested in what has been done. It is, we believe, generally known that the Benevolent Fund is under the control of its own committee and that the "Monthly" has no responsibility therefor. It is for this reason that communications regarding the Benevolent work should be addressed to Bro. E. Allbon, at 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, and not to Welling.

Some of our readers had the pleasure of meeting and hearing Bro. Trippler of Germany during his visit to this country last summer. Some of the addresses he gave during that visit have now been collected and reproduced in permanent form. If anyone who would like to have a copy of these addresses will make request to Bro. H. E. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, our brother will be happy to send a copy, while the supply lasts.

The Midlands friends announce that the annual Whitsun Convention this year will be held in the city of Leicester instead of in Birmingham as in the past. Further details will be announced in these columns as they become available, or may be obtained upon request from Bro. A. E. Gayton, "Beirnfels," Sheepy Magna, near Nuneaton.

The subject of our Lord's return is one of absorbing interest to many Christians and certainly to the vast majority—we hope all—of the readers of this journal. No one brother can hope to say all that there is to be said on the subject and although the "Monthly" has in the past published articles dealing with various aspects of the subject and one complete series (now available in booklet form under the title "The Promise of His Presence") there is still room for more. For the next few months we shall present a series of articles from the pen of Bro. T. Holmes taking up certain considerations surrounding Scriptural teaching on the subject. The "Monthly" does not necessarily endorse every detail in the conclusions reached nor every interpretation of Scripture texts offered but presents the series as worthy of consideration in the further study of this great theme.

Will our American brethren please note that the American way of writing "4" bears some resemblance to the English way of writing "7," and that in consequence letters addressed to 24, Darwin Road not infrequently get delivered to No. 27. It would be a help to us if our correspondents from across

the ocean would write the "4" as it appears in this paragraph.

Will organisers of conventions and others interested please note that the supply of hymnals available on loan for use at such gatherings is held at Welling, and that all applications for the use of same should be addressed here. At least two weeks' notice must be given, stating quantity of hymnals required. It will be appreciated if borrowers will defray cost of carriage both ways, returning books promptly after use.

The hymn sheets which have served the interests of our public meetings in various parts of the country have at last been exhausted and a few new ones to meet immediate requirements have been printed. The new sheet is, like its predecessor, a folded card having space for name and address of anyone interested at the meeting, and includes a new selection of sixteen of our hymns most suitable for such meetings. The price is higher than of old; that is only to be expected since our previous sheet was printed before the war. We can supply these sheets at 8/6 per 100 post free for those who would wish to pay for them; for others who would find this too much of a burden on top of their other expenses we shall be glad to send them either free of all charge or to accept such contribution as it is possible to send.

The Memorial

The Memorial of our Lord's death will be observed on Thursday, 19th April, after 6.30 p.m. On that evening we all, coming together in the little companies with whom we habitually meet, or claiming the promise of the Lord's own presence with us if circumstances demand physical isolation from the brethren, will share together as His disciples in all that the broken bread and filled cup symbolises. On this evening of all evenings, all other considerations will give place to our acceptance of this immutable foundation of our fellowship and unity in Christ. "Therefore let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Gone From Us

Brother T. Riley (Bristol)
Sister Thatcher (Leicester)

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

THE CUP OF OUR LORD

G.A.F.

A Consideration
for the Memorial
Season

"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18. 11.)

Moffatt has it "Am I not to drink the Cup which the Father has handed me?"

The incident that drew this remark from the Lord's lips is a well-remembered one. It was at the time of His arrest in the Garden. The little party was leaving Gethsemane, and in so doing approached and met the party of soldiers that was on its way to effect the arrest. Simon Peter, having possession of a sword, and burning with zeal to defend his Master, drew it, and struck the High Priest's servant. He succeeded only in cutting off his ear, whereupon Jesus commanded him to put up his sword, forbidding him to strike further blow in His defence. *"Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* Thus did He indicate that this Cup of which He spoke was an experience which He was called upon to encounter and endure.

The Cup then which we wish to speak of is figurative. Quite a few Scriptures refer to it in this way. To drink of this cup, the cup of our Lord, signifies acceptance of, and willingness to endure, certain experiences as a Christian and as one of His followers.

It should be noted that the Cup is used as a symbol over a wide range of thought in the Scriptures. Sometimes it is figuratively applied to nations and to the wicked. Thus we read in Ps. 75. 8 *"In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same, but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."* But this is not the sense in which we are going to examine the symbol at this present. Rather do we want to look at it in the light of Matt. 20. 22, where Jesus asks the two sons of Zebedee "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" Quite confidently they answered Him "We are able" whereupon Jesus rejoined "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with" (vs. 23) and in saying that, He was telling them, although they knew it not at the time, that they were to taste of inward affliction and desertion and bear their share of outward affliction with Him. That was a typical example of many such little words that Jesus had with His

disciples as He tried to prepare their minds for the life of patient endurance that was to be theirs in future days, after He had left them to return to His Father.

Later on, at the last Passover Supper Jesus shared with His disciples, He gave them deep doctrine under the mantle of this same symbol. While He was introducing to them the memorial of His death He told them *"THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT in my blood"* (Luke 20. 22). By that He meant to say, the experiences I am now undergoing, which will culminate in the shedding of my blood, my death, will seal a covenant between God, my Father, and myself, that will guarantee to you, my disciples, and the whole world, deliverance (redemption) from death, from sin, and an opportunity of eternal life. It is significant that the shadow of the Cross had fallen upon Jesus as He sat with His little company around the table in that upper room. As we read the accounts of the events that led up to this time we can see something of what Jesus endured, as, for instance, His setting his face "stedfastly" to go to Jerusalem, knowing full well what was before Him of shame and injustice and suffering and death. There is the human touch of the suggestion that His brethren and family go on before, so that He could slip into the city unnoticed. Then the public excitement of His later entry in kingly fashion, when riding upon an ass He presented Himself in formal fashion to Israel as their King. *"Hosanna to the Son of David"* they shouted *"Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"* — that picture fades, and we have another; the Lord is washing the disciples' feet, a lesson for them and for us. Finally the betrayal, and the arrest, and the denial by Peter, all just as Jesus had foretold it. All these things became part of the Cup which our beloved Lord must needs drain to the end.

It was the concern of Jesus to clarify in the minds of His disciples, as much as possible, the things that He must suffer, and so to prepare them for the worst. They were so slow of heart and mind to receive these things in those carefree days before the event. Like Peter, they all wanted to say "this shall not be unto thee" and dismiss the subject. But Jesus continued to turn their minds to these things. So with us, in turning our own thoughts to His trial and judgment, we cannot help feeling

something of the anguish of soul that He bore, and so share with Him, to some small degree, in that exceeding great sorrow which was His. The attitude of His mind was eloquently expressed in Matt. 26. 38 "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*" Can we not see Him now, sitting there in the upper room with His disciples? Can we not see Him performing that symbolic act that gathered up the meaning of what He had been doing and would be doing in pouring out His soul unto death? He took a Cup, and when He had thanked God for it He gave it to them! He made the wine in that Cup a symbol, a symbol that would best symbolise what He was giving to them spiritually.

This then is our participation with Him in His experiences—His Cup! The Apostle Paul reminds us of this in I Cor. 10. 16 "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*" In this mystic common-sharing we partake with Him of the fruit of the Vine. Into that Cup which He held in His hand had gone all the experiences of the mystic Vine in the past—for He is that Vine of which we are the branches (Jno. 15. 5) and we can very truthfully say that the soul or life of the Vine was there in the Cup. The essence of its fruitage was there in the Cup.

Many things had worked together to produce that fruitage. There was, first of all, the kind of soil in which the Vine grew. Then there was the attention of the husbandman and the off-times pruning, that it bring forth good fruit. The storms which beat over it, the sunshine and the rain, all had their part to play. Finally there was the crushing of the grapes in the winepress that the rich juice might be extracted and afterward become wine. All these things had gone to determine and enrich the quality of the wine which Jesus now was giving to His disciples. Everything of the past in the growth and development of the Vine or the experiences that befel the Vine had gone into the Cup.

Here is a lesson for us! Since we covenanted to be footstep followers of Jesus and branches of the true Vine, all the experiences we encounter, whether on the hilltop or in the valley, whether they are bitter or sweet, all are necessary to the triumphant completion of our calling. All are planned to work out some necessary fruitage of character in our hearts and lives. To change them would change the fruitage and maybe our position in the Body of Christ. "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose*" (Rom. 1. 28.) Then let us thank God for them.

At that Memorial Supper Jesus was putting to their lips an invisible cup of which the material cup was but a symbol. Into that invisible cup all of

the past experiences of His life had been gathered. All that Jesus had said, and suffered, and prayed, and done, and was, went into the chalice which He was now putting to their lips. Thus they drank of His life. Thus they accepted Him and thus they identified themselves with Him in that acceptance. No wonder Jesus said, afterwards, as they were walking together to Gethsemane "*I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*" (Jno. 15. 1.) He allowed that to sink in, and then He continued "*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.*" So He came to the great climax of this line of thought "*herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.*"

Let us then try to trace the experiences of Jesus that went to make up His Cup; but let us first recall His experiences as a lad and a man, experiences that led up to His acceptance of the Cup of DEATH. It was that Cup which He was invited to accept, and *which we are invited to share with Him.*

In the silent years at Nazareth, when Jesus lived in obscurity, maybe working and helping at the carpenter's bench, His hands rough with toil, we can visualise Him dealing with the commonplace things of every day. He must have known the hardship of poverty, the dull and narrow life of a country village, and perhaps the responsibility of supporting a family of younger brothers and sisters after the death of their father. But with the vision of the future all the time in His heart, unuttered though it was, he conquered the commonplace things and prepared Himself a way to take the Cup.

Many of us, perhaps most of us, have to live out our lives in the same dull obscurity, battling with the business of making a living, toiling in some factory, field, office or home, dealing with the sordid and scarring things. Yet all the time there is a vision of something better and nobler held in the heart unexpressed, the vision of our glorified Lord, and our being together with Him. We are captivated with His word. He has put the chalice to our lips and we too drink of His victory over the commonplace; we pass along realising that this is only the *beginning* of the placing of our all upon the Altar.

Now Jesus lays aside the commonplace things of life and goes out to proclaim his message, and to enter more deeply into the soul of the people. It

was in this mood that He came "from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him" (Matt. 3. 13). He had been baptised into the world's toil; He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4. 15.) Now He would be baptised into the world's SIN. Isaiah foresaw this, saying "*Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*" (Isa. 53. 4, 5, 6.) John is calling a nation to repentance, his throbbing words smiting the hearts of the people, and they come to his stream, the Jordan, for the baptism of repentance. Now Jesus enters that stream. He, with conscience unstained and character untarnished! He, who needed no repentance! He, the holy, the harmless, the undefiled! He, the sinless, enters that line, that queue, waiting for baptism. She may be a harlot standing ahead of Him and he a publican who is following behind Him; the publicans and the harlots believed John. Jesus became one of them and was baptised into John's baptism of repentance! The identification is complete! He has taken the sinner's place! "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" (2 Cor. 5. 21.) All this was a portion in His Cup; especially so is it for us and on our behalf.

There came a reaction to this identification of Himself with the sinner. Jesus left men and the habitations of men and continued the struggle in the wilderness. Was *this* the way to complete, absolute, identification? Yes! This was the poured-out Cup that the Father handed to His Son. "*Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" (Luke 4. 1.) For forty days He faced the issues, and then came hunger, and with it came the first insidious suggestion.

"*You need not go back! You are the Son of God; that is enough. Stay out here, feed yourself by miracle, and live as the miraculous Son of God.*" It was the voice of the Tempter!

The temptation to live apart, to feed oneself on spiritual miracle, is the one of the most real temptations of the spiritual life. To hear and receive the approbation of man on account of the things you discover from God is seductive indeed. Jesus brushed the suggestion aside. He would not be content with being the Son of God; He would also be the Son of Man. He would live, not merely by the food the earth brings forth, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father, and that meant, for Him, identification with men and the redemption of men at great cost to Himself. That was the Cup! "*The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many.*" (Matt. 20. 28.)

The Tempter suggested another means of proving

His authority. "If you must go back, why stand down with the people? Why not rise to a pinnacle? Your way is too costly! Why not worship me *and take possession now?*" Says Jesus "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." He put this suggestion aside also; He knew that the way He had chosen would drive Him into a position that would finally mean crucifixion. He had been baptised between two sinners. This choice meant that He would now be crucified between two thieves. But He held to His resolve to be the Son of Man and bear all that men bore, and more.

From this Jesus went straight to the synagogue at Nazareth and announced His programme "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" (Luke 4. 16. 21.) This is the Son of Man speaking. This announcement of His programme brought surprise and delighted wonder from His fellow-townsmen *until* He went on and revealed to them how wide His message really was. It was as wide as the human race—God cares as much for the Gentiles as for the Jew. There were many lepers and widows in Israel but even so the prophets went to others, Gentiles, a widow of Sarepta, and Naaman the Syrian. That changed matters! They arose in anger and led Him to the brow of the hill with the intention of casting Him headlong over the precipice; but He, passing through the midst of them, and in the majesty of His bearing holding them powerless, went His way.

All this went into the Cup. When we, too, are called and commissioned, and the cold prejudices close in and endeavour to quench our spirits, let us drink of *His* calm and courage, and so, passing through the midst of them, go our way. Let us fulfil the heavenly vision no matter at what cost to ourselves. Like the Apostle, let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3. 14.) "*This one thing I do*"—that is the keynote.

But after this there came a season during which Jesus was immensely popular. The multitudes hung upon His words, words that fell like dew upon their thirsty souls. The healed ones went everywhere telling of His power and compassion. And the people found in Him a new authority, the authority of REALITY. When they saw Him breaking bread to the crowds in the wilderness they came and tried to make Him a king by force. That was how it was that Jesus, perceiving their intention, withdrew Himself to the mountains again. He would hold to the high purpose of the Father's Will for Him even though it meant crucifixion. The EASY way to

power was resolutely put away ; He would take the long road to His Calvary. All the decisiveness and completion of consecration went into the Cup when He rejected a throne for a Cross.

When these moments come to us, brethren, when we are offered the easy and dazzling way as a substitute for the rugged climb that leads to the death of the human will upon some cross of chosen pain, and we willingly choose the hard way, then we too drink of the chalice into which this trial has gone. Surely it is then that we find we are ready for further trials, with Jesus our Lord. Then it is that we can say with the Apostle, "I (am) determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2. 2.)

Now turn your thoughts to another occasion when Jesus, beholding the city lying in all its splendour and magnificence before Him, paused on the side of the mount and wept over the city. Think of the courage of that hour when He bade them "take these things from my Father's house" and drove them out. Finally, after the "cleansing" had taken place, see Him seated in the Temple, teaching, healing the blind and lame, welcoming the children who came to Him. All this, too, went into the Cup.

The same quality of mind that led Jesus to this bold cleansing of the Temple was displayed in the Apostle Paul when he found it necessary to reprove the Corinthian Christians, and again when he was "astonished" that the Church in Galatia had so soon fallen from the faith, and yet again when he strongly denounced the Cretans. Yet, as with Jesus Himself, his followers need a stout heart combined with gentility of disposition. "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" One writer has said "I love the Christ of the searching eye, the blessing hand, the tender, terrible prophet pronouncing woes to the city and then weeping over it. I love the Christ that allowed the returning storm to beat upon Himself on the Cross so as to complete our redemption." Let us drink of these qualities and be strong, for we shall need to be bold as a lion albeit as meek as a lamb.

Seated with His disciples in the upper room, and knowing that the Father had given all things unto His hands, knowing that He Himself had come from God and was returning to God, He rose from supper, laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel began to wash the disciples' feet. He was so conscious of greatness that He dared to be humble. Into His Cup had gone majesty of soul linked with lowly service. You, my dear brethren, who share the dignity and honour of Sonship with Him, you have need to learn what constitutes true kingliness. It is "the power to bend and serve." As James

says (4. 10) "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up."

Gethsemane! All the pain, the agony, the spiritual loneliness of that hour go into the Cup. Was He afraid to die? Hardly; it was with that intention that He came, to lay down His life for you and I. Is it surprising that the Redeemer, who in His determination to go on to the end despite what wicked men might do, seemed to be looking in on men at their worst, should ask "if it be possible, let *this* cup pass from me." This is the hardest thing that any reformer or bringer of new ideas has to face; that although His idea is light to those who can receive it, it is darkness to others who are willingly blind. But there is no other way. This is the Cup that is poured. The tragedy and triumph is not in the agony but in the outcome. Calm and collected He stands and says "Arise, let us be going . . . he is at hand that betrayeth me." **ALL THAT WENT INTO THE CUP!** Those of us who meet our lesser Gethsemanes drink from that chalice into which the richness of that hour had gone, and we too can say "Arise, my soul, let us be going to meet our Cross." Having drunk, we meet it with calm.

At His taking his disciple rushed forth and struck off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. "Let me do this at least" said Jesus, according to Moffatt, and healed the wounded man. That beautiful act of healing an enemy who had come to put Him to death went into the Cup. When His hands were no longer free, nailed to the Cross, He still prayed for them, "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*" When we are tempted to be resentful towards spite and hate, we can drink of this triumph, the triumph of persisting love that will allow nothing to turn it aside. We shall be able to say with Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Standing before Pilate, arrayed in mock royalty, He afforded the Roman soldiers a supreme opportunity to show their contempt for the Jews. Putting a crown of thorns upon His head, a stick in His hand for a sceptre, they hailed Him as King of the Jews and then spat in His face. They had often wanted to do that to the Jews, now they would do it to their King. The racial contempt that was directed toward the men who were crying for His blood He bore on their behalf. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. All of that went into His Cup.

He heard His words twisted and distorted to other meanings. "*I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands.*" He was being cruci-

fied on mis-quotation and He was not nervously anxious to explain. He let it go. He could wait. He knew that every lie would break itself on the truth, and He answered not a word. The Governor marvelled! And this went into the Cup. "*Let us consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*" (Heb. 12. 3.) Those of us who have had our words mis-quoted, our best actions misunderstood, our best motives misinterpreted, and have suffered; if we drink of this Cup into which patient triumph has gone, and share with Jesus this poise of heart and resignation to our Father's Will, we shall say "Am I not to drink of the Cup my Father has handed me, with thankfulness?" He is nailed to the Cross! His good name is taken away; He is a malefactor. His disciples have fled; He is alone in His agony, beaten back, so to speak, into the dark until it seems that God too has gone—for from His lips comes the cry "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Everything seems gone.

But not quite!

Two words remain; "MY GOD". They could not snatch *them* from His lips and heart. In quiet confidence He says "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Nothing more bitter could have gone into the Cup!

So the Cup is filled full. When we have moments of forsakenness, when it seems that everything is gone, we too can drink of the chalice. We shall find that **NOTHING** is gone when that one thing remains, "MY GOD". With that fact and assurance in our hearts we can go back to anything and everything.

A tomb held Jesus—but not for long. The most glorious fact of human history was yet to go into the Cup. Out of that tomb He arose, laid aside His grave clothes, and came forth triumphant and resplendent. He is risen!

My dear brethren: IF into that Cup has gone everything that life can possibly meet:—

Its commonplaces; its obscurity; its toil; its temptations; its blind prejudices; its bid for compromise; its lonely determination; its Gethsemanes; its hours before unjust judgment seats; its Cross-forsakenness; its death:

NEVERTHELESS

there has also gone into it the most complete triumph that can possibly come. *He arose!* Nothing else now matters. **GOD'S LAST WORD IS RESURRECTION.**

Let life do its best, or worse, this saving truth will be at the end of each one sharing with Jesus in this Cup. The life of Jesus and the Cross of

Jesus raises every question about life that can be raised and raises them in the most acute form. The word "WHY" upon the lips of Jesus as He hung upon the Cross epitomised all the questions that ever trembled upon the lips of perplexed humanity. WHY does God permit evil? WHY? If there is a God, WHY this, and WHY that? The Resurrection answers them all. *God's last word is resurrection.* That is the finale of His work for mankind and it is in the Cup. Jesus prayed "Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world WAS". When He had taken the Cup He thanked God for it. He took it all as from the Father's hand. *He thanked Him for it,* and lo! everything was transformed. We all have to bear our cross; let us do it thankfully; for only those who have learned triumphantly to thank God for it all, can turn life from a senseless suffering into a sacrament. Let us each and all decide for ourselves "*the Cup which my Father hath given me, SHALL I NOT DRINK IT?*"

The trial of our faith, to which the Lord and the Apostles refer, is a trial, not only of our intellectual recognition of Divine Truth, but also of our heart reliance upon God. In both respects every true child of God will find his faith severely tried. As a soldier of Christ let him not fail to be armed for the conflict. If an attack is made upon the intellectual foundation of our faith we should see to it that we have a "thus saith the Lord" for every item of our belief. If the foundations of faith become unsettled, the superstructure cannot stand when the winds and floods of adversity and temptation beat against it. It is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days when the sun of favour shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, they are still yours; and cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. In quietness and confidence shall be your strength. "*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,*" and faith has gained her victory.

The law of God, by the hammer of affliction, or by the smiting of judgment, may break the heart; but our hearts may be bruised and shattered by calamity and yet remain as frigid as an iceberg. It is the work of grace that is just as powerful to break the heart as to heal it.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



Two men stood almost face to face, one fateful day, in old Jerusalem, around whose lives an overruling Providence purposely wove the shuttles of its mysterious Will. One was about to die—a most cruel and ignominious death; the other, standing by, registered an ill-considered consent thereto! Strange indeed was this state of affairs in Israel—for each man thought verily he did God service in what he did! A new "order" stood confronting the old, the "spirit" contending strongly against the "letter", the Reality against the "shadow"; and these men were the symbols of the differences!

That the Spirit of the living God indwelt Stephen there could be no doubt; for life, and words and bearing all gave testimony to that! But what was the directing motive which indwelt Saul—"the consenter" to a dark and cruel deed? Was this spirit of "the consenter" also of God, the outcome of a zeal for ancient holy things?

Had Stephen been too razor-edged in the clash of ideologies in that over-tense electric atmosphere, and brought upon himself an unnecessary degree of recompense from an affronted Sanhedrin? Or had that ancient and venerable "estate of the Elders" been too precipitate and blood-thirsty in their response?

That Stephen's mission and testimony called for zeal and holy courage none can gainsay! Half-hearted enthusiasm never generates sufficient steam for new "causes" in the earth; and as this was the "cause par excellence", none could ever raise too much for this! Not because there had been too much zeal was Stephen in this pioneer predicament, but because God was moving in a most mysterious way His wonders to perform!

That the Sanhedrin would defend itself with all its might, and to the last ditch of permissibility, was surely to be expected! Did they not sit in Moses' seat—that most ancient and honourable seat of Authority?—and had they not a code of laws and statutes which demanded "death without mercy" for such apostates and renegades as this man they had tried and condemned? Was not the honour of the Law, the Authority of her Colleges, the traditions of the Fathers all involved in this attitude of defence? So thought one ardent tradition-respecting mind, to say the least—and he himself

should be the sharp spear-point of the now-inevitable defensive attack! Hence the sad catalogue of persecutions and home-breakings which followed that eventful day!

But the same sad story runs also at a lower depth—at a depth unseen and unperceived save by a Higher Watchful Eye! An arrow from the quiver of Divine Providence had struck home, even as "the consenter" watched the faithful Stephen sink down in death! The dying man, far from expiring as an "out-cast" should, possessed a peace of heart, a restfulness of mind, which well betokened a soul at rest in God! How could that be, if the extreme Pharisaic claim was true? Ought not this man to have crept out of life abashed, ashamed, and as one meet for the Gehenna fires? Instead he passes out triumphant, a song of rejoicing in his heart; a prayer of forgiveness on his lips!

And it was this state of peace and confidence (or something very near akin to it) which "the consenter" had longed and sought for all his life, yet without finding it! How could that be? Why should the seeker in the old paths fail, and the turncoat in the new path, find?

This probing and provoking thought was as the constantly repeated prick of the goad in the tardy oxen's flank—and forthwith the stubborn creature's will began to "kick against the pricks"—to fight and curb and smother "the better thought" under a more intensive program of persecution and revolt!

How marvellous and complex were the ways of Providence as it shaped the "ends" and purposes of these two lives! The one ready, submissive, grounded well in Grace—a life already tempered and changed to an Image of His Son—yet surrendered up to die as bait to catch a larger fish; a grain of wheat sown deliberately in death to win a larger and fuller return!

Truly, "God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform,

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm."

God works no injury to those who yet must die to serve His Higher Purpose! There was no loss to Stephen because his days were few by comparison with those of John! The short life and the longer

life were all as parts of one great plan, and each was spent to serve the Providential "end", not that of each mere man! That Providence should design to use the "longer" or the "short" was the all-important thing—their times were in His hands; the disposing thereof was therefore in His Care. But what an amazing sequel was the outcome of that fateful day's event!

We too are in the same Providential Hands! We too are dedicated to the same far-reaching Plan—and who knows—another Saul may be cruising around, seeking for deeper things, but knowing not the way into the deep things of God! And I—or you—may yet play a Stephen's part and be the radiant witness of the deeper Grace of God! Have

I—or you—the "Stephen" heart; the same "marturion" readiness?

Can we each truly say:

"My times are in Thy Hands

My God I wish them there,

My life, my friends, my soul I leave

Entirely in Thy Care."

"My times are in Thy Hand,

Whatever they may be,

Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,

As best may seem to Thee.

"My times are in Thy Hand,

Why should I doubt or fear?

My Father's Hand will never cause,

His child a needless tear."

BENEVOLENT FUND REPORT

We are happy to print this report on behalf of the Benevolent Committee. Please send all communications to Bro. Allbon and not to the "Monthly".

* * *

In sending out the Financial Statement of the Bible Students Benevolent Service for the year ended 31st December, 1950, it is thought opportune to draw attention to the facilities available for the relief of our needy brethren throughout Great Britain.

For many years past this Service has been used of the Lord to bring much needed assistance to many dear ones who through age, sickness or other circumstances have been unable to adequately provide for those things which are needful. That this has also been a means of spiritual refreshment and encouragement, the letters of grateful acknowledgement clearly testify. To those brethren who are denied the privileges of fellowship with an ecclesia through isolation or age, the occasional "cup of cold water" together with a message of cheer and encouragement has brought a special joy and blessing.

The Service has been maintained by the loving co-operation and provision of Classes and individual brethren who have desired in this way to indicate

their love for the Lord and for fellow-members of the Divine family. Truly indeed—"if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it". The Fund is administered by a Committee of three brethren, viz. Bro. G. A. Ford (Luton); Bro. A. Boyce (Dewsbury) and Bro. E. Allbon (Ilford).

The present upward trend of the cost of living must inevitably bring greater hardship to those who are dependent upon a meagre pension or other small income and we shall count it a privilege to be used of the Lord to ease the burden of our needy brethren.

It is thought that there are brethren unknown to us, to whom this Service may be a means of comfort and assistance, and it is to this end that your co-operation is invited. If there are any such needy ones known to you, it will be appreciated if the names and addresses, together with appropriate details are forwarded to me. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these My little ones, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME".

With Christian love,

Yours in the Master's Service,

EDWIN ALLBON

20, Sunnymede Drive, (Secretary-Treasurer),
Ilford, Essex.

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1950

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Balance brought forward						
1st January, 1950—						
Cash at Bank	...	107	13	10		
Cash in hand	...	15	0	0		
				122	13	10
„ Donations received	...	332	3	10		
				£454	17	8

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
By Grants	...			144	10	0
„ Stamps	...			1	9	10
„ Cash at Bank	...	293	7	10		
„ Cash in hand	...	15	10	0		
				308	17	10
				£454	17	8

(Signed) EDWIN ALLBON,
Treasurer.

OUR LORD'S RETURN

1.—Introductory

T.H.

An Exposition of
Scripture Dealing
with the Second Advent

The subject of our Lord's Return is "in the air" (in more than one sense) in the ministerial circles of the Protestant section of Christendom, though not quite in the same sense, nor for the ends and purposes that we, as an unorthodox group of Bible students are wont to think and speak of it. It is not, in itself, the theme of a direct line of investigation, but comes into consideration rather indirectly as an unavoidable side-issue in a long-protracted and general discussion of the place (and meaning) of the term "the Son of Man" in the Divine scheme of things. As it is the Son of Man who is depicted as coming "in His Glory" (Matt. 25. 31.) to whom "all authority to execute judgment" has been given (John 5. 27.) it is at once obvious why the subject of His Return must intermingle with each other phase of the main theme, and come up for consideration in its turn and place. Occasionally, however, the Lord's Return is given the first place of importance in some of the items contributed to the ministerial Journals circulating throughout the Protestant world—and over the Radio, too!

Revolt is also "in the air" against some of the old hymns and concepts of Mediæval, Puritan, and later times, such as the "*Dies Iræ*" of the 13th century, and Walter Scott's "Day of Wrath" of the early nineteenth century. A single stanza from the first of these reads:

"Ah, that day of tears and mourning!
From the dust of earth returning,
Man for judgment must prepare him."

The latter runs:

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall we meet that dreadful day."
"When shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll,
When louder yet, and yet more dread
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead."

Even Charles Wesley's more moderate strain:

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending
Once for favoured sinners slain,
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumphs of His train,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Lo, He comes on earth to reign."

is strongly suspect, and in due time will have to be eliminated from the books of sacred song.

"What is our reaction to these hymns" asks one such critic. Is it terror, fear, conviction of sin, or merely pity or amusement? He leaves not the slightest doubt of his own reaction—a condescending pity for men who could write and use such hymns!

Today almost the whole phalanx of the Protestant ministry reject and deny the idea that Jesus Christ will yet come from heaven to set earth's disordered affairs to rights, or even to judge the race of men who dwell thereon. A whole century's deliberation and research has crystallised itself into the phrase "He has come; He is coming all the time; He will come to the end of time."

Hence hymns and other concepts which speak only of a coming in a future day are out of step with modern thought.

On the thought embodied in the first three words "He has come" Protestantism and Rome agree as to the implied fact, though not as to the way it works itself out. To the Roman hierarchy Christ has come in the power vested in the Roman Church—in the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops and the parish Priest. The Roman Church is equated with the Kingdom of God over which Jesus, through His Vicar, rules the faithful. Every extension of the Roman Church is an extension of the Kingdom of Christ, and with every such extension both Christ and His Kingdom come. Rome does not entertain the slightest thought that Jesus will ever come again, and accounts all who hold that thought as uninformed and mis-guided people.

Until within quite recent times Protestant and Catholic alike drew their convictions from Augustine's treatise on "The City of God", a theory which overthrew and replaced the Millenarian views of the first three Christian centuries. Throughout those former centuries the teachings of the early Church still held good (with certain modifications and exaggerations) as to Christ's Return and Millennial reign. During the fourth century the spiritualising and allegorising of Scripture teaching gradually crept in, and the way having thus been prepared, Augustine administered the "*coup de combat*", and substituted his own conception of the Kingdom of God as the regnant power *today* instead of in the Coming Age. Out of this original conception Papacy eventually grew.

In reformation times the theory of Augustine was still allowed to stand, all civil power being vested

in the "prince", the religious power in bishop and consistory, as the case might require. Thus in Calvin's city of Geneva an equal number of laity and clergy ruled the city in the name of Christ (and God) administering the Mosaic code of laws with all the rigidity and severity of pre-Christian days. Actuated by the same conception of the Kingdom's present rule, even Luther urged the German princes to strike down, without mercy, peasant folk rebelling against authority for want of food. Rebellion against the prince was rebellion against the Lord, and as such, must be crushed, otherwise His Kingdom would fall.

It is this same conception, shorn of most of its severities, which still holds sway in front-rank Protestant thought. God's Kingdom is represented in the Church, and in the civilised society of which it forms a part; one of its proof-texts for this state of things being Rom. 14. 17, "*the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*". In other words the Kingdom of God is a spiritual state of mind and soul which can permeate and regulate the natural life. Another is the statement that we have been already translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. (Col. 1. 13.) The existence of God's Kingdom implies the presence of its "king"—hence, the Kingdom being come, the King has also come!—such is the claim! Hence an advocate of this idea can say "It (this kingdom rule of Jesus) means there is no delaying or disappointing to our hope; no undermining of our faith; it gives a real stimulus to love and good works, to doing our best; . . . it upholds the social gospel and encourages us to help the coming of the New Jerusalem. . . . It is the substance of our message to the world, our 'gospel'. We are to challenge the world with the active presence and work of our Lord here and now, and with His moral challenge. . . ." What wonder that there is so much of this kind of talk on the Radio!

To that old Augustinian conception that Jesus has already come, and that His Kingdom already exists, the other parts of their crystallised phrase have been added because of the impact of certain persistent little sects over the last century, who held the thought of Christ's future Coming prominently before the Protestant Church. Millerites, "Plymouth" Brethren, Christadelphians and other little sects persistently held the fact of Christ's own promise to return in person (to gather to Himself His saints) before the Christian mind, injecting the force and logic of their claim even into the minds of the authoritarian teachers of the larger sects. Out of deep travail of thought, under this century-long impact by the little sect, the concept has slowly

assumed its present shape that "Christ has come", "Christ is coming all the time", "Christ will continue to come all the time".

Here follows a standard definition of that conception—"Our Lord said He would come back and He did, and within a very short time as the Church expected. . . . He has come again, and He is always coming because He is always present. . . . He comes repeatedly into the life of individuals; He is always present in the life of His Church, in its worship and its sacraments. He comes in Bible study, meditation, teaching, preaching; in prayer, in penitence, in example, in holiness; . . . He comes also in beauty in the natural world, and in the world of art in its many forms, in good work and good craftsmanship; in goodness of every kind . . . in conscience, approving as well as condemning; in opportunities of doing good, witnessing to truth and right, in the crises of life; in the challenges of new thought. The crises of human history (1914, 1939, and the discovery of atomic energy) are emphatically Divine judgments . . . they are His Divine comings."

"He has come; He is coming all the time"! How are we to calculate and apply the tenses of such a phrase? Our advocate does this by saying that "time" does not exist; there is no past, present or future, independent of each other, and that all these aspects of existence are linked together in a timeless unity which we can realise here and now, because "we live under two sets of conditions at once, our feet being on the earth, and our heads in the clouds of heaven!" Surely the contemplation of a subject in this vein is very much "in the air"!

Thus by philosophic speculation our Lord's Return can be turned into a dateless, timeless theme, on which words do not mean exactly what they say; in which the two-fold promises of Jesus to be with His people to the end of the Age, and then to return and take them to Himself, are jumbled hopelessly together and made of small effect.

On this view-point of the Return of the Lord a very large proportion of the Christian ministry is agreed. When enquiry is made for further particulars as to the actual time when Jesus "came" their seeming unity is at an end. Some say it was at Pentecost; others, at the fall of Jerusalem; in support of the former assertion we quote again,

"St. John clearly teaches that our Lord returned in the Person of the Holy Spirit, that Pentecost was the Second Coming; and the Epistles of Paul bear him out (in Acts 2. 17, St. Peter says as much). Since Pentecost Christ has been continuing and vastly extending His work through His Spirit, in the Church which is His body. . . . Our Lord said He would come back and

He did, and within a very short time as the Church expected. But this was not at first clearly recognised."

Though our author comes down with emphasis for the Return at Pentecost he realises that there is also something to be said for the Return at the Fall of Jerusalem. On this he says:

"His forecast of the siege of Jerusalem was not beyond the range of ordinary human foresight, but it is the mingling of the general and the particular, and the linking of the Messianic Kingdom with the fall of Jerusalem which cause perplexity."

Note that phrase; "the linking of the Messianic Kingdom with the fall of Jerusalem" which causes perplexity! Causes who perplexity? The advocates of the Pentecostal Coming, of course! We are enquiring re His first coming—His actual Return—and the linking of the Messianic Kingdom with the fall of Jerusalem was a much later happening than Pentecost! What explanation does our author give for escaping his perplexity? Three explanations are possible, he says:

- (a) He was merely a child of His own age and mistaken as to His Messiahship, and His words were falsified by events—but this is hard to reconcile with the later faith and history of the Church and Christianity.
- (b) There is textual confusion and some Jewish or Jewish-Christian Apocalypse has been worked into the text; but of this there is no indication in the Mss.
- (c) Our Lord was misunderstood and wrongly reported by His hearers. While this is not entirely satisfactory, it seems the most probable explanation, for the disciples' minds were full of Apocalyptic teaching; He Himself certainly used its thoughts and phrases, and they may well have read more into His words than He intended; i.e. their own ideas and hopes and wishes. He may well have foreseen the fate of Jerusalem and spoken of it to prepare them for it. He also said that He did not know the exact future." (Matt. 24. 36.)

If then there is any linking of the Messianic Kingdom and the fall of Jerusalem (and there surely is) it is due to faulty reporting by the apocalyptically-biased disciples of what Jesus said!!

We do not censure the disciples for faulty reporting, and hope to refer to the fall of Jerusalem again presently.

Meantime we have to note another source of perplexity to the modern ministerial mind—the kind of language used! Like that of the ancient Prophets, the language of Jesus and the Apostles was full of metaphor and figure—indeed, it was the language of the Prophets which Jesus and the

Apostles repeated. In his great prophecy (Matt. 24) our Lord quotes from Daniel, Joel, Ezekiel, and Deuteronomy and weaves these various excerpts into a co-ordinated and condensed outline; Peter also quotes Joel and the Psalms in his Pentecostal speech; James also refers to a prophecy of Amos at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15. 16-18.)

Occasionally too, there are traces of thought from a later literature in the Apostolic writings, which originated in the last two centuries of the B.C. era, and which is now styled the "Jewish Apocalyptic literature". A further quotation will show how the modern ministry permits this to obscure the teaching of the Lord re His Return.

"For a right judgment in this matter (i.e. the Second Coming of Jesus) we must first study the background of the New Testament, its religious ideas and some history. There is first the Old Testament itself and its teachings about the Day of the Lord, the last days when God comes in power with signs and wonders and portents (a very lurid picture) . . . there is to be a great conflict in which God and the good and right are to be victorious, and then the world is to be judged, the Chosen People recalled from Exile, re-established in their own land and an unending era of great prosperity and happiness inaugurated. . . . But the Exile came and the dispersion continued; there was no Day of God, or of deliverance; and, after 170 B.C. came the diabolical oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes!

"The faith of Israel was not to be extinguished and there came to be a great revival of the 'ideas' and teaching which we call 'apocalyptic'. . . . The chief thoughts traceable in the relevant literature (Daniel, Enoch, etc.) are that God has a purpose in history, especially for Israel; that He will be supreme and uphold the right; that there will be a Messiah (an Anointed One) called Son of David and Son of Man; there will be a new spiritual covenant and fresh outpouring of the Spirit; a rising again of the dead, a final judgment and destruction of the wicked, a new heaven and earth, and the religion of Israel will be accepted universally.

"This teaching became very popular . . . all this throws much light on the references to our Lord as King, Son of David, to the reluctance of giving tribute to Caesar, to our Lord's Galilean origin, to the Palm Sunday procession, and to the query of the disciples in Acts 1. 6. 'Apocalyptic' was very much 'in the air', especially in Galilee in the common thought and talk of the people. It was natural for our Lord to use it, and persecution later encouraged it, among His followers who formed the Church—this is why there is so much of it in the New Testament."

To illustrate the modern method of interpreting what they thus call "apocalyptic", reference will now be made to Matt. 24. 29-30. which reads, "*But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*"

Our modern critics say "With our present knowledge of cosmogony and the sidereal universe, we know better than to expect the sun to grow dark, or the moon to fail to give her light, or the stars to fall to the earth! We know these are only vivid metaphors and will never actually take place."

Consequently in a context of metaphorical language, its central feature can also be no more than a metaphor. Jesus will only come metaphorically—not actually! *His Coming and descent upon the clouds* is no more literal than the falling of the stars!"

So our critic says, "We must recognise that the traditional language is picture-language, symbolic; try and see the inner meaning and not mistake the husk for the kernel. The exaggerated impossible portents . . . were a code language, due to the Oriental imagination; they were an

attempt to express the inexpressible and the transcendent. . . . Jewish Rabbis did not take these words literally. . . . The trumpet, the voice of the Archangel, represent a calling to attention, a challenge, a warning. Clouds of glory stand for power, a movement from heaven, an act of God, to be seen only with the eye of the soul."

Thus the scientific mind of the west—the scholarship of Protestant Christendom—makes short work of the teachings of an Oriental Book by interpreting them as hyperbole, allegory and metaphor, and in doing so casts away the jewels which that treasure casket contains.

The front-rank scholars do not believe that Jesus will return; the modern college graduate is being trained in the same disbelief, and as time passes by, the pulpit will infect the pew, and then altogether they will say "Jesus has come; He is coming all the time; He will continue to come to the end of time."

Space does not permit us* to put these ministerial utterances to the test. In other issues attention will be drawn to the words of the Lord Himself, and to the ascertainment as to whether He came again at Pentecost or, at the destruction of Jerusalem, and later on, to our own expectation and experiences when He descends to gather His own.

To be continued.

Let Us Keep The Feast

A Memorial
Exhortation

W.T.R.

Those familiar with the Bible have noticed that therein the Church of Christ is called the "Church of the First-born", and again, a "kind of first-fruits" unto God "of His creatures". (Heb. 12. 23, Jas. 1. 8.) This implies others ultimately of God's family later born; it implies after-fruits. Christian people seem to have overlooked these Scriptures so far as making application of them is concerned, and have generally come to believe that only those who are of the "first-fruits" will ever be saved and that there will be no "after-fruits". But let us look at this type of the Passover—let us notice that it was God's intention to save *all* Israelites, and that as a nation they represented all mankind that will ever come into harmony with God and be granted eternal life in the land of promise. Let us notice that the whole nation by Divine power was miraculously delivered by the Lord and led

across the channel of the Red Sea in a way that was especially prepared for them.

That picture or type shows the ultimate deliverance, from the power of sin and Satan, of every creature who will ultimately come into accord with the Lord and desire to render Him worship—not an Israelite was left behind! But that passover at the Red Sea is not the one we are discussing particularly on this occasion—not the one we celebrate. No, the event which we celebrate was the passing over or sparing of the first-borns of Israel. Only the first-born were endangered, though the deliverance of all depended upon the salvation of the first-born. Applying this in harmony with all the Scriptures we see that the "Little Flock", the "first-fruits unto God of his creatures", the "Church of the first-born" alone is being spared at the present time—being passed over, provided they are "under the blood".

By and by the night will have passed, the glorious morn of deliverance will have come, and the Christ, the antitypical Moses, will lead forth, will deliver all Israel—all the people of God—all who when they shall know will be glad to reverence, honour and obey the will of God. That day of deliverance will be the entire Millennial age, at the close of which all evil and evil doers, symbolised by the hosts of Egypt, will be utterly cut off.

The Apostle clearly and positively identifies the Passover lamb with our Lord Jesus, saying, "*Christ our Passover is slain for us; therefore let us keep the feast*". (1 Cor. 5. 7, 8.) He informs us that we all need the blood of sprinkling, not upon our houses, but upon our hearts (Heb. 12. 24; 1 Pet. 1. 2). We are also to eat the unleavened bread of truth if we would be strong and prepared for the deliverance, in the morning of the new dispensation. We also must "eat" the Lamb, must appropriate Christ to ourselves. Thus we "put on" Christ, not merely by faith, but more and more, to the extent of our ability, we put on His character and are transformed day by day to His glorious image in our hearts. We are to "feed" upon Him as the Jews fed upon the literal lamb. Instead of the bitter herbs, which aided and whetted their appetites, we have bitter experiences and trials which the Lord provides for us, and which help to wean our affections from earthly things and give us increasing appetite to feed upon the Lamb and the unleavened bread of truth. We, too, are to remember that we have no continuing city, but are *en route* as pilgrims, strangers, travellers, staff in hand, girded for the journey, that we may ultimately reach the heavenly Canaan and all the glorious things which God hath in reservation for the Church of the First-born, in association with their Redeemer as kings and priests unto God.

Our Lord Jesus also fully identified himself with the Passover Lamb. On the same night that He was betrayed, and just preceding His crucifixion, He gathered his disciples in the upper room, saying, "*With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer*". It was necessary that as Jews they should celebrate the Passover Supper on that night—the saving of the typical first-born from the typical prince of this world—but as soon as the requirements of the type had been fulfilled our Lord instituted a new Memorial upon the old foundation, saying, "*As often as ye do this do it in remembrance of me!*" (1 Cor. 11. 24, 25).

We recall the circumstances of the first Memorial, the blessing of the bread and of the cup, the fruit of the vine, of our Lord's exhortation that these represented His broken body and shed blood; and

that those who are His followers should participate—not only feeding upon Him but being broken with Him, not only partaking of the merit of His blood, His sacrifice, but also in laying down their lives in His service, in co-operating with Him in every and any manner. How precious these thoughts are to those who are rightly in tune with the Lord. Let our minds, then, follow the Redeemer to Gethsemane's Garden, and behold Him with strong cryings and tears praying to Him Who was able to save Him out of death! We notice how our Lord was comforted by the Father, through the angel, with the assurance that He had faithfully kept His consecration vow and that He would surely have a resurrection as foretold. We behold how calm He was thereafter, when, before the High Priest and Pilate, and Herod and Pilate again, as a lamb before her shearers is dumb so he opened not His mouth in self-defence. We see Him faithful, courageous to the very last, and we have His assurance that He could have asked of the Father and had more than twelve legions of angels for His protection; but instead of petitioning for aid to escape His sacrifice, His petition was for aid to endure it faithfully. What a lesson for all who are His footstep followers!

On the other hand we remember that even amongst his loyal disciples the most courageous forsook the Lord and fled, and that one of them in his timidity even denied his Master! What an occasion is this for examining our own hearts as respects the degree of our faith and courage and willingness to suffer with Him who redeemed us! What an opportunity is thus afforded for us to buttress the mind with resolutions that we will not deny our Master under any circumstances and conditions—that we will confess Him not only with our lips but also by our conduct. The thought before the minds of those who participate in this Memorial should be the Apostle's words, "*If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him*"; "*If we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him*"; for the trials of the present time are "*not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us*". (Rom. 8. 7; Rom. 6. 8.) With these thoughts respecting the "passing over" of the "First-born" we may indeed keep the Feast of the Passover with joy, notwithstanding trials and difficulties. So doing, continuing faithful as his followers, we shall have the great privilege of leading forth the Lord's hosts, all who ultimately shall hear and know and obey the great King, out of the dominion of sin and death, out of Egypt into Canaan. Yes, then, in the language of the Apostle, "*Christ our Passover is slain, therefore let us keep the Feast*".

THE ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF THE MEMORIAL

A.O.H.

The custom of observing the Memorial of our Lord's death once annually instead of at weekly or other short intervals, as do many Christian bodies under the name of "Holy Communion", is so little met with among Christians that some examination of the subject from this standpoint may be well repaid in a clearer understanding of the underlying principles. It is well known that from a very early period the practice of frequent celebration has prevailed in both the Roman Catholic and the leading Protestant Churches. The question then arises, is this custom of frequent observance to be traced back to the Apostolic Church, and if so, is not this a precedent and guide to us in our own observance? Before giving consideration to such question, however, another and more important one must be put. Did our Lord or His inspired Apostles give any instruction or guidance as to the frequency of observance of the Memorial of the Last Supper? Can such instruction be found in the New Testament, which is the ultimate and authoritative guide for Christians?

There is not a great amount of material upon which to base our conclusions. The story of the Last Supper itself is narrated by three of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, with some preservation of the actual words uttered by Jesus on that occasion. The Apostle Paul alludes to the Last Supper twice in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. And that is all. Nowhere else is there any mention of the subject.

Matthew and Mark (Matt. 26. 17-30 and Mark 14. 12-26) record the remark of Jesus to the effect that He would not again drink of the fruit of the vine until He would drink it new in the Kingdom; neither Gospel gives any indication that Jesus even desired them to repeat the ceremony in after days. Both of these Gospels must therefore be ruled out of this investigation.

Luke's account (22. 7-39) preserves an additional word spoken by our Lord at the time. "*This do in remembrance of me*" He said to the assembled disciples. That phrase at least indicates that the simple ceremony of bread and wine which He had instituted following their last Passover together was to be repeated in after days, after He had left them, and that it was to be a remembrance of Him. It was, in short, to be celebrated in recollection of that tragic week-end and to keep their memory fresh.

That is why it is called, by us, the "Memorial". It was to revive their, and our, faith in the things that He had told them, and us through them, and the things for which He had died. But still there is nothing to indicate any lead given by Jesus as to how often He desired them to celebrate.

It is Paul who adds the one remaining clue. Writing to the Corinthians in reproof of their misuse of the Memorial ceremony, he declares that he himself had "received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread . . . and took the cup . . . saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, AS OFT AS YE DRINK IT, in remembrance of me". (1 Cor. 11. 23-25.) Those words, Paul tells us, were the actual words of Jesus. None of the evangelists include that expression "as oft as ye drink it". Paul must have had his information from some other source. He says himself that he received all this, not from the disciples, but from the Lord; hence this must have come to him by inspiration of the Holy Spirit at some time during his apostleship prior to his writing the Corinthians. His own comment follows (vs. 26) "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth (manifest, demonstrate, witness to) the Lord's death till he come."

If we are to take any guidance at all from the New Testament it must be from this one Scripture. "AS OFTEN AS"; there is no indication whatever HOW often is intended; merely that the ceremony is to be repeated, time after time, right up until the Second Coming has taken place. The celebration is to continue through the Gospel Age.

There is no instance of any particular Memorial celebration recorded in the Book of Acts, or, indeed, in any part of the New Testament, from whence we may draw some conclusion. In early Christian literature of the first two centuries the subject is considerably beclouded by reason of the fact that the primitive Church quite evidently celebrated a number of different festivals the nature and significance of which have become lost to us and the various allusions to which are therefore difficult to fit into their proper context. Thus there was a ceremony commemorating the death of Christ on the 14th day of Nisan, another commemorating His resurrection on the third day, another honouring

the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and so on. Additionally it was a long time before the observance of the purely Jewish festivals such as Passover died out among the early Christians. It is quite well established, however, that by the middle of the second century, about a hundred and twenty years after the Crucifixion, monthly or weekly celebrations of the Last Supper were customary.

The explanation of this is not difficult to find. The Church of the Second Century apparently had combined what were originally two separate ceremonies into one. The Last Supper and the "Agape" or Love Feast, of the Apostolic Church, do not appear as different observances in later times. To this day the great Churches do not admit any difference. But to the student of Scripture there is a distinction.

From several isolated texts in the New Testament it is known that from the very beginning the Apostolic Church had developed a simple form of common meal as an essential factor in their weekly meetings for worship. It was probably at first a bringing to the common table and sharing together the various and varied contributions of food furnished by rich and poor according to their ability. That common meal became the symbol of their brotherhood and fellowship together but it had nothing to do with the Memorial of their Lord's death, which symbolised something quite different and was celebrated on another occasion. As time went on the "Agape" feast became formalised into a partaking of broken bread together and its present day development is seen in the customs of bodies such as those known by the names "Brethren", "Assemblies of God", etc., who commence their Sunday morning services with "breaking of bread".

The best account of this ceremony as practised by the Apostolic Church is found in Acts 20. 7-12 in the narrative of Paul's visit to Troas, "*Upon the first day of the week, when the apostles came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . .*" The way the expression is put makes it clear that the breaking of the bread was the usual custom for the "first day of the week". This particular "first day of the week" must have been about three weeks after Passover, for Paul had left Philippi after the "days of unleavened bread" (the feast of Passover, which lasted fifteen days) and arrived at Troas five days later, abiding with them seven days, during which time this particular "first day" must have occurred (vs. 6). The fact that this was a visit of the great Apostle—and was to be his last visit; they would not see him again in the flesh (see vs. 38)—explains why

this meeting lasted all day with Paul still preaching at midnight (vs. 7). After the incident of Eutychus, who fell out of the window, we find that Paul broke bread with them *again* and talked with them until daybreak. It seems from this that in view of his final departing the ceremony was repeated in that early morning less than twenty-four hours after its former observance. We could hardly think that if this ceremony was the memorial of the Lord's death they would celebrate twice in twenty-four hours; evidently the "breaking of bread" had nothing in common with that.

In the face of the total absence of information as to how often the Apostolic Church celebrated the Memorial we can only put ourselves in the place of those first believers and ask ourselves what would we have done in like circumstances. All their lives they had been accustomed to keep the Passover once every year, on the precise anniversary of the night of the Exodus, the 14th day of the first month, Nisan. That celebration was a memorial of a past event, looking backward over the centuries to a great deliverance. Now they were told that that ceremony, so far as they were concerned, was at an end, Christ being "made an end of the law to every one that believeth", but that it was to be replaced by another ceremony which also was a memorial, this time looking forward through the centuries to another and greater deliverance. As Israel kept the Passover year by year continually in witness to their faith in, and appreciation of, the deliverance that was past, so now the Christians were to keep this Memorial as witness to their faith in, and appreciation of, the deliverance that is future. As with Israel the essence of the ceremony was the slain lamb whose blood delivered them from death when the destroying angel passed over the land, so in this new ceremony its essence is the slain Lamb by Whose blood all who believe and participate are redeemed from death. What more natural than to celebrate such a ceremony once every year, like the Passover it had superseded, and, too, on the anniversary of its institution, the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month? We can hardly expect that the Apostolic Church had any other mind in the matter; quite naturally they would fall into the habit of annual observance and nobody would question it.

Jesus had little use for outward ceremonial. The only ceremonies He enjoined upon His followers were two—baptism and His memorial. The fact that He did enjoin these two does indicate the importance that He placed upon both; but a due sense of that importance can only be preserved by relative infrequency of repetition. Baptism is a solemn and soul-uplifting experience for those

who undergo the symbol; it only occurs once in a life time and often its influence lingers throughout life. Baptism repeated once a week would quickly lose its solemn significance and come to mean very little. So with the Memorial; it is probably true to say that those who observe the ceremony once only in the year find it a far more deeply spiritual and life-enriching experience than do those who attend Holy Communion once a week or once a month. Jesus must have known that, even although in His wisdom He refrained from laying down a law upon the subject.

Summing up, then, it may reasonably be expected that although no definite rule was made at the beginning, the first Christians adopted the custom of annual observance on the anniversary day. At the same time they formed the habit of holding "love-feasts" or "breaking of bread" in symbol of their fellowship together, on the occasions of their regular meetings for worship. As the church grew in numbers and spread over the Roman world these two originally distinct ceremonies became combined in one and the more frequent observance

became known as the "Lord's Supper", enshrining within itself both sets of symbolism. In little more than a century the "love-feast" as a separate institution had fallen into disuse but the "Lord's Supper" was a weekly occurrence.

That is the position to-day, with the exception of a few Christian groups relatively insignificant so far as numbers are concerned. We ought not to criticise or disparage others who exercise the liberty our Lord has given in this matter and who celebrate a number of times during the year. Equally we ourselves may well rejoice that in our own exercise of this same liberty we do endeavour to retain the spirit and solemnity of the first Memorial by coming together, once every year, on the anniversary of its first occurrence, to eat of this bread, and drink of this Cup, in remembrance of Him, and in grateful acknowledgment of our continued association with Him in all that is His and all that He stands for, and our fellowship and communion with each other as brethren of the family of God.

The Three Epistles of John

A.O.H.

Part X. I John 3. 1.

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

The greatest honour that can be conferred upon any mortal being is that of being called a Son of God. We know that all life is of God, that He holds in His hands the breath of every living thing and that at the first He was the great First Cause of all that lives. In that sense all intelligent creatures are His children and He is the Universal Father. But that is not the sense in which the term is used in the Bible. A Son of God in the Biblical sense must fulfil one essential condition; he must be in harmony with God, not in a condition of alienation because of sin. Of all the millions of men and women, named and unnamed, from antediluvian days to apocalyptic times, who crowd the pages of the sacred record, only very few are dignified with the title "Son of God". The instances are so rare that they can be listed here quite quickly and quite briefly. Before we take to ourselves this honour which the New Testament tells us is ours by right, if we be Christ's, we do well to note the previous occasions in Scripture history where the title has been conferred.

Our earliest reference is that in Job 38. 7, where it is said that at the foundation of the earth the

morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. The Creator Himself is speaking; no human eye was witness of the events, for this was long before man's creation. The expression is obviously a poetic one; for if this was before the appearance of man upon the earth those who are thus described as rejoicing together and shouting for joy must obviously have been citizens of the spiritual world—those righteous celestial creatures who had been brought into being by God before He proceeded to the creation of the material universe. Whether the term "morning stars" is a poetic name for the two who figure so largely in later history, our Lord before His coming to earth, and Lucifer the Adversary before his fall, may be decided by each student for himself according to the extent to which the suggestion appeals. Both these are described as "morning stars" in other and later Scriptures. That is not relevant to our present study. That the "sons of God" who "shout for joy" must be the angels of heaven is perfectly obvious and this is right in line with our present enquiry. At that remote time in the ages which preceded this world there were angels,

fully righteous and in harmony with God, known as "Sons of God".

The next instance is at the time of man's creation. Adam awakened to life perfect and in harmony with his Creator and there was no trace or shadow of sin or imperfection in him. He was upright, pure and innocent, fresh from the hand of his Maker. In that condition he was a son of God. Luke testified as much (3. 38) in his record of the genealogy of Jesus. The line of descent, father to son through the centuries, commenced, not with Adam, where it might have been expected to commence since he was the first man, but with God, who gave life to Adam. Since all of God's work is perfect and He has never created a being in whom sin is inherent, it follows that Adam, the son of God, was perfect in his sonship. It was only after his transgression and his fall that he lost the proud title.

Next we have the antediluvian angels who "kept not their first estate". Genesis 6 tells of these sons of God and of their fall into sin. They were sons until that grievous disaster but are never referred to as sons again.

From the days of the Flood it is a long stride to the days of Jesus, and in all those long intervening ages there were no sons of God upon earth. Not one of Adam's race had proved worthy. All, as says the Apostle Paul, had alike become unprofitable. There was none to do righteousness, no, not one. Jesus was the first since Adam to lay rightful claim to the title. Peter's bold declaration settles that for all time, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*". The accusation laid against Him was that He claimed to be, or at the least allowed Himself to be called, the Son of God. And the claim was true. The One in Whom was no sin, the One holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, was indeed able to take to Himself the title which of all titles proclaimed His sinlessness and His full and complete harmony with God.

And now the same honour is ours. We who by nature are by no means sinless and righteous as He was, are nevertheless brought into a condition of justification before God which enables him to call us His sons. We have come into the family of God and are called by His Name. So many Scriptures there are to assure us that this is no empty phrase; we are accepted by Him as though we had indeed attained to actual righteousness and perfection of being. What manner of love is this that has led the God of all to call us His children?

It is because of our faith in the first place. "*To as many as received Him, to them gave He*

authority to become the sons of God" (John 1. 12). That is the first essential, our acceptance of Christ. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Being led by the Spirit of God, we become the sons of God (Rom. 8. 14). Paul likens this to an adoption; we who were by nature children of the fallen Adam have been adopted into the family of God. The adoption is a real one, and we are indeed and in truth the sons of God. The Holy Spirit is a witness to that. The Holy Spirit assures us, bearing witness to our own spirit inwardly, that we are the children of God, receiving and enjoying all the rights and privileges pertaining to that exalted position (Rom. 8. 16, 17). We are therefore heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, sharing with Him not only His life of suffering but also His life of glory, "glorified together".

"*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.*" "Seeing that it knew Him not" is the literal meaning of the Greek *hoti*, here rendered "because". The servant is not greater than his lord, and seeing that the world ignored and turned away from Jesus when He was upon earth we should not esteem it a strange thing if they do the same to His followers. That is not the only meaning in John's words, though, and perhaps not the most important meaning. "Therefore" is a critical word in this sequence of thought. It is because we have become sons of God that the world knows us not. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. This sonship into which we have entered is a very real thing to us and we have the Spirit's witness as to its genuineness; but is it so real a thing to the world? How can they understand? Even Nicodemus, an educated man and a ruler among the Jews, found it impossible to comprehend what Jesus was talking about when He spoke of being born from above, and men in the world to-day are in just the same position as was Nicodemus. They just cannot understand. And the farther that the world drifts towards materialism and away from God the more difficult it is going to be for them to receive any conception of that inner life which we live by the power of the Spirit and which to us is the hall-mark of our sonship.

There is much in this chapter to remind us of John's first words in his Gospel. We must not think that the "other worldliness" which the men of this world find impossible to understand is something that is as it were against nature. "*He was in the world*" says John, "*and the world was made by Him; and the world knew Him not*" (John 1. 10). He was of the spirit realm and this world is of the material realm, yet He was in this

world and this world was made by Him. Spiritual and earthly are all of one and if men are unable to appreciate the reality of spiritual things it is not because it is unnatural for them to do so but because they have lost the link that binds the two worlds together. Whilst it will always be true that the purely natural, material man will never understand or be able to visualise accurately the things of the spirit, he will when restored to the Divine image realise and know that there is a spiritual order of things, transcendently high above the natural. He will believe and accept the fact. It will no longer be true then that "the world knoweth us not" just as it will not be true that they then will "know him not". Mankind upon earth will themselves have become sons of God by

then; Rev. 21. 7 is our guarantee of that. "*He that overcometh*" on the earthly plane of being during the Millennial Age "*shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*". Those Millennial overcomers, sons of God, will realise at last that the ones who, in former times, they "*knew not*", have inherited the greatest and noblest of all destinies, that of eternal association with Christ in the heavenly realm, and in the gladness of that knowledge will brush all their former ignorance away and regain that link with the unseen world which Adam had before his fall and which all men will have after the restoration. As in heaven, so on earth, "*when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away*".
To be continued

GATHERED GRAIN

A lump of rock candy is pure carbon and a diamond is pure carbon, yet there is a difference between them which consists mainly in the fact that the diamond has been crystallized to an extreme degree of hardness, firmness, solidity. So there is a difference between the states and conditions of the New Creatures in Christ. At one time we are mere "babes in Christ", but if faithful through patient endurance and the Lord's instructions and disciplines of providence we are to become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might—the "babe in Christ" corresponds then to the pure carbon in the form of rock candy, while the mature Christian, developed in the furnace of affliction, etc., corresponds to the diamond. We remember in this connection the Lord's assurance that at the close of our trial time in the end of the Gospel age, at His second coming, He will make up His "jewels".

* * *

We are by nature and environment of the earth, earthy, and therefore unavoidably susceptible to the beguiling influence of the things of earth. Our human instincts prompt us to be continually reaching out for these things, and we need to be constantly on the alert to set and keep resetting our affections upon the things above. (Col. 3. 2.) Some of us may have had the experience of trying to train some creeping plant such as the morning glory, to climb up some upright structure in order to form a floral archway. If so, we can hardly have failed to notice how persistently the plant by means

of its shoots or tendrils, strives to entwine itself around every garden flower or object within its reach. It has to be constantly disentangled from these things and to be reset around the upright we wish it to cling to. Thus it is with our affections and inclinations. If left to follow their own devices they will persist in becoming entangled with earthly things before we realise the dangerous trend our thoughts are taking.

* * *

The sculptor, with an ideal form in his thought, produces a statue from the block of marble. Every measurement of the block, every turn of the drill, every blow of the mallet upon the chisel, and every effort of the sculptor's mind, goes to make up the finished form, which is the production of his ideal, as nearly as the materials would admit. So, our Lord, as our Maker, has the idea toward which He seeks to form us. And all His operations are but steps in the work of our formation. Every measurement of our life by the Divine truth, tests our capacity to attain the ideal; every turn of the drills of penetrating precepts of life, prepares us for the ideal character; every blow of the hammer of circumstances is, in the hands of the Divine providence, constantly shaping us toward the heavenly pattern. And, in the perfect economy of our Lord, never do we have to bear one measurement, or one penetrating cut, or one blow of circumstances, that is not absolutely needed to produce the most perfect work which we will allow to be done within us.

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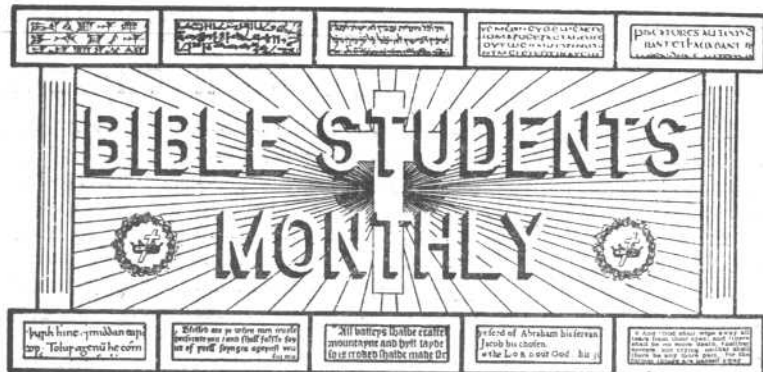
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Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



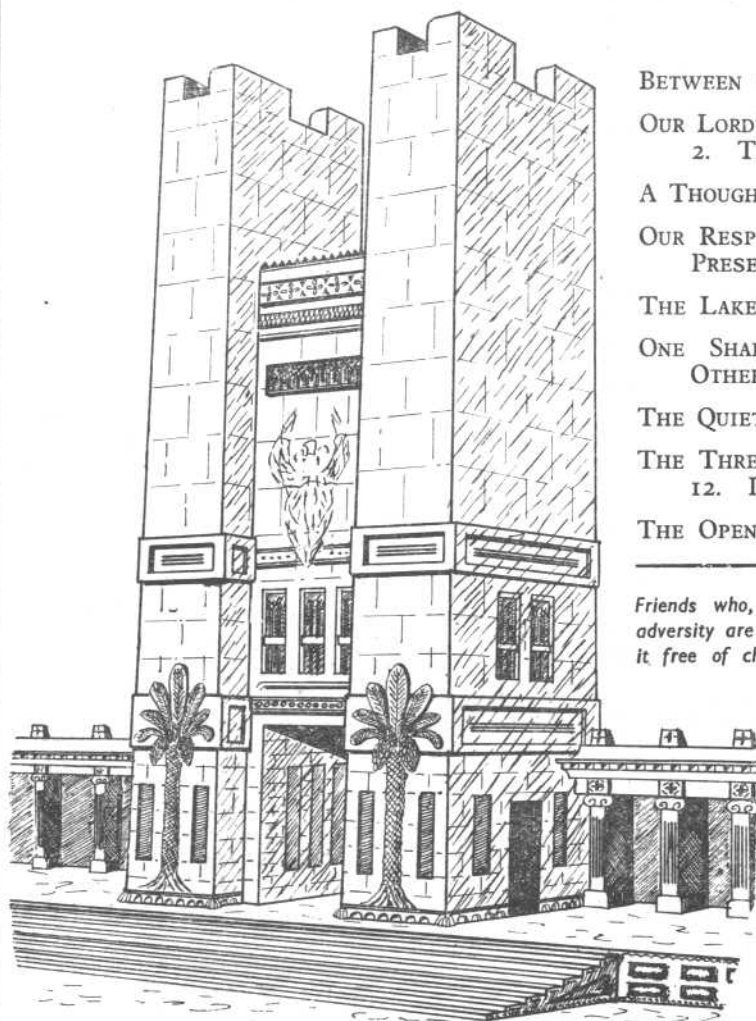
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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Midlands Whitsun Convention is to be held in the Trade Hall, St. James Street, Humberstone Gate, Leicester on the Saturday and Sunday of the Whitsuntide holiday. Meals will be provided at the Central Civic Restaurant, a few yards from the Convention Hall. Brethren desiring accommodation are desired to apply *early* to Bro. T. W. Allen, 266, Uppingham Road, Leicester, whilst for programmes and all other matters letters should be addressed to the Convention Secretary, Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry.

A Baptismal Service is being arranged by the Forest Gate brethren in connection with their Whitsun Home-gathering and will be conducted on Sunday, 13th May, in the morning, at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Boundary Road, Walthamstow, E.17. Enquiries to Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

Owing to various factors it has been decided not to hold a General Convention at Conway Hall in August as has been the custom since 1947. This decision has been reached after prayerful and careful consideration of all the indications and circumstances and it relates to this year (1951) only. If the Lord will we hope and pray that there may be a resumption of this happy annual season of fellowship in London for the brethren in 1952.

An August Convention is being arranged by the brethren of the Forest Gate Church in their own hall at Wanstead. Any brethren desirous of attending will be most welcome, and should watch for further announcements.

All who desire accommodation are requested to notify Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex as soon as possible.

(The Wanstead meeting place of the Forest Gate Church is conveniently reached by Underground Railway—Central London line, from Central London.)

A brother desires to obtain a copy of the booklet "*Evolutionists at the Crossroads*" published by the "*Dawn*" some years ago and now out of print. If anyone possessing a copy which they are willing to dispose of will kindly send same to us, stating the price desired, we will gladly remit the amount by return and pass the book to the brother concerned.

The work of collecting and despatching used clothing to meet the needs of Continental brethren, which has been carried on for the past few years,

is now being extended to meet needs existing in another part of the world—South America. Fellow-brethren of ours in a hard-hit part of that great continent are in this need and attempts are being made to do what is possible. Friends able to help with gifts of used clothing are desired to send same to Bro. E. T. Nadal, 37, Marshall's Drive, Romford, Essex.

The book "*Why be an Ape?*" is now out of stock and copies can no longer be supplied. Margolis Translation of the Bible is out of print and unobtainable for the present.

The special issue "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" has had a very favourable reception and a goodly number have been taken by various brethren and classes for use in making known the glad tidings. We hope to keep this issue permanently in stock for such purposes and can still supply by return. Prices are:—3/6 (50c) per doz., 12/6 (\$2.00) for 50., 22/- (\$3.50) per 100.

Will organisers of conventions and others interested please note that the supply of hymnals available on loan for use at such gatherings is held at Welling, and that all applications for the use of same should be addressed here. At least two weeks' notice must be given, stating quantity of hymnals required. It will be appreciated if borrowers will defray cost of carriage both ways, returning books promptly after use.

The Memorial

The Memorial of our Lord's death will be observed on Thursday, 19th April, after 6.30 p.m. On that evening we all, coming together in the little companies with whom we habitually meet, or claiming the promise of the Lord's own presence with us if circumstances demand physical isolation from the brethren, will share together as His disciples in all that the broken bread and filled cup symbolises. On this evening of all evenings, all other considerations will give place to our acceptance of this immutable foundation of our fellowship and unity in Christ. "Therefore let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Gone From Us

Sister M. L. Hosgood (*née* Coombes) Exeter
Sister J. Fairweather (Kippen, Scotland)

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

OUR LORD'S RETURN

2.—The Reality of His Return.

T.H.

An Exposition of
Scripture Dealing
with the Second Advent

In resuming our enquiry re our Lord's Return, several questions arising from the former article require consideration. They will be taken as follows:—

- (a) Did Jesus promise to return, in language unmistakably plain and unassociated with symbolism?
- (b) Did Jesus return on the day of Pentecost?
- (c) Did the early Church entertain any expectation of an immediate return?
- (d) What is the relation of the fall of Jerusalem to His Coming?

First then,

"Did Jesus promise to return, in language unmistakably plain and unassociated with symbolism?"

To this the answer is Yes, most emphatically! There is nothing metaphorical about His language to His disconsolate disciples in John 14. 3. His departure from them was to be actual and literal. It was its reality and actuality which had caused their sorrow and distress. *"If I go . . . I will come again"*—were the words whereby He sought to comfort them in their distress. Nothing that can here be said in explanation can give more emphasis to these words than Jesus gave to them. To supplement this promise Jesus again reminds them of what He had already said *"Ye heard how I said unto you 'I go away and I come unto you'—a promise of which they ought to have been very glad. There is nothing here ambiguous or uncertain, or modified by metaphor."*

Then further, after His resurrection, when Peter asked about John's latter end—*"Lord, what shall this man do"*—Jesus peremptorily replied *"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"* *"Till I come"*—till I return—there is nothing here symbolic or ambiguous. The Risen Lord was almost at the point of His departure, but the surety of His Return was in His mind.

Again when describing the condition in the earth at the time of His Return He asked *"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith in the earth?"* (Luke 18. 8). Even though this is a "Son-of-Man" scripture it is a plain straightforward question, unencumbered by symbolism.

And, as a last testimony, we may cite the angel's words on Olivet after He had bidden them farewell, *"This same Jesus, which has been received from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him go into heaven."* An actual

departure had taken place; an actual Return will also surely take place (Acts 1. 11). Thus the angel's testimony supplemented His own! No reference to the metaphorical "Son-of-Man" passages can modify or nullify these precise and definite assurances of His Return.

(b) *Did Jesus return on the Day of Pentecost?* The answer to that query is—most assuredly not! Some days after Pentecost (compare Acts 2. 47 and 3. 1) Peter told the astonished and excited multitude after witnessing the lame man's immediate recovery, that Jesus (in whose name the miracles had been performed) was now in heaven, and that it was ordained that He should remain there till the times of restoration (of which all the prophets had spoken) should begin to come to pass (Acts 3. 19-21). Paul also bears witness to the same absence from the earth. To the Corinthians he tendered brotherly advice to leave all judgment as between brethren *"till the Lord come"* (1 Cor. 4. 51) and when they met together at the Table of the Lord, they did together *"show His death till He come"* (1 Cor. 11. 26). Also, of themselves some should be made alive at His Coming (Presence) (1 Cor. 15. 23). To the Thessalonians he gave assurance of his prayer that they might be found established in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints (1 Thess. 3. 13) and that they who were alive at the Coming of the Lord would be caught up along with the sleeping saints to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4. 15).

Peter also has a word of promise and encouragement for the faithful under-shepherd of the flock when the Chief Shepherd shall appear (1 Pet. 5. 4). Paul has the right word also when he says *"we wait for a Saviour from heaven"* (Phil. 2. 20).

Evidently the members of the Apostolic band did not believe their Lord made His Return at Pentecost. The thing that really did take place at Pentecost was the arrival of "another" Comforter to take oversight in their lives in His stead (John 14. 16). To confuse the then promised spiritual Presence—the distant influence of His now Divine Presence in the midst—with that of a Personal and actual Return is scarcely to the credit of the ordained ministry of this or other lands!

(c) *Did the early Church expect and anticipate an immediate and early return of their Lord?* Again, the answer must be No; the sum total of the evidence is against such a thought. It is urged

by some that Paul himself expected he might be "alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 15) and thus find a place among those who would "not sleep" (1 Cor. 15. 51). But against that thought we must set the testimony of his own words in 1 Cor. 6. 14, by which he expresses his assurance that He who raised up Jesus from the dead would also "raise up us through His power". The raising up of Jesus could mean only His resurrection from death, and Paul had the expectation and the hope that he too (and they to whom he wrote) would share a like experience with their Lord. The "we" who would remain to the coming of the Lord and be granted the experience of an instantaneous change could only be the last members of the same company to which Paul had earlier belonged.

In Paul's later writings he came to see that his course was run, his testimony finished, and the time of his departure at hand. But it is good to know that former hopes had not miscarried and that there had been no change of hope or expectation in his mind.

Again, as one of the Apostolic band he knew right well that the "world-witnessing" had not by any means become complete. Despite the ardent intensity of his own and his brethren's missionary activity but a small fragment of the then known world had been evangelised. Beyond the Euphrates eastwards were vast territories as yet untouched; above the Caucasus northwards, in Scythia and beyond, were multitudes of unreached men; above the Danube northwards also were numerous Germanic tribes to whom no single word of grace had been addressed, while southwards also beyond Egypt and Ethiopia lay the broad expanse of Africa untouched. The work committed to the "Church" by Christ had only been begun — its completion lay far forward on the sands of time.

Again, another factor, of a more personal nature, forbade the Apostolic Church from expecting an imminent Return of their Lord. As the climax to that episode by the lake when Jesus thrice probed Peter's heart and thrice commissioned him to feed His lambs and sheep, Jesus then went on to tell Peter of his martyrdom and death "... *another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not*" (John 21. 18). "*Now this He spake,*" says John, "*signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God*".

So long as Peter was alive, there could be no question of the Return of the Lord — and all the brethren knew it! Peter himself saw to that. Giving as his reason for writing the disciples committed to his care, he says, "*I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things* . . .

And I think it right as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus signified unto me. Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease, to call these things to remembrance" (2 Pet. 1. 12-15). Peter's continued presence in the flesh was a proof that Jesus had not come and could not come unexpectedly or unannounced.

Arising out of that same episode another report went abroad that John should *not* die till Jesus came. But John himself corrected that mistaken report by saying that "Jesus said not unto him (Peter) that he (John) should not die, but 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'"

Now it is obvious that if the whole body of disciples were expecting to live till Jesus came, there would be no special point in reporting that any one of them would do so. The spread of that erroneous report concerning John is, indirectly, a proof that the whole body of believers did not themselves expect to live to witness that event. For themselves they had no such expectation; as concerning John, the expectation spread abroad was erroneous.

It is very helpful too, to place Paul's solicitude for the work of Christ after his decease alongside that of Peter, and to note that *he expected the work to carry on after his departure from the scene*. "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2. 1-2).

On these evidences it seems possible to say that the early Church cherished no expectation of an early return of their Lord.

(d) *Did the Lord Return at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?*

Most Bible students would answer this query in the negative, yet there are ideas prevalent which, when analysed, would place their advocates among those who answer in the affirmative. Superficially, it is easy to apply the words of Luke 21. 20-21 to the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus in that year. But to interpret and apply these words to that episode almost lays the Lord open to the charge of answering the disciples' anxious questions irrelevantly, skipping forward to the signs that betoken the End of the Age and then backward to an event which happened in its very early years. It is difficult for us to think that the Lord would reply in such a scrappy, disjointed and incoherent manner to a question which was of real concern to His little band. But in actual fact, He did not attempt to baffle or confuse them (or us) but made

His answer in a coherent and comprehensive manner, epitomising and concentrating many lines of prophetic testimony into a summary of evidence which constituted a most direct answer to their enquiry.

That the Lord linked a siege and capture of Jerusalem with His Return should readily be evident when we note the close connection of the various items in the summary of His evidence. Nothing that He said between the twentieth and twenty-seventh verses introduces any break or change in the tenor of His argument, and if, for the sake of demonstration, we count the intervening verses as a parenthesis, and read right on (omitting the parenthesis) we do no violence to His thought or reply. Here is the Revised Version translation of the two verses. "*But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies then know that her desolation is at hand . . . And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*" With but the smallest interlude of time . . . certainly not nineteen centuries — the scene passes from the investiture and fall of Jerusalem to the appearance of the Son of Man in power and glory! Either we must say that the Son of Man returned in the year A.D. 70 (or thereabouts) or we must confess that He made no reference to that siege and fall, but spake of another siege and capture yet to come!

Now, in the first place, as we weigh the facts relating to a former or a latter investiture, we must note the words which follow in verse 28. Was it possible to say in A.D. 70, that the "redemption" of either Jew or Christian was "at hand" or was "drawing nigh"? Was there anything in the banishment of the Jew or the scattering of the Christian flock to agree with such an exhortation? That verse, at least, points to the later of the two investitures!

Then again, is it true to facts to say of A.D. 70 that it was a time when "all things written" were fulfilled? The time of which Jesus spake was to be a time of recompense on an unprecedented scale, when all the long catalogue of crimes, insults and waywardness was to be brought up for settlement! It was to be a time of "vindicating one's rights" (God's rights) once for all! Did this occur in the days of the former siege? If so, why then the age-long banishment and punishment for the "tribes of the wandering foot" since that date? Was that the time of Jacob's Trouble of which Jeremiah spake? (Jer. 30. 4-7). Was that the siege and sack of the rebellious city of which Zechariah spake? (Zech. 14. 1-2), or the desolation of the adjacent land of which Joel prophesied? (Joel 3. 9-15). Was that the time when the wicked nation accepted the

indictment of God, confessed their sins, and when, in consequence God began to remember His Covenant with Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, and even with the "land"? (Lev. 26. 40-45). These are "some" among the "all things written" which the Master asserted were to be fulfilled! These also point without doubt to the later of the two sieges and captivities!

Always, in every instance of these "things written," once the "vindication" is complete, the help and succour of a Great Deliverer is near at hand to heal and assuage the wounds which righteousness has made, and lead the broken and the contrite people home to God! Note for instance Jeremiah's words "*. . . it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck and will burst thy bands; and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him* (Jer. 30. 8, 11, 16, 22; 11. 16-22). And Joel too has a good word to say "*. . . the Lord will be a refuge unto His people and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more*" (Joel 3. 16, 17, 18, 20 and 21).

Zechariah has a word of consolation too, "*Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battles . . .*" (Zech. 14. 3, 4, 6-8). Leviticus is also fully in line with these prophecies of hope, for God will remember the Covenant of their Fathers and become their God (Lev. 26. 45).

With these few out of the many instances of the "things written" before our minds it is easy to place and apply the words of hope and expectation uttered by our Lord; "*but when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh*" (Luke 21. 28.) Our dear Lord's mind has taken stock "of all the things" — bane and blessing too — and focussed them together into one all-embracing picture of the Day of His Return — the day when the Son of Man shall come.

Jerusalem has many times been trodden beneath Gentile feet since Nebuchadnezzar first over-ran her walls and streets, but one last spasm of anguish has yet to come — the worst of all — ere the Deliverer out of Zion saves her from her sins and enemies. A companion picture of this tragic scene seems to be outlined in Rev. 11. 1-2. Only here in the whole compass of Scripture testimony is there any parallel to Luke 21. 24; the picture in both cases appears to be the same, and the very wording of them is the same. The "treading under foot" is not merely suzerainty over the city's polity, it

is a winepress experience, for the same word occurs again in Rev. 14. 20 and 19. 15. It is a treader of grapes at his crushing and releasing work.

On the strength of this very slender resumé of evidence it is possible to say with certainty that Jesus did not return at the time of the former siege and fall of Jerusalem, and that Jesus did not even mention that siege in His Son-of-Man prophecy. But there is more to say on that great prophecy, and as this article is now as long as it

ought to be, it must be deferred to another time.

* * *

Since writing the foregoing a front-rank D.D. has stated, over the Radio, his view that Jesus came again in power and glory when He was raised from the dead, and that His Kingdom was then and there established. As this is but a slight variation of the view that He came at Pentecost the comment made on that point is all that needs to be said in response.

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

While we are, in the words of the old hymn, "straining our eyes for the tarrying day" and the scenes around us are still shrouded in semi-darkness, we may perhaps be forgiven for partial failure to comprehend aright the full significance of many of the events and portents which our eyes behold. Throughout the Harvest period the Watchers have, like Habakkuk of old, taken their stand on the tower and *watched to see* — significant words — what God would say unto them. And to what good effect that watching has been we are witnesses to-day, holding as we do a very definite and clear-cut expectation of the manner of His appearing and His Kingdom. That expectation is none the less definite for the fact that as time goes on we find it necessary to modify our earlier immature conceptions of the manner in which God will work out His purpose.

That which in the dim light of early dawn seems to be a haystack turns out to be a house, and the seemingly grotesque animal becomes a shapely tree. So with our watching; we must expect our watching to show in greater and more accurate detail the "shape of things to come" as the light "shines more and more unto meridian day" (Prov. 4. 18).

"It is because of this failure to comprehend the gradually unfolding nature of God's Plans that many to-day are walking in darkness when they might be walking in the light —"

Those words are not original, and many will recognise the source from which they are quoted. To-day, half a century after they were written, they are truer than ever. If only more of those who profess to hold and guide their lives by the "Present Truth" of Peter's Epistle had learned the implications of those words better there would not be one-tenth of the doubt, the fear, the lack of confidence and the waxing cold of faith and love that the last few decades have seen amongst us. So many have accepted gladly and zealously the loftiest and

clearest exposition of the Divine Plan which the nineteenth century produced and have failed to make increase with it. They have failed to live up to the opportunity and favour which was theirs. Like their prototypes, knowing not the time of their visitation, they have taken all that the favour of God held out to them and failed to make that progress in its light which would enable them in turn to contribute toward the further unfolding of the Plan of God. And the Kingdom of God has passed them by.

So must it always be. *"They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut."* The work of service to which the Father of all men has appointed His New Creation is so stupendous, demanding so high a standard of Christ-likeness and so great a depth of spiritual wisdom, that only those who have demonstrated their utter loyalty to Christ and appreciation of every phase and aspect of the Divine revelation can hope to hear the final "Well done". Knowledge, of itself, will not bring one to this consummation; but knowledge rightly applied is an indispensable handmaiden to that spiritual development which is so essential; and without knowledge we shall be as those who, in the parable, were asleep when the Bridegroom came.

CAXTON HALL

The monthly meeting on Saturday, April 21st, will consist of a meeting in the afternoon at 3.0 p.m., addressed by Bro. W. F. Fox (Yeovil), in the Kent Room, to be followed by an interval for tea between 4.30 and 6.30. Tea is obtainable at various cafes in the vicinity of the Hall. At 6.30 there will be a meeting in the Tudor Room addressed by Bro. H. Chrimes (Altrincham) at 6.30, followed by an address by Bro. T. Watson (London) at 7.45. All are truly welcome to these meetings.

Our Responsibility Concerning Present Truth

C.T.R.

Reflections Upon Our Christian Mission

The Prophet Jeremiah had a burning zeal in his heart, a consuming sense of the importance of the message given him to deliver. His previous declaration of the Word of God concerning Israel had been so despised and rejected that he had become disheartened. He himself declared, "*The Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary of forbearing, and could not stay!*" His message had to be spoken. The Lord had instructed him to tell Israel that they were about to be given over into the hands of their enemies.

If Jeremiah had allowed his fears to overwhelm him, and had withheld the message, undoubtedly he would have been set aside as the mouthpiece of God, and another would have been commissioned to deliver the message. The burning within the heart of the Prophet would have grown feebler and would ultimately have died out. When a fire is kept shut off from a draught for some length of time, it will become extinguished. This is as true in the realm of moral and spiritual forces as in that of physical nature. This is why the Apostle Paul urged: "Quench not the Spirit". We might let the Holy Spirit of God die out in our hearts by a failure to do our duty, a failure to keep our covenant faithfully. The light within us, the holy fire, would smoulder for a time, and finally become extinct. He could not withhold that which God had commanded him to speak; he could not quench the fire within his soul without losing his relationship with Jehovah.

Thus it is with us to-day. God has let us into the secret of His counsels. He has granted us a wonderful spiritual illumination. He has given us a Message of the utmost importance to deliver. We have been informed by the Lord that a great change is impending—that the lease of power to the Gentile nations is about to expire. We are instructed that the present systems of Christendom are to go down, that the rule of the present order is about to end, and that the dominion is about to be given "to Him whose right it is" to reign. The kingdoms of this world are about to "become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever".

This Message is not to be stated in a rude

manner. But it is to be stated, nevertheless. The great King whom God hath appointed is about to come in. In Jeremiah's time, the message was that the Kingdom of God, His typical kingdom, was about to be overthrown. The lease of power to the Gentiles, under the domination of the Prince of this world, was about to be inaugurated. This order of things was to be permitted to run for an appointed time. That time is now about to run out. The King's Son is soon to receive His long-promised inheritance (Psa. 2. 7-9). We are glad that our Message is not now the overthrow of God's Kingdom, but the very opposite of this—the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

So we are to tell forth this glorious Message. We are to tell it in our actions, in our words, by the printed page, by pictorial presentations to the eye, and in every way that the Lord shall give us the opportunity. If through fear of persecution, of losing prestige in the eyes of men, for love of ease, or for any reason whatever, we should fail to give forth the Message of God, it will be taken from us and given to one who is worthy. The Lord is seeking those who are valiant for Him, for righteousness, for truth. If we prove ourselves weak, we are not fit for the Kingdom.

Is this wonderful Message, this Message the like of which was never before granted to men or angels to tell, burning within us? And are we speaking it forth, that its inspiration may cause other hearts to take fire?

If we refrain from telling the Glad Tidings, the result will be that the fire of God's Holy Spirit will become extinguished within us. And if the light that is within us becomes darkness, how great will be that darkness! The possession of the Truth—God's Message—brings with it great responsibility. Shall we prove faithful to it? Shall we show to our God our deep appreciation of His loving kindness in granting us the knowledge of His wonderful Message of Salvation, His glorious Plan, with its times and seasons?

There is a difference between the operation of the Lord's Spirit in His children now and its operation in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah, and the other holy Prophets. During the Jewish Age the Holy Spirit acted upon the servants and mouthpieces of God in a mechanical manner. Now the

people of the Lord have both His Message in His written Word and the begetting of the Spirit, which gives us a spiritual understanding impossible to His people of past Ages. The mysteries of God are now opened up to His faithful children, the watchers; and we are granted a clear understanding of "the deep things of God", some features of which were never revealed until the present time, even to the most faithful of the Lord's saints (1 Thess. 5. 1-6).

We are also told by the Apostle Paul that the things which were written of the servants of the Lord in past dispensations were written for our admonition and instruction and comfort, "upon

whom the ends of the Ages are come" (1 Cor. 10. 11). Seeing all these things, dearly beloved, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" How earnestly, with what painstaking care, should we give heed to the Word spoken unto us! Let us be faithful in proclaiming the Message of our Lord, now due. Let us tell forth the words which He has put into our mouths, whether others hear or whether they forbear—whether our faithfulness bring us the favour or disfavour of the world and of nominal Spiritual Israel. But let us speak His word in meekness and love, leaving the results with our great Chief Reaper. "The Day is at hand"!

THE LAKE OF FIRE

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20. 10).

Our Lord's frequent references to the valley of Gehenna, outside Jerusalem, are very familiar, and their fitness as a symbol of utter destruction is well known. It has often been thought that the Revelator has this same valley in mind when he spoke of the lake of fire burning with brimstone. There is, however, an even more extreme example of complete and terrible destruction which could well fit the language of Revelation with perhaps greater propriety, and indicate with greater clarity the meaning of the expression "for ever and ever".

It will be observed that in the five instances where the symbol is used (Rev. chaps. 19, 20 and 21), the picture is that of a Lake burning with fire and sulphur (brimstone). We need therefore in endeavouring to appreciate the force of the symbol to find in Scriptural history the supreme example of such an event as associated with eternal judgment.

This thought of the "smoke of the burning" also going up forever and ever is intimately associated with the symbol, as witness Rev. 14. 10, and 18. 10 where the destruction of other phases of the system of evil is pictured. This conception is evidently borrowed from Isaiah 34. 9-10 where in speaking of the destruction of Edom the prophet declares that her smoke should go up for ever and ever and that none should pass through the land for ever and ever. That this latter does not carry the thought of perpetuity is evident from verse 17 where some are spoken of who shall ultimately possess the land for ever, i.e., after its burning.

But verse 10 of Isaiah 34, indicates that the

A Study Suggestion

prophet in his turn took his symbolism from a still earlier source, and the vivid words of Jude, verse 7, afford the clue when he speaks of "Sodom and Gomorrah . . . SUFFERING THE VENGEANCE OF ETERNAL FIRE". Gen. 19. 28 tells us that Abraham looked toward Sodom and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. That catastrophe left such an impression upon the minds of the early progenitors of the children of Israel that the vision was never effaced—the fire from heaven that destroyed the ill-fated cities. Research has elicited with some degree of certainty that the cataclysm was at least in part of a volcanic nature, and that earth movements, or an earthquake, cleft the ground in many places so that sulphur, asphalt and petroleum vapours were released and ignited, thus completing the work of destruction. It is thought that much of this material was released under the surface of the Dead Sea and took fire upon reaching the surface, thus turning the sea into a veritable lake of fire. The allusion in Isa. 34. 9 seems to be based upon some memory of such an occurrence.

Thus seen, the expression in Revelation would mean, not the continued torment in some state of conscious existence, of the devil, but, first, his utter destruction, and secondly, the continued remembrance of that destruction, just as Jude's reference to the cities of the plain suffering the vengeance of eternal fire by no means denotes the eternal burning of that fire which died down so many centuries ago, but the indelible impression left on the minds of those who witnessed or who afterwards were told of that tremendous demonstration of the wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness.

ONE SHALL BE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT

A.O.H.

An Examination of a Significant Scripture

"In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left . . . and they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17. 34-37).

Text beloved of the "Flee-from-the-wrath-to-come" type of evangelical Christian! Many whose knowledge of the Divine character and Plan has by no means equalled their zeal for God and righteousness have dwelt, fervently and almost gloatingly, upon the implication of those words. Suddenly, without warning, without previous notice, the "elect" will be snatched away to heaven from amidst the unrighteous, and the celestial doors will be closed for ever! Too late then for repentance; nothing left but outer darkness, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, for those who have spurned the day of grace and have found themselves "left". The logical implication of this belief has been well worked out; tracts are still to be met with describing the chaos that will ensue at that dramatic moment when every Christian engine-driver is whisked in a flash from the footplate of his express; every Christian sea-captain from the bridge of his ocean-liner; every Christian car-owner from the wheel of his car — most of these themes were worked out before the days of air travel and this type of tract is not always up to date, but doubtless the same principle would be held to apply to Christian pilots of passenger airplanes. It is not a conception that offers any honour or glory to God, but then so many of the crude ideas of the nineteenth century relating to the Second Advent are like that, and we who hold — or ought to hold — a far more enlightened and rational view of the manner of and method of our Lord's coming must needs take care that we do not retrogress to anything like that view ourselves. The tendency is amongst us, a tendency characteristic of every Christian reform movement a generation or so after the death of the reformer who gave it its first inspiration and impetus. The waves of understanding come farther up the beach than ever they have done before, but there follows a backwash that oft-times undermines much of the effect of the good work that has been done. This is one of the occasions when we do well to remember our Lord's words of reproof "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man is not come to destroy

men's lives but to save them".

There is no doubt, of course, that the text *does* speak of some gaining a prize that the others lose. The point to be considered is, what is that prize and who are they that gain it? And what are the consequences upon those who fail to gain, those who are "left"?

It is clear that this is one of the happenings associated with the Second Advent. These words of Jesus appear in the catalogue of signs and evidences and events given by Him in answer to the disciples' questions "When shall these things be, and what shall be the signal of thy presence, and of the culmination of the Age?" As such we find the words in Luke 17. 34-37 and Matt. 24. 28, 40-41. They do not appear in quite the same connection in the two accounts and have to be disentangled from other sayings, but it is comparatively easy to discern the connection in which the words were used and to pass on from that to a consideration of their import.

The Second Advent includes a number of different phases and aspects, each displaying characteristics of its own, but all, when fitted into proper sequence, having place in the *Parousia* or presence of the Son of Man. The *Parousia* is the period which endures from the moment of His coming into our world of time and space to gather His own, to the end of the Millennium when all things in heaven and earth have become subject unto Him, and He delivers up the restored Kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15. 28). These passages in Matthew and Luke about the one being taken and the other being left are associated with that phase of the Second Coming which is likened to the days of Noah. We need therefore to note the analogy very carefully; the similitude was not chosen by our Lord lightly but because it is capable of giving us valuable teaching.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" said Jesus (Luke 17. 26). Likewise, also, He went on, as it was in the days of Lot. The likeness is in the suddenness and unexpectedness of the catastrophe *after* due warning had been given and generally unheeded and *after* — this is important — the few who *did* heed had taken advantage of the offer of salvation provided and had been saved. Noah and his family entered the Ark before the catastrophe and were saved. The rest of the world were left behind

and perished. Lot and his daughters fled to the mountains before the disaster that overtook the Cities of the Plain and were saved. Their unbelieving fellow citizens were left behind, and perished. *"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed"* (Luke 17. 30). The word for "revealed" there is *apokaluptetai*, meaning an open and evident manifestation. That one word gives us an indication of the time lapse in this matter. The "days of Noah" figure indicates a period in the Lord's presence when He is already within the time and space framework of the material creation, already in the spiritual "heavens" of this earth, waiting to execute judgment but staying His hand the while His faithful ones are heeding the call to get ready for entrance into the Ark, or to flee to the mountains, to use either the Deluge or the Sodom picture as the case may be, and the preaching of imminent judgment is going out to the world, but there is no outward evidence that can appeal to human senses to support that preaching. Nothing to see; nothing to hear; only faith to believe. When the catastrophe does happen, when the Deluge does come to sweep them all away, the Son of Man is openly revealed in His *apokalupsis* — plainly evident, but this is after the "taken" ones have been taken; from the very nature of the case it must be that the time when some are taken and others left is before the final catastrophe — they are taken away from the "wrath to come".

This "days of Noah" phase, then, is the first period of the Second Presence, the period during which our Lord, having left the immediate presence of His Father, has entered the "heavens" or spiritual environment of this earth. Invisible to men and perhaps to evil angels also, He proceeds with the preliminaries to the great work of His Kingdom. The only evidence, even to His own disciples, the "Watchers", of this fact is the provision of "meat in due season", Truth now due for the household of faith. That is something which we can appreciate and take to ourselves as the first gift of our returned Lord; that was the promise of Luke 12. 37 and if we are as near the end of the Age as we think we are, and as the political events of to-day appear to indicate, there is not likely to be a greater or even an equal repetition of the feast of Truth that was experienced in the latter half of the nineteenth century. We are still living in the "days of Noah" period, but verging rapidly upon the catastrophe which brings that period to an end and replaces it with the outwardly manifest evidence of the Second Coming. But by that time all who are to be "taken" will have been taken, and all who are to be "left" will have been left.

Now the "taking" must of itself be unnoticeable

to the world. The sudden disappearance from the earth of all true Christians, even though they be a "little flock", in the manner beloved of the evangelistic tracts previously referred to would most assuredly attract notice and elicit comment. After all, it would only require three or four Christian engine-drivers to disappear simultaneously from their footplates, leaving no trace, in England, and the same in America, and the same in Australia, to set the newspaper reporters busy. Someone would be bound to produce one of the prophetic tracts and the whole matter would at least become a nine days wonder. That would be outward evidence, and the whole principle of the first phase of the Second Advent, the "days of Noah" period, is that there is no outward evidence capable of appealing to the natural man; none whatever. The "taking", therefore, must be of such a nature that it conforms fully with the ordinary course of events in the world and presents no outward phenomena which is at all unusual.

At this point it ought perhaps to be suggested for consideration that the interpretation sometimes put upon this passage, that those "taken" are "drawn out" from their former Christian association to a purer earthly fellowship where they may enjoy a more accurate understanding of the Divine Plan preparatory to their ultimate change to heavenly conditions, and those "left" are the ones who decline so to "come out", does not really fill the requirements of the teaching. Noah and his sons were not invited to settle in a peaceful farmstead in some secluded part of the earth while the rest of their fellows were left to languish in the wicked world; neither was Lot with his daughters called to a Bible study in some quiet house in Sodom while the sons of Belial were left to roam the streets in peace. In both cases the called and responsive ones were taken right out of their respective worlds to a place of safety and in both cases God then proceeded to destroy those worlds. And in both cases, too, the few whose faith had saved them became the means of starting their respective worlds anew with fresh life — even though the story of Lot's daughters does not square with modern ethical standards the fact remains that righteous Lot, like righteous Noah, became the father of a new community of human beings who re-peopled the territory whose former inhabitants had died under Divine judgment. The reality is true to the picture; the "taken" ones come forth when the judgment is over to be the instruments used in bringing new life to the world.

Now that privilege is enjoyed only by those who become "joint-heirs with Christ", associated with Him for the conversion and hence giving of life to the world. The "taking" can be nothing else

than the "change" of individual believers from mortality to immortality, the death of the human body and resurrection to spiritual conditions. If this is to be a process attracting no special notice in the world of men, as it must be if the "days of Noah" aspect of the Second Coming is to be preserved, it follows that the "taking" will be, not *en masse*, at one point of time, as held by so many evangelical Christians not so blessed as are we with the broader knowledge of God's Plan, but gradually, here and there, in ones and twos, just as death seems to come "naturally" to all men in all the forms and for all the reasons that death does come.

That agrees well with the Scriptural teaching, embodied in parables such as the goodman of the house, the faithful and evil servants (Matt. 24) the talents (Matt. 25) the man taking a far journey (Mark 13) as well as the epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, that our Lord returns silently, like a thief, first of all to gather His Church — of whom the dead in Christ are to rise first and then the living are to follow — and *afterwards* to be revealed to the world *with* His Church for the world's salvation. At some time during this "days of Noah" phase, there is a period, how long or how short we do not know, during which the sleeping ones are raised to be with Him in the spiritual "heavens" of this earth — referred to by Paul in 1 Thess. 4. 17 as the "air" — and His remaining faithful disciples go to join them at the moment of death. "*We shall not all sleep*" he told the Corinthians "*but we shall all be changed . . . for the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" All that is the first work of the Second Advent; it has to be completed before the catastrophe can come; and until the catastrophe has come there can be no outward evidence of the Lord's presence that can be appreciated by the world.

The disciples did not understand very perfectly. "*One shall be taken, and the other left*"! "Where, Lord?" they asked. Where were the faithful to be taken? They had expected to stay right where they were, throughout the judgment. The wicked would perish, the scribes and the Pharisees and the priests, but they themselves would remain, and after the holocaust they would sit on twelve thrones reigning as kings over a restored and righteous earth. This talk of being taken away to some unknown region frightened them. "Where shall we be taken, Lord?"

One can imagine the ready sympathy of Jesus with them in their perplexity. How could they be expected to understand? "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide

you into all truth." How could He speak to them of their destined heavenly home? How could he explain to them that the Kingdom of their dreams and hopes was going to be vaster and grander by far than anything they had ever imagined. But He must give them the best possible answer; and He did give them the best possible answer, one which satisfied their question. "*And he said unto them 'Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.'*"

There is not much doubt that it was a contemporary proverb that He had quoted to them. The structure of the phrase, the nature of its subject, and its total irrelevance to the matter under discussion ought to satisfy us that such was the case. He quoted a common proverb as answer in the way that we often do exactly the same thing in modern daily life. "Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together." It was probably a proverb they had often heard and often used.

The birds referred to were vultures, carrion birds, flocking always to any place where a piece of dead flesh offered a meal, and not leaving until every vestige of death was gone and the ground was sweet and clean again. People do not think of that; they shrug their shoulders and say "Ugh; vultures; beastly creatures, feeding on decay and death; how can such a symbol ever picture anything that is of God and His life?" But God made the vultures! Suppose God had never made any vultures. What would become of the dead bodies then? They would lie in the hot sun and breed disease and pestilence, and still more death, and so continuing death. In England a generation ago the man who collected the house refuse was known as the "dustman" and disesteemed as a socially undesirable although necessary member of society. To-day he rides on a smart electrically propelled vehicle, wears a uniform as often as not, and insists upon being called a "cleansing operative". The vultures of Palestine were cleansing operatives; in them death was swallowed up in life, and their gathering together was an indication to the observer that, for that occasion and in that place at least, they were abolishing death and bringing life to light.

Did Jesus mean to convey all that? He certainly meant the disciples to know that just as the vultures would be found gathered together around that which was the subject of their hearts desire, gathered from all quarters to the feast, so would the faithful "taken" ones find themselves gathered together in just that place, in just that company, and for just that purpose, which was their dearest desire. Where or how, what matter? They would be satisfied when they awakened in His likeness. That

must have been the primary answer to their question. "Where, Lord?" "Just where you want to be, gathered together around the work which is the purpose and aim of your lives, your calling, your destiny."

Perhaps, in after days, pondering over these things, a deeper thought may have come to them. For vultures are not the only created beings who are said to eat flesh. "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day*" (John 6. 54-55). "*The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*" (John 6. 51.) That was not living flesh; until the Saviour had shed His blood upon the Cross, and given His life a Ransom for all, there was no flesh of which either Church or world could partake. It is out of that partaking that new life comes for all mankind. Those who now partake of His flesh become His ministers to bear His life to the citizens of a new and cleansed world in which death finds no further place. It is not an analogy that we ought to press too far; but we should realise as we think upon these things that Jesus Himself did not shrink from the horror and indignity and shamefulness of the death that He died in order to provide that flesh which is given for the life of the world. "*A body hast thou prepared me*" He said to His Father; that body had to be utterly consumed before life could begin to flow to a dying world. In the Tabernacle types the outward manner of that consuming was the burning, outside the Camp, of the hoofs and hide and suchlike parts of the bullock of sacrifice, a stench in the nostrils and a defiling thing to those who beheld, but to God, as represented in the offering of the vital organs on the altar in the Court, an offering of sweet savour, acceptable to Him. Perhaps, then, as understanding deepened in later days, the disciples did realise that just as the vultures were ordained by God to rid the earth of death and death-dealing influences, so they, gathered together with one accord just like those vultures, would be used of God to rid the world of men of death and death-dealing influences. That is to be the destiny of the "taken" ones when in the Lord's due time their whole company is complete beyond the Veil.

In Matthew's account the remark about the vultures appears to be misplaced. It comes at verse 28 immediately after Jesus' statement that His *parousia* is to be as the lightning, or bright radiance coming from the east, and it is difficult to see what connection the two expressions can have with each other. Jesus could certainly have used the words twice in His talk, but the fact that in Luke's account they are given as the answer to

a question which is itself recorded perhaps justifies us in thinking that Luke has the more accurate record here, and that verse 28 in Matt. 24 should come after verse 41, and thus put the two accounts in harmony.

Quietly, then, unobtrusively, the world in general knowing nothing about it, the returned Lord is gathering His faithful ones, taking them to Himself—as one by one they finish their earthly course. Just what are the conditions of that gathering to Him "in the air" we do not know, for it relates to spiritual things of which we cannot be made cognisant whilst in the flesh, but it may very well be a condition similar to that in which our Lord remained during the time between His resurrection and ascension. What we do know, and the knowledge should give us ground for intense joy, is that those thus "taken" are gathered together and remain gathered together for the purpose of cleansing the world of all evil and of all death and of all that is associated with death. It is for that the world is waiting; for that the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting, although they realise it not, for the manifestation of the sons of God.

I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him to a place where there was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it to quench it; yet did the fire burn hotter and hotter.

Then said Christian "What means this?"

The interpreter answered "This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it to extinguish and put it out is the devil; but, in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that". So he had him about to the other side of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also put continually, but secretly, into the fire.

Then said Christian "What means this?"

The Interpreter answered "This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart, by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of His people prove gracious still".

(From "Pilgrims Progress".)

* * *

If we were seeking, pushfully seeking, ways and means to lay down life and strength that the brethren may be blessed and edified, oh, how much more of spiritual life there might be, where now things are cold and unresponsive.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

TO HIS GLORY

*"Dear Lord, take up my tangled threads,
Where I have wrought in vain,
That by the skill of Thy dear hands
Some beauty may remain.
Take all the failures, each mistake,
Of our poor human ways.
Then, Saviour, for Thine own dear sake,
Make them show forth Thy praise."*

SUBMISSION

Things I crave for have often to be refused me in order that I may serve a little better. I fancy Paul would have been the happiest man in Asia if God had taken his thorn in the flesh away. But the thorn was left; and how it enriched and sanctified the heart of Paul we shall never know until we begin to compare our own triumphs and our own troublesome thorns in accordance with the mind of Christ.

ENDURANCE

The test of endurance is certainly one of the severest tests of faithfulness to which the elect Church, the body of Christ, is subjected. It is the test which gauges and registers the strength of every virtue and grace, and no soldier of the cross will be crowned with the laurels of victory who has not stood this test . . . In the battle of this day, as in all other battles, the effort of the enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord's people; and the only preparation therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God — the Truth and the spirit of the Truth.

COMMUNION

How happy we are if the words of the Lord Jesus have a convincing, comforting, melting, impelling effect upon us! It means that we are coming to them under the tuition and guidance of the Holy Spirit; and He so vitalises them that we are as close to Christ, and as certain that no one else but Christ is talking with us, as His own immediate disciples were when He taught them Divine truths as they traversed the quietness of the Galilean hills.

TRUST

The service which rests on love and is ruled by thoughtfulness issues in self-surrender. The impetuous vigour of early days loses its self-confidence without losing its strength. The servant who has wrought much for his Lord has learned to trust Him. His joy is when no choice is left; his freedom is to give up his own desire to a Divine bondage. And this bondage is one which receives a new and greater meaning as the outward man grows to fuller proportions.

REMEMBRANCE

We need not trouble to keep diaries of our good deeds or sacrifices, or to write autobiographies with pages of record for the things we have done. We may safely let our life write its own record, or let Christ be our biographer. He will never forget anything we do, and the judgment day will reveal everything. The lowliest services and the obscurest deeds will then be manifested.

BELIEVE YE?

Natural Israel remained in the wilderness forty years because they would not accept God's power to give them Canaan. How alike are our wanderings in this wilderness of sin, making as little progress as the Israelites wandering back and forth over the same ground. How often we are brought to the border of our promised land and through fear of our giants turn and run back towards the flesh-pots of Egypt. All of Palestine was promised to the Jews, but after the death of all the adults who left Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, those who had grown up in the wilderness went in, but in spite of Jericho's walls falling at the trumpet's blast and God's other mighty works, they possessed only a small portion of the land.

HE CARETH FOR YOU

*Oh, wonderful story of deathless love!
Each child is dear to the heart above;
He fights for me when I cannot fight;
He comforts me in the gloom of night;
He lifts the burden for He is strong;
He stills the sigh and awakes the song;
The sorrow that bore me down He bears,
And loves and pardons, because He cares.*

The Three Epistles of John

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

A.O.H.

Part XII. I John 3. 2.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (Chap. 3, vs. 2).

If in this present time we are already possessing the high honour of Divine sonship; if we are already sons of God, then what can be the superlative honour that awaits us beyond the Vail? Some such question as that seems to be in John's mind. *Now* are we the sons of God—then imagination refuses to picture for us that which is to be ours *then*. That is truly so. *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 9).* There is a spiritual understanding which assures us of the reality of those things that are within the Vail, and a witness of the Spirit assuring us that we shall indeed inherit those things if we abide faithful; even so we do not and cannot visualise in our minds the nature and appearance of those who are its citizens. The spiritual understanding of future things is ours, but not the ability to picture them or see them as we shall see them when we have experienced our "change". *"It doth not yet appear" what we shall be, but we do know that the life beyond is one of superlative happiness and glory. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3. 4).*

There is a "present inheritance" of the New Creation as well as a future inheritance. The rewards of consecration are not all deferred until death, just as the obligations of consecration affect this present life no less than the future one. The old theological idea that the whole aim and purpose of this life is to get through it as quickly and easily as possible in order to inherit the life to come at the earliest practicable moment has no support in Scripture. God has work for all His servants to do before they depart this life, and a great many purposes to be worked out in, and through, and by, those who are devoted to Him. Therefore the Apostle exhorts *"Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12. 2).* There is a work of transformation to be carried out

within us as we pursue the consecrated life, a work that is going to show fruitage, visible fruitage, and produce works, real works, even in this day, and in so doing will both reveal God's will and accomplish God's will. And that work of transformation is only possible because we have become, in John's own words here, sons of God. The great Husbandman is able to accomplish His work only because the subjects of His skill have become plants in His garden, ready to be planted and watered and pruned and trained as His Wisdom shall direct. It is only possible because those who are being led to glory have already become citizens of that country toward which they journey, have already turned away in their hearts from the world in which they were first born. The power of the Kingdom of God has already invaded the world of men; there are isolated outposts of the new Kingdom in the heart of the enemy's country, and therefore those who have been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" can look upon themselves as defending one or another of those isolated outposts and as being "in the Kingdom" even though surrounded by all the visible trappings and powers of the kingdoms of this world.

That is why Jesus said that except a man be born again, or born from above, he could not see the Kingdom of God. Entrance into that Kingdom is not secured by a simple passage through the gates of death, out of this life and into the next. True, there must be that "change" in order that this mortal may put on immortality (1 Cor. 15), but unless the would-be entrant has already, while yet he lives in this world, experienced the new birth, he will never join the saints in light. We do not become sons of God at death; we are sons of God *now*, and have been from the time of our consecration of life to God, from the time that we were buried with Christ by baptism into His death, and risen to walk with Him in newness of life. Our being "born again" is not at the time of our entrance into the celestial realm, when our "earthly house of this tabernacle" has been dissolved (2 Cor. 5.1), but at the time we become dead to earthly things and alive to heavenly things. It may be true—and it is true—that we "know not what we shall be", but it is also and undeniably true that we are now, at this present time, sons of God, and that high honour no man can take from us.

Having thus firmly established ourselves in our present inheritance, the privileged standing of the sons of God now and to-day, we can with confidence and joyful hope look forward to the greater glories yet to be revealed. "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be*" says John "*but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*" (ch. 3, vs. 2). This word translated "appear" — "*phaineroo*" — means the making manifest or evident or visible something that has hitherto been obscure or unknown or hidden. John is reminding us here of the promises that connect our glorification and entry into the Father's presence with the Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Without that Coming there can be no "presentation before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy". Jesus told His disciples "*If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also*". There can be no whittling down or minimising the importance of those words. Many in Christendom to-day doubt or deny that Christ will come again; the Christian hope is valueless unless it incorporates a firm and steadfast belief in His Second Coming, for without that Second Coming the Plan of God ceases to have any significance and the prospect for the future of humanity is bleak and hopeless. He comes to save the world, and without His coming there will never be any salvation. Therefore John stirs up the minds of his readers and brings fresh inspiration to us as once again we are reminded of the indissoluble bond that links the fruition of our own personal hopes for the future with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven.

This is one of the most definite and clearly spoken promises of the future state of the Church that the New Testament contains. It defines the "shape of things to come" in terms as comprehensible as can be attained when talking about the spiritual world. We can understand in what way we are sons of God now, in the flesh; we know that the glory that lies beyond the Vail is greater by far than the glory that we have now; but we cannot visualise it. The only man who ever glimpsed the lineaments of scenes in the sphere that lies beyond human sense was Paul, and he found it impossible to express in man-made language what he had seen and heard. But somehow or other John must tell us how infinitely to be preferred is that condition of life beyond the Vail to this which we now know and appreciate, glorious though this "life in Christ" may be to us at this time. So he says we shall be like Him; we shall see Him as He is. Nothing more; but then surely nothing more is needed. "*I shall be satisfied*" sang the Psalmist "*when I awake, with*

thy likeness" (Psa. 17. 15). That is the goal and hope of every true follower of the Lord Jesus. To be made like Him, to know Him as He knows us, to live in the sunshine of His presence forever. The words of old take on a new ring when we think like this; "*in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore*" even though we know that our exaltation to that place of privilege is going to mean incessant and continuous work for God in the conversion and reconciliation of His erring children upon earth. It is true that we shall rest from our labours, where labours involve weariness and fatigue and suffering, but our works will continue, works that will still involve sowing, and watering, and tending, and pruning, before the desired harvest can be reaped. But as we look now toward the bright prospect we are thinking, as was John, of the moment of union, of the gathering together of all the saints into one great General Assembly, the Church of the First Born, whose names are written in heaven, and, like Paul, we realise that although now we are seeing as through a glass, darkly, it will then be face to face. Though now we know only in part, then we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. 13. 12). That knowledge and hope gives us strength and confidence.

This little phrase of John's fixes two most important matters together in time. The point to which he looks is "His appearing" and it is *then* that we shall be "like him" — beyond the Vail, that is evident. This appearing is the revelation of Christ, with His Church, to the world. It is the grand pivotal point around which all the aspects and phases of the Second Advent are arranged. We have our differences of thought on the earlier phases of our Lord's Coming, as to whether he has already come and is invisibly present, or has not yet come and will shortly be revealed in some way not as yet understood; such differences are inevitable so long as Christ's disciples exercise their God-given right of private judgment; but there is no room for difference of thought on this central theme of our common expectation. There is to be a day, yet future — obviously still future — when the Church complete, gathered from death and from life, not one missing, shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13. 43). They will be manifested to all mankind in association with the Lord Jesus, manifest in similar fashion, as the world's deliverers. However that manifestation comes about, by whatever means mankind in general are persuaded of the fact and realise the nature of what is happening, it will be true that the Lord and His Church will be manifested together. That is the commencement of the Millennial reign, the fulfilment of the vision seen by John on Patmos when he "*saw thrones,*

and they (that) sat on them . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20. 4). John, telling us that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, is talking about that event and that day.

When Jesus comes for His Church they are neither like Him nor do they see Him as He is. It is only after resurrection that those things are true; and it is hardly the proper use of language to speak of our being taken out of this life, and coming into His presence, as "His appearing" in the sense in which the word is used here. This is a making manifest to those still upon earth of something that was previously hidden and was not manifest before.

So our great hope is centred upon the point of time at which our Master Jesus is revealed to the world for the world's salvation, and we are revealed with Him. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of that hour, important in the councils of heaven as well as to the tangled chaos that will by then exist upon earth. Whatever our own agreements and disagreements, we must, if we would not be found wanting at the last, keep our eyes and hopes fixed together upon that one supreme moment, "*looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2. 13).

"And every man that hath this hope in him" John concludes "*purifieth himself, even as he is pure*" (vs. 3). Sacred, clean, chaste, undefiled — the word means all these things. Of course he does; the sincere reception of such a hope must surely inspire its possessor with an earnest desire to fulfil all the Master's commandments in order that the realisation of the hope may be made sure. Says the writer to the Hebrews "*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12. 1). Our hope is the great inspiration that enables us to count all things but loss and dross if so be that we win Christ and be found in Him. Recognising that fact, Peter declares that it is even by these promises and the consequent hope to which they give rise that we become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1. 4). "*Exceeding great and precious promises*" Peter calls them. How exceeding great and precious they must be if they can be made to lead to so glorious a destiny. And there is no doubt about it. "*If ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*".

Well, there are the promises. It is for us to believe them, and take hold of them, and claim them for ourselves, and make use of them, and

allow them to work out their beneficent effect in our hearts and lives. Our Father has done all that He can do; the remainder rests with us. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself. So shall we be His disciples!

To be continued.

If we are faithful we shall have neither the time nor the disposition to give heed either to false doctrines or to other themes which have no bearing on the ONE THING to which we have solemnly dedicated our lives. Our time is not our own if we have consecrated all to God; consequently, we have none to spare for the investigation of fanciful false theories, built upon other foundations than that laid down in the Scriptures; nor have we the time to devote to the ideas and pursuits which engross the world's attention, many of which are harmless in themselves, but would be harmful to us if we were to allow them to occupy consecrated time and to divert our attention from the ONE THING we ought to be doing. The Apostle warns us "To shun profane babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness"; but adds, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." "Teach no other doctrine: neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than Godly edifying which is in faith."

2 Tim. 2. 15, 16. 1 Tim. 1. 3, 4.

* * *

The great Spurgeon once remarked, "In contending with certain sins there remains no mode of victory but by flight. The ancient naturalists wrote much of basilisks, whose eyes fascinated their victims and rendered them easy victims; so the moral gaze of wickedness puts us in solemn danger". In harmony with this thought the Apostle wrote to Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts". (2 Tim. 2. 22.) Jesus' example in this matter is a wonderful lesson to us all respecting loyalty to the principles of righteousness even to the extent of hazarding the brightest hopes and prospects of an earthly kind. And if we may well copy this lesson of fleeing from temptation, we may also note with the Prophet another lesson in this connection, for when Joseph's master Potiphar was very angry with him, so far as the evidence shows, Joseph contented himself with merely denying the allegation without attempting to demean Potiphar's wife by relating the facts of the case. What a noble example is here given us of avoiding evil speaking, even when that would be the truth!

THE OPEN HAND

A Meditation on
Divine Goodness

T.H.

"These wait all upon thee . . . thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (Psa. 104. 27-28).

One of the most persistently reiterated themes of Holy Writ is man's utter helplessness to direct his life without God. At every turn of life man comes up against his NEED, though it is but rarely that he either knows or realises the extent of that need.

The absoluteness of this need is not brought home to the heart or mind of man, because of the universal generosity of Almighty God. Only if God withdrew His activities from this planet entirely would man come face to face with the absoluteness and universality of his needs. If God kept back the rains, which fall impartially upon the just and the unjust; if He withheld the fruitful seasons (Acts 14. 17) with their bounteous harvests; if He locked up His winds in their treasuries; then man would realise the utter helplessness of his position in this scheme of things. The effects of local famines have been serious and have brought ruin and destruction to man and beast. But these famines have usually been local only: there has mostly been abundance elsewhere, and relief has usually been despatched from the region of the abundance to the place of want. God has never withheld his gifts world-wide. He has never caused the universal harvest to fail. So unfailingly, yet naturally, has the bountiful God bestowed His gifts, that men sow, doubting not for a moment but that they will reap, and call the sowing and reaping Nature's common round. But should God withhold His hand, their sowing would be vain — man may plant, and man may water but without God there would be no increase.

The other side of the question, obverse to man's need is God's ability and disposition to GIVE. These two factors in universal life are complementary to each other. God is the source of unfailing abundance, man the creature of unending need (Psa. 104. 10-15).

Not less is this so in the religious life of man. Here again the persistently reiterated theme of Holy Writ is man's utter helplessness and universal need. Again the other side of the question obverse to man's need, is God's ability and disposition to give.

The beginning of God's generosity to fallen men

dates from Eden days, when in the act of imposing the sentence required by His broken Law, God promised Mother Eve that her seed should eventually bruise the Serpent's head — God gave her there a promise — His first Gift. This form of gift He repeated to Noah, in that He promised summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. To Abraham God gave that most wonderful promise which is the basic feature of the whole Plan of redemption. By the gift of His promises God also gave hope to fallen man. God said to man "I will bring blessing to you" — man, musing on the promise said "God will bring blessing to us some day", and so hope and expectancy were born.

God gave Abraham a seed — first a son, then a nation. To this nation God gave His Word and His Law, those "lively oracles" (Acts 7. 28) which Moses received at Sinai. That Law was the most advanced moral standard of its day, and had it been received and obeyed would have raised Israel high above the nations around. That sacred gift from Sinai forms one important section of the Holy Book we treasure as the Word of Life. He gave Israel a Tabernacle so that He might give them the benefit of His presence in their midst. He gave them the good land on which the eye of God rests with holy delight (Ex. 3. 8., Deut. 11. 12). He gave them judges and deliverers when they fell into captivity — reformers who led them back to their "oracles," and "seers" who carried their minds forward to higher expectations. God gave them advancement and prominence among the nations, under David and Solomon, when the fame of Israel's king spread to the distant quarters of the world. The dual nations which later came about were given the benefit of God's patience and long-suffering, though they were fast becoming vessels fit only for destruction. Becoming inveterately idolatrous, Israel first, and Judah afterwards were given the spirit of slumber (Rom. 11. 8). Under the conditions this was a boon to them, for the blindness which came minimised the degree of their responsibility, and because God thus concluded them all in unbelief He will be able in Millennial days to have mercy upon all, "and so all Israel will be saved".

Isaiah, commissioned to deliver the message of rejection said "... the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep and hath closed your

eyes . . . " (Isa. 29. 10-16) yet he concludes his denunciation with the statement "*Is it not yet a little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field . . .*" (v. 17). The gift of slumber, while it deprived the two nations of their land for centuries, and of the privilege of supplying all the Body-members of Christ, will have kept the national spirit in a state of hunger for the appearance of Messiah as an exalted King.

In due course God gave to the returned remnant nation in Jerusalem His greatest and best gift—His well-beloved Son. This was the gift that lay dearest to His own heart. He came to earth bearing the tidings of the Almighty's great Love for men, especially for those who were children of God's Friend (Jas. 2. 23, Isa. 41. 8). What tremendous possibilities God set before that generation in Jerusalem when Messiah came to them! (Dan. 9. 25). In the first place God purposed to give *repentance* for their national sins to Israel through His Son (Luke 1. 68-79, Acts 5. 31). God desired to touch the deeper springs of their hearts by the ministry of His well-beloved, and thus to lead them to repentance.

Again, Jesus was destined to be a bringer of light to His people—God desired to bestow the gift of understanding upon that generation, so that it might comprehend what His higher purposes were—that the heavenly things were about to begin to displace the earthly carnal things. To those who were responsive to the new teachings God *gave an understanding* of the mysteries of the Kingdom (Matt. 13. 11, Mark 4. 11). "*Unto you it is given to know*" what was "hidden" from other ages.

Again, God gave Jesus to that people, to be to them as Bread of Life. In manner similar to wilderness days when God strewed the earth morning by morning with manna, so again, in another forty-year "To-day" (Heb. 4. 7) God *provided Living Bread* for the children of Abraham (John 6. 27-65). In some supernatural way the words of the Lord would have sustained their deeper life (John 6. 63) and eventuated in eternal life. In some super-mundane way His flesh would sustain the life of the world. God *gave Living Bread* to those who could eat. (John 6:32). Again (to vary the "sustenance" figure of speech) God gave Jesus as the *Water of Life*—of which, if one should drink, it should satisfy his thirst forever. (John 4. 10-15.)

God gave Israel a shepherd, who would have guided and pastured the flock of God in paths of righteousness (John 10. 1-16). But there was no beauty about Him that they desired Him. They wanted a King—a conquering Messiah; He came a sufferer, a Man of sorrows; an offering for sin.

The nation rejected Him—but to as many as did receive Him *God gave the privilege to become His own Sons* (John 1. 2). To those whose hands were open to take, God gave many other gifts along with and through His beloved Son! Giving! Giving! GIVING! all the time, to those who knew their NEED.

Even after they had despised and crucified His Son, God still kept the door of opportunity open for such as needed more than the ritual and ceremonial of the Temple sacrifice. To many among them the words of Jesus had opened a new world of possibilities—He told of opportunities and privileges, of which their fathers had never heard—(Matt. 13. 35). He set new longings rising in their hearts, but because they had been powerless against the Sanhedrin and Priests, and had not been able to veto their schemes nor their fearful deed, He had been slain. How readily they listened on that wonderful morn when "Peter stood up with the eleven" and told the people that God had raised Him from the dead, and again desired through Him to "give repentance to Israel" (Acts 5. 31).

But only a remnant were found, who desired that gift of repentance. To fill the place vacant by this hard-hearted race, God turned to the nations to take out of them a people for His Name. To these also God gave repentance unto salvation. "*Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God*" spake Peter in defence (Acts 11. 17). "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" was the brethren's response. Repentance, the gift of God? Yes, verily! They who received the word into good hearts are *such as are "opened" by the Lord* (Acts 16. 14). No man comes to the Son save those whom the Father draws (John 6. 65). The "faith" that saves is God's gift (Eph. 2. 8) through the operation of His word (Rom. 10. 13-17) and of His Spirit in their hearts. The "peace" that garrisons their hearts comes from God too (Phil. 4. 7., John 14. 27). This is a precious gift to those who dwell in a tempestuous world. Perfect peace is bestowed upon all who dwell upon the Rock of Ages (Isa. 26. 3-4).

And Love—that most desirable God-like trait? Yes, that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which He gives us (Rom. 5. 5). We cannot add so little as one inch to our spiritual stature by taking thought. It is not impossible to spend too much time talking over the necessity for our growth in Love and be all the time forgetful of the fact that Love is a fruitage (Gal. 5. 22-23) and is more a matter of the husbandman's concern than that of the branch in the vine itself. God is more

willing to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him, than any earthly father is ready to give his children food (Matt. 7. 11). And more Holy Spirit power in the heart means more Love to shed abroad in the life. This Love also, is a gift from God, for we love because He first loved.

Again, not only is the bestowment of the Holy Spirit the basis of character development (2 Cor. 3. 18) but it is also God's pledge-penny of the inheritance we hope to receive. It is the token that God has taken us into His service, and that the final reward will be sure, if we discharge our duty faithfully, "... *God . . . hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts*" (2 Cor. 1. 22, 2 Cor. 5. 5). Moreover this Holy Spirit gift is an energising and stabilising power. It is not a spirit of fear—but of cool reasoned courage, and of a sound mind. It produces the spirit of sanctity blended with sanity in our minds—a well-balanced properly-ordered sanctification of life. This too is a gift of God—and is by no means the outcome of psychological self-effort. It is God who hath wrought us for our resurrection change (2 Cor. 5. 5). The transformation is wrought by His Spirit (2 Cor. 3. 18). And then for the day-to-day struggle *He giveth grace* to such as repair to His Throne of Grace, humbly beseeching assistance in their time of need (Heb. 4. 16, Jas. 4. 6, 1 Pet. 5. 5). Thus the whole range of the Christian's life and experience is called into being and sustained by His gracious gifts, but it does not end even at that, for He will give the complete victory over death, and over the grave. When that which is mortal is swallowed up in immortality, and death is swallowed up in victory, the faithful footstep follower of the Lord will see Him and be with Him for evermore. "*Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15. 57).

From first to last, the Christian's life is one of receiving; for what has he that he has not received? It is a life of faith with an open hand—with a courage to ask and take. It is the story of a great need—which grows as it feeds, and which is more pronounced at the end of the way than at the beginning. Thank God, even its deepest need does not exhaust the capacity of the bounteous Giver. Though its demands are presented every day—yea, many times a day—the riches of His grace are of ample store for each and all that call upon Him.

The story of Divine grace is the record of One who has been disposed to "give," and "give," and "give" again, because it pleases Him to dispense of His fulness to helpless needy men. He created man with a great "need," so that He might play the part of a great giver. Man has but to open

his hand to take of that bountiful fulness which God opens His hand to give (Psa. 104. 27-28). If God withheld not His well-beloved Son "shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8. 32). Christian experience of this and other days shows without fail that they who are most developed in grace are the ones most conscious of their need. The more one has grown in the things of the Lord, and the more tender and sensitive the heart has become the more such saints become persuaded of their need for God. The ultimate end of every quest of the maturer heart, is not merely to accept the gifts of God, but to receive with open heart the Giver too.

It is good to accept with open hand the gifts of God; it is better far with open heart to accept the Giver Himself. No wealth of earth is so desirable as the gifts of God; the whole world itself is but refuse indeed in comparison with possessing God.

Beloved in the Lord, cultivate with diligence your NEEDS, then shall you find that God can more than supply them all to-day, to-morrow, and to the end.

Sickness and pain and all diseases will yield to the power of the Great Physician upon the throne; and He will not permit death to befall any except those who shall intelligently and wilfully refuse His offers of full restitution, by rejecting the terms of obedience required under the New Covenant then open to all. And even these shall be liberally dealt with; for our Lord willeth not the death of him that dieth, but would rather that all should turn unto Him and live. Accordingly, while all will be forced to "bow", in at least outward recognition of that kingdom, and to "confess" it a blessed improvement upon the reign of sin unto death (Rom. 5. 21; 1. Cor. 15. 26); yet their *will* must remain their own and their progress in restitution beyond the common advantages will depend upon their willingness or unwillingness to come into accord with that kingdom and its righteous arrangements.

* * *

Oh! how many others, like David, have played tricks with their conscience over some unconfessed sin or weakness, and have carried their burden for days and weeks and months until the drought of summer has come over them too. All the joy of the truth has gradually disappeared; all the gladness of soul has evaporated, the songs have turned to sighs and perhaps an attempt has been made to substitute service for repentance, and the longer the fight has been attempted against the voice of the Lord within, the cooler the Altar fires have become until love has waxed cold.

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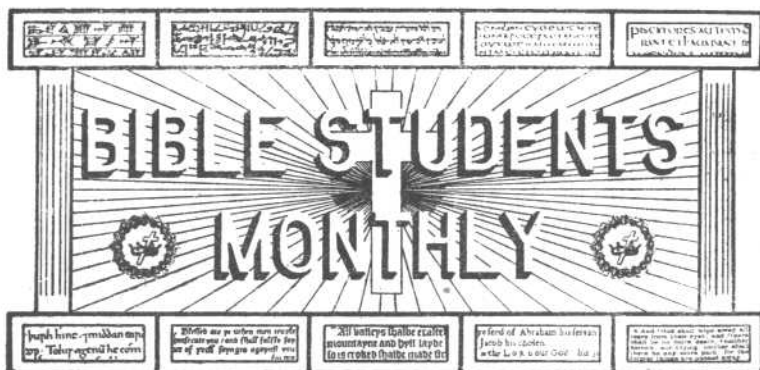
202 The Dawn of a New Era.

203 Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

204 Sure Word of Prophecy.



Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.



Vol. 28, No. 5

MAY, 1951

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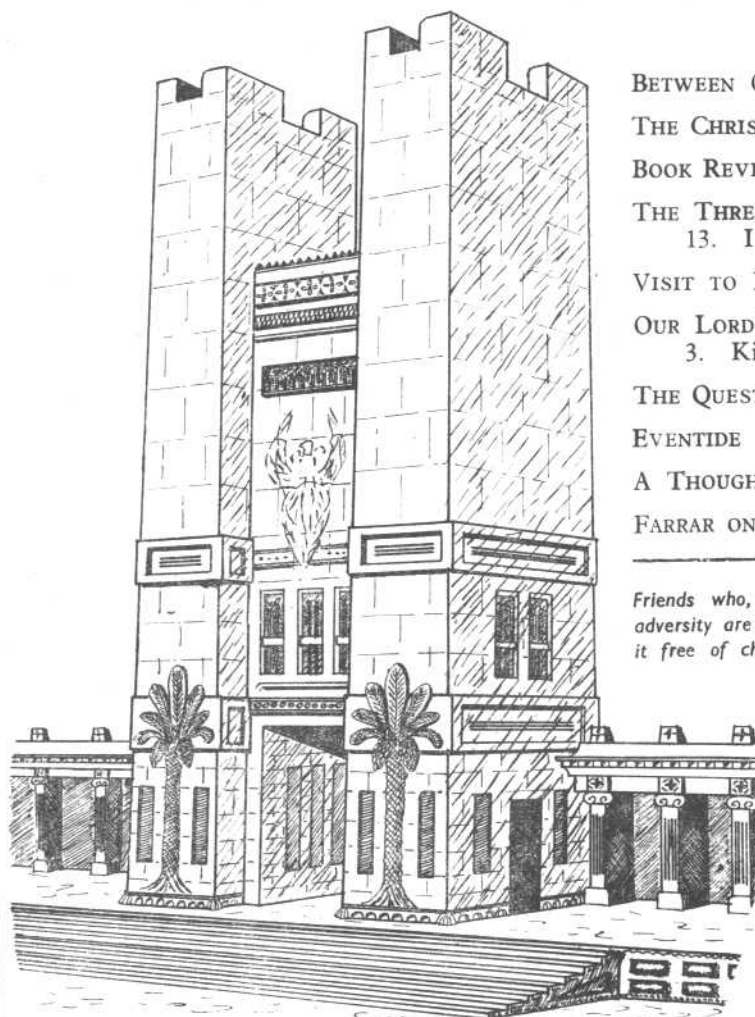
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Baptismal Service is being arranged by the Forest Gate brethren in connection with their Whitsun Home-gathering and will be conducted on Sunday, 13th May, in the morning, at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Boundary Road, Walthamstow, E.17. Enquiries to Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * *

Brethren in the Manchester area announce a programme of public meetings during 1951 which will be of interest to many. Full details can be obtained from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs, although by the time this appears in print the meetings still remaining to be held will be those at Haslingden in June and Eccles in October. It is proposed to hold the annual "Assembly of Witness" at Eccles in October but more definite details will be announced later.

* * *

Those who followed with sympathetic interest the progress of the Unity Convention held at Lake Webster, U.S.A., in 1950 will be further interested to learn that a similar gathering is planned for this year at Lakeside, Lake Erie, Ohio, U.S.A., for the period 29th July to 4th August of this year. Say the promoters, the brethren of Cicero, Ill., "If you cannot attend but are willing to give moral and prayerful support, let us hear from you and convention bulletins will be sent to you". There will not be many, if any, in this country who will be able to join with our friends at Lake Erie, but the invitation that is repeated above holds good for all. Enquiries should be sent to Convention Committee, Post Office Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

* * *

This issue contains a short report of the meeting held in London at which Brother Casimir Lanowick, of Redwood City, Calif., related some of his experiences in the land of Israel while there for some months recently. It was a pleasure for us here in London to meet our brother for the first time, and an additional pleasure to learn that he hopes to return in the autumn of this year and stay for a longer period, addressing meetings and perhaps showing films of life in Israel taken by himself upon the same occasion. It is probably generally known that Brother Lanowick is the Editor of "Jews in the News", a monthly publication devoted to recording items of interest in connection with the rebuilding of the Land of Israel and the fulfilment of related prophecies.

The publication will be sent to anyone interested, upon request to "Jews in the News", P.O. Box 432, Redwood City, Calif., U.S.A.

* * *

The May meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on 19th May in the Tudor Room. Speakers will be Bros. J. Ensoll and E. Bullard, and a very warm welcome is extended to all brethren who find it possible to join the friends there in a season of worship and fellowship. The meeting commences at 6.30 p.m.

* * *

The book "Letters of St. Paul" by Arthur Way, a translation of the Pauline Epistles, mentioned in our current list of books in this issue, is at present out of print and we are unable to say when the new edition will be ready. For the present therefore we shall not accept further orders for the book but will announce the fact as soon as new stocks are to hand.

* * *

The special issue "God's Fulfilling Purpose" has had a very favourable reception and a goodly number has been taken by various brethren and classes for use in making known the glad tidings. We hope to keep this issue permanently in stock for such purposes and can still supply by return. Prices are:—3/6 (50c) per doz., 12/6 (\$2.00) for 50., 22/- (\$3.50) per 100.

* * *

Will organisers of conventions and others interested please note that the supply of hymnals available on loan for use at such gatherings is held at Welling, and that all applications for the use of same should be addressed here. At least two weeks' notice must be given, stating quantity of hymnals required. It will be appreciated if borrowers will defray cost of carriage both ways, returning books promptly after use.

Gone From Us

Sister M. Clipsham (Macclesfield).
 Bro. H. Hawes (London).
 Bro. J. W. Newall (London).
 Bro. Pougher, senr. (Cosby).
 Bro. T. Smith (Petts Wood).
 Bro. W. Williams (Cumcarn).

* * *

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

THE CHRISTIAN ARMY

G.M.G.

A Word of
Exhortation

Are we true soldiers of Christ? Many of us will immediately answer "yes", but, stay a moment; let us be quite sure that we really are, for to join any army there are certain conditions to be fulfilled before we can commence training for the possibility of warfare, and so is it with training for the battle of the Faith.

Let us, therefore, investigate the requisite conditions and ascertain if we are fulfilling them, for without this we can no more enter into the service of the King of Kings than we can enter into the service of our King and Country.

The first condition is, of course

1. ENLISTMENT.

We must, to commence with, have a willing heart to serve Him, even to death if need be, and having decided that we wish to join the army of our God, we must decide to enlist under His Banner. It is worth while to look back and see how even in Old Testament times the Israelites entered the service of their God. In 1 Chronicles 29. 9 we have the following description of this offering of themselves to the service of the living God:—

"Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the King also rejoiced with great joy."

The same thing occurred in the days of King Hezekiah, who answered the people saying,

"Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings unto the Lord." (2 Chron. 29. 31.)

This, then, is the first condition—to "offer ourselves" or to volunteer to join of our own free will by consecrating our lives to His service. Without this initial step we have not yet entered the army of the Lord.

How can we be sure that we have done so? By surrendering ourselves, our talents and abilities to Him and utilising them for the furtherance of His Kingdom, just as we would do if we were to enter our National army. St. Paul exhorts us as follows:—

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12. 1.)

Having, then, entered the service of the Lord,

and as it were "signed on", accepting His conditions of full surrender to His Will and His guidance, we will consider the further conditions to ensure that we truly belong to Him.

2. CLOTHING.

The first thing a new recruit receives when he has entered the Army is his new clothing, or as he would say, his "kit". So it is when entering the Christian Army. There are garments provided by our Heavenly King for all His servants. Special garments are given to them to enable them to enjoy the full benefit of being His soldiers. These are called "the garments of salvation". Can this be so, you may ask? Yes, by all means. You have now placed yourselves under His protection and care and in return He offers you the garments which belong to all His true soldiers, and thus equipped you are "fitted" for His service.

Having now become His in a very special way, you are cleansed from the consequences of sin and are given great and precious promises. By reason of the sacrifice of the Supreme Commander you have entered into that "life more abundant" which He promised that all who came to Him should receive if only they would yield themselves to Him and take upon them His yoke. Of these "garments of salvation" the Prophet Isaiah sings with great joy as follows:—

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with his ornaments and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isa. 61. 10.)

This is the garment our Lord described as "the wedding garment" without which no one is allowed to partake of the heavenly feast. This means that we are not to put any merit in anything we can do, for our salvation is of the Lord alone, and His All-Sufficient merits have brought us back from sin and death. Small wonder that the same Prophet says that "all our own righteousness is as 'filthy rags'" (64. 6), thus showing clearly that self-righteousness will never win for us our heavenly birthright, but implicit trust in our Lord's redemption and His Righteousness alone, and these deep fundamentally important truths are referred to as "the garments of salvation" which we must appro-

priate and acknowledge before we can partake of the "royal feast" which the King has provided.

Having, therefore, joined willingly, signed on by consecration and accepted the clothing provided, we are acceptable in Christ Jesus as a true soldier.

3. FOOD AND DRINK.

Naturally, these are amply provided by the Captain of our Salvation. Jesus is Himself the "Bread of Life" and in this sense "Bread" is a comprehensive word including all we need of spiritual food, for He is the Fountain of Life and all others from whom we receive are only springs from the One Source. Jesus Himself described this bread as "living bread"; he that eats thereof will never die. That means, in the real sense of the word—"die"—for those who have passed away from this life are "asleep in Jesus" until He shall appear the second time. (1 Thess. 4.)

We know that Jesus was Himself the Word—"I am the way, the truth, and the life", and, therefore, when we read the Word—His Book—we are actually feeding on Him, eating the spiritual Bread. Jesus said clearly "*Whoso cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst*". (John 6. 35.)

He is also the Fountain of Life and therefore we have all our wants supplied by Him for eating and drinking.

"And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22. 17.)

The Word of God is, therefore, "meat indeed" and "drink indeed". His flesh and blood! What a satisfying portion is ours when we realise that this food and drink leads us to life eternal, for the "gift of God is eternal life, through Christ Jesus our Lord"!

We see thus that our spiritual food and drink are amply provided for us and we shall "lack nothing" as the Psalmist so confidently assures us.

4. ARMOUR.

This is a most essential thing for any soldier, not only to make sure he possesses, but also look to it that it is kept in good repair and well proved. The Lord has provided for His army a very full equipment, as we shall see. St. Paul, the great Apostle, again exhorts us as follows:—

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all taking the shield of faith,

wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

As we have a special robe for the feast, so our Master provides for His true and faithful servants this full equipment for the battle in which we shall most surely be called upon to take part. Let us make sure that the "sword of the spirit", the "Word", is in our hands a powerful weapon and that we keep it sharp and ready at all times till the battle is over.

It is worth recalling here that David, when he went to slay Goliath, would not use Saul's armour, because he "had not proved it". He preferred the sling and stones with which he was better acquainted and more practised and tried, and then he went forward confidently in "the name of the Lord of Hosts". We, too, must likewise remember St. Paul's injunction to "Pray always with all supplications in the spirit". As one of our greatest writers has said "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

5. RECOMPENSE or REWARD.

To every true soldier who realises that his loved country is in danger, and who has the real loyalty to his King in his heart, the thought of reward does not count very much. The spirit of love and devotion to all that he holds dear is sufficient to call him to arms when their safety is threatened. Thus, too, it is with the soldier of Christ. Yet our Captain and Head knows that there will come times when the battle is hard and the soldier is "sore pressed" by the enemy, and He has, therefore, set before us great hopes and promises. He also assures us that if we do His Will, when He comes to reward us for our labours for Him "your joy no man taketh from you".

St. Paul warns us that there may be some who will attempt to wrest this reward from us and that they may endeavour to turn us aside to worship others, whereas we know that we must worship the Lord only. He says:—

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility." (Col. 2. 18.)

Now, although humility is a great essential for all who follow Christ, we are not to be downcast and afraid to run for the prize through lack of confidence in our ability to attain, for we have to remember that Christ Himself is with us and if we trust in Him we shall be "more than conquerors". Thus St. Paul says:—

"Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward." (Heb. 10. 35.) and, although elsewhere he says that "In a race

all run but not all gain the prize", we may be quite sure that just as every valorous deed does not gain the V.C. there are many other honours to be gained, and did not our Captain Himself say that "Who-soever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward". (Mark 9. 41.)

How much more, therefore, will He reward His faithful army.

6. HOPE OF VICTORY.

Without this hope the soldier would not be able to put forth his best efforts and would lose his confidence, and so our Captain has many words of comfort and consolation to those who press on and rely on Him. "*And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*" (1 John 5. 4.)

Again and again He exhorts us to trust Him and surely we can do no better for "*The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own*". So let us do as the beautiful hymn advises us and "Stand in His strength alone", and seeking only His glory and honour, take up His cause and help to bring in the reign of:—

7. PEACE.

For this is really what every soldier fights for.

He knows, when he joins the army that he may be called upon to fight some stern battles, but the true soldier of Christ knows that the Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of Peace and when the battle is done, his thoughts turn longingly to home and loved ones and he looks forward to the fruits of his labours—peaceful and happy days fulfilling his own destiny amid the joy and harmony of his own kindred. Then shall the righteous flourish, and peace, lasting peace, shall reign and the soldiers will rejoice with their King even as the people rejoiced with King David. For He, our Prince of Peace, shall reign with equity and shall "reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" and—oh wonderful promise—the last enemy that he shall put under his feet is death, for in His Kingdom

"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". (Rev. 21. 4.)

*"From victory unto victory,
His armies shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord indeed."*

BOOK REVIEWS

Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Geldenhuys) Marshall, Morgan and Scott. 685 pp. 25/- (27/- or \$4.00 post free from Welling).

A most exhaustive work, intended for students and preachers and containing a tremendous amount of material for all such. The book consists of, first, an introduction to the Gospel dealing with all that is known of Luke and his work, his sources, style, trustworthiness and so forth; second, the exposition proper; finally, a number of special essays on particular subjects such as the Virgin Birth, the Kingdom of God, demon-possession and the like. There is a good index and an index of Scripture references. This is not a commentary to be read through once and then put away, but a work of reference to which one can turn time after time for information on any part of the Gospel. The author evidently holds to the expectation of the literal Second Coming and the Kingdom, and his outlook on this and other matters affecting the authority of the New Testament is one that will commend itself to our readers.

"I Will Come Again" (Hollister) Society for Bible Research. 320 pp. \$2.25 in U.S.A. 18/- post free from Welling.

The title page announces this as "a fresh analysis of the Old and New Testament prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Christ the Messiah". The *parousia* is pictured as comprising five phases, commencing with the invisible presence (*prosopon*—the masked face) prior to His revelation to the world, passing successively into the *epiphaneia*, the dawning; the *apokalupsis*, His revealing to Israel; thence to His sovereignty over the nations and the final judgment when the Son delivers up the Kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all. For a book of 320 pages there is not so much actual text matter as might have been expected, a great portion of the book being occupied by parallel renderings of every New Testament text and passage bearing on the Second Advent from Wilson's "*Diaglott*" and Rotherham's version. There is also an index of Scripture references and a glossary of all relevant Greek words. The parallel version feature makes this a useful reference book for those who wish to study the subject of the Lord's Second Coming in detail, and the 67 pages of exposition contain many points of real interest.

The Three Epistles of John

A.O.H.

Part XIII. I John 3. 4,—10

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
(Chap. 3 vs. 4.)

This is a sudden change of thought from the lofty tones of the first three verses. *There*, John had taken us up into the very heavens themselves, exalting our minds with the celestial vision of the future glory that will without doubt be ours. The conditional qualification of verse 3, reminding us that a process of purifying is going on within each one who has this hope within him, seems almost intended to be nothing more than a reminder. The assurance and certainty of verses 1 and 2 is as though no failure is contemplated or possible. *We are* sons of God; that is indisputable. *We shall* be like Him; that is equally indisputable. Then verse 3 just hints at the fact that without purification the promised glory may never materialise, but verse 4 comes right down with a stark and uncompromising declaration that there is one dread power which might conceivably ruin and nullify the whole glorious promise, and that dread power is—sin!

Of course John had spoken about sin before. In chapter 1 and chapter 2 he touches upon its blackness several times. But whereas in chapter 1 he treats sin as a defiling influence resting upon us largely because of our Adamic inheritance that can be cleansed away by confession and repentance; whereas in chapter 2 he speaks of sin as the general effect of our worldly environment and our own fleshly weaknesses, that can be extinguished by "abiding in Him", here in chapter 3 he shows how sin can be a more subtle and more personal thing, a principle that may be received into the heart and allowed to control life's actions not because of Adamic weakness, not because of the seductive influences of the world, the flesh and the devil, but because the unregenerate heart may in some cases love the darkness better than the light and rejoice in deeds of evil for the very sake of evil. That is the darkest and the deepest manifestation of sin that can proceed from a man, the one most difficult to blot out. Adamic weakness will no longer have effect in men's lives in the Millennial Age; the snares of this world will disappear with the ending of this world; but nothing else than true conversion to Christ will ever put

an end to secret sympathy with sin. The real purpose both of Divine dealings with the Church in this Age and with the world in the next Age is to eliminate from all hearts the love of sin for its own sake, the last stronghold of the Devil. John, knowing that in these last days, just as in the days before the Flood, the hearts of men would be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", has taken care to warn all who may hear or read his words of the danger that surrounds those even who live the nearest to God. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

It seems such a self-evident statement that one might wonder at first why John troubled to make the remark. "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.*" Of course he transgresses, everyone knows that; for sin is against the law. There must be something deeper in the thought, something that does not come to mind until after a few minutes' reflection. What law? The law of Moses? It could be so, but the law of Moses is altogether too restricted a framework in which to fit the implication of this verse. John's words were addressed to Christians, too, and the law of Moses is not the rule by which our lives are to be guided. The law of Rome, then? Hardly that, for again the Christian is bound by a law which is higher far than the laws of Rome. That is the clue, of course. God constituted immutable and fundamental laws for the ordered progress of His creation and the guidance of those intelligent beings he purposed to create, away there right at the beginning. And sin is the violation of that primitive and fundamental law. No man-made code can reproduce all that is contained in that Divine rule in its entirety. Neither did the Mosaic law fully reflect all that it contains, and demands. The original Divine law, implanted in the constitution and in the heart of Adam in the day of his creation, and now held before the Church of this Gospel Age as the ideal towards which she must strive, is the law the violation of which is sin. Any infringement of the rules which God has devised for the orderly conduct of His creation and the happiness and well-being of the creatures He has placed upon it—is sin. And whosoever infringes those rules, whether deliberately or unwittingly, is a sinner. There is really no better expression of

this truth than is contained in the words of the Authorised Version. Wilson's Diaglott attempts to improve the translation by rendering "Everyone who practises sin also practises iniquity, and sin is iniquity" but he really only obscures the sense. The plain, forthright English expression "SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW" cannot possibly be improved upon when once we realise that it is Divine fundamental law that is meant.

Here comes a parenthesis. John misses no opportunity of impressing upon his readers that there is a remedy for sin and a way of escape from the power of sin. So here, immediately after the dark shadow of sin has fallen across the page, he draws aside the curtain, as it were, and lets in the light that chases that shadow away. "*Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*" (vs 5). The Vatican manuscript omits the word "our" and in so doing immeasurably strengthens the passage. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law . . . but . . . he was manifested to take away sin." There is hope for all, all who repent, no matter how heinous or deliberate their sin nor how tardy their repentance. If the Parable of the Prodigal Son had nothing else to teach us it would always have that. No matter how far away the erring one has strayed nor how deeply he has sunk, nor how long he has stayed away, if he but sincerely repents and begins to make his way back, his father will come to meet him!

Now at this point John has to embark upon an admittedly difficult subject. He has to bring another deep doctrinal truth to his readers in such fashion that they can grasp the principle he wants to expound, without so misunderstanding the implication of his words that they assume a position before God to which they have no right. He wants to show his disciples that because of their repentance and sincerity they have been awarded a justification in the eyes of God which allows Him completely to ignore and put behind His back the content of sin in their mortal bodies and in their earthly lives. He has to make them realise that in the final analysis, sin is the fruit of the *desire* to act in violation of fundamental Divine law, and righteousness is the *desire* to act in accordance with fundamental Divine law; that it is from those desires that the concrete things which we call evil and good spring forth, so that it is what lies in the heart rather than on the hands which constitutes a man sinful or sinless. Jesus began to lead the minds of His disciples to such an understanding when He told them that the mere desire to sin is the same to God as if the sin had actually

been committed. (Matt. 5. 27-28.) That was a "hard saying" to those who had been accustomed from childhood to the Mosaic Law which laid absolute stress upon the performance of the letter without any regard to the spirit. The later Papal doctrine of cleansing by penances really had quite a good prototype in the typical ceremonies of the Tabernacle. The Israelite who learned that by the bringing of appropriate animal or vegetable offerings to the priest, he could be cleansed from his sin, might very easily be tempted to conclude that for so much sin the price of cleansing was so much offering, or payment. That system, initiated by Moses and practised by Israel through so many centuries, was a very necessary step in the process by which God must needs reveal His deepest spiritual truths to man, but it was a stage that had to be completed, and then superseded in Christ by something deeper and nearer the fundamental. The tragedy is that even in our day, so long after the ending of the Mosaic Law, there are so many who fail to realise that slavery to sin, or freedom from sin, does not lie so much in the expression of our motives through our bodies, as in the motives themselves.

So John ventures upon this new and uncharted sea by a first tentative approach. "*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.*" (vs. 6.) It is a startling statement to make; taken in the ordinary sense and with our ordinary everyday definition of what constitutes the practice of sin, it cannot possibly be true. But the statement, coming as it does from the inspired Apostle, cannot be other than true, and if it seems a difficult and incomprehensible remark to make we must perforce search our minds and attune ourselves to his thoughts until we understand what he means. Thus doing we shall realise how true it is. We must not be unmindful of the fact that in chapter 1 he has already said "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us". Whatever meaning we attach to this last statement of John, it must not do violence to the earlier ones. We must understand it in such a way that both are true.

The Twentieth Century translation tries to lessen the impact of this disturbing teaching by rendering "No one who maintains union with him lives in sin". That is a way out of the apparent difficulty but that is not what John said. The Greek is as bold and uncompromising as the Authorised: "Everyone abiding in him sins not". The only possible answer to the enigma is that the words do mean just what they say and that here in this passage John is representing things as seen by God Himself. In chapter 1 the viewpoint is from the

earth and of ourselves. "If *we* say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" for the results of other men's infractions of Divine law are present in our bodies, and those of our own individual infractions of Divine law, willing or unwilling, deliberate or of ignorance, are also present in our bodies. But God, looking down upon us from above, says "Whoever is abiding in Me, *sins not*" for only those who at heart are sincere and in full sympathy with Divine law can be truly said to be "abiding in Him". And these, despite their fleshly, Adamic imperfections, their stumblings and failings and frequent falls from grace, the Father knows are at heart in harmony with Him and entirely out of sympathy with sin in all its forms. These, transferred to a perfect environment and being given bodies not handicapped by inherited imperfections and weaknesses, would live fully sinless lives in full harmony with Divine law. Hence, knowing what they *would* do if they could, knowing that they have already pledged themselves to the standards of righteousness and have no desire for, nor sympathy with, any of the "hidden things of darkness", knowing that their motives and intents and sincerity are beyond question, God declares that such "sin not". From the Divine point of view they are without sin, even although in real life the motions of sin still work in their mortal members.

That, after all, is justification, to be declared righteous, upright, in the sight of God. That is the justification that is of God. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!" (Rom. 8. 33).

Now, immediately, and as if to guard against our taking the wrong thought from this wonderful statement defining our standing in the sight of God, John adds an antithesis. "*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*"—yes, but—"who-soever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (vs 6). Here we are brought back to earth again and compelled to view matters from our own standpoint once more. "Whosoever sinneth!" It has already been told us that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we, who are the sons of God, admitted to this spiritual presence. Now, says John, whosoever sinneth hath neither seen nor known him. Clearly here again he is talking of sin from another standpoint than that which is taken in chapter 1. And how logical it is to conclude that if, in chapter 3 verse 6, the one who, abiding in him, sinneth not in the sense that his motives and sincerity are perfect in the Father's sight, then conversely, the one whose motives and sincerity are not perfect, neither sees nor knows the Father. John has already told us that much, previously in

his epistle; now he reiterates this truth in even more solemn tones. It is not the one who has failed by reason of some human weakness who "hath not seen him, neither known him", else not one of us in the flesh could justly claim the privilege. It is the one who, like Simon the sorcerer, has a "heart not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8. 21) who, being one that sinneth, neither sees nor knows him.

John wants to impress this lesson even more forcefully before he leaves the subject, but he wants to go very carefully. He must have known how that some in after days would seize upon his words to claim for themselves an actual fleshly perfection which they do not in fact and can never hope to possess; how others, more sincere of heart, would nevertheless mistakenly conclude that God had granted perpetual freedom from the thralldom of sin without the possibility of its bonds ever again encircling them; and how there would be those so blind to the essence of God's ways that they would hail this declared freedom from sin as licence to plunge into those very excesses which must inevitably brand them as sinners in the sight of the Most High. "*Let no man deceive you*" he warns "*He that doeth righteousness is the righteous one, just as God Himself is righteous*" (vs. 7). That is not quite the A.V. rendering but it is perhaps a very readable paraphrase. It must be expected that the one whose inward purity and sincerity has earned for himself the Divine approval and hall mark of justification must show something in his outward life and actions to correspond. A good tree does not bring forth evil fruits and a grape vine planted in good ground will normally produce good grapes. Likewise, says John, it is with the sinner. "*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning*." (vs. 8.) Just as God sets his seal upon those who are truly His, and proclaims them righteous in His sight, so the devil brands with his hall-mark those who have given themselves over to him, and proclaims them his slaves. Thus it is, and thus it has been from the entry of sin into the world.

There is a subtle thought here that is not apparent in the Authorised Version. "The devil sinneth from the beginning" says that Version. The Greek omits the definite article; it is grammatically correct to read "a beginning", and although it does not necessarily follow on that account that the indefinite article and not the definite article—"a" instead of "the"—is intended and should be read in this instance, it is at least a possibility. We do not know just when the fall of Lucifer occurred. It might have been at the time of Eden; it might have been earlier, and he waiting his time for an oppor-

tunity to put his rebellious designs into effect. What we do know—and perhaps this is what John had in mind at this point—is that Satan's rebellion and sin did have a beginning; *Divine righteousness had no beginning*. That latter existed, with the Most High Himself, "from everlasting". And it will exist, after sin has been utterly destroyed, "to everlasting". And this same theme, the perpetuity of righteousness and those who stand for righteousness in contrast to the transience of evil and those who embrace and retain evil, is hinted at in the next sentence. "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (vs. 8). Not created, or born, but manifested. He already existed. There is no note here of the time when He was not. From a time long before whatever "beginning" it was that first saw the evil and sin of the Devil, the Son of God was; but now He is manifested, made plain in this world from whose sight He was formerly hidden, to destroy the works of the Devil. This "manifestation" must therefore include both His First and Second Advents and all that is associated therewith. Throughout all past ages, whilst sin began and spread apparently unchecked through the earth, and the "prince of this world" ruled without let or hindrance, the Lord of All remained concealed from the world, unknown to mankind. On the historic day when the last of the Prophets, lifting up his eyes from the swiftly flowing waters, cried aloud "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world", that manifestation began, and has continued ever since, and will continue, throughout the Millennial Age of glory that is to succeed this Age, until the final judgment has completed this promised destruction of the works of the Devil, and ushered all mankind into the Divinely ordained eternity of sinlessness that is the consummation of God's purpose for this world.

So, at last, John comes to the climax of his teaching; he feels that he has prepared the way sufficiently for this forthright expression of truth. "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.*" (vs. 9-10.)

This is a striking statement, more so even than that in verse 6 for it is couched in even bolder terms. "Doth not commit sin" . . . "he cannot sin!" These are daring words indeed. Even with all in mind that has just been said, can they be justified? Can it be truthfully said, from any possible standpoint, that we who are born of God, born from above, as Jesus put it to Nicodemus, *cannot* sin?

Most of the modern translators seem to be

uncertain how to take this. They adopt a variety of expedients to get around the literal meaning of the words. "*Is not habitually guilty of sin*" says Weymouth. "*He does not value sinning*" is Ferrar Fenton's suggestion. "*No one who has received the new life from God lives sinfully*" is the rendering adopted by the Twentieth Century version. They all give an impression of dubiousness, of perplexity. None of them mirror the simplicity of the Greek—"is not able to sin". The one born of God cannot accept and practise the way of sin because it is unthinkable that he should do so. A good example of the principle is afforded in the case of Joseph and his master's wife. "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin before God?*" (Gen. 39. 9.) Physically and in fact, he *could* have done so, but nonetheless his allegiance to Divine law made it a perfectly true thing to say that he *could not* commit this sin. That is the heart attitude of all who are born of God; they do not and cannot have any sympathy with the violation of God's laws, and even though they may and do come short of their ideals, their inward sincerity remains unblemished, and God, looking upon them and judging them according to that perfect heart-attitude, declares that they, the born of God, are *sinless* in His sight.

There is an important but somewhat obscure phrase here. "His seed remaineth in him." Whose seed? Remains in whom? Grammatically, the "seed" referred to might be of God or it might be of the one born of God. It is not altogether clear why it is that the one who "doth not commit sin" finds himself in this honoured position by reason of the fact that "his seed remaineth in him". What is the explanation?

It seems most likely that there is a direct connection between the fact of being "born of God" and the remaining a receptacle, so to speak, of this "seed". It is almost as if there is an assurance against sin coming in and defiling one who continues in possession of a purifying or vitalising "seed". Weymouth has it "*a God-given germ of life abides in him*", Moffatt "*the offspring of God remains in him*", and the Twentieth Century "*the very nature of God dwelleth in him*". Rotherham, more obscurely, renders "*a seed of him within him abideth*". In most cases, at all events, the translators appear to take this "seed" as a vitalising or living influence from God, entering into the man and remaining there. That view at any rate makes the verse intelligible, and in harmony with all other scriptural doctrine regarding our spiritual quickening and "begetting" and "birth". Whoever has experienced this "new birth" has been "born of God", has thereafter and throughout life, whilst

faithful to his calling, an inward possession of the life-giving and quickening Holy Spirit, which not only sustains the inward spiritual life but also causes us to grow and develop spiritually so that in due time we shall be fitted to be clothed upon with our "house which is from heaven". The continued possession of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee against our being brought into bondage to sin; conversely, our lapsing into the power of sin indicates that we have lost the Holy Spirit. The expression "his seed remaineth in him" does not mean that it must inevitably remain in us without possibility of loss for the remainder of life, any more than the parallel expression "he cannot sin" means that it is impossible for one to repudiate his Lord and his consecration and his faith and turn to unrighteousness like the "sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire". (2 Pet. 2. 22.) What it does mean is that *while* that seed remains, and *because* it remains, the new birth, the being "born again" remains a truth, and freedom from sin is a truth also. There are not many who would seriously claim that one thus accepted into this relationship with God is thereafter rendered incapable of turning his back upon the sacred things and embracing again the evil from which he has escaped. "Once saved, always saved" is certainly a theme not altogether unknown among some groups of Christian believers, but the belief, when analysed, is seldom found to be so extreme as the bare utterance of the four words would seem to imply.

Our final conclusion, in the light of all that John has to tell us in this remarkable passage, would seem to be that complete faith in Christ and in His atoning sacrificial death, and absolute sincerity of heart in one's personal consecration to God, backed up with such manifestation of good endeavours in words and conduct as the weakness of the flesh and the outward influences of the world permit, gains for the believer a judicial decree of righteousness, of sinlessness, in the sight of God, and as judged by His own fundamental standards. That blessed condition rests upon the basis of faith and consecration, and whilst that basis persists that standing before God persists. But if the basis be destroyed, the whole edifice that is built upon it is destroyed also. If one turns aside from the paths of righteousness and commences deliberately to violate Divine law, knowing that he is violating Divine law, then the Holy Spirit, the "seed", no longer remains in him, he loses his standing of justification, he is no longer born of God, it is no longer true that he "cannot sin", and it is manifest that he is no longer a child of God but is instead a child of the Devil. If it is possible for a man to be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the

children of God, it must be equally possible for one to be delivered into the bondage of corruption out of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But not by God! The great truth that can give the weakest of the Lord's sincere children supreme confidence is that our Father having accepted one who has come to Him, will never of Himself let that one go. He Who has promised to perform a good work in us will abundantly complete that work and fulfil that promise, no matter how unpromising and unsatisfactory the human material with which He has to work—if we on our part will let Him. But there is one barrier the Father cannot and will not break down—the barrier of the human will. He will—and does—do all that lies in His mighty power to turn us away from sin and toward righteousness, but we have now and shall have for all time the power within ourselves to choose the way of evil, if we will. And if, after every possible means of persuasion has been used, and failed, and we remain obdurate in our determination to continue in the way of evil, the Father can do nothing but leave us to the logical consequences of our choice. He will ever abide faithful; but attainment of the promised prize rests not only upon God's faithfulness to us, which cannot be questioned, but also upon our faithfulness to God, which is much more of an uncertain matter. We have been "once saved"; of that there is no doubt nor dispute, and so far as the Father is concerned we are, thereafter "always saved"; but so far as we are concerned we do well to remember that we shall remain "saved" only just so long as we ourselves comply with the conditions which alone can keep us "saved" in His sight.

Here John changes the subject. From the middle of verse 10 he comes back to the more practical expressions of Christian conduct in everyday life and begins to talk of the connection between our relationship to God and our relationship to the brethren.

To be continued.

A flower that stops short at its flowering misses its purpose. We were created for more than our spiritual development: reproduction, not mere development, is the goal of matured being — reproduction in other lives.

* * *

Oh, strange enigma! and wonderful paradox! Bonds, afflictions, tribulations, imprisonment — sufferings of all kinds — and even death — yet Paul looked forward to it all with "joy". What an inexplicable intoxication it is to have the love of Christ in the heart at a white-hot glow!

VISIT TO ISRAEL—A Report of Interest

Bro. Casimir Lanowick, Editor of "Jews in the News", was in England recently for a short time on his way back to America after a prolonged tour in the Holy Land. At the invitation of the London friends he addressed a meeting of brethren in London on Saturday, March 17th last. In consequence of the loving zeal of a sister at the meeting the following notes of his address were taken at the time and are reproduced here for the benefit and interest of those who were not present but would like to know what was said.

Bro. Lanowick hopes to be in England again in the autumn and it is hoped that he will be able to speak on his experiences in Israel in various parts of this country. The "Monthly" will announce the arrangements in due course.

* * *

In the first place I would like to apologise if any of the friends here have difficulty in understanding my Yankee accent. The big question every time I begin to talk is "Where shall I start?". We want to tell you that we felt we *lived* in Israel. We were there for three months. You cannot help but be greatly impressed when you are there. I am sure everybody would feel greatly privileged to be there. Last year twenty thousand tourists visited Israel, and I wanted to get some good out of it as did others. While we were in Israel we were so greatly impressed; we found how difficult it was to retain in one's mind past history and future history. Our attention was attracted and fascinated by the things we saw; while travelling I was attracted by the agricultural plain where Gideon selected his three hundred. There are many things that appeal to the Christian who understands prophecy, and we were mindful of the Lord's words through Jeremiah "*I will gather them from all nations, and bring them back*". You would be moved to tears if you saw the sights at the port where Jews come in their thousands. We saw fourteen hundred coming off the "Transylvania." Employment has to be found for five hundred Jews every day. We came to the conclusion that Israel was standing on chicken legs, but, *it was standing*. Israel must take in its children, whether it is wise or unwise, they must take them in.

I believe, dear friends, that the Lord has placed the Jews in such a position to-day that they cannot

refuse entrance to their brethren. Now they have the government power in their own control and are able to say how many Jews can enter, the only thing they can do is to see the Jews come. There is no power that can prevent it. They must go to Israel because the persecutions are getting severe. We saw Jews from Iraq, Poland and Rumania. We saw three hundred children from forty-five different countries, and they all had to learn Hebrew to understand each other. These are some of the things that make you realise what a tremendous thing is happening.

We made the trip to the Negev, the south land. We found them drilling for water, and they are finding it. This is typical of what you will see throughout the land; many of these things are in the beginning. We must remember that the promises were of a material nature and that material blessings will be poured out upon Israel. The rainfall is increasing marvellously; in America they have tried to make an artificial rainfall, but of course it has only been a fizzle; this is the real thing. I believe, dear friends, that one of the things that is going to turn Israel to their Creator is His goodness in things like this. In 1949 Israel had the lowest deathrate in the world; that is the report of the World Health Organisation.

Many changes are taking place in Israel, but one of the greatest revolutions there is the spiritual revolution. People know what the Jew is doing to the land, but many do not know what that land is doing to the Jew. I want to refer you to John 12. 42 and then to Acts 6. 7. "*A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*" There we have the finished picture, what happened to a great many individuals in the day of the early Church. There are secret believers in Jerusalem to-day, and we are waiting for the day of Acts 6. 7 when they come out into the open and are obedient to the faith.

We want to say that we were greatly refreshed by our visit, and we want to give others this belief so that they can look at their Bibles and become positive. So we hope that these things will inspire you all to a greater interest in Israel, and that you may be used by the Lord to help that people. We would like to see this message, the message of God's Word, to be made known unto His people. Let us see our privileges, and give a helping hand.

OUR LORD'S RETURN

3.—Kingdom against Kingdom.

T.H.

An Exposition of
Scripture Dealing
with the Second Advent

Having reviewed in the previous articles some of the prevailing Protestant conceptions relative to our Lord's Return and their non-agreement with Scripture testimony, it will be well for us now to review in greater detail some of the statements and forecasts which Jesus Himself made with regard to that epoch-making event. Some of these statements are connected with parabolic utterances, and thus will be subject to the rule that a parable is only an illustrated account of something else, and as such must not be pressed too strongly in the application of its details. On the other hand, when applied in conformity with the spirit and tenor of the illustration, such statements may carry much precision and emphasis. "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me*" is a case in point where a most profound statement gains emphasis because spoken in an illustrative sense. The parabolic form of statement is a gain (not a loss) in exactitude of meaning when thus rightly employed.

This particular line of enquiry must start out very definitely with the assurance that Jesus will come again, and that that Coming occurred neither at His resurrection, nor yet at Pentecost, nor even at the destruction of Jerusalem, but at some later date far forward on the stream of time from any one of those early episodes. That those who survived the scattering which resulted from the Fall of Jerusalem believed that that Coming still lay ahead of them is demonstrated by the words of John in his first Epistle. He there says "*... little children, abide in Him so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming. . . . it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*" (1 John 2. 28, 3. 2.) Again in the Revelation setting, both at its beginning, and end, that Coming is re-asserted, and appreciated with much warmth of heart. When once its graphic words are due to be fulfilled, the Lord and Master upon whom fulfillment depends, says "*Behold I come quickly . . . yea, I come quickly*" to which John expectantly replies "*Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.*" (Rev. 1. 7 ; 22. 7 ; 12. 22.) And so say we all, even now, in this later day!

If then Jesus had thus not come at the end of the First Century, for how long do the evidences

indicate that He would be away from the earth? Would His absence be of long or short duration?

In this point the evidence must be inferential—from the parables. In Luke 19. 11-27, our Lord propounds the parable of the Pounds, and introduces it by stating that a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. A journey into a "far" country, in those slow-moving days, would be a journey covering a considerable length of time. There is nothing here to indicate a period as long as this Gospel Age unless it be connected with our Lord's departure and return. All it shows is that the period was not of short duration. The reason Jesus spake the parable was because certain disciples were supposing the Kingdom to be near at hand. "But" said Jesus "it is not near at hand ; I have to go away into a far country and to return before that Kingdom can really come."

Again, in another parable of a like kind (Matt. 25. 14-30), Jesus spake of a man journeying to another country, and after being away "a long time" (vs. 19) returning home to make a reckoning with his servants. Again, nothing here could indicate a period as long as the Gospel Age, except by connecting it to its long preceding context, and taking Jesus to be the man who had to make the journey and leave the control of his goods to his servants while away. But in this case, it is "a long time" not "a far country" which is indicated.

What a "long time" could indicate in a parabolic setting could be well shown by a reference to Luke 20. 9-18. A man had planted a vineyard, and after letting it out to husbandmen, went into another country for "a long time". Here the parable had a local and contemporaneous setting, for the Scribes and Chief Priests perceived that it had been spoken against them (vs. 19) and would have laid violent hands on Jesus but for their fear of the consequences. God had been the planter of the vineyard (Psa. 80. 8-9 ; Isa. 5. 1-7) who at stated times sought for the fruitage thereof. He sent prophets to the husbandmen to state His requests. These they beat, and sent away empty-handed. He then sent His Son, whom they slew. In this case "a long time" is the period from Moses to Christ—nearly the whole of the Jewish Age!

Inferentially therefore, "a long time" in Matt.

25. 19 could mean another period of somewhat similar length. Certain also of the parables of the Kingdom in Matt. 13 imply a considerable period of time for growth and development, especially that of the mustard seed, which, at length, became a tree. The "wheat and tares" illustration reaches to the "end of the Age", but that alone, does not of itself say "how long" apart from other factors.

In the writer's humble estimation the Epistles to the Seven Churches (Rev. 2 and 3) addressed to them by the Risen Lord, after He had acquired an understanding He did not have on earth, contains an indication of "a long time" for development. This is not either time or place for presenting an historical exposition of that development, but very long and close reflection have left an assurance both deep and strong that the growth and development of the whole Church of the Gospel Age is pictured there and has indeed covered "a long time".

As a last line of evidence (but from outside New Testament sources this time) the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, of the Image and the Stone, is adduced (Dan. 2). Three out of the four kingdoms represented in the metallic Image had come and gone in Jesus' day. The "fourth" (unnamed, but which had proved to be Rome) was at its zenith of power in those days, and continued through about three centuries in an unchanged form. Then its Imperial power was divided into an Eastern and Western Imperatorship. The Western one endured till 476 A.D., when it dissolved itself, and sent its regalia and crown to the Emperor then reigning in Constantinople. The Eastern power endured till the fifteenth century.

But the point of importance to our present study is that as yet, the Stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, *has not fallen* on the ironclay feet and ground them, and the whole Image, to powder. Inferentially—though it is difficult to prove—Rome is in existence yet, and must remain so till the miraculously-quarried Stone falls on its toes and feet.

That Stone represents the Kingdom of God, hence, represents in a less direct way its King—our returning Lord. Here again is some suggestion of the length of "the long time" our Lord has been absent from the earth. Now the duration of this "long time" could not have been known at the beginning of the Age, but if allowance is not made in these days for its passing, these parables of the Master would have lost one of their outstanding points. And most certainly those who date the Second Coming from either Pentecost or A.D. 70, have no place for it in their calculations.

The next point of enquiry, arising out of our survey of the present orthodox view will naturally

be "Did Jesus, before He went away, make any promise or provision for returning more than once?" In other words, is it in keeping with Scripture testimony that He comes in all the crisis periods of the nations, and that, seeing there have been quite a few turning-points in the history of the Church in its relationship to the nations, has He come, at the least, several times since the day of Pentecost?

Right here it is essential that we should rule out of our calculations any possibility of confusing the question of personal return with that of a constant spiritual presence with His loved ones, both in their mutual fellowship and in their private lives. That He is in constant attendance upon His people in the latter sense, is a thing well understood and for which we have every reason to give heart-felt thanks. That He comes in a Divinely spiritual capacity as supervisor and guide into every little gathering where His people come together in His Name, is a fact admitted on every hand by all who continually abide in Him. And that that is true also of their private meditation and seasons of prayer is a testimony countless thousands can give. But that is a projection of His Presence into this world which we can neither explain nor understand—it arises from the essence of His Divinity, and stands as far beyond our ken as the Infinite stands above finiteness.

Again, our survey would rule out of calculation any episode (if such there has been) akin to that which came to Paul on the Damascus Way. From all that we can say it certainly appears as though the Lord did descend in person, to intercept Paul on his way, in order to apprehend and break his fiery heart to His control. The whole outline of evidence seems to point to a close-range conversation between Paul and His Lord, and from that moment Paul went forth unmistakably assured that he had actually seen the Lord (1 Cor. 15. 8). It would be unwise to say that there have been no other episodes akin to that in the long history of the Church, but be that as it may, the Lord has not had many Pauls whom He has called and claimed as specially chosen vessels unto Himself, under circumstances such as then existed at that point of the Church's experience.

An episode (or episodes) like that is exceptional, for when we have said all we can, it is not a "Coming" on a par with that which was implied in His promise in the Upper Room. (John 14. 3.) Jesus went away again to His heavenly abode, to resume his session at His Father's right hand, leaving Paul here on earth as His servant and His messenger. Paul was not received by Jesus "unto Himself" to be "forever with his Lord".

When Jesus spoke of His Coming as a personal

return He linked up with that appearing a rather precise list of portents and signs, some of which would show that His return was near at hand, while others would most clearly indicate that He had come. Careful attention to the tenor of His words will show the watchful student that the ebb and flow of national development in the Gentile world is most closely interwoven into His choice of words and signs. Of greater moment perhaps is a certain condition of spring-like promise in the attitude of the people over whom He had wept, and whose solemn doom and banishment had but recently passed His quivering lips! In addition to these international and national signs, the whole vile forces of the Satanic world were to be mustered and concentrated into a desolating conspiracy, to oppose and thwart (if possible) the establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord. This is to be an attempt of actual "opposition" (2 Thess. 2. 4. Diaglott) even to the point of actual war against the Lord, against which He will have to fight and wage both moral and material combat.

Various other minor signs will accompany these three, but some of these are couched in oriental symbolism and are not so easy to define and subject to the same close scrutiny as the major three! Their testimony will be helpful in a supplementary way, when that of the major three has been established.

Now the vital question is, Have these three major signs occurred more than once during the long course of the Gospel Age? If so, then Jesus could have come more than once—if not, then He will not have come more than once, and that Coming will occur when the signs are testifying as they are intended to do!

The first of these signs has to do with nations and kingdoms growing to nationhood and political maturity, and breaking themselves free from religious control. It is not the fact that they are engaged in war, and give occasion for constant threats and rumours of war, that is of importance in the Master's prophecy—it is the fact that the mediæval tribes, which, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, ebbed and flowed about like the waves of a restless sea, had now found for themselves some fixed abiding place, and had had time to grow up to maturity and nationhood. In his "*Outline of History*", H. G. Wells allocates this period of intense nationalism in Europe and America, to the last two hundred years—and more particularly, except in England and France, to the period since Napoleon.

That the tribes of Europe had fought wars innumerable throughout the former portion of the

Age is an undeniable fact of history, and if it was war alone which was given as the sign, it would, as a sign, be almost meaningless, but it is the wars of *nations* and *kingdoms* which stand as the sign, and the understanding of that aspect of the sign makes all the difference to the location of the times, and to the testimony it affords.

The other two signs must be held over to another article, but here is one we can put to the test of history.

From the time when the Germanic tribes settled down in their new European homes in the fifth and sixth centuries, almost every war on the European terrain was fought on behalf of the Church. Commencing with Clovis (the Frankish chief) around the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries, it is an unchanging story through all the centuries till the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806 A.D. Pepin and Charles Martel in the eighth; Charlemagne at the beginning of the ninth; the Saxon and Hohenstaufen Emperors in the tenth to the twelfth; the Bohemians in the fourteenth; the post-reformation wars in the sixteenth; the Low Countries in the seventeenth; Scotland in the eighteenth—so runs the grisly story through the priest-ridden centuries. Few indeed were the wars fought for national grievances, and for national gain.

In the last decades of the eighteenth century a change came over the scene. French writers raised the flag of the "Community", and at length France executed its King and nobility! The thirteen American States threw off allegiance to the British Crown and the U.S.A. was born! The ferment of freedom spread to the American southern Continent, and within thirty years or so, the whole territory was freed from Portuguese and Spanish control!

England and France were embroiled in the early nineteenth century—together, as allies, they engaged Russia in the middle of that century! Prussia attacked Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866, and becoming the pivot of a newly-formed Empire in Germany, overthrew France in 1870. This abject defeat of France sowed the seeds for the conflagration of 1914-1918; and that laid the scene for the last of the list, to date. None of these wars were fought for religion—those days were at an end!

To-day the frightfulness and fear of war has driven the nations to seek for federation and unity, as a hoped-for way of escape from further spasms of sanguinary hostility. What that might end in does not concern us now.

Our point here is: between the end of the religious wars, and the tendencies of to-day, lies the

period when the nations grew to maturity and nationhood, and fought their wars for their own gain. This period of intensive nationalism can be located on the stream of history with considerable ease and tolerable certainty.

And it is to this nationhood of the many nations of the earth (Europe in particular), that Divine foreknowledge, through the inspired lips of the Lord pointed forward in the words "*Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars . . . nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom*" with all their fearful disturbances and consequences.

Now the vital question can be asked again, has this state of things existed and transpired many times throughout the intervening centuries since Jesus went away? The answer must be in the negative. It is an impossibility to locate it more

than once, or sooner than the nineteenth century! What then follows from this?

Jesus *has not been coming* all down the centuries; even in its acutest crises, He did not come! The premonitory and attendant signs were not in evidence, and therefore He could not come!

But our present survey does not tell us He has come, but that the time for Him to do so has drawn very near! "The end is not yet"—only the beginning of travail is come!

That is the testimony, clear, and sharp, and sure which this sign affords to those who have eyes to see and ears to understand!

No matter then, what his standing may be in the Church visible, he is an unsafe guide to lean upon who cannot see and read the signs which are speaking to-day.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. It is said that the Chinese story of creation is older than the Genesis story and this invalidates the claim of the Bible to possess the true story of man's origin upon earth. What can be said about this?

A. The alleged antiquity of Chinese history is a favourite resort of some who look for any argument wherewith to discredit the Bible. In point of fact Chinese history does not claim to be as old as that in Genesis. Bible chronology indicates that human history began at least 4100 years B.C., if the Masoretic text is followed; if the Septuagint is accepted the time must go back to something like 5500 B.C. Chinese history—which is more carefully documented than that of many other ancient nations—claims a date for the commencement of the matters with which it deals of 2852 B.C., thus giving the Bible an agreed lead of at least 1250 years. For the information and interest of any who may be called upon to answer this particular objection again the following points, taken from standard modern works on Chinese history, may be of interest.

The first ruler recorded is Fuh Hsi, said to have commenced his reign in 2852 B.C., over the first people, a small wandering tribe in north-west China from whom all the Chinese people afterwards sprang. Fuh Hsi is said to have instructed his people in hunting, fishing, shepherding, the use of musical instruments and the laws of marriage. His name is supposed to mean "ancestor of mankind" and he was represented in Chinese art attired in fig leaves! Archæological discoveries in western China—"Stone Age" implements, etc.—

are dated by experts as belonging to the period 2000-2700 B.C. The next prominent name is that of Hwang Ti, 2637 B.C., who invented writing and introduced the decimal system (learned men in England are still debating whether it should be adopted in this country!). Later on came Yao, 2357 B.C., who had reigned sixty years when the country was overwhelmed by a Great Flood (B.C. 2297) which drowned many people, submerged the mountains and threatened to invade Heaven itself. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, lived 522 to 479 B.C. Japan, previously uninhabited, was colonised about 220 B.C. by Chinese emigrants, from whom the present Japanese people are descended.

Points of contact with the Genesis story can be traced up to the Emperor Yao and the Flood. They can be reasonably accounted for by supposing that a tribe of wanderers, pushing eastward from the common centre after the Flood, entered China from the west, started a national existence, and in after times identified their first ruler, Fuh Hsi, with the traditions they had brought with them concerning the first man, Adam. The Flood of Hwang-Ti's time may have been a colossal overflow of the Yellow River (known as "China's Sorrow" because of its frequent devastating floods) confused in legend with traditions of the Flood of Noah, or it may be a recollection of the latter event. When Marco Polo, the traveller of Venice, visited China in the thirteenth century A.D. (China being unknown to Europeans at that time) he was received by the then Emperor and shown a casket containing pictures or images of ancient Patriarchs,

among whom he recognised Noah with the Ark. To his expression of surprise the Emperor responded by telling him that the Chinese people knew all about the Ark and the Flood; that it had not drowned all their people as it had the people of the west because the high mountain ranges of Western China had deflected the waters. Much of this is tradition and not to be taken too seriously but it does demonstrate one thing; that Chinese history itself presupposes the existence of older and earlier history in the West, and therefore it is not true to assert that Chinese history is "older" than Biblical history. It claims only to go back to the beginning of the Chinese people as a separate nation on the earth.

* * *

Q. I John 5. 12 states that "He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son hath not life". Are the Jews an exception to this statement? If not, must we not conclude that any arrangement other than in and by "the Son" is lifeless and therefore outside of God's avowed purpose and arrangement?

A. This question almost looks as if it is the outcome of some discussion between friends who maybe entertain different views on the matter. If such be the case, it is fortunate that the question can best be answered, not by the quoting of text against text, but by appeal to well-understood and agreed fundamental principles. We all know and agree that only in and through Christ is there salvation. "No other name is given, no other name is known"; that is hymnbook theology but it is true theology. The Scripture makes no exception. Life is only to be had by belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and full acceptance of Him, now and forever, and reconciliation with God on that basis.

One may ask "But did not the Mosaic Law promise life to the one who kept its provisions? If one had done so, say in the days of Moses or Samuel, would not he have had life, without Christ?" The answer to that is that no one, in Moses' time or any other time, could have kept the Law without first having been released from Adamic imperfection and becoming perfected before God. The keeping of the Law would have brought—and will bring—life; but only after Christ has redeemed from sin and set the sinner free from the thralldom of his sin. That was why not a single Israelite in all the fourteen centuries that the Law endured ever succeeded in keeping the covenant sufficiently perfectly to merit its reward.

* * *

Q. Was not the importance of Abraham and Sarah

solely because of the promised Seed, or was Sarah important apart from the Seed for whose coming a mighty miracle was performed for her (Heb. 11. 11)? Antotypically, are individuals, collections of individuals, Jews or Gentiles, of any importance apart from the Seed, which is Christ?

A. Although the coming of Isaac, the son of promise, is a most important thing in Scripture history, it is probably true to say that Abraham, at any rate, plays a significant part in the drama of the Ages aside from the fact that he was the father of the one in whom the promise centred. Isaac was, after all (apart from the figurative or symbolic use to which his name and person has been put in Scriptural theology) only an ancestor of the Lord Jesus, the true "Seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3. 16). Isaac, Jacob, Judah and Pharez were links in the genealogical chain that led to Christ; so were Terah and Nahor and Serug and Reu; it is Abraham who is proclaimed throughout the Scriptures as the father of the Seed. Additionally, too, it has to be noticed that Abraham marked a turning point in world history in its relation to the Divine Plan. With Abraham, God began to work actively for man's redemption; the chain of circumstances that began in Abraham led inevitably to Christ, and so onward to the Millennial Age. Abraham was a remarkable man; he lived at a remarkable time in history and the place that he occupies in the Divine Plan is unique. He was honoured with the title "The Friend of God", an honour granted to no other man in history; he was the literal progenitor of a remarkable people, Israel, who are yet to figure prominently in the outworking of the Divine Plan on earth; he is the spiritual ancestor of all who comprise the Church, the consecrated disciples of Christ, and he is one of whom it is testified that their faith so pleased God that they are to be His special representatives in the days of the Kingdom.

Of Sarah, not so much can be said because she does not play so prominent a part. She was the wife of Abraham; that of itself was important. She shared in her husband's greatness.

The second part of the question is of a rather different order to the first. Quite obviously none of the fallen race have any standing before God, or can be of any usefulness to Him, or occupy any place in the outworking of His Plan, except "in Christ". Perhaps Gal. 3. 29 is sufficient of itself to answer this question and illustrate the principle upon which God is working. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



"Behold, he prayeth"—is there anything really striking about that? Ought not all lovers of righteousness to pray in times of need and extremity? Ah, yes! but this occasion is different—and extraordinary!

The speaker was the Risen Lord; the hearer, Ananias; the subject, the persecuting Saul; the place Damascus. (Acts 9. 11.)

Some few days prior to this episode, Saul had left Jerusalem, armed with Sanhedrin authority, and accompanied by an escort of Temple guards, for Damascus in the far north, to apprehend and conduct in bonds to Jerusalem every follower of the Lord he could lay violent hands upon. Tidings of his coming had preceded him, and the little company of believing saints, knowing what had overtaken brethren in Jerusalem, awaited, with dread, the arrival of this wolf into their midst, knowing there would be neither clemency nor mercy for any whom he might find of that "way".

But as he (and they) rode on expectantly, exultantly, the thing which a watchful Providence had ordained, took place! The blistering mid-day sun appeared to turn pale as a heavenly radiance stepped across his path! The very tick of time ordained by Providence had come, and He who angled to take this fish came nigh to sweep up His "catch"! The days for "playing out the line" had expired, and One from the Heavenly Throne had come near to wield the net.

How piercingly penetrating the challenge request, intended for no ear but his own! "*Why persecutest thou Me*" . . . "Who art thou, Lord" . . . "*I am Jesus*" . . . Then it was true, unquestionably true, what these men in Jerusalem had said about the Nazarene! Oh, the horror of the situation in which he now found himself; he had separated man and wife; he had violently compelled some to blaspheme; he had consented to send one good man to untimely death. And here, en clothed with more than solar-radiance, was the exalted Lord and Master of the suffering flock!

Gone was now the gaiety and self-assurance of the morning hours, as now with blinded eyes and smitten conscience he drags along to make entrance to the city where co-conspirator and victim alike await his coming!

Three days and nights, without food or drink, the inner conflict raged. No former friend or counsellor could be of help in this hour of need. All his past life, particularly the recent past, would rise up before him and taunt him with its futility! Despite intense zeal, he had missed the objects of his soul's desire . . . yet Stephen, a man he could not recall to life, had found all the best it had to give.

Back and forth, from the old things to the new, from the authority of Moses to the exaltation of the Christ, his poor struggling mind would pass, as he attempted to weigh up the values each appeared to possess, until at last his wearied frame, faint from lack of food, and spent from its internal strain, sank to its knees, and faltering lips and stammering tongue began to pray!

He had capitulated; the besieging Lord had stormed the fortress of his soul, and was now triumphant there! The battle had been fought and lost . . . and won!

And thus the compassionate and dominating Lord, desirous of assuaging every needless pain, commissions Ananias to "go to the street called Straight, . . . and enquire . . . for a man of Tarsus called Saul, for behold he prayeth". "*Behold he prayeth*"—not in the ancient city of Jerusalem, not with priest or sacrifice attending him, but here, in his darkened room, in this city of Damascus, and with no comfort or help at hand.

What a prayer that must have been, as all the flood-gates of his soul were broken down, and all its bitter contents gushed forth in penitence and remorse! How the angels who had watched the long-drawn conflict must have rejoiced at a sinner so sincerely repenting of his former misguided way! And who can tell, or even attempt to tell, what that prostrated form and penitential prayer meant to the supervising Lord?

Never thenceforward throughout his whole life did the memories of those days and nights fade from recollection—they were not intended so to fade—for, first, to himself, and then, through him to countless thousands of a later day, it was intended to teach that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" "of whom I am chief, howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in

me, as chief, might Jesus Christ show forth all His long-suffering for an example of them which should hereafter believe on Him to eternal life". (1 Tim. 1. 15-16.)

Not always has the Lord of life and glory come forth in that majestic way to intercept and turn to Himself those who misguidedly sought the "best" along wrong and improper lines, but that He has providentially intercepted them in His own acceptable way is a truth to which thousands could testify. That there is an act of Providence in the direction of a word, a phrase, a tract, a book, a visit, a journey, or even an illness, is a fact none conversant with His way would dare deny. Thousands on thousands could joyfully say:

*"I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me has been made known,
Or why, unworthy as I am,
He claimed me for His own."*

It is not given to everyone to plumb the depths of the subterranean experience as did our brother Paul, for few could withstand the strain. But unnumbered thousands have learned through him, of a Saviour's love and long-suffering, ere, in their own waywardness they bent in lowly penitence before Him and prayed their first untutored prayer.

Paul never ceased, throughout life's little day, to remind himself of that tender love which followed him all those headstrong, wayward days, till at last it broke in upon him and brought him face to face with the stern realities of the situation—and won his heart and soul for ever.

Had he been with us to-day, how joyfully and fervently he would have joined with us in singing:

*"I've found a friend, O! such a friend,
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am His, and He is mine
For ever and for ever."*

"He loved me ere I knew him"—how true that was in Paul's special case—but no less true in ours too! "He drew me with the cords of love"—who would not have found intense delight in hearing Paul sing that! Ought there to be less when we sing it ourselves?

*"I've found a friend, O! such a friend,
He gave His life to save me;
And not alone the gift of life,
But His own self He gave me.
Naught that I have my own I call,
I hold it for the Giver;
My heart, my strength, my life,
my all,
Are His, and His for ever."
"I've found a friend, O! such a friend,
So kind and true and tender,
So wise a counsellor and guide
So mighty a defender!
From Him who now doth love me so,
What power my soul can sever
Shall life or death, or any foe?
NO! I am His for ever!"*

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"He taught them; as one having authority."

In this world of dictators and totalitarian States, where the gospel of individual submission to the will of the Leader is paramount, such a statement as this would cause disquiet of mind were it not that we know Him of Whom the words were spoken. Not for Jesus the blustering arrogance of the bully, nor the cold passionless orders of the man of steel. Christ's teaching was warm, tender, vibrant with the love of humankind and pity for their unhappy conditions; yet underlying his words there was a calm authority which carried with it conviction that this man who "spoke as never man spake", told of things he had both seen and heard. He, Who, having beheld and shared in the glory of that spiritual realm of which the Infinite Creator is at once the centre and the all-in-all, spoke to the hearts of men and women

who themselves were part of God's creation, and His words came with the force of that authority which is engendered, not by the outward trappings of physical force or mental superiority, but the inward power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Christians right down the Age have realised this, and rejoiced in the assertion of our Heavenly Father's own way of imparting knowledge to mankind—knowledge not only of Himself and His Plan, but also of themselves, their relation to each other and their mutual obligations and responsibilities as fellow-citizens of the earth. But it still remains true that those who remain to listen are far smaller in number than those who turn away "to walk no more with Him". The day has yet to dawn when the emptiness and worthlessness of these mcch-vaunted earthly dictatorships will be appreciated by all men, and, in the appointed day

when God shall judge the world in righteousness, that gentle, insistent teaching of the stranger from Galilee's shores will come into its rightful heritage.

Therefore, knowing this to be the outcome of the Divine Plan for humanity we can with confidence turn to our own position as men and women who already have accepted the Divine principle of teaching and have rejected the earthly policies. Not for us to sit at the feet of teachers who impress their claims to overlordship as by right, or enforce the acceptance of their dogmas by appeals to the intellect or alleged loyalty to the personal teachings of past or present ministers to the Church, or considerations of policy or allegiance to the group. All these things are but manifestations in our Christian fellowship of that same spirit which is producing in the political world menacing forms of government and national life and filling the minds of worldly thinkers with apprehension for the future of humanity. "Mass-thinking" and the restriction of personal liberty may yet prove to be an important factor in bringing the nations to Armageddon. The same principle within the

Church must produce, in a more spiritual sense, the same results.

We turn then to Christ's words with a feeling of relief. Here is our salvation in very truth. "*If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.*" In the calm, quiet discussion of Scriptural teaching between ourselves; in the constant appeal, not to force, not even to intellectual reasoning, but to the enlightening and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, dispensing to every man severally as it will, shall the word of old be fulfilled, "And they shall be all taught of God; and great shall be the peace of Thy children." Thus shall every teacher and pastor the Church has ever known be held in rightful esteem and honour, "for his works sake" and the truest feelings of loyalty to those who in the past have been our personal mentors, manifested. Thus shall we progress into further revelation and understanding of the Divine Will, until at length, like Christian in Bunyan's immortal allegory, we shall see with our own eyes the city to which we journey, and hear with our ears the strains of celestial song.

SPIRITUAL DICTATORS

This "itch of teaching," this oracular egotism, is the natural result of vanity and selfishness disguising themselves under the cloak of the Gospel. With all such men words take the place of works, and dogmatising contentiousness of peace and love. Therefore James warns us against being "many teachers" — self-constituted ministers — persons of that large class who assume that no incompetence is too absolute to rob them of the privilege of infallibility in laying down the law of truth for others.

Party spirit has always been a curse and disease of the Christian religion. And because this factiousness shows an absence of true wisdom amid the pride of its imagined presence, James proceeds to contrast the false and the true wisdom. True wisdom, true understanding, is shown by a course of life spent in meekness, which is the attribute of wisdom. For a man to boast of wisdom when his heart is full of bitter emulation and party spirit is a lying vaunt. The wisdom of which he thus boasts is not the true heavenly wisdom of the Christian, but earthly, animal, demon-like. The wisdom which evinces itself in party spirit leads to unhallowed chaos and every contemptible practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, reasonable, open to persuasion, full of mercy and

good fruits, without vacillation, without hypocrisy.

Thus we see that with James, love, peace, mutual respect, mutual toleration, is the highest form of wisdom, and is a far truer sign than a contentious and bitter orthodoxy that he who has it has reached to the highest ideal of the Christian character.

There are *tired* Christians who will work if coaxed to do so. But the tired Christian complains so much that there isn't much joy in it for anyone.

Second, there is the *retired* Christian. He believes that he has done his share and sits idly by, exercising his right to criticise.

Third, there is the *rubber-tyred* Christian. He may go along if the way is clear and the road is smooth.

Finally, there is the *flat-tyred* Christian. He was once active and faithful in service, but he suffered a puncture, and has never recovered his wind.

* * *

"If He had not come!" Let the words sink deep into our heart of hearts as we survey the barrenness and emptiness that would have been, and then let us lift up our hearts and thank God that "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty, might be made rich." God gave His best Gift, when He gave His Son to come to earth, to redeem and restore fallen man.

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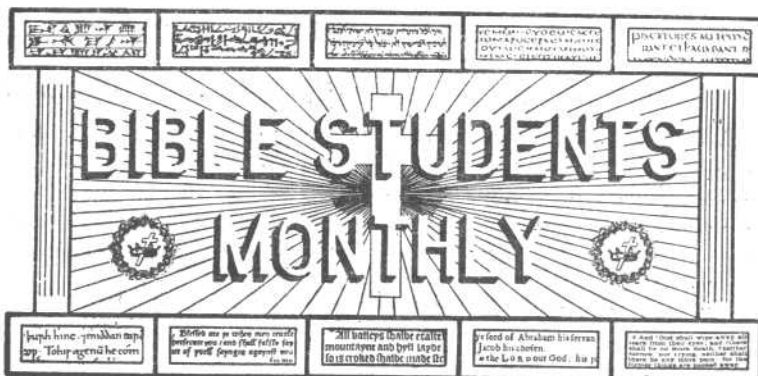
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



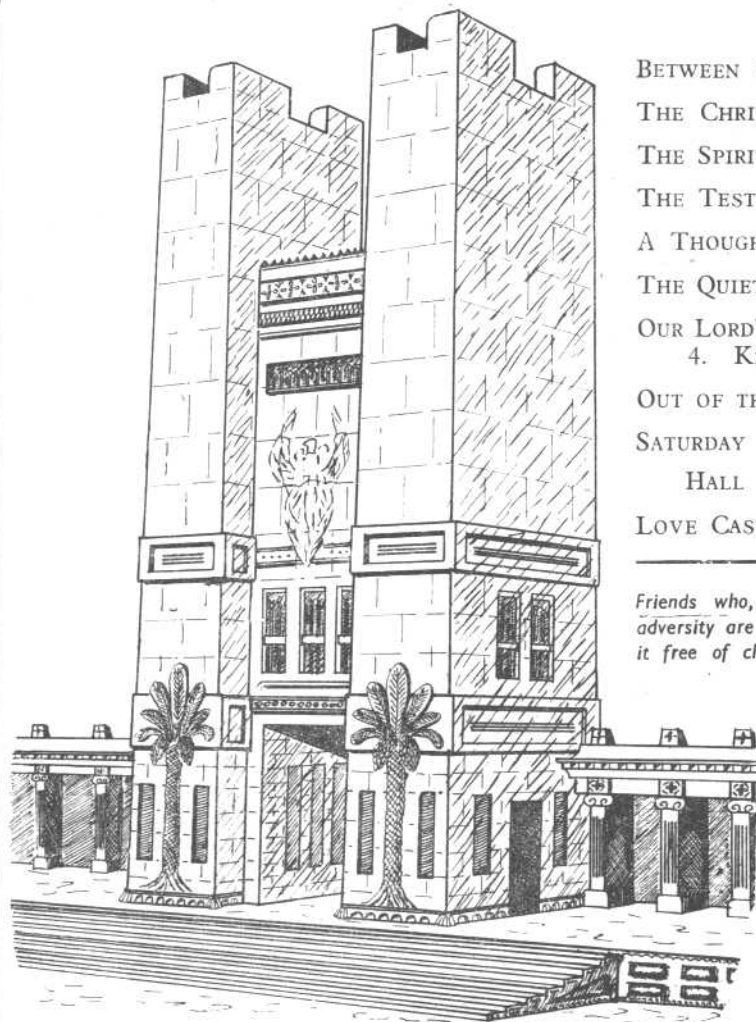
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*Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.*



Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

We have available a number of copies of the booklet "*Jacob's Trouble*" in the old blue plain covers, which are slightly defective in binding or trimming but otherwise in sound condition. It will be a pleasure to send parcels of these free of charge to any friends who can make use of them. Israel is now "in the news" and this booklet, which has so much to say in connection with God's promises to the Jewish people, is very much in line with current events.

Ask for as many as you wish to have and we will send as many toward that number as the quantity available, and the requests received, will permit.

* * *

It may be timely to remind the friends that we still supply the "two-minute" tract to all who can make use of same. A sample tract is enclosed with this issue of the "Monthly"; they are put up in packets of one hundred tracts, on sixteen different subjects in each packet (for titles see last page of this issue). Some have found them useful for enclosing in letters or carrying in the pocket or hand-bag. We shall gladly send as many as desired, free of charge as is the case with all our tract literature, upon request.

* * *

Acceding to many requests we have now commenced to stock Bibles again. At present there are three types available, as follows:—

- G 42 Oxford Bible, Minion 16mo Clarendon, Moroccoette yapp, 19/6.
- G 52 Oxford Bible, Brevier 16mo Clarendon, Moroccoette yapp, 26/-.
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These prices are post free. The Brevier is probably the better type, but both are handsome and readable Bibles and well adapted for constant use. Stocks are not plentiful and we can never be sure of replenishing any given style when we ourselves have gone out of stock but will do our best to keep a few useful styles on hand and will always record these in our price list on back page month by month as available. A style card showing the sizes of the pages and type will be sent anyone on request to enable choice to be made on the understanding that the card will be returned without delay.

* * *

The current instalment of the series "*The Three Epistles of John*" has been held over this month and will appear in our next month's issue.

The next meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on Saturday, 16th June, at 6.30 p.m., the speaker for the occasion being Bro. W. R. Walton (Coventry). A very warm welcome is extended to all who can make it possible to attend. A report of the afternoon and evening meetings held at Caxton Hall on 21st April last will be found in this issue and it may well be that some who have not before attended these meetings will be encouraged, upon reading this report, to join in the fellowship on the next occasion. Caxton Hall is a few minutes walk only from St. James's Park station or easily reached from buses passing along Victoria Street.

* * *

We would acknowledge with sincere appreciation the anonymous gift of 3/- to the work.

* * *

The Benevolent Fund is in the care of Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Donations intended for the Fund, and all other correspondence in connection with the same, should be sent to Bro. Allbon.

* * *

The little booklet, "*A Glimpse of God's Plans*" has been used very extensively in some parts of the country and apparently has been found to serve a useful purpose. The little booklet is still available in stock at 1/6 doz. or 11/- per 100 and it will be a pleasure to send copies upon request.

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We are still supplying "*Millennial Message No. 3*" and "*4*" in quantities for free distribution and the brethren may continue to request such quantities as they can use. It will be a pleasure to despatch them to all such.

* * *

The friends at Yeovil announce a week-end gathering for Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th June, at the Masonic Hall, opposite Manor Hotel, Hendford, Yeovil, at which Bros. Woodworth, Scholefield and Fox will speak. Please advise intention to attend to Bro. W. F. Fox, 34, St. Michaels Road, Yeovil, Somerset, between 31st May and 18th June. Lunch and tea is obtainable at a near-by cafe, and a warm welcome awaits all who can attend.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RACE

B.J.D. Discourse on a stirring theme

We sometimes hear the suggestion that there are so many crowns allotted and that the members of the church of God compete against each other, as in a race, to win them; that the most faithful will receive the prize; that if one should prove unfaithful and drop out of the race others are ready to take his place in the contest; and that the less faithful and diligent (but not reprobate) will receive a consolation prize. It may be said that such is a rather blatant way to picture the making of one's calling and election sure. Possibly so, but we have all at some time or another met similar theories. We need spend little time upon it. It is far better to consider what the Bible has to say on the matter. There we shall find that our Father has no such expedient to determine who among the millions calling themselves Christians are worthy of the prize of the high-calling in Christ Jesus. It will be immediately clear that such a notion strikes at the root of the doctrine of election and even casts doubt on the all-embracing love of God for his sons. There are but few references to Christians racing and we shall find that the texts are more concerned with running patiently, persistently, than with racing. We are urged to run the race (or course) with patience rather than with speed and to run *as though* we were competing, but there the picture ends. And now let us see if the running of others in the O.T. will furnish examples to help the Christian in his course.

The first example of running in the Bible (other than from vengeance) is that of one hastening to *worship and receive some guests*. The well-known incident is recorded in Gen. 18. An old man sat in his tent door in the heat of the day and suddenly became aware of three strangers standing near. He could have thought that if the travellers chose to journey under the noonday sun it was none of his business; he could have thought that if they wished to speak to him or ask for food they could open the matter. Had he sauntered forward to meet them we might have thought him indifferent, but he was of better fibre. Perhaps he thought he knew them; possibly he felt they were no ordinary travellers; perhaps because he had previously had visitations of heavenly visitors he received them. (According to reference Bible he thus became an example to all not to be forgetful to entertain strangers.) We may not know just what was in

his mind but his action was immediate, for he RAN to meet and honour them, and by his haste we know him to be a genuine soul. He urged them to receive his hospitality and food, and when rested they could pass on their way. They briefly consent, and Abraham HASTENS to serve them and the meal seems to be prepared in record time. He stood by them while they partook of the meal apparently in silence; but we feel as we read the story that something momentous is about to happen, and sure enough it does. Suddenly they say to him "Where is Sarah, thy wife?" And by the question he realises who they must be; and when he answers them they confirm the promise given years before and added details so that Abraham and Sarah would know that their son of promise would be born soon, and thus was his faith rewarded in this life. And no doubt when the visitors had finally left him (v. 33), he hurried back to his tent oblivious of everything else. This-one-thing-I-do was written all over that man of faith.

The next example of running was that of a man who ran to find if his prayer had been answered. The story is in Gen. 24 and is part of a charming love story. That same Abraham had sent his senior servant back to his old region in Mesopotamia charged under oath with heavy responsibility—that of finding among Abraham's kinsfolk a bride for his son, the son of promise. The long journey ended at eventide when he arrived at Haran. He and his camels needed water, and that need provided him a basis upon which to make his prayer to the God of his master Abraham. He prayed that He would show kindness to his master by prospering his journey; he asked to be answered just as he himself specified; he prayed that the Lord God would so respond to his request that it should happen that the damsel he asked for water would be the one destined to be the wife of Isaac. Then he would know that all was well. (In passing, would Christians to-day pray asking that they be answered just as they themselves might define?) The answer to his prayer could not have been speedier, for while he was yet speaking Rebekah came to draw water for the household, and as she came to the well he RAN to ask for water, and she as requested in his prayer offered and drew water for his camels. (Again, in passing, do Christians now hurry to find if their prayers are answered?)

The response to his prayer was so prompt that momentarily he wondered in himself if the Lord had prospered his journey, but he quickly recovered, gave her gifts and asked who she was, and hearing the name Nahor he knew all was well and he worshipped the Lord saying "Blessed be the God of my master Abraham . . ." When Rebekah heard the name Abraham she RAN home to tell the news, and Laban RAN back to the well and invited the servant to stay with them. But he is still anxious to fulfil his mission and he cannot rest till he is assured that Rebekah is willing to return with him to Isaac. Like his master Abraham who received the heavenly visitors, in his eagerness for his mission he runs, and as we read we know he means it. And instinctively we like these people for they were so intent on the work in hand.

Another early instance of running was when Jacob and Esau met again after their long estrangement. From the story (Gen. 33) we note that when Jacob saw his brother coming he spread out his family as though he expected trouble. He need not have been so suspicious. The passage of time had cooled the fires of revenge in Esau, and in the incident he seems the better man of the two for he RAN to meet Jacob and embrace him. Possibly we all would have liked the change of heart to have been first revealed in Jacob, but it was not so. By his action of running we observe again that it proves how genuine is his heart.

From these and other instances in the O.T. we may see that running in the Bible, proves the sincerity and purpose, the loyalty and goodness of heart of these people. But are these the thoughts we should have in mind when we read the few verses in the N.T. that encourage Christians to run? Let us see!

The first running of the Bible was from vengeance. Is that in any way a lesson to us? In one sense it is true for we like mankind were under condemnation; but unlike them we have learned that instead of running away from the justice of God it is far better to hasten towards Him, relying on His mercy, for He himself has made the arrangement whereby mercy triumphs over justice. Long ago we all realised that unless He had made a way of escape for us we should have been eternally without hope of life, and we hasten to receive the grace He freely offers. It is declared in the Word that though man had fallen from grace, God himself had promised to benefit mankind when He gave the gospel to this very Abraham, and so unalterable is His will in that promise that He bound Himself by oath to fulfil it. This promise and oath is considered in Heb. 6 where the writer urges his readers to be followers of them who through faith

and patience inherit the promises. In verses 12-20 he reasons that we have every ground for confidence and hope because the promise has been bound by the oath of God, and believing it is impossible for God to lie we have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us which we have as an anchor of the soul and enters within the vail where the Forerunner has already entered and received His honour—priesthood after the order of Melchisedek. What more ground for hope could we possibly need? Who would not RUN to follow this Forerunner? And so we have fled for refuge—not by attempting escape from justice, but towards Him for mercy, hope and confidence. Nothing in the Bible implies that our Lord competed with another as in a race, yet as Forerunner he hastened to serve His Father, and appeared beyond the vail in the presence of God for us, thereby opening the new and living way that those who believe and follow may obtain their reward. He thus became a goal and an incentive to his followers, which seems to be in line with Heb. 12. 1, 2. There we are encouraged to run with patience the course set before us looking unto Jesus. He kept his eyes set upon the joy before Him; we keep our eyes on Him. As Forerunner he finished his course with joy; and we along with others may succeed and share His reward. And in it all we are not attempting to beat the other fellow—in fact we wish him to have an abundant entrance into the kingdom. Thus it is no race at all; but each of us running patiently, persistently, will receive the crown at the end; and the doggedness of our running is the measure of our loyalty, the proof of our value of the hope and the extent of our love of Him who has called us. And this tallies with that we have seen of the O.T. worthies—their running proved their genuineness of heart and purpose.

In order to obtain the prize, or reach the goal, or finish the course (whatever phrase we choose) we are exhorted to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and to run with patience. Does this imply that there is one sin common to us all holding us back, or slackening our perseverance? Most things which prevent us progressing, will, when fully considered prove to result from lack of faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" said Paul, and it is a perfect aphorism. In line with these considerations are other words of Paul (Gal. 5. 7) "Ye did run well, what did hinder that ye should not obey the truth". They had not been competing with each other, but they had been running diligently, patiently following the Lord. They had been justified by faith in Him, they were children of faith, children of Abraham, sons of God; yet someone had turned their thoughts

away from faith; someone had lured them over to the works of the law from which they had been freed in Christ; someone had "put a yoke upon the neck of these disciples" and they had ceased to run with other followers of Christ. It will be noted that the running of Gal. 5. 7 is synonymous with following or striving, and like thoughts are in Gal. 2. 2, Phil. 2. 16 and Rom. 9. 16; and in truth those in the N.T. who so run are those who follow Christ, but with this difference, that the running reveals the persistence of the follower. And so we may read Heb. 12. 1 as "Let us lay aside every hindrance of faith and follow with patience, so ardently that we run". Thus running as a Bible figure differs from walking (which pictures fellowship) and standing (which pictures honour innate or credited now; e.g. Luke 1. 19 and Rom. 5. 2), and sitting (which pictures kingly honours after life's race has been run, e.g. Rev. 3. 21). And so with patience the Christian runs, or with endurance for the race is no sprint. No doubt the apostle had in mind the marathon race of the Greeks, where endurance was so great an asset. Patient endurance is often in N.T. usage combined with hope, particularly the hope of the Lord's return with all that it holds for the Christian's eternal felicity. Thus there is always before us a goal of aspiration as well as of prize—something to reach as well as to receive. The words "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith" refer to Him as the goal of aspiration and the pattern of patient faithful running. And true, there is reward for those who faithfully follow Him home, but many would agree that the prize or reward we desire is best found in the words of the hymn "Jesus, our only joy be thou, as thou our prize wilt be".

We cannot leave the topic without referring to Paul's words in 1 Cor. 9. 24-27, for there we are urged to run as in racing. The exhortation seems disconnected from the context, for in the preceding verses the Apostle has been defending his calling and office. Clearly some critics within the Corinthian church had raised objection to his apostleship saying that he had prospered by it. Nowadays the charge will seem baseless to us who believe that probably no Christian had surrendered more for his Lord and the faith. But the charge was there and evidently the critics had made some headway and were causing dissension among the brethren. No doubt the Adversary was behind the false accusation. The method used has been adopted at other times in church life; and it is, that when the apostle's preaching and teaching cannot be gainsaid, belittle his service on the grounds of morals or that he had made a living out of the gospel.

Paul's denial is correct (see v. 18, etc.), and rather than that, he had become the slave of all (v. 19) and accommodated himself to gain the Jew and those without the law, and even becoming as weak to gain the weak. Possibly Corinth mistook his self-immolation thinking that none would lower themselves unless there was gain to be made; but then perhaps there was jealousy in Corinth. Then Paul changes (v. 24-27) and suggests to them that they think of better, nobler motives for service. In effect he says "Do you not realise that I am running in the service of Christ as though one will receive the prize? Do you not know that I strive for the mastery and fight for the gospel not as one that beateth the air? Those who contend in the games do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but with you and me much more is at stake. Run with me, fight with me, Corinth! And far from making profit out of the gospel, I subject myself to its service, keep under my body and bring it unto subjection, lest after all my service of Christ I should be unapproved, or had run in vain". How happy he would have been to know that Corinth and other churches were running with him in the service of the gospel, laying aside every weight and having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace!

And so we may see in the few references to running in the N.T. much the same thought as was noted in the O.T. incidents, namely that it pictures the intensity of purpose, the loyalty of service, the determination to reach the goal of the runners. "*So run, that ye may obtain.*"

Let us in all our activities and arrangements, our organising and building, ever remember that all these "mighty works," desirable and even necessary as they are to-day, are not intended to endure for all time, to be jealously guarded and handed down to posterity. They are for the needs of the moment, for the promulgation of the Word of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ—UNTIL we all come, in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the full stature of the Anointed One.

* * *

Jesus failed to keep many who followed Him. They turned back when His message became increasingly spiritual. Some start in the narrow way full of confidence but the path of sacrifice reveals hardship and the first love cools. They do not mean to leave Him altogether but it is so easy to drift. Relax a little, admit the life of the world, and your spiritual life is heading for shipwreck.

THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

Thoughts on a well-known text

A.O.H.

"The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'."
(Rev. 22. 17.)

Why the Spirit and the Bride? Would it not seem more appropriate for the Son and His Bride to issue the invitation? The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of that Age, and the Bride is associated with Him as joint-heir in the Kingdom! Why then is it the Spirit that in the Book of Revelation is associated in the invitation to life?

No word of Scripture was put in its place lightly. The expression must have been framed in that way because the truth of the matter is best expressed that way: such is the only logical conclusion.

Knowing, as we do, the perfect unity and harmony of purpose existing between the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both, we can be sure that there is no disharmony here with our understanding that our Lord is the "Everlasting Father" of the Millennial Age (Isa. 9. 6). The Holy Spirit is as it were the vehicle of the King's invitation to accept life and the only question before us is why the Spirit is said to issue the invitation rather than the Lord.

Maybe the answer is related to the fact that this verse deals with the creating of new life. Those who hear and accept the call to the waters of life do thereby have planted within them a new life. The old Adamic life was lost at death. The awaking to conscious existence at the commencement of the Millennium is not really the enduring life that God has promised to all who come into harmony with Him; it is a life which still has much of death in it. The awakened ones are under the protection and care of the Mediator; their life depends entirely upon Him for they are still imperfect and unable to keep the Divine Law in its fulness. They have been awarded a measure of conscious existence for a limited period—the thousand years—the while they have the opportunity to become reconciled to God and accept whole-heartedly the conditions of eternal life. Only after they have been awakened can they hear the invitation and commence to take the living waters. The work of the Spirit therefore comes after the first work of the Mediator in raising men from the dead.

It seems that in the Scriptures the imparting or creating of new life is pictured as being the work of the Holy Spirit. In the very first chapter of

the Bible, and the very first activity of recorded history, we find that the agency which is at work is the Holy Spirit. *"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said 'Let there be light' and there was light"* (Gen. 1. 2-3). It is fairly plain that we are expected to read the whole of the ensuing account of creation as though God was represented on the primitive earth by His Holy Spirit, executing all the works that had to be done in accordance with His Divine command. The important factor in this view is that the creation story is the story of newly created life. Of the history of life and living beings before this earth came into existence, before Genesis 1, we know little. We know only that there were angels, spiritual beings dwelling in the presence of God, but we know nothing else. Genesis 1 introduces us immediately to the creation of life on this material earth—first vegetable, then animal, finally man. And all this was the work of the Spirit. It has long been a puzzle to scientists how life originated upon earth. They have hazarded various guesses, some thinking that there are "spores" of life floating through space and that some of these settled upon earth and took root—and then evolution did the rest. Others think that some accidental combination of chemical substances produced a reaction which became living—and again evolution did the rest. But all of this is guesswork and none of them claim really to know. The truth, of course, is that life on this earth was introduced by the Holy Spirit of God, and on its onward progress and differentiation into all its myriads of forms has been guided and controlled by that Spirit. The first living creatures of recognisable form to appear upon earth, as far as can be ascertained from the fossil remains, were queer little swimming things something like wood-lice, called trilobites. But queer as they were, even repulsive as they would appear to many people if met with today, they were the work of the Holy Spirit, an earnest of a future time when the earth shall be full of happy human sons of God rejoicing in all that Divine Wisdom and Love has provided for them.

That brief glimpse of the Holy Spirit at work, then, shows us a world on which new life had been created. From thence onward, through immeasurably long ages, that life developed and multiplied

along what we call natural lines, generation succeeding generation, individuals born according to the natural laws that God has instituted for His purpose, until in the fulness of time the Holy Spirit introduced another new life into the world, a life owing nothing of its vitality to the life that already existed in the world even although it was clothed upon with a form that was of this earth.

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee", said the heavenly messenger to the wondering girl, *"and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy one that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1. 35).

The Son existed with the Father from before the world was (Prov. 8. 23). Now He was to lay aside that glory which He had, that He might be made man, for the suffering of death, that fallen man might be redeemed from death. No power other than the power of His Father could effect that transfer of His conscious life from heavenly conditions and a spiritual body to earthly conditions and a material body. The words of the angel reveal to us how the incomprehensible power of God, His Holy Spirit, came upon the handmaid of the Lord and effected His purpose. The "Word" had been made flesh (John 1. 14) and in due time men saw His glory, the glory as of the Son of God revealed to the sight of men.

It was not long afterwards that new life of another kind came to be conferred upon men. The Day of Pentecost had dawned and a company of earnest followers of the Master were gathered in an upper room. The story is very familiar to us all, but it is not the outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit's coming, nor yet the miraculous gifts that were bestowed, of which we speak at this time. These things were important and had their place in the later experiences and work of those believers. But a more vital thing took place at that same time, not outwardly manifest as were the tongues of fire and the supernatural gifts, but something of supreme importance. They all, at that moment, were "born again". Jesus had told Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again in order to inherit the Kingdom of God and Nicodemus had completely failed to understand Him. For the first time in the history of the world, here in this upper room on this Day of Pentecost, human beings were "born again". By the operation of the Holy Spirit there had been an infusion of new life not derived from human life that already existed. These believers experienced the implanting within them of a new and spiritual life which would ultimately attain its full development in a spiritual body in the "First Resurrection". The

relation of this new life to the old Adamic life—which was imperfect and doomed to extinction anyway—is not something that we can define with certainty. As human beings we go on living after our "new birth" much as we did before. The same life processes continue to function and we have the same consciousness of existence and the same identity. But there is something new. *"If any man be in Christ"* says Paul in 2 Cor. 5. 17 *"there is a new creation"*—a newly created thing. We have to bear in mind the New Testament insistence that he who believes on the Son *hath*—present tense—eternal (aionian) life, and although at times some try to minimise the direct nature of those words and make it a prospective eternal life only, there can be little doubt that Jesus did mean His disciples to understand that in some very real sense they would become possessed of a new life quality on that day when the Holy Spirit entered into them. We have to guard against any thought of a separate indwelling "soul"; the Scriptures do not mean that. Probably we do well not to define our terms too dogmatically but to accept quite literally the Scripture statements. *"If Christ be in you, the body is dead as to sin, but the Spirit is life as to righteousness. If the Spirit (of God) . . . dwell in you, He . . . shall also quicken (give new life to) your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you"* (Rom. 8. 10-11). In some wonderful way that we cannot at present understand and therefore must not be too dogmatic about, the Holy Spirit is operating in our bodies and lives to give us a life force and a power which enables us to see things and do things that as natural men, having only the powers of life inherited from father Adam, we could never hope to do.

Once more in the world's history the Spirit comes to bring new life. The scene is this earth; the time the Millennial Age. Once more Adamic life has proved insufficient. Once more there must come life from above to constitute ransomed men and women sons of God. Here is where an old question comes to the front again. Do humanity in that Age receive their life from the Lord Christ or from the Father; are they children of Christ or children of God? The Scriptures certainly speak of it both ways. Jesus spoke of men who "eat His flesh" in order to obtain life; without that, He said, they could have no life in them. (Jno. 6. 53.) *"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children"* says the Psalmist in Psal. 45, addressing the King and the Bride. Yet Rev. 21. 7 declares that overcomers of the Millennial Age will be sons of God, and Rom. 8. 21 assumes the same position. Perhaps the answer to the apparent disharmony is that which answers so many questions touching the

relationship between the Father and the Son, that they are so absolute a unity in all that concerns all creation that what is true of one is also true of the other. The Holy Spirit is the vehicle of all that proceeds from the Father and the Son and whether we picture life as coming from the Father, or from the Son, it must of necessity be by the Holy Spirit. In such case the phrase in Rev. 22. 17 becomes not only understandable, but the best that could possibly be chosen. The Bride is associated not only with Jesus the Christ, but also with God the Father, in sending out the invitation to

all men to come and receive of the life that is offered. With perfect propriety, therefore, it is, not the King and His Bride who say "Come", not the Father and the Church who say "Come", but the Holy Spirit and the Bride who are the agencies, or instruments, of that life which, issuing from Father and Son, will quicken the human bodies of all who accept and obey the laws of the Kingdom. Sustained into all eternity by the life which thus comes from God, they will receive and enjoy the inheritance which God prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

The Test of Endurance

An exhortation

C.T.R

"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings 20. 11.)

The test of endurance is certainly one of the severest tests of faithfulness to which the elect Church, the Body of Christ, is subjected. It is the test which gauges and registers the strength of every other virtue and grace, and no soldier of the cross will be crowned with the laurels of victory who has not stood this test. The Christian life is a warfare, and the above words of one of the kings of Israel to a boastful enemy of the Lord's people, are applicable, not only to every new recruit in the Lord's army, but, similarly, to all who have not yet finished the good fight of faith.

The first gush of enthusiasm in the Lord's service, much as we may and do appreciate it, may be but the hasty production of the shallow soil of a heart which immediately receives the truth with gladness but, having no root in itself, endures but for a time, and afterwards, when affliction and persecution arise, immediately is offended. (Mark 4. 16-17.) Such characters cannot stand the fiery tests of this "evil day", whereof it is written—*"The fire (of that day) shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"*. (1 Cor. 3. 13.)

Therefore, says the Apostle Peter, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."* (1 Peter 4. 12.) All of the elect Church must be so tried; and blessed is he that shall endure unto the end. The sure Word of prophecy points to severe conflicts and great trials in the closing scenes of the Church's history. Elijah, a type of the Body of Christ, finished his earthly career and went up by a whirlwind and a chariot of fire—strong symbols of storms and great afflictions. John, another type of the Church, was

cast into prison and then beheaded. And we are forewarned of the great necessity of the whole armour of God, if we would stand in this "evil day".

It therefore behoves every one who aspires to the prize of our high calling to brace himself for the severer conflicts and trials of faith and patience that may suddenly and without a moment's warning be sprung upon him. In the battle of this day, as in all battles, the effort of the Enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord's people; and the only preparation, therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God—the Truth and the spirit of Truth.

"In your patience possess ye your souls." No other grace will be more needed than this in the fiery ordeals of this "evil day"; for without patience no man can endure to the end. All along the Christian's pathway, ever and anon, he comes to a new crisis; perhaps these are often seemingly of trivial importance, yet he realises that they may be turning points in his Christian course. Who has not realised them? There comes a temptation to weariness in well-doing, together with the suggestion of an easier way; or there springs up a little root of pride or ambition, with suggestions of ways and means for feeding and gratifying it. Then there comes, bye and bye, the decisive moment when you *must* choose this course or that; and lo, you have reached a crisis!

Which way will you turn! Most likely you will turn in the direction to which the sentiments you have cultivated have been tending, whether that be the right way or the wrong way. If it be the wrong way, most likely you will be unable to discern

it clearly; for your long cultivated sentiments will sway your judgment. "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.*" (Prov. 14. 12.) How necessary, therefore, is prayer, that in every crisis we may pass the test successfully! Nor can we safely delay to watch and pray until the crisis is upon us; but such should be our constant attitude.

The life of a soldier, even on the alert and on duty, is by no means an easy life; nor do the Scriptures warrant any such expectation. On the contrary, they say "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"; "Fight the good fight of faith". And yet many Christian people seem to have the very opposite idea. Their ideal Christian life is one without a breeze or a storm; it must be one continuous calm. Such a life was indeed more possible in former days than now, though the world,

the flesh and the Devil always have opposed them, and always have had to be resisted by every loyal soldier of the cross. But now the opposition is daily becoming more and more intense; for Satan realises that his time is short, and he is determined by any and every means to exert his power against the consummation of the Lord's plan for the exaltation of the Church.

Consequently, we have many and severe storms of opposition; and still there are doubtless more severe trials to follow. But those who, with overcoming faith, outride them all—who patiently endure, who cultivate the spirit of Christ with its fruits and graces, and who valiantly fight the good fight of faith, rather than withdraw from the field—such will be the "overcomers" to whom the laurels of victory will be given when the crowning day has come.

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

In every aspect and phase of our Christian life and our activity in the service of Jesus Christ there is nothing of greater moment than absolute sincerity and the ability to judge our own motives aright. Some of the greatest and noblest of men have ruined their life's work just because in the enthusiasm of success they have allowed their own motives to go more and more unquestioned until the influence of self-desire and the policy of expediency has usurped the place once held by selflessness and true sincerity. One whose early life is spent in unselfish service for others and whose native zeal is used to bring happiness and inspiration to his fellows, may in later life become a veritable barrier to progress, without at any time so much as suspecting that any inward change has taken place.

Particularly is this true in respect to our standing as believers in Christ Jesus. The very intensity of one's personal conviction of the teaching of Scripture inspires a zealous desire to "preach the Word, instant in season and out of season"; and to carry the flaming torch of Truth into every place where it has not as yet penetrated. And in the power of that zeal and confidence great things have ever been done. It is in later years, when the wonder of the Truth, and the joys of its service, have become more familiar to us and begin to be regarded as the normal setting of life, that the temptation to adopt worldly methods for the furtherance of our work comes in. Fully justifying our attitude to ourselves, and fully desirous of doing our Master acceptable service, we become

less tolerant to others, more arrogant in insistence upon our own way, and progressively we become blinded to that great secret enunciated by Jesus; "*I came . . . not to do mine own will . . .*"

Ah yes—here is a secret thing indeed. We who are as servants waiting for their Lord need to be very watchful, very, very prayerful, that when He cometh He shall find us ready in every respect—not only armed with the knowledge which is fitting in those who "know what their Lord doeth" but also in that attitude of mind and heart which belongs to an "Israelite indeed". If it can be said of us, not only at the beginning but at the end of our Christian life, that there is in our hearts absolute unselfishness, kindness, true brotherliness, we shall indeed be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light". The children of Israel came short because they put their trust in the Egyptians, who were "men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" and we too, if we become blinded to that spiritual guidance which comes from God alone, will fail in the same manner. Clear-sighted sincerity and tolerant unselfishness will keep us ever true sons of Him who is worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

Let us come before God to be filled with Christ, to be taken up with Him, His life, His ways, His sweetness; let the confession of our failure and nothingness in ourselves be made the plea that we may be filled with Him; and our intercourse will be soon changed to communion, for in Him we shall have something we can share.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

BLESSING

*How blest the children of the Lord,
Who, walking in His sight,
Make all the precepts of His Word
Their study and delight!
That precious wealth shall be their dower,
Which cannot know decay:
Which moth and rust shall ne'er devour,
Or spoiler take away.*

GOD'S HANDS

Our life is like the dial of a clock. The hands are God's hands passing over and over again—the short hand, the Hand of Discipline; the long hand, the Hand of Mercy. Slowly and surely the Hand of Discipline must pass and God speaks at each stroke; but over and over passes the Hand of Mercy, showering down sixtyfold of blessing for each stroke of discipline and trial; and both hands are fastened to one secure point, the heart of God.

HOPE

We who are the Lord's are not living for the present time. We are expecting great changes to be ushered in when our King shall take to himself His great power and begin His reign. We are not to be struggling for the last inch or the last penny, nor for the extreme of our own rights; but rather, to be so full of rejoicing in the good things coming, and already ours by faith, that it will make us generous as respects the present time in our dealings with the brethren and with others.

OBEDIENCE

How suitable are Mary's words to all of the Lord's people: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it!" How important that all should learn the lesson that it is not merely the hearing of the Gospel which brings blessing to the heart; but obedience to the glad tidings! Of course, it is necessary that we should believe the Master before we could be ready to obey Him; yet the expression, "Whatsoever He shall say unto you, do it!" includes a faith in the Lord on the part of all those who are obedient. The Christian cannot do better than adopt these words as one of the mottoes of his life—Whatsoever my Lord saith unto me, I will do it.

WITNESS

His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. Jer. 20. 9.

Whoever would be in accord with God must confess Him and must confess Jesus, His representative, whom He sent into the world. He is to be confessed in the life, in the conduct, in the words, of His followers. They are to have His Spirit and to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." Whoever makes a profession of being a disciple, and then ignores the Master's teachings, misrepresents Him, slanders Him, denies Him, and will not share in the glorious presentation of the Bride, in the end of the Age.

QUIETNESS

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.

EXAMPLE

The Master has himself served, and knows all the difficulties of the service. It gives a master great power over his workmen when they know he is not a mere amateur in the thing itself; not merely master because he has money enough to employ them, but is a master who has done the work well and thoroughly, and joins them in the work, saying, "Come and work with me; what you do not know, I will show you." It is such a Master whom we serve.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

*When the way is rough and thorny,
Danger all along the path,
When the foe is ever planning
How to crush thee in his wrath,
Have faith in God;
His loving care
Shall keep thee safe
From every snare.*

OUR LORD'S RETURN

4.—Kings and Magistrates.

T.H.

An Exposition of
Scripture Dealing
with the Second Advent

Resuming our review of the signs given by our Lord to precede His Return, we pick up the threads of the last article again in order to suggest that though it is possible to identify the era of intense nationalism on the page of history, it is not to be thought that wars, and rumours of wars, will utterly cease, or that world-citizenship will yet displace nationalistic-citizenship in the minds and doing of men. Interspersed with the yet further breaches of international good-faith, further resorts to the clash of arms seem to be outlined, until the world succumbs to an ideology which is slowly permeating and leavening human thought and human government. Meantime, because men will (or must) fight the matter out to the bitter end, famine and pestilence spread their desolating effects from land to land. The sword and gun must have their men, though plough and reaper be left desolate. Hence along with war and rumour of war, our Lord links the quaking earth, the famines and the pestilence as associated happenings.

It is an interesting comparison to place these co-related concomitants of up-to-date mechanistic war alongside the first four Seals of Rev. 6. 1-8. First of all comes the "white war"; the clash of thought claiming for the under-dog and dispossessed a fair and proper share of the earth's bounteous resources. The insistent demand of good and noble public-spirited men that the day of privilege should cease, and that the under-clad and under-fed, in tenement and slum, should receive a fair reward for their services, created consternation and tension (—a bow, Rev. 6. 2—is a thing in a state of tension; there is no reference to any arrows here) in the ranks of Society, first in England, then in France, now almost everywhere. This battle-cry still rings through the earth, but today it is branded with another name, a name still capable of striking a cold chill into those who yet seek to uphold ancient privilege and human exploitation. In its birth pangs it was called the "Commune", in its adolescence and maturity, though now perverted and misdirected, it is still called by a kindred name. But what is now "proletarian" (and thus privileged for some—the ruling caste—) began as a plea for the under-paid and under-fed, some generations ago, a "white war" in which righteousness was the watchword, and in which but little blood was shed!

And now, betimes, it wears the crown! it has gained here and there the right to rule; and forth it goes still conquering and yet to conquer.

Then comes the "red war" (Rev. 6. 3-4) and the "great sword" . . . and the sanguinary slaughter of fellowmen on an unprecedented scale . . . and the peace of the earth is dissipated! Is that era difficult to fix?

After that the "spirit of the heavens"—the disposition of the ruling and governmental authorities—holds the scales to distribute and to ration essential foods in times of shortage and deficiency. Famine conditions most surely are depicted there (Rev. 6. 5-6) but what there is, is held for a-more-or-less-even distribution to each and all. Here also is the spirit of the Commune! Shortage exists, but as far as possible, it is fair shares for all, with just the little extra—the wine and oil—for those who pay the little more of responsibility, or activity, into the common pool!

And after that the pestilence and gruesome death! What does language like this portend? We do not claim to be able to explain it all; all we can say is "Let that foul and fearful thing now held in reservation by certain of the earth's great powers come to be used in some future clash of arms, and death will stalk the earth—in some fourth part of it—leaving the silence and solitude of hades in its track!" We say no more than that. (Rev. 6. 8-9.)

It can scarcely be by accident, or even of mere coincidence, that Matt. 24. and Rev. 6. are so very much alike both in detail and in sequence. Wars, famines, pestilence, and quaking earth (both of seismic and explosive type) followed by persecution for the saints (Matt. 24. 9, and Rev. 6. 9-11) and that in its turn followed by the darkened sun, the lightless (or reddened; Rev. 6.) moon, and falling stars (Matt. 24. 29; Rev. 6. 12-17.) and after that the Presence of the Son of Man (Matt. 24. 30.); the presence on the throne of the Lamb. (Rev. 6. 12-17.)

Concerning the persecution of the saints Jesus then goes on to say "*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated of all nations for My names sake*" (Matt. 24. 9). Mark states the matter thus "*. . . they will deliver you up to the councils and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before*

governors and kings for My sake, to bear testimony before them." (Mark 13. 9. *New Revised Version.*) Corresponding with this the Revelator pictures faithful souls crying from the Altar for recompense upon their persecutors, only to be told to wait patiently, for other brethren also had to share the same experience ere the recompense would fall. Luke seems to paint the picture a little differently—he has the persecution before the wars and famines (Luke 21. 10-12). The Revelation symbolism allows for that as well—for war has not yet come to an end!

Perhaps if we examine this context again very carefully we may be led to see the introduction and spread of a most fearful and despicable trait in human kind when certain outward circumstances in governmental authority prevail—the trait of the "common informer"! "*Then shall many stumble and shall deliver up one another and shall hate one another*" (Matt. 24. 10). Usually this is an indication that totalitarian or communistic government is in the seat of authority, and may serve as a straw in the wind to indicate to us the trend of things to come. This "information" against a "fellow" will be laid against those who are religious and God-fearing men, lovers of the Holy Name! Consequent to this, iniquity grows apace and love grows cool!

A demand that men shall live to a stereotyped plan without individuality or judgment of their own is creeping slowly through the earth, and when once this demand is conceded, or imposed, woe betide the man who dares to be a little different! Behind these seemingly simple words of our Lord lies the warning that the interests of the State have become the "all-in-all" and that it is but doing one's bounden duty to the State to stoop so morally low as to play the sneak-thief part of becoming "common informer" against a former friend or relative. (Luke 21. 16-17.)

When and where this state of things begins to prevail Jesus counsels His loved ones to exercise a deeper, fuller trust in His care. "*Do not begin to worry or get perturbed over what you shall say when under arrest . . . I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay.*" That may be no easy thing to observe, but that is the tenor of His words for such an hour! Some may have to seal their testimony with the life's-blood, but even so, Jesus can say that not a hair of the head is lost thereby. Like Paul, all such can commit the keeping of their souls to His care "till that day". Faithful endurance into the "End" time will bring deliverance and salvation.

Wars, famines, pestilence, together with the moral perversity of the "informer" have come to pass many times in bygone days, when the influence of

the Church was paramount in the affairs of the State, but that these should occur again after the nations and men have reputedly "come of age", and have cut themselves adrift from religious apron-strings, only goes to show how the State, as well as the Church, fears to permit freedom of thought to be entertained or publicly expressed.

These things stand on record (as minor signs) in the prophecy of the Lord, and in the symbolisms of Revelation, and now that the nations have attained nationalistic maturity, slowly but surely, "prophetic forecast" and "fulfilling event" seem to be moving into step!

This spread of authoritarian state control dominating and producing slow decay in both man's moral and religious propensities, is preparing the stage for the second of the three outstanding signs—the establishment of an "Abomination which makes desolate"!

That this is a sign pre-eminently associated with the time of the end appears most obvious. It is impossible, without doing grievous violence to the context, to apply it to a long-past day. "When ye see this thing" said Jesus "flee" and "pray" "for then shall be great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now . . ." There cannot be two such periods on the chart of history—nor can it be repeated at His Coming if it has already taken place in the historic past! Since however, Jesus comes in His power "and glory" immediately after the "tribulation of those days" that statement alone is proof that it has not occurred in a long-past day (v. 29). Why, for instance, should the Jewish Christian, now slowly establishing himself in the Holy Land, flee to the mountains, if the menace to their faith occurred way back in Papacy's palmy days? Of what need they be afraid if that were the root and cause of their trouble?

Allow only that these Christian Jews are subjects of an Israeli State where orthodox regard for the Sabbath and other ancient institutions have again become legalised (on that point consider Mal. 4. 1-6.) then it is not difficult to fit in the restrictions and inhibitions attending "flight". "Daniel the Prophet" was the main source of Jesus' information. That He made reference to Dan. 8. 9-14, and 23-25, is tolerably sure. Also to Chap. 11. 21-45, and Chap. 12. 1-4. In the angel's explanation of Daniel's vision the statement is made "Understand, O son of man, for the vision belongeth to the time of the end (Dan. 8. 17). Again in verse 23, he says "And in the latter time of their kingdom *when the transgressors are come to the full . . . a king of fierce countenance . . . shall . . . stand up against the prince of princes (angelic princes) but he shall be*

broken without hand." (v. 25.) Chapter 11. 45, tells of the same overthrow and then Chap. 12. 1, continues "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation even to that same time. . . ."

Daniel's angelic informant therefore places the Desolator and the unprecedented trouble together as cause and consequence, exactly as Jesus does in His great prophecy. Paul also had something to say to the Thessalonians on the same theme. He locates it in "the day of the Lord" (2 Thess. 2. 2.) that is, in the day of the Lord's presence (v. 1). But that day will not come, says he, until he that "opposeth and exalteth himself" against all thought of God and of reverent worship has previously come.

Now here Paul speaks, first, not of an "instead-of" deputy (or Vicar) but of an *outright opponent*, an antagonist whose purpose and intention is to divert to himself all that rightly belongs to God. In its palmyest days Papacy never attempted this; at most it sought only to be a reflector of a Divine Radiance!

Secondly, Paul speaks only of the day of the Lord and the immediate future preceding it. By no stretch of imagination can Papacy-past be introduced there!

This is exactly how Jesus also outlines it. First the Abomination that desolates, next the Tribulation which ensues, and then the Presence of the Son of Man in power and glory! (Matt. 24. 15, 22, 29-30.) Further than that it is not now intended to go.

Our point of enquiry is as to whether Jesus has repeatedly come in the crisis times of the present Age. The answer must most certainly be in the negative. Times of trouble, such as never was, nor shall ever be again, cannot occur with recurring frequency throughout the Age, and as such a season of great Tribulation must immediately precede His Return, it ought surely to be obvious, that, as such an unprecedented period of Tribulation can occur but once, so can the Coming and Presence of the Lord occur but once!

The testimony of that major sign is dead against the crystallised statement of the orthodox theologian that "Jesus has come", "Jesus has been coming all down the Age"; "Jesus will continue coming to the end of time".

There is yet another major sign to which some short reference can be made—that of the budding fig tree. Here in the form of a parable, the softening and burgeoning of returning Judah's heart is foretold. The increasing warmth of the spring-tide sun makes the root-stored sap to flow, and leaf, bud

and fruit come to grace and adorn the tree. So shall it be with the Jew.

It is not the Jews' mere return to the land (as at present—and greatly in unbelief) to which Jesus refers. He must be "*in the land*" ere the spring sap begins to flow, but it is the surge of new life invigorating, softening, and gracing the heart which constitutes the actual sign. It is the "confession" of sin, and the acceptance of returning favour which brings that change about! But all that lies *beyond* the descent of the Son of Man—that is a proof that He has actually come!

Has this relenting and softening of Jewry been a frequent thing throughout this Gospel Age? If not then Jesus has surely not come with frequent recurrence. The age-long blindness and hardness of heart is proof beyond doubt that the Deliverer out of Zion did not come to bring Restitution and release to Israel. Thus all three major signs stand as refuting evidence against the crystallised and concentrated wisdom of the leaders of religious thought today.

In all things pertaining to the Return and Presence of our Lord, the presence of the Opposer and Defiler (2 Thess. 2. 4.) and the ensuing period of unprecedented distress, consequent upon its rebellious government, seems to stand as a prophetic datum or dividing-line. Certain of the signs in Matt. 24. and the other Gospels, together with the Seal-breaking and the Trumpet movements lead up to them, and to which they seem to stand as climax and culmination. Certain other signs in the Gospel record, together with corresponding symbolisms in Revelation lead forward from them. They seem together to constitute the one central fixed point from which all other facets and features of the Lord's Return and Presence may be located and measured off, simply because these happenings must be events occurring on this earth, which will be visible to human eyes and be experienced, to their great hurt, by human kind. The heavenly or super-sensuous counterparts (as for instance Rev. 12. 1-7.) must be located and fixed in harmony therewith.

The Bible student of those tempestuous days will seem to have a specific landmark—a Marble-Arch milestone—from which to work his way backwards and fix with accuracy and precision the historic and social happenings which constituted the former five seal-movements and the previous six Trumpet-movements. And then, looking forward he will also have means at hand for comprehending the shape of things to come.

The period of Tribulation seems to be the sure indication that the Return of the Lord is near at hand. In view of the evidence of Matt. 24. 29-31,

it does not seem possible, on any ground, or any form of calculation to make the Return and Presence of the Lord precede the Tribulation. Furthermore, as the Return of Jesus is the prelude to the Harvest period, it would again appear that the Tribulation must precede the Harvest work of the End of the Age. (v. 30.)

Inasmuch also as the seventh Trumpet is the last Trump—the Trump of God (1 Cor. 15. 51.)—it seems to be at this time also that the dead in Christ are due to be raised, and the then living saints caught up to be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4. 14-17.)

Consequent therefore upon the period of unprecedented distress our blessed Lord returns, the Seventh Trumpet sounds, the Harvest takes place, and the saints are gathered up to the descending Lord. (Matt. 24. 29-31.) This same sequence or connection of events is pictured in the same relationship in the symbols of Revelation also (Chap. 11. 15 ; and 14. 13-16.) hence it scarcely seems possible to find ground or evidence for any personal Return prior to the unprecedented Tribulation. Lest anyone should think that a prior secret Presence

of the Lord is spoken of elsewhere in the Word of God, let it here be said that a most careful search for such evidence has been made, but without success.

That there seems to be a period of secret Presence *subsequent* to the Tribulation, before the full manifestation to the World, seems very obvious, for much of the remainder of Matt. 24. beyond verse 31, and also the first thirty verses of Matt. 25. show the Lord, as now returned after the "long absence" (Matt. 25. 19.) and engaged in reckoning with His servants.

After His Return the world remains in willing ignorance of that event, until the infliction of the Vials of His Wrath overtakes and overwhelms them, as did the Flood in Noah's day. (Rev. 16. 1-21 ; Matt. 24. 37-39.)

In that period of secret Presence the saints are gathered to the Lord—the sleeping dead as a company, those that remain, one by one, as they become ready for the Presence of the Lord.

But that must remain over for consideration to the next study in this series.

The Scriptures admit of diversities of operations and administrations in the Household of Faith ; and this admission is rendered with perfect compatibility with the declared catholicity and unity of the church. (1. Cor. 12. 4.) In essentials firm ; in circumstantialia moderate ; is our safest way. The several departments of the one universal church may differ as appropriately and beautifully, in opinion and ceremony, as the varying foliage and flowers of the several portions of the earth ; all, in harmony, can send up one commingled perfume to the Master Spirit that creates, sustains and governs all. The moral universe, like the natural world, is variety in harmony, and diversity in unity. Christ is the Sun and centre of all minds unfallen and redeemed, and it will matter little what shades of difference may prevail among them if all do but drink in His beams, and rise in the odour of devout affection to circulate eternally around His Throne. We contend not, however, for diversified name and sect among men ; this is rather to be deprecated ; but when a Peter needed a Paul's rebuke surely we should beware of the plausibility of those who should retain or cherish error for unity's sake, sooner than contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, at the sacrifice of what is only apparent harmony in the guise of destructive falsehood.

Rev. W. Mudge, 1843.

With all our striving and watchfulness, however, we shall not be able, in our present condition, to reach our ideal. Perfection is something which can only be approximated in the present life. The measure of our effort to attain it will prove the measure of our faithfulness and earnest desire to do so, and that effort will not be unfruitful. If no fruit appears, we may be sure that little or no effort is made at cultivating or pruning. The fruit will not only appear in the development of the Christian graces of character, but also in increasing activities. We must not wait for our spiritual and immortal bodies, promised us in our resurrection, before our activity in God's service begins. If we possess the spirit (the will, the disposition) of that new nature our mortal bodies will be active in the service of God's truth now. Our feet will be swift to run His errands, our hands prompt to do His bidding, our tongues ready to bear testimony to the truth, our minds active in devising ways and means to do so more and more abundantly and effectively, and thus we shall be living epistles known and read of all about us.

* * *

The spiritual individuality of every person can be preserved only by his personally receiving and digesting the truths of the Divine Word. This is why our Lord and the Apostles so earnestly exhorted the early Church to search the Scriptures—to make the Truth their own personally, to know and understand its meaning.

Out of the Ivory Palaces

"Blow upon my garden
that the spices thereof
may flow out"

OUR PRAYER

We seek not, Lord, for tongues of flame,
Or healing virtue's mystic aid ;
But power thy Gospel to proclaim—
The balm for wounds that sin has made.
Breathe on us, Lord ; thy radiance pour
On all the wonders of the page
Where hidden lies the heavenly lore
That blessed our youth and guides our age.
Grant skill each sacred theme to trace,
With loving voice and glowing tongue,
As when upon thy words of grace
The wondering crowds enraptured hung.
Grant faith, that treads the stormy deep
If but thy voice shall bid it come ;
And zeal, that climbs the mountain steep,
To seek and bring the wanderer home.

RETROSPECTION

He was better to me than all my hopes
He was better than all my fears ;
He made a bridge of my broken works,
And a rainbow of my tears.
The billows that guarded my sea-girt path
Carried my Lord on their crest ;
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march
I can lean on His love for the rest.
He emptied my hands of their treasured store,
And His covenant love revealed ;
There was not a wound in my aching heart,
But the balm of His breath has healed.
Oh, tender and true was the chastening sore
In wisdom that taught and tried,
Till the soul He loved was trusting in Him,
And in nothing on earth beside !
He guided my steps where I could not see,
By ways that I had not known ;
The crooked was straight and the rough made plain,
As I followed the Lord alone.
I praise Him still for the pleasant palms,
For the water-springs by the way ;
For the glowing pillar of flame by night,
And the guiding cloud by day.

MY CONFIDENCE

You ask me do I fear?
Should that child fear
Whose Father owns earth's store of precious things,
Whose *Will* carves destinies, whose *Wish* sways kings ;
Whose *Love* surpasses fondest mother-love,
And whose unsleeping eye guards from above?
My Father is the Lord ; I am His child.
His storehouse groans beneath a golden weight,
And I shall never want, though sore my strait.
When danger threatens and the way seems drear,
My Father's guiding hand is ever near ;
His kindly counsel will my way attend
And bring me safely to my journey's end.

THE LORD IS KING

When'er the storms come down on thee,
And days of peace all seem to flee ;
This thought thy peace again shall bring,
Why should I fear?—the Lord is King.
E'en when the tempest rages high,
And darkest clouds are drawing nigh,
With hands of faith to this, O cling—
Why should I fear?—the Lord is King.
Amid the stormy waves of life,
Above the tumult and the strife,
The chimes of hope still sweetly ring—
Be not afraid—the Lord is King.
Thy ship is toss'd by wind and wave,
But there is one whose power can save ;
Across the sea he hastes to bring
Both rest and peace—the Lord is King.
Yes, Jesus walks upon the sea,
And in the storm he comes to thee ;
Then trust in him, rejoice and sing ;
He calms the waves—the Lord is King.
He stretches out his hand to thee,
And from thy fears he sets thee free ;
Beneath the shadow of his wing
He keeps thee safe—the Lord is King.

A SATURDAY GATHERING AT CAXTON HALL

A special afternoon and evening gathering held at Caxton Hall on 21st April, the occasion of the regular monthly meeting, was of so helpful a nature that a brief synopsis of the addresses has been prepared for the interest of friends unable to attend these meetings.

The afternoon session was addressed by Brother W. F. Fox (*Yeovil*) on a Resurrection theme, and the evening session, first by Brother H. Chrimes (*Altrincham*) on "*Amazing Grace*" and then by Brother T. Watson (*London*) whose theme was "*Lovest thou me?*"

Brother W. F. Fox

This is the time of year when the words of 1. Cor. 6. 14 come very strongly upon the mind "*And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.*" It was Job who uttered the immortal words "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth", and this day, which is to us the third day since the Lord died, the day in which he was lying still in death, is a day of great significance. We ought to think of Him who was rich and so willingly allowed Himself to be transferred to an earthly life; the one so much loved of His Father; who went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom; who spake as never man spake; who so loved His disciples and loved them unto the end. This is the anniversary of the day when Jesus rested in the tomb, helpless; yet He had said "My soul also shall rest in hope". His confidence was that when He must needs go down into death His Father would raise Him from the dead. Jesus also took to Himself that beautiful song of Job "I know that my Redeemer liveth". Have you ever noticed that that title "Redeemer" is applied to the Heavenly Father seventeen times in the Old Testament? Not once in the Bible do we read that the title is given to Jesus, even though we do speak and sing of Him as our Redeemer. Job knew not our Lord Jesus and therefore when he spoke he must have been speaking of God. He demonstrated his faith in those words, just as he showed his faith in his life. There is nothing so grand as to see faith outworked in the life. In the lives of all the patriarchs we see one grand outgrowth, confidence in God! All the good qualities of the Christian life were exemplified in various of the patriarchs, and are brought together in one, Jesus. So that God might be enabled to put these things on record. He gave them through the patriarchs, prophets and others, and then showed them through Christ so that He could bring salvation to everyone. Truly Jesus could say, as did

Job "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him". What a standard!

"*I have power to lay down my life, and power to take it again*" said Jesus, but that was the right He had because He had fulfilled His vows. His life was spent in the spirit of Psalms 166. 12-15. "*I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.*" Our Lord fulfilled His vows; how often do we vow and fail to fulfil. Jesus offered Himself to God in full submission; He was a "burnt offering", a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour; it was the Heavenly Father who made Him a sin-offering. It was in the course of that offering that Jesus was called to suffer even to the extent of being betrayed by one of His friends; in our own lives, do our own friends taunt us and speak evil of us? If so and if it is a severe test—and only the Heavenly Father knows how severe a test it can be—we but suffer as did our Lord. But then, our faith must needs involve more, much more, than the mere attendance at meetings. The empty tomb is the eternal witness that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, and our faith must include all for which He stood.

When the women went to that empty tomb they were met with the question "Whom seekest thou?" The power of God had entered that tomb and Jesus had come forth to resurrection glory, to a wonderful glory. The Heavenly Father had come down and had burst that tomb! "Make it as sure as ye can" Pilate had said to the priests who wanted a guard placed at the sepulchre, but oh, the impotence of men! The power of God is beyond all the powers of men. And what must have been the condition of mind of the brethren when they were told "He is risen"! When Jesus was on earth His hope was always that He might again see His Father's courts. At the Last Supper the symbols of bread and wine told of His faith that "I go to my Father". Twenty-five times in the Gospels does He mention His Father.

Now for a little while let us think of our own appreciation of Christ. Leviticus 2 is a good chapter on which to set our minds in this way. We should assemble, every one of us, in our meetings, with "meat-offerings", that is, food offerings. Our offering needs to be "mingled with oil"; thus it ministers grace to others and at the same time helps us to accept the hard experiences of life. Then there was the offering of first fruits, the golden ears of corn, beaten up small and roasted with fire. So Jesus was the first-fruits, and He was offered up immediately. There was no waiting in death; He

was only three days in the tomb. Again there was to be neither honey nor leaven in the offerings. Honey is sweet; there are many sweet sentiments uttered between ourselves which may be pleasant as it were to the taste but have little depth. Everything in Jesus' life was "seasoned with salt"; so it should be with us.

Brother H. Chrimes "Amazing Grace"

My text is Isa. 57. 17-18 "*For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.*"

Of all the treasures that we have received from the love of Christ, the Word of God is the most valuable. Now God has declared that His word that goeth forth out of his mouth shall not return unto Him void but shall prosper in the thing whereto it is sent. Mankind is alienated from God; the nations have learned nothing, and within the next few years they will reap the whirlwind, a time of unparalleled violence. Just so it was in ancient times; I am staggered to see the wickedness of Israel as revealed by the prophet Isaiah, and yet, despite it all, God does not say "I will sweep them all away". What He does say is "I will heal them". We must first of all note that the Scripture presents this theme continually. "I will heal them and restore them." God knows the hearts of the children of men and His power goes out to the undeserving. He is kind to the evil and the unthankful, giving his grace equally to Manasseh, the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus. I believe in God's omniscience and in his omnipresence, that his power extends everywhere throughout his creation. Our text is true to the fullest possible extent. "*I have seen his ways.*" In this chapter the people described are those who scoff and sneer at the Lord's people. They have made the name of God an object of profane sport and they have jested at virtue; sneered at piety. God says "I know; but for all that, I will heal them". These people had become quite infatuated with sin; they could not have enough of it. The land was foul with vice and stained with blood and their children they gave in the fire to Moloch. God says "I have seen how eager they are after sin and how they drink it down like a thirsty monster; nevertheless *I will heal them*". O my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, how good the Scripture sounds, it holds us spell-bound. They will yet renounce their evil ways and hearts and come to Him and live. God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent and his word will not return to him void. We have in the history of Israel not only God's greatness and goodness but

also his superabounding grace. They were a people specially favoured and also specially ungrateful. What other nation did He separate, bringing them out with an high hand, pouring out the artillery of his plagues, judgment most terrible? He gave them food from the skies, led them forty years in the wilderness, sustained them by day and by night, their clothes waxing not old! And their iniquities were great against God, God whose hand they had seen and whose voice they had heard, whose presence had been revealed to them all. We are always specially hurt by the unfaithfulness of those to whom we have been specially generous. David himself realised the bitterness of this. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it . . . but it was thou . . . we took sweet counsel together and walked into the house of God in company." It was after this fashion that Israel offended and grieved the Lord at His heart. So He cries "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea". God's anger will not blaze for ever, because He believes in men! I stand astonished! I can neither understand nor explain it fully; I can only confess to standing amazed and confounded at God's electing law that casts His eye upon the vilest of the vile and says of man "I mean to save him, and save him I will!" Heaven is amazed at such salvation; Hell trembles to its lowest depths at such a God!

But let none suppose from this that God is the author of sin. He will surely consume evil from the face of the earth. "God is angry with the wicked every day." He was not careless when Israel worshipped idols, and His judgment will fall heavy upon every manifestation of sin. There will be no escape.

How often have we said to each other that the great Time of Trouble will prepare men's hearts for the Kingdom. If that were truly so, surely men would be ready for that Kingdom now. They are so manifestly not ready, something more is needed; trouble of itself will not effect the cure. Men in extremity will make good resolves and when the danger is past will often return to worse ways. Trouble of itself will only harden the heart of men unless there is involved the problem of the human will. We say "I will" but it is better to say "I will do the will of God". Men will learn to do the will of Christ, and thus will come the triumph of Christ. So the Good Shepherd goes after the sheep, tracks it down, throws it over His shoulder—and comes home rejoicing!

Brother T. Watson "Lovest thou Me?"

It was the incident of the great draft of fishes. The Lord had wanted His disciples to know that

He was no longer a fleshly being and this incident on the lake provided the means. That was one reason; the other was to recall to their minds that other similar incident when first He had called His disciples. Now this time there was a reason for the fishers' fruitless night—for they had toiled all night and had caught nothing. His hand was in their frustration. We, also, know times like this, when all our plans come to naught. Let us, at such times, wait, knowing that His holy purpose will be revealed "in the morning". Let His providences work out for our highest good.

After this incident Jesus asked Peter "Lovest thou me more than these?"—more than the loaves and the fishing business! It seems strange that it should be necessary for our Lord to ask that. All the disciples had already faced a similar question when first the Lord called them, and first set out to follow Him. Why should it be necessary to ask it again? It was because of the subsequent conduct of Peter—it almost seemed as if he had forgotten. He was back now in the fishing business. "Lovest thou me more than these?"—this is the question Jesus puts to everyone who desires to become His disciple. He advises everyone who contemplates following in His steps to count the cost. His word is something like the surgeon's probe which is used to find the depth and extent of an injury: we would like to use the Word of God like that tonight, to find the depth and extent of our affection. Do we love Him more than all our earthly possessions; are we willing to give them all up? When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, our Lord "loved him" but wanted him to face this question; he could not bring himself to answer, for "he had great possessions". Do we love Him more than these and can we answer "Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"? Can He put us to the test to see if we mean it?

*"All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken
Take me, Jesus, take me now."*

The Apostle Paul counted all things loss and dross if so be that he could win Christ. "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven" said Jesus "where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal". Our hearts must needs always be given to Him that we may learn of Him, and so we become children of His family and in such things we show that we love Him "more than these". Our all is asked of us at our consecration but our all is not demanded to be given up at once. We are not all called to live without settled home and occupation as our Lord

lived. We have probably all heard of the brother who, when asked his business, replied that he was a servant of the Kingdom of Heaven but worked for Brown Brothers to pay expenses! We may not neglect earthly responsibilities. "If a man provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." But these things should take second place.

We need decision. Jesus is our heavenly Bridegroom. When Eliezer wanted to take Rebecca back with him immediately to become the bride of Isaac, her family wanted to keep her for a little while longer. They asked her what was her own wish; she said "I will go". There should be that same ready response on the part of all who aspire to be part of the Bride of Christ. Jesus insists upon this complete separation from the world. First, because He desires us for Himself, that He might be the sum of all our thoughts. Jesus cherished the companionship of His disciples during His earthly life but they could not enter into this with Him because at that time they had not been begotten of the Holy Spirit. Now we on our part will find earthly companionships less attractive in proportion as we enter into communion with our Heavenly Father. Turning for a moment now to the picture of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, how few there are who really desire to see the golden glory within the Most Holy, and how many who are quite content with the pegs and poles of the Court! But Jesus desires to receive us into God's deepest secrets. John on Patmos saw the wonders of Revelation. Paul in Arabia saw visions. All these are the fruits of lives lived in that love, lives of disciples who have loved their Lord "more than these". When Israel went out of Egypt they took all that they had with them; there was "not one hoof left behind". That is expressive of true consecration. All that we have we bring to the Lord. "Lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

If you want to know the character of a house, ask the servants—especially the old servants. So with the service of our Lord, ask the old servants and you will get the best account of it. Those who have been at it longest have the best things to say about it. Ask such a one as Paul the aged.

* * *

The faltering, hesitant effort of the least conspicuous member may in our Heavenly Father's providence achieve a greater work of grace in someone's heart than all the co-ordinated effort of a powerful and efficient organisation—for God's ways are not our ways.

Love Casteth out Fear

A word of
confidence

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment."
1 John 4. 18.

Better expressed could have been the thought of the text by saying, "There is no *dread* in love". We do not dread that which we love. In one sense, however, the more we love, the more we fear. We would not be so careful about pleasing a person whom we do not thus love. This is not the kind of fear, however, that the Apostle wishes us to cast out. On the contrary, it should be much enhanced. Consequently, the word *dread* would more accurately express the thought of our text.

The Scriptures speak of some who have "no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3. 18.) Evidently these are unregenerate. Often, among men, there is a thoughtlessness in respect to God and the future. The Apostle in this text does not intimate that all hearts have fear; but that if any heart has fear, perfect love will cast it out. As the knowledge and love increase, the fear diminishes. We may say that those of the world who have a reverential fear are such as are in a preferable attitude of mind; they are in better condition than the thoughtless. In life, certain conditions which surround us call for reverence; and man's brain is so constituted that reverence will be a part of his mental attitude if he be not depraved. Hence, the Scriptures say that "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*". (Prov. 9. 10.) The fear of the Lord, the *reverence* of the Lord, will bring a blessing. *This* fear of the Lord rather increases as the child of God comes to know his Maker, but it is a gradual process.

There is a certain kind of fear which comes as the result of imperfect knowledge. We do not credit the Adversary with producing all the evil thoughts of the human mind, yet we believe he has very much to do with the evil influences which surround our race. People may be without fear of God; and we think that even after they have come to the Lord, and are learning to reverence Him and to know something about Him, they may lack the right kind of fear. Then the Adversary's plan will be to plant *dread* in their minds.

So we find with all heathen peoples. As soon as they have any knowledge of God, the Adversary seems to conjure up slavish fear which crowds out

love, and produces *dread*. We read that "*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*". (2 Cor. 4. 4.) We think that this evil influence is accountable for many of the things which seem so remarkable to us. It explains the fact that the heathen have devilish doctrines mingled with *dread* of God; and that all the worldly who have knowledge of God, both Jews and Christians, have fear also—*dread*. Yet Christians have much greater light upon God's character than have others, and so should have correspondingly less fear than the heathen.

Evidently our text is not intended to signify that a Christian should have no sense of fear. This fact is shown by the experience of our Lord Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. He there feared, as the Apostle tells us in speaking of this occasion, and He was heard in that He feared. He offered up strong cryings and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death. (Heb. 5. 7.) If the Master feared, so should His followers. The Apostle says, "*Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*". (Heb. 4. 1.) How shall we harmonise these fears with our text. The text is, evidently, not intended to contradict the great lessons otherwise taught. Our Lord Jesus appealed to the Father who, He knew, loved Him; but He knew also, that the Father was absolutely perfect, righteous, just; and He feared lest He might have come short in fulfilling some of the requirements.

So with us. Let us know that "God is love" (1 John 4. 8), but let us fear *respecting ourselves*, and have such a carefulness, such a desire to please God, that we should feel fearful lest in any degree we should come short. Ignorance begets fear; but love for God will enable us to cast out that fear, and will also enable us to come to God with great confidence. So let us "Draw nigh unto God" (James 4. 8) with full confidence that He will bless us. This thought is the very opposite to that of the heathen mind. Their conception of a *god* is that of a *demon*. The Christian, on the other hand, who is walking in the footsteps of the Master, learns to love his God and to wish to do the Father's will only. Nothing is acceptable in the nature of a sacrifice that is not prompted by that love. "*The Father seeketh such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth*." (John 4. 23, 24.)

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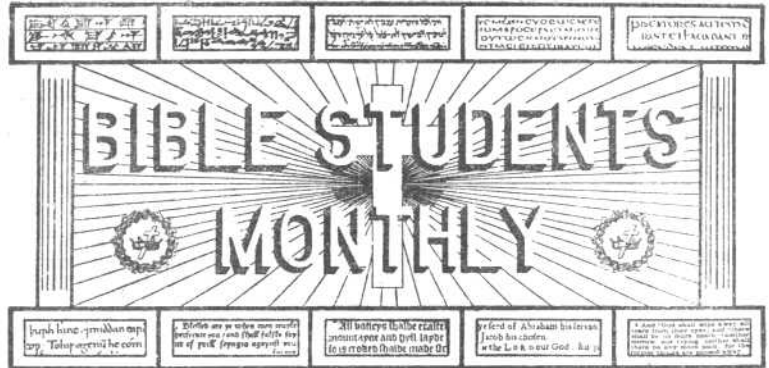
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



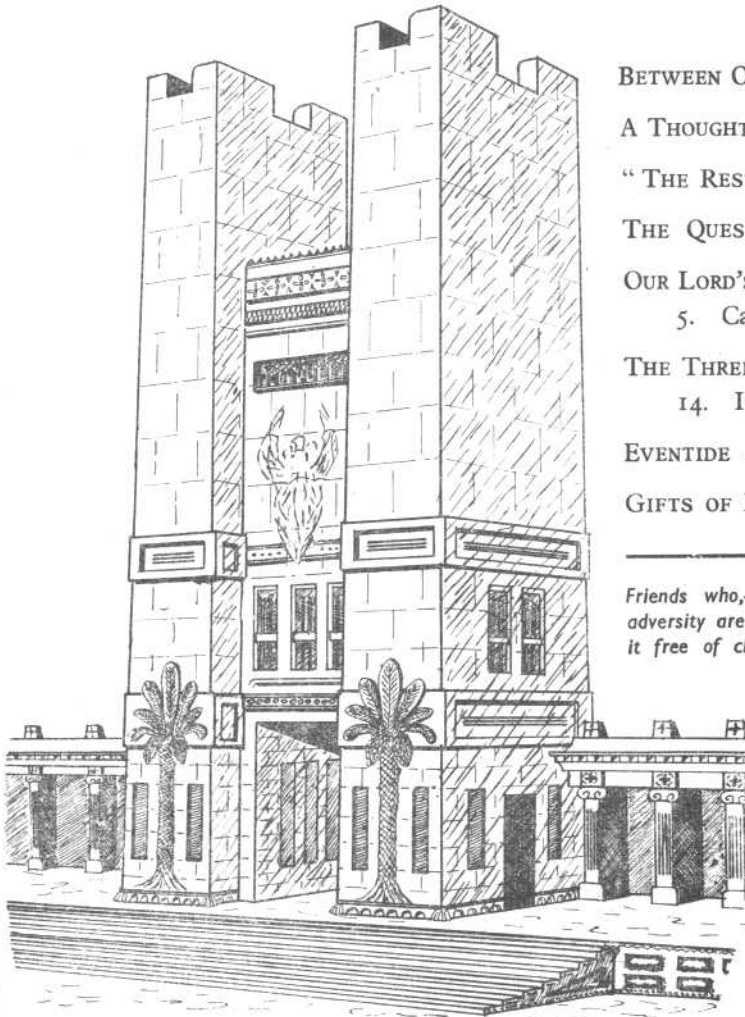
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it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

It has become necessary to review the position of the B.S.M. in relation to constantly rising costs of production. The "Monthly" has never altogether paid its way; a slow yet steady increase in the number of readers in recent years had brought it within sight of doing so, but now the meteoric price increases of the past few months, reflected at last in the cost of printing our magazine, has caused our monthly "outgoings" to exceed the "incomings" by over 100 per cent. Postages go up this month by 50 per cent., and the "Monthly" will now cost more than twice as much to produce and despatch as is received by way of subscriptions. This may involve a deficit of something like £300 on the next twelve months' working.

We do not feel that the problem will be solved by increasing the subscription price; in fact we do not feel that there is any real problem; the work is carried on as unto the Master and for His glory and it will be continued or terminated as He may direct. We shall certainly continue to send it to those who are truly the "Lord's Poor", and will once again stress that none who appreciate the "Monthly" should refrain from having it merely on the ground of being unable to pay for it—but we will say that we shall always appreciate any contribution such brethren can make; a few stamps to help with the postage will be just as much esteemed as larger amounts.

The most practical help that can be given is for brethren or classes to take a regular quantity of each issue to use in their local work. Every "small-circulation" magazine such as ours is saddled with higher costs per copy than those enjoying wider circulation. Every hundred copies added to our list would be a positive help. Those who wish to see the "Monthly" continued and extend its influence can do nothing better, if financially possible, than place a regular order for a dozen, twenty or some

other number of copies per month. The cost of such copies in lots of one dozen upwards may be calculated at 6/- per copy per annum instead of 7/-, and payment can be made quarterly instead of annually if desired.

The "Monthly" commenced in 1923 as a four-page leaflet. It was issued throughout 1950 as a 20-page magazine. Its future will depend upon the result of this intimation; with that word we will leave the matter.

Quite a number of enquiries of late on the "disputed passage" of Rev. 20. 5, lead to the conclusion that some thoughts on the subject will be timely; hence an article "The Rest of the Dead" appears in this issue in the hope that it will answer some of the questions being raised.

The Benevolent Committee would like to express their sincere appreciation of an anonymous donation of £1 from S.W. London.

The July meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on 21st July with afternoon and evening sessions. At 3.15 in Room 15 there will be an address by Bro. John Brockis (London), followed by an interval for tea at nearby cafes, and at 6.30, in the Tudor Room, a talk by Bro. G. H. Jennings on his recent visit to brethren in Germany, followed by an address from Bro. J. H. Murray (Grays).

Gone From Us

Sister M. Kretschmar (London)
Brother F. Winter (Kettering)

"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4. 33.)

It was because the early Christians in the first flush of their newly-established faith in the resurrected Christ found themselves all with one accord in one place that the power of the Holy Spirit was able to come upon them all collectively, and inspire them to go forth with supreme confidence that their message must surely conquer the world. We to-day know of a surety that, although the torch of faith has oft-times flickered uncertainly, and at times all but failed entirely, there has never lacked that nucleus of devoted followers who, as it were again receiving the Spirit from on high, have come forth from the upper room with faces transfigured, even as Moses coming down from the Mount bore on his features the visible reflection of the glory of God. Then why should we, of all people on earth to-day, hesitate to proclaim and practise the glorious truth that they who, fearing the Lord and speaking oft to one another, may by means of the very strength thus imparted, become an instrument in His Hand to effect some further mighty triumph of faith. In our coming together we are forced to recognise that our God has not left Himself without witnesses, that there yet remain the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. In our communion together the Spirit warms our hearts with that flame of sacred love which urges us with irresistible force to "lay down our lives for the brethren" and count no sacrifice too great if

so be we may exemplify the teachings of Him Who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me" says Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, "Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Here is the way by which we shall come forth as a people charged with a message to this generation—the road of day-by-day advancement in understanding of the revelation of God. We who now live need a message that will answer the questions and solve the problems of to-day. That message we have, for the Divine Plan, testified "in due time" even though known and expressed only "in part" is sufficient to satisfy the mind and the heart of every sincere enquirer. But to give it with power and effect, it is necessary that we ourselves should live the message—that as exponents of the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth we should in our own lives and fellowship give evidence of the transforming influence of the things we have heard and the life we have entered upon. To believe is not enough. To hold the true doctrine and to live in constant expectation of the Lord from Heaven will not suffice. To retire into a bigoted self-satisfaction with our own position before Him and an indifferent attitude to the interests of the Kingdom to-day will never bring as a result those stirring words "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here then is the call—to take our rightful place in this day as men with a Message; up-to-date, all-sufficient, the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe.

"THE REST OF THE DEAD"

A consideration
of Rev. 20.5

A.O.H.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Rev. 20. 5.)

Obviously it is not the First Resurrection! Verse 4 has already described that, and verse 6 goes on to say more about it. The First Resurrection is the resurrection of the Church, which takes place at the return of the Lord, and in advance of the resurrection of the world, which is usually known as the General Resurrection. If the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" is to be deferred to the end of the thousand years and the Church is raised at the beginning, John surely should have said "This is the second resurrection".

Notwithstanding that the facts concerning this verse have often appeared in print, it seems still to give quite a lot of trouble and to cause some perplexity. It is one of the few rather important interpolations in the New Testament; the time of its insertion can be determined fairly closely and the reason for its insertion is fairly obvious. Nevertheless it comes up still from time to time for discussion and attempts are sometimes made to harmonise it with the remainder of New Testament teaching regarding the Millennium. Strange it is that this verse should remain a subject of dispute when the exactly similar case of 1 John 5. 7-8, referring to the Trinity, another interpolation made at the same time and for an equally obvious reason, is never questioned.

First of all it may be noted that the sentence "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" completely breaks the sense of the passage. Verse 4 speaks of the exaltation of the Church and concludes by saying "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years". Were the expression about the rest of the dead not there, the narrative would go straight on to say "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" and so on. The whole passage is connected in a logical manner. Now verses 7-9 go on to say that at the end of the thousand years Satan goes out in an attempt to deceive the nations, who apparently have been in the earth all the time during the thousand years. And since the main object of this thousand years is for the reconciliation to God of whosoever will, and at the end of that period the issue of eternal life or death is to be decided for

every human being, and evil be brought to its end, it is obvious that the phrase as it stands cannot possibly be true unless our whole conception of the Plan of God as respects the Millennial work is grievously at fault—and there is no indication of that!

We come therefore to examine the text itself. The *International Critical Commentary*, which is probably the best existing authority on purely textual matters, says briefly that the sentence is "an interpolation". Unfortunately it does not give much information wherewith to buttress this very definite statement. That has to be sought elsewhere.

No manuscript of the New Testament earlier than the 5th century contains this sentence. That of itself is significant. It was during the 5th century that opposition to the Early Church belief in the Millennium came to a head. The Sinaitic MS., 4th century, the Vatican MS., 1160, 5th century, and the Syriac Peshitto, 6th century, do not contain the passage. (The date of the Syriac is sometimes given as 2nd century, but the original Peshitto of this date did not contain the Book of Revelation, which was added to it in the 6th century.) It is found in the Alexandrian and in the Ephraemi, both of the 5th century, and statements are sometimes made that it appears in the Vatican 1209 of the early 5th century, but this is not correct. Vaticanus 1209 ended at Heb. 9. 13 and no part of the New Testament beyond that appeared in the original manuscript. Revelation was added to this MS. in the 15th century to make it complete, and it is this late addition, of no value for the present enquiry, that contains the phrase in question.

There are very few MSS. earlier than the 4th century in existence, so that we are left with the position that no 4th century MS. has the disputed phrase, whilst of MSS. written during the 5th and 6th centuries some contain it and some do not. It seems quite clear therefore that it was during the 5th century that the words were first inserted.

It has been noticed by scholars that once the interpolation is removed, the passage in Rev. 20 describing the exaltation of the Church to her position of reigning over the nations takes the form of a set of seven couplets, which further strengthens the case for regarding it as an interpolation. The passage would then read thus:

"And I saw thrones, and they (that) sat upon them,
 And judgment was given unto them:
 And the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,
 And for the word of God:
 And which would not worship the beast,
 Neither his image,
 Neither had received his mark upon their foreheads,
 Or in their hands;
 And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;
 This is the first Resurrection.
 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection;
 On such the second death hath no power,
 But they shall be priests of God and of Christ,
 And shall reign with him a thousand years."

How did the sentence get there? It was probably added perhaps as an interlineary comment, by some transcriber who thought that such an observation was called for. Later on, when the usefulness of this addition to the theology of the day became apparent, it would be incorporated in new copies of many manuscripts and gradually become general. In the 4th and 5th centuries the doctrine of the Millennium was under a cloud; the original sharp outlines of Paul's teaching respecting the Day of Judgment and its purpose was becoming blurred over by later speculations tending to stress the Church's present glory and power. The missionary zeal that had fired the Early Church with the desire to lead men to Christ and save them, and hold out the hope of the High Calling of this Age as God's great work for the present, had given place to a complacent satisfaction with the world as it is, and much attention to Church organisation and the extension of its influence in temporal matters. Constantine had long since established Christianity as the State religion and the times of persecution, except for short periods, were past. Church dignitaries found the doctrine of the Millennium increasingly distasteful; they wanted to reign now. St. Augustine, the great theologian of orthodox Christianity, wrote his celebrated work, "*The City of God*", in 420 A.D. and virtually transferred the reign of the Church into this present Age, leaving no place for the Millennium and its work. The Council of Rome, under Pope Damasus, in A.D. 373 formally denounced Millennial belief as heresy and from that date the decline of belief in the coming Age of righteousness commenced, not to be revived on any large scale until the dawn of the Second Advent in the 19th century. With this interpolation added it became easier to interpret Rev. 20 as applying to this new idea of the Millen-

nium, the reign of the Church over the nations during this present Age, and the resurrection of the dead at its end, which then became the Day of Judgment of mediæval theology.

St. Augustine explained the "First Resurrection" as the resurrection of believers in this life from the death to sin to the life of faith in Christ and their exaltation to be sons of God, and the binding of Satan as the overthrow of his power by reason of the rising power of the Church in the world and the "Christianising" of the nations. The thousand years, he said, was to be taken as a figure of the time between the First and Second Advents, and at the Second Advent would come the Last Judgment and the second resurrection, the resurrection of the dead. Continuing, he says ("*City of God*" 20., 7) "*Of these two resurrections John the evangelist, in the book of Revelation, has spoken in such a way that the First Resurrection has been misunderstood by some of our people and turned into fables. Those who, on the strength of his words have surmised that the First Resurrection would be a corporal one have, among other reasons, been mainly moved by the number—a thousand years—as though there were destined to be a Sabbath rest of that duration for the saints, a holy vacation after six thousand years of labour . . . and that the saints are to rise again to keep this Sabbath. Which opinion would be at least tolerable, if it were understood that the saints would enjoy spiritual delights from the presence of the Lord. For we ourselves were formerly of this opinion. But when they say that those who then rise again will spend their time in immoderate carnal feasting . . . such things cannot possibly be believed except by carnal persons.*" From this extract it can be seen how popular belief in the Millennium had degenerated into a hope for "good times for the saints" on a purely material level, and the high ideal of service for humanity in that day, the extending to all men of the blessings of knowledge and recovery from sin, had become lost. Augustine first poured scorn upon the carnal views of the Millennium that prevailed in his day and then proceeded to do away with the doctrine altogether.

The theologians of the 4th and 5th centuries could find some earlier basis on which to build their views. Apocryphal literature circulating among the Jews during the few centuries around the time of our Lord had much to say respecting the Messianic Age which was to be inaugurated by the Advent of Messiah, who would exalt Israel to a place of rulership among the nations, rule as their King, put down the opposition of their enemies, and at the end of His reign—put variously at periods ranging between four hundred and a thousand years—hold a Last Judgment and destroy all the wicked. After

that would come a totally new world of everlasting righteousness in which evil would find no place. We, looking back now, can see how accurate that expectation was, once the fact that the reign of Messiah is to commence at His Second Advent and not at His first is seen. But the Jewish hope envisaged only one Advent. It was easy for the Church of the 5th century to claim that Christ had indeed come to reign at His First Advent, but that the Church, not Israel, was to be joint ruler with Him over the nations. It was not difficult either to find chronological proofs to support this claim. The work called the "*Assumption of Moses*" (written probably during the lifetime of Jesus) says that Divine intervention for the setting up of His Kingdom would come seventeen hundred and fifty years after the death of Moses, which pointed to A.D. 350 as the date. The chronology of the day gave times varying between A.D. 350 and 500 as the end of six thousand years from Adam, and with all this material at hand the claim that the Millennium had already begun was easy to promulgate. The symbolic language of Revelation lent itself to this new principle of interpretation, and so the inserted passage became firmly fixed.

Andreas, Bishop of Caesarea, about A.D. 550 wrote in his commentary upon the Book of Revelation, chap. 20, "*Some confine this thousand years to the short period of our Lord's ministry, from His baptism to His ascension to heaven, being no more than three years and a half. Others think that after the completion of six thousand years shall be the first resurrection from the dead, which is to be peculiar to the saints alone, who are to be raised up that they may dwell again upon this earth, where they had given proofs of patience and fortitude, and that they may live here a thousand years in honour and plenty, after which will be the general resurrection of good and bad. But the Church receives neither of these interpretations. By the thousand years we understand the time of the preaching of the gospel, or the time of the gospel dispensation*". Here is a plain statement of rejection of Millennial belief and clear evidence that the inserted passage was generally received by that date.

The earliest reference to belief in a second resurrection at the end of the Millennium that the writer has been able to discover is in the writings of Lactantius, an educated Roman who became tutor to the eldest son of the Emperor Constantine, and had some influence on the theology of the Church of his day. Writing in A.D. 310, he says (*Divine Institutions*, Book 7, ch. 24) "*Let philosophers know, who number thousands of years since the beginning of the world, that the six thousandth year is not yet concluded. But that number being fulfilled, of necessity there must be an end and the*

state of human things be transferred into that which is better. Because all the works of God were finished in six days, it is necessary that the world should remain in this state six ages; that is, six thousand years. Because having finished the works, he rested on the seventh day and blessed it, it is necessary that at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness should be abolished out of the earth, and justice should reign for a thousand years. When the Son of God shall have destroyed injustice, and shall have restored the just to life, he shall be conversant among men a thousand years and shall rule with a most righteous government. At the same time the Prince of Devils shall be bound with chains, and shall be in custody for a thousand years of the heavenly kingdom, lest he should attempt anything against the people of God. When the thousand years of the kingdom, that is, seven thousand years, shall draw toward a conclusion, Satan shall be loosed again; and then shall be that second and public resurrection of us all wherein the unjust shall be raised". Now this description of the Millennium from the pen of one of the most learned Christians of the 4th century is remarkable in that it betrays no trace whatever of the true purpose for which the Age is ordained of God; "*that the residue of men might seek after the Lord*" (Acts 15. 17.). The Millennium of Lactantius is not for the blessing and conversion of the world; it is for the delectation and selfish pleasure of the saints, and at its end the "unjust", those who are not of the saints, are to be raised merely to be judged and presumably sent to everlasting doom. And that leads us to the conclusion that it was the loss of that true understanding of God's purpose in the Millennial Age, sometime between the 1st and 4th centuries, that made it possible, and indeed necessary, to find some Scriptural warrant for deferring the resurrection of the world to the end of the Millennium. Their presence on earth during that blessed Age would be an annoyance and a nuisance to the redeemed saints who had been raised from the dead to enjoy a kind of super-holiday as compensation for the persecutions and sufferings they had endured during this life.

Writers earlier than Lactantius do not seem to have any knowledge of this idea of a deferred resurrection. Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto, in A.D. 220 proclaimed that the Millennium would commence in A.D. 500, when Christ would return, destroy Antichrist, and the First Resurrection would take place, the Kingdom be set up, and the wicked come into judgment. That is a fair summary of the truth as we too would define it — except for the date! Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, in A.D. 116 taught that there would be a thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, when the Kingdom of

Christ would be established visibly upon the earth. The unknown writer of the "*Epistle of Barnabas*", some time during the 1st century, said "*In six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end . . . And when he saith 'He rested the seventh day' he meaneth this, that when His Son shall come and abolish the Wicked One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, and moon, and stars, then He shall gloriously rest on that seventh day*". These earlier Christians of the first few centuries seem to be quite clear that the Age itself is intended for the judgment of the "ungodly", and once we realise that the term "judgment" includes the whole process of teaching and preparing mankind for the final choice, then these beliefs are just what we would expect from men who were not far removed from Apostolic teaching itself.

Why does the belief in this "second resurrection at the end of the Age" persist? During later centuries of the Gospel Age those few who did hold to the New Testament view of the Millennial reign were compelled to view the prophecies in the light of their own theological misconceptions. The effect of the "Dark Ages" suppression of the doctrine was to obliterate understanding of the "two salvations", and with that went, logically, the true view of the two resurrections. When in the 16th and 17th centuries Millennial belief came to the surface again men viewed the Millennial earth much as did Lactantius, the temporary home of the resurrected saints prior to their being taken off to heaven at the end of the thousand years and the burning up of the earth. The seeming incongruity of glorified saints and resurrected wicked living side by side, upon the Millennial earth, made it easy to postpone the judgment of humanity in general to the end of the Age, especially since there was no understanding that the Age is to be a time of probation; there would seem to be no point in resurrecting the doomed only to wait about for a thousand years before being brought to the bar for sentence. This disputed passage therefore was still just as apparently logical. The saints were to dwell on earth during the thousand years with Satan and all evil restrained; at the end the saints would be taken to heaven, all mankind, "the rest of the dead", raised, Satan loosed, the final judgment on evil, the "Last Judgment", take place before the Great White Throne, and then the Devil destroyed, the earth burned up, and the new heavens and new earth brought into being. At a time when men had not realised that God plans to give all the dead and all the living a full and fair trial for life and the Millennial Age is the Age for the purpose, and the only Age that could be for that purpose, it all looked very logical and harmonious.

To-day we have no such excuse. We hold as a fundamental article of faith that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained". That day is a thousand years in length. The saints, raised at the beginning of that day, at the Second Advent, are not to dwell on the earth but in heaven; they will reign over the earth as spiritual rulers. The dead—all of them—are to be raised to life to enjoy all the provision that God has made for them in that Age, and have the opportunity to become reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ the King and Mediator. The whole purpose of the thousand years is the reconciliation of all mankind, whosoever will, living or dead. The restraint of Satan and the restraint of evil during that Age is not for the benefit of the Church, which will then be beyond Satan's power anyway, all who compose that Church having made their calling and election sure, but is for the benefit of the world, who though awakened to life are still imperfect and unable as yet to resist sin and keep the perfect law of God. In the very same breath in which Paul spoke of the day apportioned by God for the judging of the world in righteousness he spoke of God having turned from the times of ignorance which He had been overlooking, and calling upon all men everywhere to repent. That call to repentance commenced to go out at Pentecost. For two thousand years it has led those who heeded it to the High Calling. When the High Calling is closed, at the end of this Age, the call to repentance will continue but it will then lead to the earthly salvation and for another thousand years it continues. There is no third call and there is no third salvation. It is "*the Church, now—the world, then*" and the end of the thousand years is the end of the Divine Plan so far as this earth is concerned. The new heavens and new earth which all have looked for as following the end of the Millennial reign will commence at that point, sure enough, but it will be a new heaven and new earth in which full perfection has been reached and there is no question of further probation or further judgment, for "*there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever maketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*".

Dearly beloved, if the joys of the Lord which once you knew have been lost; if your soul is in chains, will you not ask yourself the reason why? Is there some dread spectre in your life, some weakness unconfessed, unrepented of? Is there some earthborn cloud intercepting a Father's smile and blotting out the sunshine of His love?

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. Does not the "if" of Rom. 11. 22 show that we New Creatures, like the Jews of old, stand only in favour through faith and obedience? Does not all this glorify God as a God of sterling righteousness, a God of principle and not a "tribal" God?

A. The verse referred to reads "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off". It contrasts the unbelief of Israel and the results which followed that unbelief with the belief to which the Church of this Age is exhorted and the outcome of that belief. God is good; that is the underlying theme; but His goodness can only benefit those who will live in His goodness. Those who will not accept the goodness of God, or who, having once accepted it, afterwards reject it and cast it from them, are outside the purposes of God, for the time being at any rate. The gifts and calling of God are "without repentance" on His part, for with Him "there is no variableness neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1. 17) but they are conditional on our part, and if we fail to observe the conditions, then as the Apostle says here, like Israel of old who similarly failed, we shall be "cut-off", that is, rejected from the High Calling, whatever else we may ultimately become fitted for.

* * *

Q. Gal. 3. 19 states that the Law was added because of transgression "till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made". What promise is meant here and when was it made to the Seed? The text seems to indicate that the promise was not given till after the Law Covenant ended.

A. Christ is the Seed: verse 29 makes that plain. The promise was made to Christ even although it was enunciated two thousand years before Christ came to earth as Man. Verse 16 tells us that. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not 'And to seeds' as of many: but as of one 'And to thy seed' which is Christ." It is clear from that verse that the inner meaning of the promise to Abraham is that not only in him, but in his ultimate seed, Jesus Christ, is the promise to be fulfilled. In a lesser sense Abraham's one natural seed, Israel, is to be used as agent in the fulfilment of the promise, and in a still lesser sense his other natural seed through Ishmael, but the real significance of this promise is that Christ is the promised Seed who is to bless all families of

the earth and it was to Him that the promise was made even though it was two thousand years before it commenced to be fulfilled.

* * *

Q. What kind of bread and wine should be used in the Memorial celebration?

A. When Jesus instituted the Memorial ceremony at the Last Supper He used that which came most readily to His hand—the ordinary fermented wine of grapes which was the usual beverage at the Passover meal, and unleavened bread which was essential to the conduct of that same ceremony. In the endeavour to keep as close to the original pattern as possible it is usual for European and American Christians to use the same elements, but we can be certain that Jesus, Who taught His disciples to value the spirit of the Law above its letter, does not bind His followers to a slavish insistence upon precise identity with the bread and wine He used. If, for example, some feel qualms of conscience about tasting alcoholic wine there is no reason at all why fresh grape or raisin juice, unfermented, should not be used. If difficulty is experienced in obtaining unleavened bread it is quite customary to substitute some form of biscuit. The native Christians in some parts of the tropics in primitive districts where wine is unknown or rarely found have never in their celebrations of the Last Supper used anything else but coconut juice. Neither wine nor unleavened bread are obtained in some parts of the world so easily as they are in countries inhabited by the white races, and Christian missionaries and other workers among native peoples have for centuries interpreted the requirements of the feast in the light of what has been normally and immediately available to their respective flocks. That is just how our Lord would have it. "Let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." It is good to keep as near as we reasonably can to the original institution, but above all things "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind".

Not only does death open the door into the world of acquittal, and again into that of holiness, but also into the realm of surrender, and thence into that of sacrifice. For the essential idea of the Cross is a life lost, to be found again in those around. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."—Matt. 16. 26.

OUR LORD'S RETURN

5.—Caught up together

T.H.

An Exposition of Scripture
Dealing with the Second Advent

In our early Christian days, now some fifty-odd years ago, the writer was most carefully indoctrinated into the then orthodox Adventist teaching relative to the Return of the Lord by a dear saint of God, whose remembrance is still held dear. That the Lord would descend from heaven with a shout (perhaps any day) and with the Archangel's voice accompanied by the Trump of God, was good news indeed for a youthful mind, for then the sleeping dead would be raised and all the living saints caught up, and in one glorious moment of time we should all be at home with the Lord. Many dear saints have gone to their rest with that expectation supporting them!

That old-time expectation had been built up by superimposing a thought from 1 Cor. 15. 51, re a change "in the twinkling of an eye", upon that stated by Paul in 1 Thess. 4. 14-17, regarding the "left-over" saints. Inasmuch as Paul, in that Scripture, records the fact that "we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them—the dead in Christ—be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air", what could seem more natural than to add the phrase "in the twinkling of an eye" to the words "together with them", and thus deduce the thought that the whole Resurrection transaction required no longer than a single tick of time—a space no longer in duration than it takes for "tired eye-lids to close down over tired eyes"!

At a little later time, a wider and deeper conception of Advent Truth superseded that old orthodox teaching, and led to a belief that the time had already come for the dead to be raised, and that the *now-living* saints were being caught up one-by-one as the good Lord saw fit to call them home to Himself. Interwoven with these ideas were certain chronological calculations which seem to lend proof and force to the claim that the Lord had already returned and that the Harvest work was now in progress, and that, day by day, the gracious Lord was making up the number of the Elect.

Some sections of these chronological calculations did not seem to materialise as had been expected, and as it was not possible to re-adjust them to give other terminal dates, the whole range seemed to lose their force and validity for the purposes previously assumed.

Many brethren experienced this same difficulty,

and in the surrender of the "dates", they surrendered also some of the expectations connected with the dates. During a period of ensuing intensive research, it was noted by some that the Greek word "*hama*" (used by Paul in 1 Thess. 4. 16, and translated "together" in the Authorised Version and Revised Version text) really means "at the same time". Again, the same thing happened as in our younger days—the phrase "in the twinkling of an eye" was brought over from 1 Cor. 15. 51; and superimposed upon the phrase "at the same time" in Thessalonians, and thus made to mean "at the same moment of time". As a consequence of this the old orthodox conception of the conjoint momentary rapture of the saints—the living and the dead—came to be revived, and began to replace what had become (because of the seeming chronological failure) a discredited and unprovable expectation.

When the full force of the evidence re the time for the Lord's Coming (presented in the previous article) drove itself home even the present writer found it needful to re-examine the grounds of that belief, and had to seek in the original and other co-related passages the evidence "for and against" both the older and the new idea. The result of that re-examination was to re-establish and confirm the basic feature of the new idea, for though the chronological dating of the event had to be considerably adjusted, the one-by-one-resurrection-entry into the Presence of the Lord (of those "left-over" till He come) remained unchanged and undisturbed.

Believing that it might be of some help to other seekers on this subject the essential evidences which led to our own satisfaction will be presented following.

Beginning with the passage in 1 Thess. 4. 14-17, attention was first given to the word "*hama*"—the meaning of which had been stressed so strongly by other students. Next, attention was given to two other words in the same passage—"first, then" (vv. 16-17) which seemed utterly incompatible with the idea of a momentary translation for all. After that, further attention was given to the passage "in the twinkling of an eye", in 1 Cor. 15. 51, and also to other Scriptures associated with our Lord's return in Revelation.

These are the evidences to be considered now. It was assumed from the onset of this re-

examination that the only safe method of eliciting the meaning of any Apostolic word, would be to take every instance of its usage (by that Apostle or his contemporaries), and ascertain its length and breadth of meaning by its relation to the circumstances in which it had been used. This was what was done, with the word "hama". In the Greek New Testament text, the word occurs only nine times; once in the parable of the wheat and tares, twice in the historical narrative of the Acts, and six times in the Epistles of Paul. It is not used by any other New Testament writer.

The instances quoted from our Lord and Luke (as historian) will be helpful to our study in an illustrative and supplementary way; three also from Paul will be reviewed to help establish his mode of thought and expression concerning this Greek word, while two of the remaining three (because of their rendering into English, by the word "together"), will constitute the evidence-in-chief as to the right meaning of the third. There will thus be the force of two primary equivalents, coupled with that of six secondary equivalents, to be brought to bear on the ninth, in order to elicit its true meaning and intent in the words of our text!

Now, in eight of the nine instances where "hama" occurs it can mean nothing else than a *period of time*; the ninth and remaining one is our text. By no stretch of imagination can any one of the "eight" be applied to a single moment of time; why then should the ninth? In all these eight there is the thought of simultaneous or contemporaneousness of two or more things running through the narrative, yet no construction or definition can reduce the time-duration to one single moment of time.

Let us now take note of these incidents. The first is in the words of our Lord in Matt. 13. 29, where "hama" is translated "with". A field of wheat had been over-sown with tares. The servants, greatly perturbed over this intrusion of "bad" seed into "good", wanted forthwith to begin the uprooting of the tares. "No" says the Householder "Lest gathering out the darnel you should root up 'with' (*hama*) them the wheat" (*Diaglott word-for-word translation*). Now here we have both time and action implied—pulling up a field of darnel implies time (and obviously a period) as well as an act. One single stalk of wheat, with one of darnel alongside, could well have been rooted up "in a moment of time", but not a whole field! The wheat and the darnel could have been rooted out together "at the same time", but most obviously not in "the same moment of time".

The next instance is found in Acts 24. 26. Here is the story of Paul's repeated appearance before the venial and corrupt Felix, who while appearing to listen attentively to what Paul had to say, *also*, (*hama*) hoped that money would be given him to set Paul free. "Hearing" and "hoping" went on simultaneously (at the same time) but obviously not for a mere moment of the judge's or the prisoner's time! "*Hama*" in this case covers two whole years, during which "hearing" and "hoping" went side by side! This is more specific than the parable reference, for the length of the period is here assigned!

The next occurrence of "*hama*" comes in Acts 27. 40. Here it is translated in our Authorised Version "and". It occurs in the story of Paul's shipwreck on his journey to Rome, and tells how the distracted seamen, having been two whole weeks the sport of wind, wave and darkened sky, sight, at last, an unknown island coast. Finding shallow waters and an inviting creek an attempt was made to drive the ship up the beach. To attain this end anchor cables were cut, *and* (*hama*) rudder bindings loosed, while foresail also was run up to catch the wind. Here, three separate, but co-ordinate, efforts were undertaken to effect the desired end, but, by no stretch of imagination could these efforts, under the circumstances, be said to have been performed in a single moment of time. Cutting an anchor cable in itself, is more than any one moment's work, and this is also true of unleashing rudder bands; true also of hoisting mainsails to the wind! All might have been undertaken simultaneously by different members of the crew, but nothing is less likely than that they were all accomplished "in the twinkling of an eye". A period of several minutes duration is called for here, to say the least.

That brings us now to the consideration of "*hama*" as used by Paul himself in several places, in his letters to his friends. If here, we find consistency of usage in five instances out of six, it ought, at least, to be presumable that the sixth also will conform to the five! That five of these are used in one certain way ought to give assurance to an enquirer to-day that Paul used "*hama*" always of a period, never of a single moment; and that if we seek to introduce the idea of a mere moment of time into his usage of "the word", it will give a meaning altogether at variance with his own.

Our A.V. translators have given us two different words as equivalents to "*hama*" in these letters of Paul; "withal" three times, and "together" three times. Seeing that the crux of this argument will turn more upon the context where we find the word "together" employed, it is reserved for con-

sideration till the last, though that is not to disparage, by any means, the weightiness of proof in the word "withal".

First then, the word "withal" (which means moreover; likewise; or with all the rest). The first instance is so obvious in its implications that it is needless to add stress. Writing to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, Paul pleads with his friend to receive back his former slave, not now as a mere chattel, but as a brother in the Lord. Then, assuming assurance of a ready compliance with his request, Paul goes on to say "but at the same time (*hama*) also prepare for me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I may be imparted to you" (v. 22. *Diaglott*) "Please take back Onesimus to your home, and, at the same time prepare a little corner for me", so ran Paul's appeal! Cleaning, adapting, furnishing perhaps—all by way of preparation for Paul's comfort and recuperation! Scarcely the work of one single moment here!

Our next instance, found in 1 Tim. 5. 13, has reference to young widows, who, wishing to become married again, wax wanton against the Anointed One, and incur condemnation, having violated their first fidelity (*Diaglott*) "And at the same time (*hama*) also, they learn to be idlers, gadding about to the houses . . ." (*Diaglott*).

Perhaps no more needs to be said than that much more than a moment of time would be required for waxing wanton against Christ, and for learning to be idlers and gad-about! Things like this thrive on repetition and experience, and imply a prolonged period of time for their growth!

The last of these "withals" is found in Col. 4. 3, "attend constantly to prayer, watching in it with thankfulness, praying also "at the same time" (*hama*) for us that God may open to us a door for the word . . ." "Attend constantly to prayer . . ." yes, time is involved, days, weeks, and months perhaps . . . "and when you pray for yourselves pray also for me!" . . . Surely here the meaning is obvious enough!

Thus far then the evidence of the three "withals"! Weighty enough by itself to decide the issue before us, but offered only by way of supplement!

And now the three (or rather the two) "togethers" upon whose testimony the evidence will stand or fall. And first we take Rom. 3. 12 "they are together become unprofitable". The "they" are the two sections of the human race, into which, by the Old Law Covenant, God had divided its peoples—the Gentiles and the Jews. In chapter one (Romans) Paul has argued out at length how the Gentiles, long ago, had become unprofitable to God, having repudiated Him and turned

each to his own way of worship and immorality. That was in the ancient days before even Abraham was called. That state of unprofitability had continued through the centuries right on to Paul's own day. There is no dubiety or uncertainty about that.

But now, at length, Abraham's children also had become unprofitable to God; a remnant only being found fit for His further present purposes. The nation as a whole was being set aside, and the remnant only were of profit to His Name. Thus both together (Gentile and Jew) had become unprofitable to God.

Where in all the run of ages is the single moment of time when this stood true? There is no such moment possible! There was a time—a moment perhaps—when Gentile unprofitability began; true also there was a time—a moment perhaps—when Jewish unprofitability began, but those times, once begun, have never ceased. Moments have run on into a period, and the period constitutes at least one whole age. In the Gentile's case it is more than one . . . and there is no cessation yet! Gentile and Jew have both "at the same time" (for the whole Gospel Age) been unprofitable to God! That is what Paul means by "*hama*" in this argument!

Now to the second of the "togethers", which is found in 1 Thess. 5. 10. This is undoubtedly the companion text to 1 Thess. 4. 14-17, for it links up with that passage at two most important points. First, it links up those who "wake or sleep" (are awake or asleep) with those that remain unto the coming of the Lord, and those who are safely asleep in Christ—the dead in Christ. In both texts the "waiting" and the "sleeping" saints are brought under review. And secondly, it links our living "together with Him", with the phrase "and so shall we ever be with the Lord". Here we have the Apostle's own commentary upon the preceding text, and his own considered and specific definition of what "*hama*" meant to him. Paul had been his own interpreter and he had made it plain!

For how long does that "*hama*" last? Would any saint of God who has followed Jesus all through the way of sacrifice rejoice to think that his "together-ness" with the Lord would be ended after but one "twinkling" moment of time? The time-duration of "*hama*" here is eternity—a "forever with the Lord"—the "together-ness" and the "time" running hand in hand while eternal ages roll! Need any more be said!

We have now examined eight of the nine occurrences of "*hama*", and in no case can it be made to mean "at the same moment of time".

Always on its "time" side it denotes a period; a period during which at least two things will be happening together!

What of the ninth occurrence in our text? Is this to be interpreted at variance with all the previous eight? Can "at the same time" here really mean "at the same moment of time" as the old orthodox teaching assumed? These are the considerations which decided the point for ourselves!

Moreover, is it possible to say of events occurring "in the twinkling of an eye" . . . first, then . . . —"the dead in Christ shall rise *first*: *then*, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . ."

Consideration of that must be left for another day.

This enquiry has been made solely with regard to the usage of the word, apart from any chronological associations, consequently, fix our gathering to the Lord where we will, past, present or still to come, it cannot change or vary the sense and meaning which Paul himself wrote into it. In Paul's mode of thought, *the time required for the saints assembling into the Presence of their Lord, is thereby shown to be a period*, not a mere moment of time—a period in which a "first" thing can come first, and a "then" or "after"-thing can come to pass in due time.

The Three Epistles of John

A.O.H.

Part XIV. I John 3.10-13

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another." (vs. 10-11.)

This declaration is a bridge between John's words in verses 4-10 and the things he is going to say in the rest of the chapter. He has already been at pains to stress that we, the disciples of Christ, have a standing in righteousness before God, dependent upon our sincerity and purity of mind and purpose, and that without that righteousness we cannot claim to be of God. That righteousness, that justification, is an inward possession, known only to God and the believer, not of itself discernible to the onlooker. Now John would tell us that there is a means by which our righteousness is manifested to those around us, to our brethren, our neighbours, and others. That means is our love for our brethren, our neighbours, for all. It was Jesus Who first proclaimed the law of love and He made it incumbent upon His disciples to develop a love for all mankind of the nature that He Himself possessed. Nothing short of a deep and sincere love and solicitude for all who have been made in the image and likeness of God can be acceptable in those who are eventually to be entrusted with the task of reconciling men to God. But even John's fellow-brethren, accepted unto Christ and constituted sons of God as they were, could not reach up to that height at once. John must lead them by a succession of steps, appealing first of all to that which lay nearest to their hearts. So he confines his argument at the beginning to the family circle, the fellowship of the believers, the community of

the Church, where of all places the love of each true-hearted believer should be most manifest. If that love, the love of the brethren, is not present, says John, then without any further argument it can be definitely stated that the professed child of God is not so in fact. He that loveth not his brother is "not of God".

Now that does not mean that we must as a matter of obligation extend the full privileges of our fellowship and receive into all the implications of brotherly love anyone who chooses to come into our midst, profess acceptance of our beliefs and standards, and claim to be a brother or sister in Christ. There has often been a certain amount of loose thinking in this connection and not infrequently "wolves in sheep's clothing" have taken advantage of the too-ready friendliness of earnest disciples endeavouring to follow out what they believe to be the requirements of the Scriptures. When John says "his brother" he means just those who can truthfully be described by the term, those who are in deed and in truth children of God and therefore brethren of other children of God. There can be no denying that there is a love that we should bear toward the world in general, and toward our enemies, and toward all, no matter how evil or depraved or far from God they may be, but that is not what John is talking about here. He is talking, for the moment, of matters exclusively concerned with the circle of believers, the brethren, and his major theme, to which he returns time after time in the course of his exhortation, is that we must first recognise the strictness of the standards by which a true child of God is to be recognised, and then, recognising that, must find that we do feel a love toward

him that transcends all other affections and friendships. The love of the brethren ought to be the greatest thing in our lives and the most powerful force in our fellowship.

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (vs. 11). What beginning? Certainly not the beginning of Israel's existence as a nation, for although the Mosaic Law certainly did command men to love God above all things and then to love their neighbours as themselves, the same Law provided for things that were the very antithesis of love. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life"—that certainly is not the law of love as we understand the word to-day. And love cannot be commanded; the Mosaic Law gave commands and the only love it could inculcate was duty love. The love that Jesus brought to light in the world was something so much beyond the loftiest reach of Moses' precepts that Jesus could justly say "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy', but I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven'." (Matt. 5. 43-45.) That must have been the beginning of which John is speaking here; here in these words of Jesus we find the same association between the possession of all-embracing love and the being a child of God, except that Jesus demands more. He demands love towards all; John, so far as he has got in the course of his exhortation here in the middle of chapter 3, is for the present only asking for love for the brethren. But he appeals to the right authority. For him and for all who then and thereafter were to read his words, Jesus is the beginning and the words of Jesus constitute that "message that ye have heard from the beginning".

And how whole-heartedly the Church of the first few generations did enter into the spirit of that exhortation! It is impossible to read the thrilling stories of the Acts of the Apostles without sensing the atmosphere of Christian love in which the fellowship was born and developed. There were the rifts and the occasional quarrels, it is true. The Grecians murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations (Acts 7). The Jews resented the extension of the call to the Gentiles and at first refused to count them brethren, causing Peter and others some difficult times before agreement was attained and harmony restored (Acts 15). Paul himself was not always received in the manner befitting an Apostle and an elder of the flock. But on the whole these were only incidents in the life

of the Church. In the main the joy of salvation and appreciation of the High Calling to which they had been called overshadowed all other considerations and made the early Christian fellowship so joyous and happy a thing that those outside envied the believers for the possession of what they themselves could neither understand nor emulate. "How these Christians love one another!" cried Tertullian many years afterwards; that word has lingered and echoed down the ages to our own time, where it has mingled with another expression "the love of the brethren" which has become proverbial amongst us. As it was in the first century, as it was in Tertullian's day, so it is in our own time; the spirit of Christian love manifest in our assemblies is still one of the most potent means of conversion we know. It is a solemn thought that the loss or partial loss of that spirit may be a contributory factor to the decline in the number of conversions we now observe. It is in our meetings, our gatherings and our fellowship that we have opportunity to show the enquirer how our beliefs and hopes work out in practice. If our practice does not match our profession we must pardon the candidate for conversion if he is a little sceptical. When George Lansbury, the one-time leader of the Labour party, visited Lenin in Moscow during the course of his endeavour to promote an understanding between the heads of the great Powers, and talked with him of Christ and the Christian faith, the Russian leader said quietly "Go back to England and convert your fellow-countrymen to Christianity; then come back to me and we will talk again". Lenin spent part of his life in this country and he knew what he was talking about. So with us; if we would persuade others to accept for themselves the rule of life which we have accepted and found good, we must expect to be judged by our manifestation of that life in actual practice under everyday conditions.

"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (vs. 12-13.)

John, strangely, does not use the word "hate" in describing the attitude of Cain towards his brother. He leaves it to be inferred, in the light of all that he has just been saying, that Cain failed to love his brother. He could have quoted no more terrible example of the consequences that can follow such a failure. The sin of Cain has stirred the consciences of all generations of men throughout all history. He has become the standard archetype of the fratricide, and the expression "the mark of Cain" has passed into the realm of proverbs and popular allusions. There

is probably no other character of history, except Judas Iscariot, who has commanded so much popular detestation as has Cain. We know nothing of Cain's earlier life with Abel, but it is evident that he had not loved him as a brother should.

Some have deduced from John's expression here, "who was of that wicked one", that Cain was in fact the offspring, not of Adam and Eve, but of Satan and Eve, and doomed from the outset. The plain statement of Gen. 4. 1 ought to be sufficient to expose the fallacy of such reasoning. Cain was "of the wicked one" in exactly the same sense as those Pharisees to whom our Lord said "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do". (Jno. 5. 44.) He was "of that wicked one" because he had allowed sin to take root in his heart and exercise control over his actions, and in the end it led him to slay his brother.

Cain did not love his brother; that much is evident. That failure led to hatred, and hatred to murder. It is unlikely that Cain seriously intended things to go so far. There is no hint of animosity when they made their individual offerings, side by side, to God. When Cain's offering was rejected it was to God he first addressed his complaint and it was only after being told that acceptance followed righteousness, and rejection unrighteousness, that the implied contrast between his brother's goodness and his own evil evoked the feelings that led eventually to the crime. That is the position to which John is leading us here. The world hates the Christian because of its realisation of the contrast. The darkness hateth the light because its own deeds are evil. Abel suffered, innocently, because of his own rightness of heart. The very sight of

him standing there, or going about his work, was a reproof to Cain and to the evil that he cherished; and Cain thought to remove the reproof by obliterating the sight of his brother, by doing away with him. So does the unregenerate man try to do away with all that savours of God and His holiness, and is no more successful than was Cain. So the message comes to us, that we should love one another in sincerity and truth, realising that this is the evidence we have that we are indeed passed from death unto life. The world will hate us, but we are bidden not to be surprised at that. Greater cause for surprise would we have if it were found that the world did not hate us. "Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you" said Jesus. He did not mean that we should always be expecting and seeking the scorn or active dislike or downright persecution of the world. Some have taken it that way and gone out of their way to make themselves obnoxious to their fellows, hailing the consequent—natural—resentment as persecution nobly borne for Christ's sake. He did not mean anything like that. What he did mean was that we should expect to find the *darkness* in the world hating the *light* that is in us. That of itself will bring all the disesteem or reproach or persecution that the Lord intends us to have. Apart from that, we should expect to find ordinarily decent men and women in the world appreciating and even applauding that which is good and Christ-like in our daily lives and our disposition and our outlook. The world has fallen to a low level in many ways, but it is not so hopelessly degraded that there are not some who can appreciate and approve the things of Christ that we hold out before them.

To be continued.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

"I can wrap the boss round my little finger! If he orders me to do anything I just go and do it in my own way!"

How often has some braggart soul, under the influence of something more than water, let off such a boast! "Managing the boss" may or may not be of advantage to the business, but it sometimes does occur when the boss is a mere quivering reed, and the workman a real sturdy bulrush.

Paul too, thought to work that little game but found he had yielded to a Master who intended to keep His place as supervisor and director, and be all that their respective relationships implied—the "Boss"; the Master, and the Head.

After a little while spent in confounding the Jewish leaders in Damascus the reformed and converted advocate for the Son of God had to flee by night, for his life. Away into the solitudes of Arabia he went—exactly where, we cannot say—and for three whole years remained in hiding and in meditation there.

From thence, at length, he returned to Damascus (Gal. 1. 17.) and after that proceeded up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and James. (Gal. 1. 18-19.) So completely had Paul seemed to disappear in the solitudes of Arabia, during his three years sojourn there, that brethren in Jerusalem seem to have forgotten the report of his conversion to

the Lord, and to have shrunk away from him in fear, when attempting to join himself to them "not believing that he was a disciple." (Acts 9. 26.) But Barnabas—that ardent son of consolation—took him beneath his wing, brought him to the then resident Apostles and told them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to Him, and that he had spoken boldly in Damascus in the Name of Jesus. (Acts 9. 27.)

And so Paul is back at the spot from which he started out to find the turning-point of destiny awaiting him. Deliberately and fearlessly he now began to proclaim Jesus in Jerusalem, and just as surely gave occasion to the hostile spirit there to reveal itself again, inasmuch that certain Grecian Jews went about to kill him.

Had the Master called him back to the Metropolis to be His advocate there? Paul had no decisive evidence in the words of Ananias' message—"a chosen vessel . . . to carry My Name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." (Acts 9. 15.) But his presence in the mother-city was arousing hostility where otherwise the situation would have been peaceable and conducive to the spiritual growth of the Church. (Acts 9. 31.) Evidently there was toleration now for the original apostles, but not for Paul! He was the turn-coat, the renegade, the apostate; the attacker turned advocate; and that was more than Jewish orthodoxy could stand!

The story continues in Paul's own words: "I was praying in the temple and fell into a trance and saw the Lord saying to me, 'Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning Me'." (Acts 22. 18.) Then began the workman's expostulation "But why Lord? am I not the best witness for this work! They all know what I was, and what I did, even to standing sponsor for them at the stoning of Thy faithful martyr Stephen! Surely when they come to realise all that I now am, and that it is Thine own resistless power which has wrought the mighty change, they can scarcely fail to be impressed by what Thou hast done in me, and lend themselves to be influenced by Thee."

" . . . they will not receive of thee testimony concerning Me" the Lord had said; "I think they will, Lord if you will let me stay on awhile and try" was the contradictory reply. "Get out, depart, . . ." was the peremptory command. The Master was in no mood for parleying. There was no wrapping Him round the little finger!

Paul had to learn that a Dictator had come into his life who would brook no impertinence or self-will. Paul had been called to *serve*, under instruction; not to decide or control.

Of course this was part of the self-mortification and self-crucifixion incident to the Christian call, but to men of strong personality (like Paul) how difficult to learn, and how anguished the experience!

Paul bent before the imperious command and went from Jerusalem to his own native town, and there in the solitudes of Cilicia acquired, by intensive diligence, the aptitude and experience which shaped and developed him for his later evangelistic work. In Jerusalem he would have been a misfit and a menace, in Cilicia the "peg" and the "hole" were made to fit, and the Lord was both honoured and satisfied by the man he was made to be!

When the whole tale of the Church's varied experience comes to be told, oh! how many will be the cases where the servant decided against the Lord, and in consequence both he and his work will at length be disowned! Not all of strong personality obeyed like Paul, and retired till they had been made fit to lead and supervise under His watchful care! How difficult it has ever been for the self-assertive leader to believe that the circumstances in some Jerusalem would be the better for his absence, and that some Cilician back-woods would be the ideal place for him! Or that some other quieter personality would make a better Elder than himself!

"The story of the misfits"—that might be a suitable sub-title for the story of the Christian Church; the story of the ardent evangelist, able to persuade men to cross the line, but unable to shepherd converts afterwards; the story of the studious Pastor, but with never a single addition over years to his little flock of souls; good men both (or all), but good men in the wrong and unsuitable place.

Good men in the wrong place, engaged on work unsanctioned or unallotted by the Lord! Is this situation a thing entirely of the past? Is there none of this to-day?

This little episode in the life of Paul poses for us a situation and a question of very serious import, and should make all seek to understand whether some Jerusalem or some Cilicia is where he ought to be at work. The question is, the Lord's Will or mine, which!

Surely all who love His blessed Name will say:

*"Sweet will of God, my refuge Thou,
My safe abiding place.*

*Till all the storms of life are past,
And I shall see His face.*

*"Though from my life He seems to take
What I thought wholly blest;*

*E'en if I might, I would not choose,
My Father knoweth best."*

GIFTS OF FAITH

A Short Essay

C.T.R.

Faith may be viewed from two standpoints—*belief* and *trust*. In the Scriptural use of the word faith, we understand it to be a belief in God and the things that we have reason to recognise as being of God—God's prophecies, the promises of his Word, etc., and a heart reliance on him—and not a belief in anything. The latter would be what we would term credulity. And the person who could believe anything would be foolish; whereas, he that believes what God has said has the Wisdom that cometh from above, and is, therefore, wise from the Scriptural standpoint.

We understand that the purpose and determination of the Christian should be to have this faith largely developed, and he should obtain it from the Scriptures. Many people have faith which they believe to be of God, but which, on investigation, they find to be unscriptural and not a faith in what has come from God, in what he has expressed, but from the traditions of the "Dark Ages" and from college professors, etc., and is quite contrary to the "faith once delivered to the saints".

In this particular sense we would understand faith to represent a heart-quality of trust in the Lord—something that has been acquired through the knowledge of God—through acquaintance with him by the various means by which he has been pleased to reveal himself. This is a faith which cannot continue to subsist or increase unless knowledge shall increase, based upon the Divine Revelation, and full acceptance of it and the coming into harmony with the Almighty, so as to be able to apply the promises and to recognise that they belong to the individual.

We would consider faith, then, as belief in God and in his promises, as personal trust in God, giving one the rest and peace of God. As to how these views of faith agree with the words of our Lord, "*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth*", and as to how they agree with the statement of the Apostle Paul in Corinthians respecting faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit, we would say that in the first of these passages the rendering should be, "*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find The Faith on the earth?*" The implication is not that he will find no faith, but Shall he find "The Faith (the Doctrine) once delivered unto the saints"; hence we understand our Lord's words to mean that when the Son of man cometh he will not find, save in a few, "The Faith once delivered unto the saints", but will find instead misconceptions.

And so we find that many Christian people, when talking on this subject, do not know what they are talking about. They have not "The Faith once delivered to the saints". Thus we are reminded of the statement of the Scriptures that "the inhabitants of the world have been made drunk" with the false doctrines which have perverted the Word of God. Instead of the "good tidings of great joy" they have been told bad tidings of most horrible torture. It is intimated in the Word that some will have The Faith. But the Lord implies that it will be a very small number who will possess it.

Respecting the gifts of faith: At the very beginning of this Age gifts of speaking with tongues, gifts of interpreting tongues, gifts of healing, etc., were bestowed so that they might be exercised for the benefit of the people. It would require a great deal of faith to be able to say, as did Peter to the impotent man at the temple,

"Arise and walk". One would need the "gift" in order to do this. And so with those who spoke with tongues. It would need to be a miraculous gift which would enable them to master any unknown language.

Those gifts which God chose to give were granted because the Church was in its infancy and needed them for encouragement. The gifts were given also for a witness because the Church did not then have the New Testament; it had not as yet been written. The early Church needed some means for instructing one another. And so one would arise and speak in an unknown tongue; a gift of interpretation would be given to another, and he would rise and give the interpretation. These gifts were given amongst them as a sort of drawing power to cause the Lord's people to assemble themselves together. Thus was the Word of God sent out for a time through this imperfect channel.

We should not think that a higher development was indicated by the possession of these gifts, but rather, these gifts were granted during the infancy of the Church, and we should not pray for them. The Scriptures show that either they were the gifts possessed by the Apostles or else, subsequently, they were the result of the impartation of the Holy Spirit and laying on of the hands of the Apostles; as, for instance, when Philip, the deacon, sent the Apostle that he might lay hands upon the people that they might receive the gifts; evidently Philip had not the power to do this of himself.

As to the desire for speaking with unknown tongues, the Apostle gave them a warning reproof. He said, "*I would rather speak five words in the Church with my understanding—that by my voice I might teach others also—than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*" (1 Cor. 14. 19.) He tells them that if any man possessed the gift of speaking with tongues, let him pray that he might interpret—that he might be able to express himself intelligibly to those to whom he was speaking, rather than in dark sayings. And then he proceeds to say that this strong desire for emulation in the possession of the gifts did not of itself indicate deep consecration to God. He tells them that if they spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, it would profit them nothing, if they did not have love. The possession of an unknown tongue did not imply that a man had reached a higher attainment and relationship to God.

He says that the fruits of the Spirit are more to be desired, which are these—meekness, gentleness, patience, fortitude, self-control, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love. St. Peter tells us, "*If ye do these things, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2 Pet. 1. 10, 11.) But we might have all the gifts of the early Church and have no evidence whatever that we would be sure of a place in the Kingdom. Love excels all the other virtues, because it is the most enduring.

When we shall see and know thoroughly faith will, practically, have come to an end. And hope will be practically at an end when our hopes in our Heavenly Father's promises have reached fruition. But love had no beginning and it will have no end. God is love. Since God was without beginning, so Love was without beginning; because it is His character, His disposition; and as He endureth forever, so Love will endure forever.

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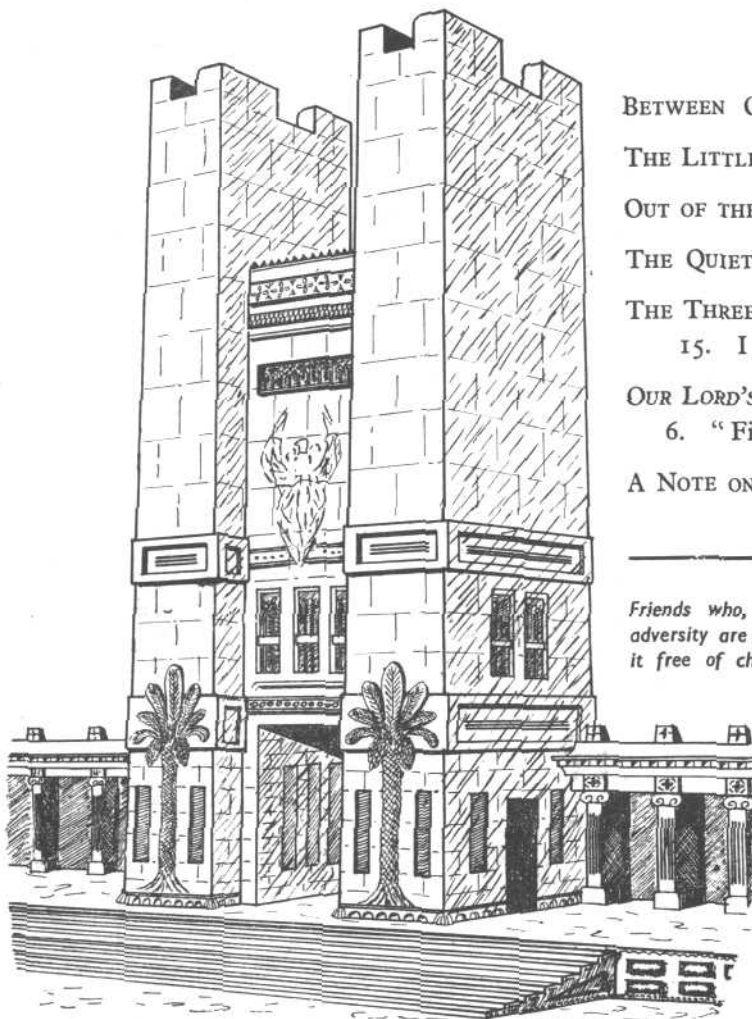
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

A minor change has been made in the name of our magazine. The reason is that for some years now a fairly well-known Christian organisation, with whose theology, outlook and activities the "Monthly" has little or nothing in common, has been increasingly using the term "Bible Students" to describe its own adherents, instead of the name by which they have been known for some twenty years. There has been in consequence some confusion in the minds of some who come in contact with our work, and we have had to explain the situation more than once. It has been deemed wise therefore to make this change in order to reduce the likelihood of this journal being mistakenly concluded to have some connection with the organisation referred to.

* * *

The special issue "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" has been taken up so well by the friends that we are about to reprint—our stocks are nearly exhausted. Substantial price increases have taken place since the last printing and the new edition will be more expensive—about 40/- per 100. In the meantime, however, a brother who desires to see this issue sent out widely among those who are likely to be interested has donated a substantial sum to be used in providing free supplies of "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" to all who will undertake to use them profitably. Before commencing to charge the increased price, therefore, we shall be very happy to send reasonable quantities free and post free to brethren everywhere who will ask for same and undertake to make immediate use of them. In order to allow our friends in America, Australia and New Zealand to have part in this distribution, we are setting aside a proportion of the free copies for their use, realising that their requests cannot come in for a month or two after this issue reaches them. Will British brethren therefore please apply at once, and their requests will be met first? Overseas friends are desired to apply by air mail so as to reach here during September in the case of America and Canada, and to reach here by the end of November in the case of Australia and New Zealand. Brethren who have already purchased quantities of this special issue for use need not feel precluded from participating in this free issue, provided they can make use of the copies. We feel sure that all will appreciate the loving zeal which has inspired our brother in making this provision, and trust that in consequence there will be many sad and puzzled ones come to a better understanding of the purposes of our gracious Father.

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Brothers G. H. Jennings and W. F. Fox have recently taken a trip through Germany, visiting

many of the German brethren, and have returned charged with messages of love to the friends in this country. They say:

"During our recent tour through Germany visiting classes and groups of brethren, we were requested everywhere to convey the "LOVE and GREETINGS" of the brethren in Germany to those in the British Isles, together with Psa. 133.

"We know of no more effective manner of getting these messages conveyed to the majority of brethren in this country than through the BSM, and if this is possible we would be glad and, our responsibility will have been discharged. Also, we trust that these expressions will serve to strengthen the bonds of brotherly love and of mutual sharing already in existence between the brethren here and on the Continent.

"Our experiences frequently cause us to remark how good it would have been if many more of the brethren from this country could have shared in the joy of meeting and having fellowship with the brethren in Germany. The same spirit was found in them and a warmth and depth of Christian love was everywhere manifest. Having regard to their limited resources from a material standpoint, largesse alone could best describe both the spontaneity and unstinted nature of their hospitality. 'Blest be the tie that binds' was the sincere expression of all those with whom we met. We thank the Lord for the experience and for the many lessons we ourselves received and the encouragement shared."

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The monthly meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on Saturday, August 18th, in the Tudor Room, at 6.30, the speakers for the evening being Bros. F. Oakley and W. Batcheller. As is customary, a very warm invitation is extended to all who can make it possible to join in the fellowship and worship on that occasion.

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The friends at Ossett, Yorks, announce a Home-Gathering to be held on Saturday and Sunday, 25th-26th August, at the Christian Fellowship Mission, Ossett, on Saturday, and at the Town Hall, Ossett, on Sunday. The speakers will be Bros. Bullard and Jennings (London), and Chrimes (Altrincham). The brethren who are arranging this gathering extend a warm welcome to all who can attend. For further details and accommodation please write to the Secretary of the Ossett Christian Fellowship Mission, Miss E. L. Robinson, Laburnum Cottage, Dewsbury Road, Ossett, Yorks.

THE LITTLE SEASON

*An examination of
things to come*

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations" (Rev. 20. 7-8.)

This is the final Act in the Drama of the Ages. When the Age of Blessedness has run its full course and the Messianic reign completed its beneficent work upon earth there is to be a last opportunity for the forces of evil to seek the allegiance of any who are still at heart in sympathy with sin. It is not an opportunity that will last long; it is not an effort that is going to be crowned with success. Swift and inexorable, the judgment of God will come down from heaven upon all who thus ally themselves with Satan the great enemy, and together with him they will sink into that death from which there is no awaking, down into the depths of the blackness of darkness for ever.

Of all revealed prophecy of things to come, this event, at the very end of the Millennial Age, is the farthest away from us in point of time and therefore its outlines are the most vague and shadowy. Yet there is material in the few words of Rev. 20. 7-10 to afford us much food for thought; sober reflection upon the principles that are embedded in this brief account should go far toward giving us some understanding of the final chapter in the story of sin and death. This is the only actual description of the "little season" in the Bible but there are allusions elsewhere which throw some light upon the things that are going to take place at that time.

This short account enshrines the main principle of the Divine Plan, that every man is to be given every possible opportunity to attain human perfection and to overcome the effects of sin in himself, and then to be placed in such a position that he must choose of himself whether or no he will live in harmony with righteousness in the face of full opportunity and ability to do otherwise. The final choice will be completely voluntary even although the gift of eternal life can only follow if the choice be for righteousness. The "little season" is the period during which the choice is made and the irrevocable decision, for life or death, taken.

"And when the thousand years are expired," says John in verse 7, *"Satan shall be loosed out of his prison."* This really follows on the end of verse 3 where John in vision saw Satan bound and cast into the abyss, *"that he should deceive the nations*

no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season."

This "abyss" into which Satan is cast for the duration of the Millennial Age is the same as the "deep" of Luke 8. 31, into which the demons besought the Lord not to command them to enter. It is the same as the "tartarus" of 2 Pet. 2. 4, into which the rebellious angels were cast by God at the time of the Flood. In other words, the Devil is restrained during the whole of that Messianic Age and utterly unable to influence humanity in any way. But at the end the restraints are to be lifted for "a little season" and he will attempt to deceive and ensnare those who will listen to him as he has done before. This simple statement in verse 3 is one of the clearest proofs of the personality of the Devil that we have. There are some believers whose studies have convinced them that Biblical references to "Satan" denote only the evil tendencies that are within man's own heart, only the "principle of evil", and that there is in fact no great supernatural spiritual being named "Satan" who has set himself in inflexible rebellion against God. Now if this conclusion is the correct one, it would be difficult to imagine what is implied by the binding of Satan during the Millennial Age and the loosing of Satan at its end. The evil tendencies within men's own hearts and lives which have persisted throughout this present life will still be there when they return during the Millennium and will still have a measure of influence until by "restitution processes" they have progressed well along the Highway of Holiness that leads to life. It is at the end of the Millennium that we should expect them to be free of such influences and tendencies. If "Satan" is only within man's own heart—every man his own Satan, so to speak—then it were more proper to speak of Satan as being *loosed* during the Age and *bound* at its end. Verses 3 and 7 of Rev. 20 can be understood logically only of an evil influence which is outside and not inside man and is independent of man. A personal Devil is the only figure that will fill the requirements and it is in fact such a personal Devil who will be totally restrained from tempting mankind during the Millennial Age while they are being taught the laws of God's kingdom and only allowed to bring his temptations to bear upon them when God in His wisdom sees they are abundantly able to resist the Devil, if they wish so to do.

Is this "loosing of Satan" in harmony with the revealed character of God. Is it to be expected that the One Who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil" and has done so much to remove evil from the earth and out of the hearts of men is likely to let the author of all evil loose upon mankind again? For answer we must go back to the beginning. The all-wise Creator allowed the Adversary to deceive and seduce our first parents. God made them creatures of free-will and told them what would be the consequences of sin. They were perfect, and they had freedom of choice, and they exercised freedom of choice. The situation will be exactly the same, except that mankind now will have the benefit of experience and if any give way to the Evil One it will be in the face of full knowledge. There is another factor, too, which is indicated in this passage. It will not be a merely passive abandonment of men to the seductive influences of the Adversary with no corresponding force on the other side. The forces of righteousness will do battle with the forces of evil for every human soul, and it will be a hard thing for any man to resist the appeal of God.

Having been set at liberty, in all probability his malignant host of evil angels also being at liberty with him, we read that Satan will "go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (vs. 8). This verse has been interpreted to mean that the vast majority of earth's millions will join the rebels and that they will surround the relatively few righteous as though they were the sand of the seashore for multitude. Such interpretation is not consistent with the Divine Plan. If, after this thousand years reign which is ordained by God for the reconciliation to Himself of "whosoever will", so that His original purpose in creating mankind on the earth might go into effect, the vast majority of men fall again into sin at the first temptation, then we can only conclude that the whole creative purpose of God has been a failure. If only a minority of earth's inhabitants eventually attain eternal life then the glowing rhapsodies of the prophets were, to say the least of it, exaggeration, and the coming of Jesus to earth by no means such "good tidings of great joy to all people" as the angels claimed. We know that this is not the case. Everything that is revealed to us concerning the Plan of God stresses the transcendent truth that the Plan is going to be a glorious success and that, so far from it being a hard thing to enter into eternal life, as was supposed in mediæval times, it is in fact going to be a very hard thing to keep out of it. As Paterson Smyth says in his "Gospel of

the Hereafter" "no one will be lost until the Heavenly Father has as it were thrown His arms around him and looked him full in the face with the bright eyes of His love, and of his own deliberate will he will not have Him."

The defective interpretation comes largely in consequence of misunderstanding the reference to "Gog and Magog". John here is using a Hebrew idiom that was much more intelligible to his immediate readers than it is to us. To the Jews the expression "Gog and Magog" meant all the farthest and most remote and most primitive peoples of the earth. It had its origin in the days of Ezekiel's boyhood, when the settled civilisations of Israel, Assyria, Syria, Babylonia and Egypt were suddenly and without warning assailed by a savage onslaught of barbarous people from the north of whose very existence they had previously been hardly aware. These barbarians ravaged and looted for some thirty years before being driven back to the coasts of the Black Sea, from whence they had come, but Israel never forgot their visitation. It provided Ezekiel in later life with the background for his memorable description of the trouble with which this Age is to end, likened by him to an onslaught of Gog and Magog and all their peoples upon defenceless Jerusalem. Because of this it has sometimes been suggested that Ezekiel 38-39 and Rev. 20. 7 refer to the same event, but a close study will soon show that this is not the case. The invasion of Gog and Magog in Ezek. 38-39 precedes the time that Israel will, after the victory "know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward" (Ezek. 39. 22.) The cleansing of the land takes place after the host has been destroyed. That does not fit the Millennial Age. In Rev. 20. 7 the attack against the forces of righteousness comes after men have been converted and after the land has been cleansed, and the host is destroyed by fire from heaven before it is able to defile the earth as the earlier host does in Ezek. 39.

This idea of a final attack upon the citadel of God's holiness at the end of the Messianic reign, by peoples from the farthest parts of the earth, Gog and Magog, was a very general one at the time of the First Advent. It is not easy to decide just when or how the belief came into being or how much it owed in the first place to Ezekiel's prophecy, but certain it is that John was not the only seer who spoke and wrote in such terms. Thus the "Sibylline Oracles", written roughly at the same time as Revelation, describes the Messianic Kingdom as being closed by an attack by all the nations upon Jerusalem and their destruction by God. The "Apocalypse of Elijah" and the "4th Book of Ezra" among other apocryphal works of

times very close to the First Advent, similarly tell of the assault of "Gog and Magog" upon Jerusalem at the close of the Messianic Kingdom, and their consequent destruction. John used a few simple words here that conveyed a perfectly familiar thought to his readers; that there would come peoples from the farthest corners of the earth to join in this attack upon the things of God. Satan would seek his dupes, not merely among the faithful ones at the very centre of God's Kingdom, not among the relative few in the "beloved city", at headquarters, so to speak, but among all the millions of redeemed humanity spread abroad upon the face of the earth as the sand of the sea for multitude. It will be the people of the nations to whom Satan goes who are "as the sand of the sea", not the number he succeeds in deceiving. That number, we trust and believe, will be a small one.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." It is this verse which gives a clue to the nature of this last rebellion and the manner in which it is met. The word translated "camp" is *parembolen* and refers to a walled military encampment or barracks. It is translated "castle" in Acts 21 to 23, where the reference is to the Tower of Antonia, the headquarters of the Roman legions in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's arrest. It is also applied to the "camp" of Israel in Heb. 13. 11. The "camp of the holy ones" may therefore well be a symbolic expression denoting all who at that time are dwelling as it were inside the New Jerusalem, sheltered and protected by its encircling walls and enlightened by that light which comes from God. Since the verse goes on to say that the rebels also encompass the "beloved city"—obviously something that can well be represented by the city Jerusalem—it might well be that we have here an indication that the assault is directed both against the Ancient Worthies, princes in all the earth, the "beloved city", and all of redeemed and perfected mankind, "the camp of the holy ones". Then it only remains to consider the nature of the conflict. Is it a literally physical warfare with carnal weapons, or something more subtle?

It must be the latter. The waging of physical warfare involves destruction, injury, death, coming upon the innocent righteous. That at the end of the Millennium, is inconceivable. Nothing shall hurt nor destroy, during the Millennial reign and onwards. Those who yield themselves to the temptations of the Evil One will injure themselves, but nobody else. The warfare therefore must be a spiritual one, a determined attempt to win the

righteous away from their faith in, and allegiance to, God.

Since Rev. 20 gives no clue as to the precise evils practised by those who follow Satan at this time, we have to consider what information is afforded by other Scriptures. There is enough to give us a fair picture. Psa. 66. 3, describing Millennial conditions, declares (marginal rendering) that the King's enemies will yield feigned obedience. In other words some who are out of harmony with the laws of the Kingdom will conform to them outwardly for the sake of the advantages such submission will bring. Obviously that attitude must eventually be revealed openly, for no hypocrite will enter the everlasting Kingdom of the "Ages of Glory" beyond the Millennium. The parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt. 25 is a picture of the Millennial reign and its judgments; the fault of the rejected ones in that parable is that they failed to appreciate and act in the spirit of Christ toward their fellows. They used their blessings for selfish purposes rather than for the blessing of others. In Rev. 21. 8 it is the unclean and the immoral who have their part in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. The vision of the Great White Throne in Rev. 20 shows the dead being judged "according to their works" and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life being cast into the Lake of Fire. Rev. 21. 27 completes the trio of Revelation scriptures by saying in so many words that it is the unclean and immoral who are not written in the Book of Life.

So far as these Scriptures go, they indicate a deliberate refusal to accept and live by Divine law. That fact in itself constitutes an assault upon the camp of the saints and the holy city. God has so ordered His creation that it is quite impossible for it to continue into eternity, and mankind upon earth continue to live everlastingly, and the earth itself bring forth sustenance for mankind without fail perpetually, unless every living human being plays his or her part in the grand scheme. That implies the universal practice of the Golden Rule and it implies the complete elimination of sin. Therefore every man who, at the end of the Millennial Age, chooses to remain a deliberate sinner or fails willingly to accept his place as a citizen of the world and discharge his obligations as such, is actively fighting against the everlasting Kingdom, and is therefore fighting against his righteously inclined fellows, even though he makes no attempt whatever to lift up a hand in violence against them. The "Ages of Glory" that are to follow the Millennium cannot come while one single sinner remains alive; they cannot tolerate even the quiescent existence of evil. It must be utterly done

away. Therefore the presence of sinners on earth, during the "little season" of Rev. 20. 8-9, is a menace to the fulfilment of the Divine Plan and a menace that must be met.

What are the hopes and aims of those who thus ally themselves with Satan? They will have seen the wondrous works of God manifest through the thousand years and surely must realise the extent of His power over Satan and all evil. What kind of deception is it by means of which the Devil, loosed from his prison, is able to convince them that sin and sinful men have yet the opportunity and power to regain control over the now righteous world of mankind and restore to their own advantage the old bad days of sin and death?

It must obviously be a subtle temptation buttressed by convincing and apparently logical arguments. Even in these present days men do not embark on a desperate venture unless they have reason to hope for success, and the rebellion of that final day will be in face of a much more united and powerful world than any revolutionary has had to face in past history. Even the most hardened of the sinners will have to admit that they are up against what the world to-day calls a "tough proposition"!

Do the words of Peter in 2. Peter 2 give a hint as to what might be expected? That chapter alludes to the false prophets of past ages and the descent of Divine judgment upon them, detailing the nature of their sins, and draws an analogy with the corresponding seducers of — it has generally been thought — the Gospel Age. The thought may well be correct, but even so Peter's language is strong, almost too strong if his allusion is only to false teachers among Christians during this Age. Did he have in mind also the seducers of the Millennial Age and was his language deliberately chosen to define their position too? He certainly alludes to a similar class of evildoers in each of earth's former ages; the fallen angels in the Antediluvian Age, the men of Sodom and Balaam the prophet of Aram in the Patriarchal Age, and the false prophets of Israel in the Jewish Age. Of all these he speaks in general terms describing their uncleanness and immorality, but above all things of the fact that they are, first, *unbelievers* (vs. 1); second, *hypocrites*, seeking to deceive the righteous (vs. 3); third, *presumptuous*, standing up against the powers of heaven (vs. 10); fourth — and this is important — *themselves deceived by reason of their unbelief*, so that they fail to understand the power against which they fight (vs. 12). In consequence of all this the outraged justice of God will come down upon them in a final execution of sentence which brings their whole edifice of deceit and sin

to an end. The chapter is replete with strong expressions denoting the utter and irrevocable destruction of these rebels. "*The Lord knoweth*" says Peter "*how . . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*" (vs. 9). "*As natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed . . . shall utterly perish in their own corruption*" (vs. 12). "*To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever*" (vs. 17). There is much in this striking chapter that fits very well the position of those who sally forth at the end of the Millennium to deceive the righteous.

Unbelief — hypocrisy — presumption — blindness to the invincibility of righteousness! If these things are indicated as the characteristics of those who form the rebellious army of the "Little Season" we may be able to draw at least the outlines of a picture. Even although we need not and cannot be dogmatic, the attempt to view that last conflict ought to be helpful and beneficial.

Picture then the state of human society at the end of the Millennium. Satan will have been bound and the outward practice of evil restrained for a thousand years. Death will have been unknown for a thousand years. Disease and sickness will have been long since eliminated. The earth will have become fair and fertile, fear and anxiety for the future long since banished, men living happily together as one great family. The days of sin and death will seem very far away — as far away as the times of William the Conqueror do to us. There will be a few, here and there, who do not seem to share in the general happiness. They will always have been marked out by their tardiness in co-operating with others for the general welfare. They give outward and nominal assent to the laws of the Kingdom but it is easy to see that they resent them and are not at heart lovers of the Lord Jesus. They are still unreconciled to God and there can be no disguising the fact. But they have never been able to inflict evil on others nor to injure the earth. Whatever may be their inmost thoughts and desires, they have had to conform to the general rules of conduct which have been binding upon all men in the Millennial world.

Now a change becomes evident. It is known, of course, that the thousand years is at an end and there must be a certain amount of interested discussion as to precisely what happens next. The reign of Christ over the nations is to close; that much is known, and that the government of mankind is to be committed to mankind itself. The restraints on evil are to be lifted. Clearly those whose hearts are set in them to do evil must look forward to the lifting of the restraints with more

than academic interest. And when, for the first time for a thousand years, the Evil One finds himself able to whisper his suggestions into the ears of those who will listen, what is likely to be the nature of his deception?

Could it conceivably be the old one that was so effective at the start, back there in Eden?

"Ye shall be as gods — ye shall not surely die!"

For a thousand years there has been no death. Men have, in that time, become godlike in form and physique, and in mental powers. It is true that all this has come about since the Most High God succeeded in defeating and imprisoning the powers of evil a thousand years ago; but it took Him six or seven thousand years to effect that defeat, and even when He had done so, He did not destroy those powers. They did not go into death. And now they have escaped that imprisonment and are back on earth again! Can it be — is it possible — that God, after all, is unable to deprive evil beings of life, that rebellion against God does not really bring death in its train, that perhaps, given sufficient determination and ruthlessness, God could be defied indefinitely? *"Ye shall not surely die!"* At this late stage in the history of humanity, so many millenniums after man's creation, with so long a history of evil, it is still true that not one intelligent creature has as yet suffered the penalty of sin — eternal death. Here at the end of the Millennium every human being and every angelic being, good or evil, who has ever known conscious existence, *is alive still*. Death is still no more than a threat! The law that eternal death is the wages of sin is still a law that has never been put into execution! Is it not at least possible that the great delusion which will test humanity and search out the sinful at heart, at the end of the Millennial Age, will be just that; "Suppose Satan is right after all! Suppose God is unable to inflict eternal death! He has not yet done so, to anyone! There is no evidence, as yet, that He can do so! And, if that be so, then we, refusing loyalty to God, can still be as gods! We shall not surely die!"?

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption . . . which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray . . . to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." (2. Peter 2.)

Once such a thought takes root in the minds of the unregenerate and is accepted, it will not be long before there is a great effort to convert the righteous to the same way of thinking. *"We can do as we like and God cannot interfere; we shall live for ever."* That can well be the meaning of the symbolic encompassing of the Camp of the saints and

the holy city. The arch-enemy of mankind will send forth his dupes to rally as many of mankind as can be rallied under his banner. To what extent the lifting of the restraints upon evil will allow the outward practice of evil we may not know; certain it is that even though some freedom to practice evil may be given at this time it will not be allowed to work any kind of harm to the righteous.

But these unbelieving and presumptuous ones will have forgotten one thing. Perhaps they never really knew it. Paul knew it and he told his knowledge to the Athenians. *"In him we live, and move, and have our being."* (Acts 17. 28.) In God's hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind (Job 12. 10.) In some wonderful way which is beyond our human comprehension He has but to withdraw His Spirit, and life ceases.

That is how the end will come. In the very moment of the proud boast, in that moment of scornful and final rejection of all that the Heavenly Father has done for them and given them, He will "gather to himself His spirit and His breath". (Job 34. 14.) The arrogant words, dying on the lips; the proud glance, fading out of the eyes; the suddenly nerveless body, slumping helplessly to the ground; all will give mute but eloquent testimony to the burning truth of the Divine word *"the soul that sinneth, it shall die"*. (Ezek. 18. 4.) In one brief instant the lives of all evil men and all evil angels, and of Satan the Evil One himself, will be cut off, lost in the "blackness of darkness for ever". *"Fire came down from God out of heaven, and consumed them"* says the Revelator. Just so brief and sharp, and final, will be the everlasting destruction that will come upon those who in the end of the Millennial Age seek to re-establish the old bad days and in so doing demonstrate to the full their own incorrigible allegiance to evil for evil's sake.

Like a casket of Attar of roses, which is the concentrated essence of thousands of beautifully tinted rose leaves, full grown and mature, which has been put into that form with a view to its subsequent expansion and distribution, as and when required, so facts and truths and principles of the profoundest importance to man, are laid up and enshrined in the Scriptures in a comparatively few words with a view to their being, in God's providence, and as He sees fit from time to time, expanded and distributed to the delight and profit of those who diligently and humbly give themselves to the study of His Holy Word.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

The word "tares" in the parable of the wheat and tares, is a translation of the Greek word *zizanian*. This word does not appear in the writings of any classical Greek writers, and it is supposed that it was a Palestinian local name for the plant that to-day is known in the land as *ziwan*. This plant is definitely poisonous. Travellers have observed that it has the property of causing giddiness and even unconsciousness, and that its effect is insidious and often unnoticed until too late. At least one case is on record where a whole community of people was affected by eating *ziwan* which had not been cleansed out of the wheat that had been used to make their bread. Jesus used an apt simile for His parable!

* * *

An old story tells of three men who were each presented with a crystal to use as he pleased. The poet tells of the outcome and how these three men used their gifts.

"The *fool* contrived of his a *lens*,
Wherein, to gloating eyes,
The smallest blot that could be found
Was magnified in size.

"The *just man* made of his a *pane*,
All clear without a flaw.
Nor summer sun nor winter rain
Affected what he saw.

"The *wise man* pondered long and well
How best to search, to aid.
Then taking up the crystal given,
Of his a *mirror* made."

* * *

Faulty translation is not an uncommon thing in the Authorised Version; misprints, which were common in the earliest editions, are now rare. Some have persisted. One is the expression in Matt. 13. 24 "*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*". What Jesus really did say is "*Ye blind guides, which strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel*". The Diaglott corrects the error, and explains that the allusion is to the custom of passing wine through a strainer lest any defiling insect should have got into it. With this correction made, the comparison becomes much more forceful. One is impressed also with the gentle irony in the Lord's words. The idea of

swallowing a camel verges on the ludicrous. Extreme and exaggerated figures of speech are common in the East; even so one can imagine the covert smiles on the faces of the bystanders at this biting comment on the punctilious observances of the Pharisees and their blindness to the really vital things.

* * *

"If in these books (the Bible) I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I shall not hesitate to conclude either that the text is faulty, or that the translator has not expressed the meaning of the passage, or that I myself do not understand it." Those words are from the pen of Pope Leo 13th, who died in 1903. Quite irrespective of the source from which they come, they are words of good sense and breathe the right atmosphere of Christian caution in dealing with the Word of God. So many there are who read a passage of Scripture, draw a conclusion, and immediately brand as in error all who view the matter differently. The Bible is a book to be studied, carefully, reverently, prayerfully, and always with the thought in mind that the best and ablest of men can only glean its secrets in proportion as he is led by the Holy Spirit of God. Though a man live a thousand years twice told, he will never be more than a student of the Word, and will always find new aspects and views of the old truths opening up before his vision. Not one of us will attain to full knowledge until "that which is perfect is come" and if that fact is allowed to rule our minds while we study and pray and fellowship together we shall be blessed indeed in our searching.

* * *

Perhaps our favourite hymn is that inspiring one "Blest be the tie that binds" for it expresses so clearly and with such earnestness the basis of our life together in Christ that we can never sing it without feeling something of that wonderful fellowship its words express. It is said that it was written by a Baptist pastor, Dr. Fawcett, who while serving a small Yorkshire parish on a very small salary, received an invitation to minister to a London congregation.

Dr. Fawcett accepted the invitation, preached his farewell sermon, and prepared to leave the place where he had become so well-loved. With

his household goods loaded and all ready to start, his parishioners and neighbours gathered round to say goodbye. But the expressions of love and affection, and the evident grief and sorrow so manifest on the part of those who were seeing their pastor as such for the last time, completely overcame the minister and his wife. They found it impossible to go.

The furniture went back into the house. By the end of the day all was again in order, and the minister wrote to his London friends that his coming was impossible. So he continued to serve those among whom his life had been spent, held there by the subtle power of Christian love and fellowship, stronger by far than any band or bond forged by the hand of man. It was then that Dr. Fawcett, to commemorate this event in his life, sat down and wrote the hymn which has expressed so well our own attitude toward, and feelings for each other; we who are joined together in this mystic bond of union whose centre and inspiring force is Christ.

* * *

"When the Great Way prevails, the world is one Great Commonwealth. The virtuous and able are selected for office, good faith is cultivated, and harmony prevails. People regard not only their own parents as parents, and not only their own children as children. The old are able to enjoy their old age; the young are able to employ their talents; the adolescents are free to grow; helpless widows and widowers, lonely orphans, and the crippled and deformed are provided for. Men have occupations and women have homes. Wealth is not to be thrown away, nor is it to be kept as personal possession. Labour is not to be wasted, nor is it to be employed for private gain. Selfish schemes cease to exist, and banditry and rebellion do not rise. All doors are open. This is the age of the Great Commonwealth."

These are the words of Confucius (551-478 B.C.), the Chinese philosopher whose teachings are professed as a religion by one-fifth of earth's population. They reveal his appreciation of the principles of the Millennial Kingdom and although, living before Christ, he never knew of God's provision for man, he will one day return to life, see his ideals in practice, and probably quickly pledge himself to Christ's service and become again a teacher of men.

* * *

"When all order, discipline and Church government shall be left to newness of opinion, and men's fancies, soon after, as many kinds of religion will spring up as there are parish churches within Eng-

land; every contentious and ignorant person clothing his fancy with the Spirit of God, and his imagination with the gift of revelation; insomuch that when the Truth, which is but one, shall appear to the simple multitude no less variable than contrary to itself, the faith of men will die away by degrees, and all religion be held in scorn and contempt."

That extract is from Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World" written in Queen Elizabeth's time—or more probably during the reign of James I—some three hundred and fifty years ago. His prophecy has come sadly true in our day and generation. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?"

* * *

"... always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus... for we... are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake... so then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2. Cor. 4. 1-12.). It was a case of Paul putting Paul to death, for his brethren's benefit, that life, and strength might be induced in them. It was the life's-blood of Paul that became the quickener, the energiser of these, his dear brethren in the Lord. When other men might be taking life leisurely,—yea, when many of his brethren were taking life easily, Paul was intensively seeking ways and means of putting himself at the service of these believers, hoping thereby to produce spiritual energy in his brethren. Persecution might stop some men, but not this seasoned warrior—perplexities might daunt less determined men but not this unconquerable spirit—"On every side pressed hard, but not hemmed in, without a way, but not without a bye-way; pursued, but not abandoned, thrown down, but not destroyed. At all times the putting to death of Jesus, in our body bearing about." That is Rotherham's beautiful translation of Paul's intensive words, as he describes what it means for him to serve his Corinthian brethren.

Oh! wonderful economy of God! and oh! wonderful wisdom of God! to accomplish the overthrow of all evil things and evil men by the power of His grace, by the power that enables men to endure fire and flame, scorn and reproach, in the faith of Him.

* * *

The only way to enjoy life is to believe on the Son of God, and then to walk in fellowship with Him. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "The Lord doth put a difference."

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

LOVE'S ALCHEMY

*Love is the filling from one's own
Another's cup;
Love is the daily laying down
And taking up;
Love is not blind, but looks abroad
Through other eyes;
And asks not "Must I give?" but "May
I sacrifice?"
Brother, hast thou a love like this
Within thy soul?
'Twill change thy name to saint when thou
Dost reach thy goal.*

COMING TO HIM

How do we come to Christ? Not on our feet, but on our knees. Not on our feet, but on our affections. When we are burdened in our minds; when we are oppressed with manifold cares; when we are bowed down with many sorrows; when we are ill-used, humiliated, despised, trampled upon; when we are weary of the world; then we take our burden to Christ, receiving comfort and strength.

CONSIDER

It would do us all good to take time and consider our ways, whether they be perfect in God's sight. Promotion and the processes of commercial ladder climbing mean the unmaning of some men. To the humble one the valley walks of life are God's Mountain aspirations to better ways and pure-mindedness. It is not the office or rank of man that counts. The great thing is, to have the mind and spirit of God in all our transactions of life.

HE KNOWS

Our Heavenly Father's love and care and protection are His wings and His feathers, shielding us from all harm, keeping us warm and safe. He is able to make every experience in life work out for our good. We are, however, to remember that the promise that God will make all things work together for our good is a promise to the New Creature, and not to the old creature. Our temporal affairs may be permitted to go awry. We are not wise enough to know what is for our own best interests as New Creatures, and what would help us the most in our fight against the world, the flesh and the Devil.

PEACE

I look around me, and think how many are in the same trouble as myself, perhaps much greater, and they have no Father to go to. I look behind me, and think of all the way I have been led, and the mercy upon mercy which I have experienced. I look before, and think of my heaven at the door. Jesus my Forerunner there, my God there, and where I shall soon be myself. And by the time I have looked at this last, realising its significance and meaning, all my trouble is gone.

SYMPATHY

The little I have seen in the world and known of the history of mankind, teaches me to look at their errors in sorrow, and not in anger. When I take the history of one poor heart, that has sinned and suffered, and represent to myself the struggles and temptations it has passed through—the brief pulsations of joy; the tears of regret; the feebleness of purpose; the scorn of the world that has little charity; the desolation of the soul's sanctuary, and threatening voices within; health gone, happiness gone—I would fain leave the erring soul of my fellow-man with Him from Whose Hands it came.

OBEDIENCE

We have taken the first step of belief; we have taken the second step of response, and have agreed to do these things; the important question with each one of us, therefore, must be—Am I obedient to him from heaven who speaketh? Am I doing whatsoever he says?

GRATITUDE

Thanks to God should not prevent our giving thanks to one another for benefits received through human agents. In fact, if we are not thankful to the human giver, how can we be thankful to the heavenly?

STRENGTH FOR TO-DAY

*God is in every tomorrow,
Therefore I live for to-day.
Certain of finding at sunrise
Guidance and strength for the way;
Power for each moment of weakness
Hope for each moment of pain,
Comfort for every sorrow,
Sunshine and joy after rain.*

The Three Epistles of John

A.O.H.

Part XV. 1 John 3:14-17

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (vs. 14-15.)

In chapter 2 the one who loves his brother is abiding in the light; in this chapter he is passed into life. In chapter 2 the one who hates his brother is walking in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth; in this chapter he is abiding in death. Once more the analogy between light and life, and between darkness and death, which forms so prominent a theme in John's epistle, is impressed upon our minds. Abiding in the light, we pass into life, through love. Walking in darkness, we eventually abide in death, because of hate. These are simple and easily-remembered equations and they are important ones too.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (vs. 16.)

First of all let it be noticed that the two words "of God" have been supplied by the translators (like all words in the Bible printed in italics) in order to help out what they deemed to be the sense of the passage. Such words do not appear in the original Hebrew or Greek, but in many cases their insertion is desirable and even necessary, and justified in order accurately to express the thought in English words. In this case the two words are neither necessary nor desirable. It was natural for the translators to think of the great love of God which inspired Him to arrange and conduct the great Plan of salvation, even to the extent of sending His Son to die on man's behalf for man's redemption, but John is not thinking so much about the personality as about the attribute. He is not thinking so much about the Majesty on high as he is about the Love that reached down to earth. And so sure is he that his readers are following with him in thought and entering into his thoughts that when he comes to refer to his Lord and their Lord, Jesus the Redeemer, he uses the personal pronoun instead of the proper name. "Hereby perceive we *the* love, because *he* laid down his life for us". He has been talking so much about love, love of the brethren, love for the brethren, love of

the saints for the world, love of a man for his brother, but now he rises to the height of the greatest love that ever has been. Hereby perceive we *the* love, the love that is manifest above all others. "Greater love hath no man than this" said Jesus "that a man lay down his life for his friends." That man was Jesus; and because every one of John's disciples and brethren and readers knew Jesus to be that one, John had no need so much as to utter His name. "Because he laid down his life for us." There was only one who did that, only one who could do that, and although the love of God the Father in heaven was just as much involved in this as was the love of Christ the Son on earth, John refers to it just as "*the* love" because of all manifestations of love that the earth has ever known none can reach up to the level of this.

This laying down of his life for us was not only His death on the Cross but also His daily dying on man's behalf throughout the three and a half years of His ministry. "He poured out his soul unto death" cried Isaiah. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" said Jesus. It is in that way that we, in our turn, can lay down our lives for the brethren. There is value in that "laying down of life". Every sacrifice, every service, every loss, every suffering, incurred in the laying down of our lives on behalf of others, whether of the "brethren" or of the "world" lays up in store something which is of value in bringing men and women closer to Christ and nearer to reconciliation with God, either in this Age or the next. We who have given ourselves in consecration to be dead with Christ can by no means and in no manner be associated with Him in His vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, in the Ransom. To think that would be blasphemy. "No other name is given, no other way is known" runs the hymn. Only in Jesus Christ is there the ransom for all. But we are most definitely associated with Him in His sacrificial life, for "as he is, so are we in this world". As He poured out His life unto death for three and a half years on behalf of, and for the benefit of, sin-stricken humanity, so do we, all the days and years of our consecrated lives. That, for Him, was the sin-offering; that, for us, is the sin-offering, and that is why so many of us hold and maintain that the Church, while not in any sense sharing in the Ransom, does most definitely and in every sense of the word share in the sin-

offering. We shall find in future days that the consecrated endeavours and sacrifices and sufferings of Christ's brethren during this Age will have played their part in generating a force, a power, that will enable men in the next Age in their own turn to climb back to righteousness. In the old typical ceremonies of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness the sin-offering was the means of removing sin from the people. The process culminated in all the weight of sin being, as it were, literally carried on the back of an animal far away into the wilderness, from which that sin would never return. So it is now in the reality. The Ransom reverses the death sentence and restores men to life. The Sin-offering removes sin, by

restitution processes, to a place from whence it can never return. None but the Lord can have any part in the Ransom; "*Of the people there was none with him*". But He is graciously pleased to invite and allow others to be associated with Him in the subsequent work of bringing mankind up to perfection and helping to remove their sin. And that which will give them their authority and power in the eyes of those whom they would save will be their own earlier lives on earth, their own sacrifices and sufferings, even as their Lord's own life on earth will give Him His authority and power with these same sin-stricken ones. Men will follow a leader who has already walked the way himself.

(To be continued.)

OUR LORD'S RETURN

6.—"First . . . then !"

T.H.

An Exposition of Scripture
Dealing with the Second Advent

Continuing our enquiry into the question of our Lord's Return and "our assembling to meet Him" (2 Thess. 2. 1. *New R.V.*) we now proceed to investigate the precise sense and meaning intended by Paul when he wrote, "the dead in Christ shall be raised *first*, then we which are alive and remain . . . shall be caught up." (1 Thess. 4. 16-17.) "*First . . . then*" ! In our A.V. text these two words are respectively the last word of verse 16, and the first of verse 17. They are separated from each other by a colon, a clear indication that the translator's thought that the sentence of which each forms a part was a complete one in itself.

These two words stand as the English equivalents of two Greek words '*proton*' and '*epeita*'. These are the words which will constitute the subject matter for the former part of this article, though as we proceed, seeing that '*epeita*' is a compound of '*epi*' and '*eita*', it will be necessary to give attention to both in order to get the compound thought. "*Epi*"—a preposition—has as its primary equivalent our English word 'upon', though in its actual usage in many passages it is translated by many other words. "*Eita*"—an adverb of time—is translated "then", "next" and "after that". "*Epeita*" therefore signifies "then-upon", or "next-upon", or more euphonesously in English usage "There-upon", or more tersely still "then"—as in our text.

At the commencement of this study it is important that we call to mind the thoughts arrived at in the last article re the word '*hama*', and that there is neither need nor warranty for pin-pointing its application to a mere moment of human time.

Realising that its time-duration may vary from a few minutes of our measured time, to an eternity of unmeasured duration, it should in consequence, be a matter much less difficult to fit within its framework the sense of sequence and rotation implied in the two words '*first—then*'. '*Hama*' signifies the 'together-ness', after '*epeita*' has added the complement of the 'remaining' saints to the '*proton*' of the previously 'dead in Christ' but now-raised company.

It is proposed again to consider the Biblical usage of each word, though in the present case, time and space forbid reference to every occurrence of each word.

'*Proton*' is stated by Thayer's Lexicon to be the adverbial form of '*Protos*', and occurs no less than 62 times in the New Testament; of these occurrences it is rendered 'first' 52 times, indicating thus that this is its most precise equivalent in English. Here follows a short selection from that larger list.

- (1) "If . . . thou . . . rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the Altar and go thy way, first (*proton*) be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5. 23-24.)
- (2) Mark 3. 27; "But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods except he first (*proton*) bind the strong man."
- (3) Luke 17. 25; "But first (*proton*) must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation."

- (4) Acts 11. 26; "... the disciples were called Christians first (*proton*) in Antioch."
- (5) Rom. 1. 16; "... for it (the Gospel) is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first (*proton*) and also to the Greek."
- (6) 2 Tim. 1. 5; "... the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first (*proton*) in thy grandmother Lois."

In every case the sense implied is that which we give to the word 'first', both in time and order, in its relation to something that follows in proper sequence.

Next as to the word '*Epeita*' and its base '*Eita*'. Each word occurs sixteen times. Here follows a few instances of each.

- (1) Luke 8. 12; "then (*eita*) cometh the devil and taketh away the word from their heart."
- (2) 1 Cor. 15. 5 & 7; "... he appeared to Cephas, then (*eita*) to the twelve ... he appeared to James, then (*eita*) to all the apostles."
- (3) 1 Cor. 15. 24; "Then (*eita*) cometh the end."
- (4) James 1. 15; "Then (*eita*) lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin."
- (5) Heb. 12. 9; "Furthermore (*eita*) we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us ... " Here '*eita*' represents an additional reason for submitting to discipline.
- (1) Luke 16. 7; "Then (*epeita*) said he to another, How much owest thou?"
- (2) John 11. 7; "Then (*epeita*) after this He saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again."
- (3) Gal. 1. 18; Then (*epeita*) after three years I went up to Jerusalem to meet Cephas ... "
- (4) 1 Cor. 15. 23; "Christ the first fruits, afterwards (*epeita*) they that are Christ's at His coming."

Here in every case the sense is that of succeeding or following a 'something' that has preceded or gone before it.

Concerning the close relationship of '*eita*' and '*epeita*', the following Scriptures will be to the point.

- (1) 1 Cor. 12. 28; "God has set some in the Church ... teachers, then (*epeita*) miracles, then (*eita*) gifts of healing, helps, ... "
- (2) 1 Cor. 15. 5-7; "He appeared to Cephas, then (*eita*) to the twelve; afterwards (*epeita*) he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once ... then (*epeita*) he appeared to James, then (*eita*) to all the apostles."

Here the words appear to be used without discrimination to express the same exact idea of sequence or successional order.

There now remain four other passages (besides our text) in which '*proton*' and '*epeita*' (or *eita*) are set in their proper sequential relationship to each other.

- (1) As to rotational order:

1 Cor. 12. 28; "God hath set some in the Church, first (*proton*) Apostles, secondly prophets; thirdly teachers; then (*epeita*) miracles; then (*eita*) gifts of healing, helps ... "

"First", second, third, '*epeita*', '*eita*',—that surely is precise enough!

- (2) As to time and order.

Mark 4. 28; "The earth beareth fruit of itself, first (*proton*) the blade, then (*eita*) the ear, then (*eita*) the full corn in the ear."

- (3) 1 Tim. 3. 10; ... let these also first (*proton*) be proved, then (*eita*) let them serve as deacons ... "

- (4) 1 Cor. 15. 46; "Howbeit that this is not first (*proton*) which is spiritual but that which is natural, then (*epeita*) that which is spiritual."

This last quotation is an exact parallel to our two words '*proton-epeita*' and ought to fix their relationship beyond all doubt. Time sequence, as well as orderly rotation, is definitely implied. They stand related in the same way as our 'first' and 'afterwards' in the sequence of timed events. Applied to quality 'Best' and 'seconds' would be appropriate equivalents. These are matters of simple grammatical usage and will stand the test in any language, anywhere. The 'second' cannot be the 'first'; the 'inferior' never the 'best'; the 'latter' never the 'former' no matter where we search!

'*Proton-First*' and '*Epeita-then*' are the two words by which Paul throws into proper sequence the order in which Divine Power awakes the sleeping dead, and then translates the saints who remain unto the Coming of the Lord, and no more refer to a mere moment of time than their companion word '*Hama*' does! As we cannot pinpoint '*Hama*' to 'the twinkling of an eye', no more can '*proton-epeita*' be pin-pointed down to that tick of time!

To what then does the Apostle refer in 1 Cor. 15. 51-52? Let us quote it, "Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed ... " What was the secret information here imparted? Was it that the sleeping dead would be raised? By no means! that was an item of common understanding among the Christian brotherhood. Was it that the dead

would be raised incorruptible and immortal? Again No! Christians had been long taught to seek for glory, honour and incorruptibility. (Rom. 2. 7.)

The great secret that Paul now imparted was that those who were alive when the last trump sounded would not need to lie asleep as the former saints had done, but would pass over into immortal life in a moment by an instantaneous change! This was not exactly the first time Paul had referred to this experience, for it had been referred to in his letter to the Thessalonians. But at that time he had used another method of stating it. The dead were to be raised—he repeats this side of the matter in almost identical words to the Corinthians—but those who remained alive till the Lord came were to be “caught up” to meet the Lord. It is this class which, in the process of being ‘caught up’, would also be “changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”. The point of his assertion turns upon a clear-cut distinction between ‘the dead’ and ‘we’;—the dead, the whole company of those who after death had slept in Jesus’ care; “we” the whole company of those who, at death, would not sleep, but would experience the necessary change from this present tabernacle to the new house from heaven (2 Cor. 5. 5.) their ‘humiliation’ body being instantaneously made like unto His glorious body. (Phil. 3. 20-21.)

“The dead will be raised incorruptible”, but we who do not sleep shall be *changed* so that this corruptible may *put on* incorruption in the process of the change! The only class to whom the twinkling-of-an-eye experience applies is the “we” class—those who remaining in the flesh till the Lord comes, have need to be caught up to meet Him in the Air! There is not one single syllable here which indicates how long the resurrection process for the sleeping dead will require—all we know is that they will be raised ‘first’! ‘Then’ after their resurrection is accomplished, “we that are alive and remain” are due to be ‘caught up’ and ‘changed’—one instant here, the next up there with the Lord!

But here another question comes to view,—does this scripture indicate that all who “remain” to the coming of the Lord will be caught up together in the twinkling of an eye, and that one single moment of time will see the whole of these “remainers” go up into the Presence of the Lord as a company? Let us see what another Scripture has to say on that point.

First, let us note that Paul locates both the ‘resurrection’ and the ‘change’ as synchronising with the “last Trump”. Now, as there are but seven of these trumpets in the series in Revelation the “last” trump is obviously the “seventh”.

This is introduced in Rev. 11. 15, and continues sounding till superseded by the Vial plagues (Chapter 16.) The seventh Trumpet is synchronous with the “Third Woe” (Rev. 11. 14.) in the same way that the Sixth Trumpet had been synchronous with the Second Woe (Rev. 9. 12 and 11. 14.) and the Fifth Trumpet with the First Woe (Rev. 9. 1 & 12.) The “Third Woe” continues in progress till superseded by the last seven plagues (Rev. 15. 1.). Thus there is a first series of “three” and a later series of “seven”—exactly as it was in Egypt when the first three plagues came upon God’s people and the Egyptians alike (Exod. 7. 21; 8. 5 & 16.) while the latter seven afflicted the Egyptians alone (Exod. 8. 20-23.) In Revelation that which to God’s enemies is a “Woe”, is to His friends and people, a ‘Trumpet’, betokening deliverance, yet suffering lies for a time on both enemies and friends alike.

Revelation 12, and 13, and 14, belong to Seventh-Trumpet times, not to the long-distant past, and chronicle the experiences of both Israel and the Church in the final days of the Age. After certain changes of personnel have taken place and a certain period of authority to act against the saints has expired (Rev. 13. 2 and 5-7.) the hand of heaven begins to be assertive and aggressive against the oppressors of the Lord’s people.

Rev. 14. 14-16. links up with Matt. 24. 29-31, and shows the Son of Man returning in (or on) the clouds of heaven, to begin the reaping work. Obviously by this time, the period of the tribulation upon His people is almost at an end (Matt. 24. 29.) though a period of wrath to the uttermost upon His foes has yet to run its course.

Immediately preceding this picture of the Lord’s Return and the inception of the Harvest Work a most unusual and wonderful Message to the Saints goes forth . . . “I heard a voice from heaven saying ‘Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them’”. (Rev. 14. 13.) Its very position here, as an introduction to the Harvest Work marks it out as one of the most momentous features of those “End” days! Mark that word “Henceforth”! Up to this stage in the developments of those days, the immediate consequences for the ‘dead’ who had ‘died in the Lord’ *had not been as they were now to be from ‘henceforth’*. From this time forward throughout all the Harvest days, the ‘dead’ who died would enter into immediate rest from wearying toil, yet their labours would continue. Evidently some mighty change would accompany that special form of death! The “dead who die in the Lord”, can, of course, be only those who are

"dead in Christ" by sacrifice, and who now complete that sacrifice in actual death; but who now are 'Blessed' in some new and special way since that "Henceforth" decree went forth.

"Henceforth"! Would that be the right word to use if all the "dead in the Lord" died in one single moment of earthly time, and thus went into the "Blessed" state as a united company? The very word itself means "from this time forward" until the present situation is changed and superseded by some other phase of activity. The "Henceforth" is linked with the whole harvest period, not to a moment of time, but during that period the dead in Christ are to be raised 'first' (Rev. 11. 18.) and then the living will be caught up to be with the Lord in the Air.

Blessed are the consecrated dead who die in the Lord and do not sleep, but who, being "caught up" and "changed" have put on immortality and incorruption, and hence know no weariness in labour, but work henceforth with all the ease and facility of Rest!

As the Harvest Work proceeds, and grain after grain is gathered into the garner of the Lord (Matt. 13. 30.) the ripened and well matured saints will pass, one by one (but all within a certain period) into the presence of their Lord and Head. The "Henceforth" message is both pledge and surety of that!

That then is the solution which we have reached!

(To be concluded.)

A NOTE ON MARK 4. 11-12

Mark 4. 11-12 "*... unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them.*" At first reading this seems to be alien to the known character of God. Did Jesus really hide His teaching in parables in order deliberately to prevent the people from hearing and so being converted? Absurd, of course; it cannot possibly be so! His very purpose in coming to earth was to convince and save men, "whosoever will". The parallel passage in Matt. 13. 13-15 has it "*Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias 'By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: For 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 see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'*" What is the explanation? The word "that" in Mark is the Greek word *hina* which has a wide range of meaning in the New Testament, and is sometimes used to denote cause rather than purpose. An instance is John 17. 3; "*This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God*" which can equally well be expressed "to know thee is life eternal". The Lord quoted from Isaiah 6. 9-10 but when reference is made to that passage we are once again faced with an apparent contradiction to our view of the Divine Plan.

"... *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes ...*" etc. By comparing Isaiah with Matthew it will be seen that the quotation differs considerably; the explanation is that Jesus quoted from the Septuagint, which was in common use in His day, and the Septuagint of Isaiah 6. 9-10 runs "*Go, and say to this people, 'Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive.' For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*" This, which evidently better preserves the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, is quite in line with what we should expect. The message is to be preached but the people will deliberately shut their eyes and ears to it, refusing to listen, in case they should be converted. They do not want to be converted and they willingly turn away from the word of life. That is the true situation as we ourselves well know. But not for ever. "How long?" asked Isaiah. Until a time of great desolation and judgment, was the Divine answer (Isa. 6. 11-13). "*Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the land be utterly desolate.*" The great Time of Trouble with which this Age will end, the time in which we now live, will have the effect, in conjunction with the softening influences of the Millennial reign which will follow it, of inducing men to listen to the message against which they formerly shut their eyes and ears; and this time they will turn and be converted, and will be healed.

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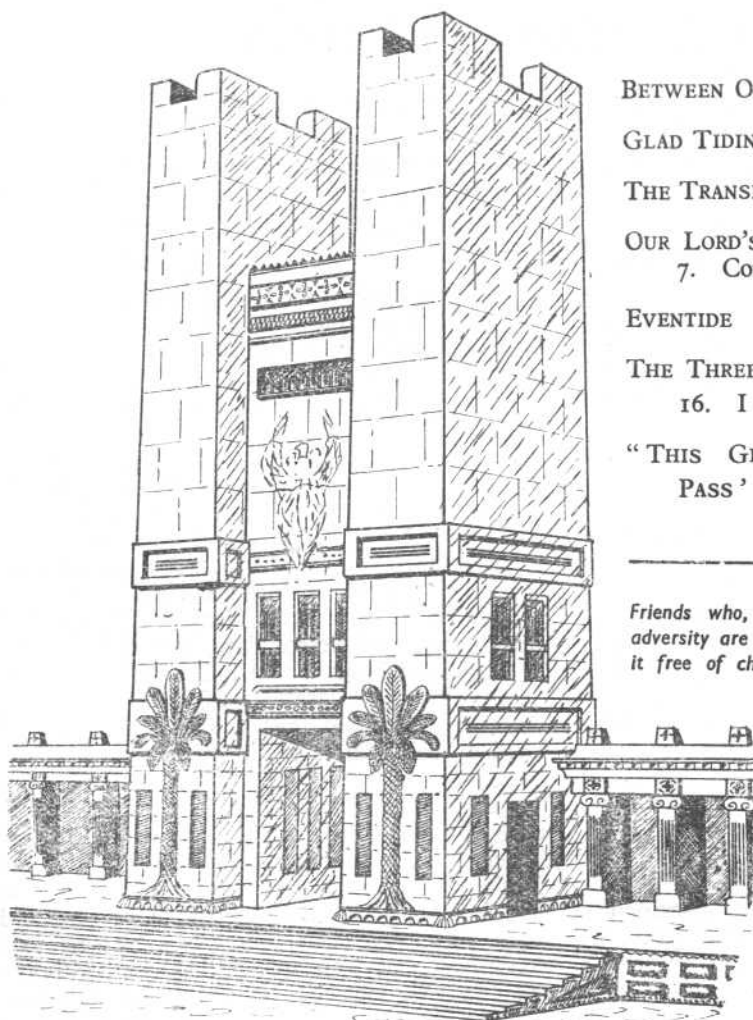
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And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Cardiff announce a Home Gathering to be held on Saturday and Sunday, 29th-30th September, and wish to extend a warm welcome to all who can attend. The Saturday sessions will be at the regular meeting-place, 35, Windsor Place, Cardiff, and the Sunday sessions at the Pavilion Cafe, St. Mary Street. Meals will be provided free, and other details regarding speakers, etc., will be available on request to Bro. L. W. Shephard, Flat B, 1, Walter Road, Swansea, S. Wales. Appli-

cations for accommodation should be made to the same address. The gathering opens with a session on Saturday afternoon and continues until Sunday evening.

* * *

The United London Meeting at Caxton Hall will be held on 15th September at 6.30, and the usual welcome is extended to all. The speakers on this occasion will be Bros. L. Smethurst and A. O. Hudson.

THE GLAD TIDINGS IN ITALY

It will be news to many friends that in the last few years an organised work has been carried on in Italy in an effort to bring a knowledge of the Truth to the Italian people. That the Lord has blessed this work is evident by the following report which we give for the information of all those friends who rejoice in seeing the truth of the Divine Plan of Salvation spread abroad.

This work has been carried out by a group of Italian ecclesias in America. Said ecclesias, in January, 1939, decided to publish a monthly periodical by the name of "*L'Aurora Millenniale*"; also goodly numbers of tracts or booklets were given or sent free to anyone upon request. All expenses of printing and shipping were borne by the ecclesias in the group. This desire to extend the message was prevented, first by Fascist regulations and then by the Second World War. However, at the conclusion of hostilities, contacts were re-established with a few friends in Italy, and quantities of literature were shipped for free distribution. An advertisement was inserted in an influential Italian Protestant journal in Italy, which created a deluge of requests. Evidently the war had left in its wake a hunger for spiritual values; the Lord had opened to us the gates of Italy and the group was determined that this golden opportunity to evangelise that people should not be missed by default.

As the number of tracts, etc., sent to Italy increased, so also the number of friends increased there. The Lord opened the hearts of many young, intelligent and educated men, who, upon learning and accepting the Truth, were enthusiastic in spreading it to others. From North, South and Central Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, requests kept coming. Our circulation of a few hundred magazines per month climbed to two thousand and more. Readers included office workers, doctors,

lawyers, school teachers, university professors, engineers, shop people, farmers, etc.

Two years ago, the Committee which has charge of the work, and whose members are annually elected by the membership of the grouped Italian ecclesias in America, decided to form a Corporation. This was done under the laws of the State of Connecticut. An administrative office was opened in a central city in Italy and a qualified brother elected as Administrator of the work in Italy without remuneration.

In April, 1948, a brother from Pennsylvania went to Italy at his own expense. He visited the new brethren in North and Central Italy. His visit was of great spiritual uplift to the brethren there. In response to many requests, a brother from New York State was moved by the Lord to go to Italy in 1949. On this occasion the first Convention was held in Messina, Sicily. It was a blessed experience for the many brethren who, for three happy and blessed days, were fed the Word of Truth and brought to a fuller knowledge of the Divine Plan of salvation. Quite a number of brethren symbolised their full consecration to the Lord by being immersed in the waters at the seashore.

In 1950 a brother and his wife from Massachusetts were also moved to visit the ecclesias and brethren in Italy. They attended the second three-day Convention in Naples, and were instrumental in giving friends there a better understanding of the Lord's work in Italy. Their visit was a blessing to all concerned, and it is hoped that another brother from America will visit Italy some time this year.

There are now twelve ecclesias. Some brethren are doing Pilgrim and Missionary work in their spare time, and the prospects are encouraging indeed. The time is ripe to bring the blessed truth of the Divine Plan to the mass of the Italian people

while it is yet day, for surely the night is coming when nothing can be done any more until the Kingdom is set up on this earth.

Friends who have read this report with interest and who wish to keep in touch with future develop-

ments may send their names and addresses and from time to time new reports will be sent to them. Such letters should be addressed: The Committee, 613,, Capitol Avenue, Hartford 6, Conn., U.S.A.

The Translation of Enoch

Examination of
a strange passage

Enoch is one of the most singular characters of the Old Testament, a man who appears on the stage only to leave it immediately; visible long enough for it to be known that he was a man of God and that God took him. The Old Testament says "*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*" (Gen. 5. 24); the writer to the Hebrews adds "*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*" (Heb. 11. 5).

This unusual ending to the brief record of a saintly man's life has given rise to endless conjecture and speculation; so much so that the question "What really *did* happen to Enoch?" is by no means an uncommon one.

The usual conclusion of nineteenth century commentators was that Enoch went to heaven without dying—a kind of instantaneous passage from the scenes of earth to the presence of God. Many have found this a satisfactory answer, but the fact that other words of Scripture are contradicted by this conclusion is sufficient justification for an endeavour to attain a deeper and more accurate understanding of these two cryptic texts.

In such an enquiry any suggestion which may be of assistance, no matter from what source it comes, will be of value as an aid to thought.

Beside the two texts quoted above, Enoch is mentioned in only one other place in the Scriptures. Jude (verse 14) quotes him as predicting the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment. This reference contributes nothing to our knowledge of the life of the prophet and does not materially assist our enquiry. It does however stamp Enoch as one of the prophets who spoke of the coming of the Day of the Lord and assures us that, like Abraham in later years, he "*rejoiced to see my (Christ's) day, and was glad*". (John 8. 56.)

The first point of enquiry is as to the precise meaning of the words in Genesis 5. 24. Does the phrase—"*Enoch walked with God, and Enoch was*

not, for God took him" really mean that he was taken to heaven without dying as is so often supposed, or does it bear another meaning?

"What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" asks the Psalmist (Psa. 89. 48). "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" says Paul (1. Cor. 15. 50) and again "*the King of Kings and Lord of Lords . . . dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.*" (1 Tim. 6. 16). Our Lord Himself declared "*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man*". (John 3. 13.)

Such Scriptures as these are sufficient to confirm that no man, not even Enoch, has escaped the hand of Death, even had not the writer to the Hebrews stated so definitely, after including Enoch in his portrait gallery of heroes, that "*these all died in faith.*" (Heb. 11. 13.) It should be accepted therefore that Enoch, when his allotted span was expired, *did* pass into death and "*slept with his fathers*".

The use of that latter expression serves as a clue to this strange word in Gen. 5. 24. Although we must believe that Enoch did eventually sleep with his fathers, there is no record to that effect in Genesis. This is the more strange when it is noticed that in every other case the formula is consistently the same "*Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son . . . and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years and he begat sons and daughters. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.*" (Gen. 5. 3-6.) The same expressions are used for each one of the patriarchs up to Methuselah, *except Enoch*. Why the exception?

Is it not a reasonable conclusion that the time and circumstances of Enoch's death were not known to the men of his day, and therefore the record could not be completed? There is another fact that helps to confirm this thought. The ages of the antediluvian patriarchs ranged between 895 and

969 years; but that stated of Enoch is an exception. The record states that he lived 365 years, and God took him. Is it possible that the ancient historian intended his readers to understand that Enoch lived 365 years among men, becoming famed for his piety, and at that age disappeared unaccountably and was never heard of again? Was it that God in his inscrutable wisdom took Enoch away from the habitations of men perchance to carry out some work for Him during the remainder of His earthly life, living perhaps as long as his fellow patriarchs and, like Moses, ending his life in a solitary place known only to his God?

Let the Scriptures and such other records as are available be examined in this light and a reasonable understanding of the story comes into view.

"*Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*" The Hebrew here has the significance of "walking to and fro" as a man does with his bosom companion. That could well depict the fact that Enoch was a man living in close and habitual communion with God in a day when quite certainly the wickedness of man was increasing on the earth and "*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen. 6. 5). Heb. 11. 5 confirms this view by saying "*Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*" Picture then this venerable man surrounded, in all probability, by a godly family—for one of his great grandsons was Noah, a man who was "seen righteous" before God (Gen. 7. 1)—attaining what would be considered "middle age" of nearly four hundred years. One day Enoch was not to be found; he "was not" for he had been "translated". What had happened?

"God took him" says Genesis. The word is "*laqach*," meaning "to be taken away" or "removed" as in Amos 7. 15 "The Lord *took* me as I followed the flock," and Josh. 24. 3 "I *took* your father Abraham from the other side of the flood" (river). A more definite word is used by the writer to the Hebrews when he declared that Enoch was "translated". The two occurrences of this word in this verse are from the Greek *metathesis* and *metatithemi*, meaning to take up an object and put it down somewhere else. These words appear frequently in the New Testament and a clear idea of their usage is gained by noting the following occurrences:

Heb. 12. 27 "signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken."

Acts 7. 1 "And were *carried over* into Sychem."

Luke 16. 4 "When I am *put out* of the stewardship."

Acts 19. 26 "Paul hath persuaded and *turned away* much people."

This word "translate" continued to bear this same meaning, of transference from one place to another, in much later times. There is in Wakefield Cathedral a memorial tablet to a quite recent Bishop of Wakefield who, at a certain date, says the tablet, was "translated to Newcastle," meaning that he was appointed to the latter city and so was transferred from Wakefield to Newcastle.

It is not necessary to insist that the expression "was not" must imply death, or the death condition. It need only indicate that the one referred to is not present or not to be found. A striking example of the usage of this expression occurs in the Babylonian story of the Flood. (It is probable that Genesis 5 was originally written in the same language—Sumerian—and perhaps not very much earlier than the Flood story, which has survived in its purest form in Genesis and in a much more distorted form in the Babylonian account). Telling of the time when he sent forth the birds from the Ark, Uta-Napishtim (the Babylonian Noah) says "To and fro went the dove, and returned, for a resting place *was not* . . . to and fro went the swallow. She too returned, for a resting place *was not*". In this light the expression need only mean that Enoch was not to be found, and this is exactly what Heb. 11. 5 declares.

It seems then that both the inspired writers intended their readers to understand that Enoch was taken away from amongst men, but not necessarily to heaven. It could well be to some other part of the earth. From that day onward, Enoch was never seen or heard of again, and the ancient chronicler who first compiled the history which now appears in Genesis 5—probably in the days immediately after the Flood—was unable to say any more about this venerable character beyond the well-known fact that in the three hundred and sixty-fifth year of his life he "was not—for God took him". Where He had taken him was not known, and for that reason the length of his earthly life and the time of his death could not be recorded.

Now it is a remarkable fact that the traditions of the Israelites shed a distinct light on the fact of, and reason for, this mysterious disappearance. The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus declares (44. 16) that "*Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated, being an example of repentance unto all generations*". This can only be taken as a reflection of Jewish understanding of the Genesis account, but one is impelled to ask in what way Enoch could be an "example" to "all generations". Perhaps the answer is to be found in the Hebrews verse, where it is said that in faith was

Enoch translated, having already pleased God (Heb. 11. 5). Now in that chapter Enoch's faith is placed on the same level as that of Abraham, Moses and others, who at the call of God left their home, kindred and country and went out to a place which God would show them, *not knowing whither they went*. (Heb. 11. 8.) Perhaps Enoch also went out to a solitary place, away from men, in close communion with God, to do a work for God just as did Abraham and Moses in later days, and maybe that was the secret of his translation.

Many have wondered from what source Jude took his famous quotation when he said (Jude 14) "*Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints . . .*" and so on; for the quotation is not to be found in the Old Testament. It was little more than a hundred years ago that a complete copy of the "*Book of Enoch*", in which this passage occurs, was made available in the English language, and although none would now claim that this book was written by Enoch, competent authorities declare that not only Jude but our Lord Himself were quite familiar with it. It is to this book that we are indebted for sufficient light on Judaistic tradition to confirm the suggestion advanced above as to the nature of Enoch's disappearance.

Although the Book of Enoch was put together in its present state no earlier than one or two centuries before Christ, its nature suggests that certain portions are taken from written records which are considerably older. Apart from a great deal of pseudo-astronomical lore with which we have no immediate concern, the book purports to tell of the conditions prevailing immediately before the Flood—an amplification of the story told briefly in chapter 6 of Genesis. It is evident that various "fragments" of older records, some considerably distorted by their passage through the generations, by copying and re-copying, translation and re-translation, have been put together in a very clumsy and disjointed fashion with much material of later composition, but a careful study of these "fragments" does reveal one very interesting fact.

That fact is that the prevailing theme of the book is the taking of Enoch away from the world of men and his establishment in some part of the earth where he could not be approached except by one or two favoured ones who were aware of the secret. The story tells of both Noah and Methuselah visiting Enoch thus, and of the family of Methuselah coming to hear his words. Perhaps the most eloquent passage in this connection is I Enoch 12. 1, which says "*Before these things Enoch was hidden, and no one of the children of men knew where he was hidden, and where he abode, and what had*

become of him. And his activities had to do with the Watchers, and his days were with the Holy Ones". Again chapter 70, verse 1 declares "It came to pass after this that his name *during his lifetime* was raised aloft to the Son of Man and to the Lord of Spirits from amongst those who dwell on the earth. And he was raised aloft in the chariots of the Spirit and his name vanished from among them".

The similarity of this to the story of Elijah is very striking, and this likeness is heightened by words which are accredited to Enoch himself. (39. 3) "*And in those days a whirlwind carried me off from the earth and set me down at the end of the heavens*". Elijah too was separated from Elisha by a chariot of fire and carried up by a whirlwind into the heavens (2 Kings 2. 11) and the translation of Enoch is depicted here as having occurred in very similar fashion. The sons of the prophets besought Elisha that they might go and search the mountains, believing that the "wind of the Lord" (Heb. *ruach*, translated "wind" or "spirit" as required by the context, and incorrectly rendered "spirit" in this instance in the A.V.) might have dropped Elijah somewhere within reach (2 Kings 2. 16). They searched, and found him not. So with Enoch; it seems the Israelites believed that he had been removed to some inaccessible part of the earth and throughout the Book of Enoch he is described as continuing in a closer and more direct communion with God and the spiritual powers of heaven than man had enjoyed since the Fall in Eden. They believed that he bore God's message to the "fallen angels" of whom both Jude and Peter speak in the New Testament (Jude 6, 2 Peter 2. 4), warned Methuselah and Noah of the coming flood, and declared that the judgment of God would come upon the ungodly; but as far as mankind generally were concerned, they knew not where he was and they never saw him again. Incidentally the Book of Enoch depicts the events of Genesis 6. 1 as first taking place in the time of Jared, the father of Enoch.

The "*Book of Jubilees*", written about two hundred years before Christ but incorporating much legendary matter from the lost "*Book of Noah*" of unknown antiquity, says that Enoch after his translation was with the angels of God in the lost Garden of Eden for 294 years, during which time he wrote down all the knowledge they taught him concerning the heavenly bodies, the seasons and the forces of Nature. He also recorded the sin of the angels (the "fallen angels") and the coming Divine judgment, the Flood. The origin of this piece of information is quite unknown, but it does at least indicate the popular belief that Enoch was not in heaven, but very much on earth, in the for-

bidden land of Eden, still guarded by the Cherubim with the "flaming sword that turned every way". Since the Book of Genesis says that Enoch was 365 years old at his translation, the addition of this legendary 294 years away from the homes of men would make him 659 years old at his death, which does at least compare fairly well with the ages of his fellow patriarchs before the Flood.

It was the opinion of Jewish tradition that Enoch was the one to whom God entrusted the secrets of astronomy, of heavenly wisdom, what we in our day would call "scientific knowledge", and of writing and other useful arts, to be revealed in turn to mankind. It is of interest therefore to find that in the Babylonian tradition of the ten kings who reigned before the Flood, sometimes thought to be a dim memory of the ten antediluvian patriarchs, the seventh, who would in that case correspond to Enoch, is supposed to have been a special favourite of the gods of heaven and to have been initiated into all the mysteries of heaven and earth. Such legends have some value in that they show a fixed idea, prevailing throughout ancient times, that there once was a man, especially acceptable to God for his piety, who was entrusted with Divine secrets and taken into some place of separation from his fellows in order that he might learn those secrets. The short remark in Genesis about Enoch, brief and uninformative as it is, is quite evidently true history.

There is a hint in Heb. 11. 5 that some search for Enoch was made after his translation, for the verse declares that he was "translated that he should not see death, and was not found", as though men searched for him and their efforts were fruitless.

The most difficult part of this verse is the expression "that he should not see death". Once only is the same expression used elsewhere in the Scriptures, and that is in the well known saying of our Lord "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death" (John 8. 51). It should not be thought that this promise implied the escape of the physical human frame from the inevitable end which comes to all men when life's allotted span is past. Our Lord referred to a far deeper truth, and a far more enduring life than that when men to-day are pleased to call "life". Those who are the faithful of Christ, who have been "born again" and have a life within them which is from above and not of "this corruptible seed" (1. Pet. 1. 23) shall truly "never see death" even although their "earthly house of this tabernacle" (2. Cor. 5. 1) be dissolved. In like manner the Ancient Worthies of old who are said in Heb. 11. 39 to have obtained a good report through their faith have not failed of their reward,

and it can truly be said of them that having manifested their loyalty and allegiance to God by their faith there is a city which God hath prepared for them. (Heb. 11. 16.) They, too, do not "see death". Enoch was one of these; and his faith, exercised as was that of Abraham, Moses and Daniel, is an assurance that he inherits the promise which God has prepared for him and so does not "see death"; but just as surely as Abraham and Moses and Christian believers throughout the centuries, finishing their course with joy, have gone down into the grave, so, in some lonely place far from his fellow-men, Enoch must have yielded up his breath to the One Who gave it. If it be assumed that Enoch lived to the average age of his fellow patriarchs, he could have been alive within half a century of the Flood. In this event he might well have been used of God to communicate those messages to Methuselah and to Noah, which the Book of Enoch declares he did in fact communicate. In such case one can well visualise the saintly old man in his quiet retreat spending his time in meditation on the things of God, perhaps seeing in ever clearer vision the trend of events in the world of sin and death, and—who knows—being the one who first discerned that impending fate which hovered over the antediluvian world. It may have been that he perceived the natural signs of the impending catastrophe many years before it happened—perhaps with knowledge born of long observation of the heavens, undisturbed by other distraction, realising something of the mighty changes which were at work in the earth and which at length culminated in the "breaking of the great waters of the abyss" and the opening of the "floodgates of heaven" (Gen. 7. 11). Some dim memory of this may be the reason why those long passages about the stars, winds and forces of Nature in the Book of Enoch are accredited to this mystic personage. It seems that he lived as a righteous man in a world fast giving itself over to every form of evil, that he prophesied to it concerning coming retribution, and that in the heyday of life he was removed from his place among men and until the day of his death lived in his peaceful retreat, serving and living in "quiet fellowship with God".

All are not teachers. Teaching, St. Paul declares, is a special gift (1 Cor. 12. 28-30). A teacher is one who, being fully consecrated and brought into submission to the Divine will and enlightened concerning the Divine Plan, God can, and is pleased to use in instructing His Church. And the basis of such selection may be a keen, penetrating mind or other naturally or supernaturally imparted endowment and qualification.

OUR LORD'S RETURN

7.—Conclusion

T.H.

An Exposition of Scripture
Dealing with the Second Advent

In our review of the teachings and conceptions re our Lord's Return, we have, perforce, had to take note, to our deep sorrow and regret, that the mental attitude of the major part of the present-day Christian Church is in a state of apathy and indifference to this transcendently important theme. Almost everywhere, in both pulpit and pew, a most profound lack of understanding prevails with scarce a single Watchman on the battlements to warn the confused and apathetic multitudes that the great and dreadful Day of God is drawing on apace, or that ere long its searching judgments will break in upon its ranks, with all the stealth and havoc of an unexpected thief in the night, and will leave them stripped and naked in His sight. (Rev. 16.15.) This every-where prevailing poverty of thought is made only too painfully apparent to those whose ears and eyes are open to the influences of the coming Day of God, when over the radio and in the daily Press front rank writers and spokesmen find themselves asked (or forced) to speak on this searching theme. Here, one will be heard saying that the Lord "returned" at His Resurrection, or most certainly at Pentecost; there, another claims He came in the fall and overthrow of Jerusalem; yonder another thinks He comes in every crisis-epoch of history; while another thinks His coming is to meet us on the farther frontier of our last earthly experience, and that He will continue so to come till time shall be no more. Out of this babel of conflicting thought, (as though it ought to be accepted as the quintessence of research and understanding) rises the enigmatic cry "*He has come; He is always coming; He will continue to come to the end of time*"!

It is a strange commentary upon the artlessness of the human mind, that, by long deliberation and ingenuous debate men can talk themselves into the loss of what, to the Early Church, was the very lode-star of her hopes—yet neither feel or know it as a loss and can come at length to substitute in its place definitions and expectations, which, when analysed, can have neither light nor meaning for common simple men. It is no explanation of these trenchant matters to say that because Jesus is no longer a man, He is no longer subject to human limitations, and that therefore He can already have come, yet not have come, and that He will be always coming, yet never fully and corporeally here! Language such as this may not sound amiss

to the subtle theologian; it is hardly the kind to give strength and conviction to the minds of humble fishermen—and all such like—to lay broad a basis for a faith that will take the Master at His word, and believe that when He said if He went away, He would as surely come again to receive them to Himself. Whatever else the Early Church looked for to accompany His Return most certainly they looked for *Him* to Return, in Person, and although then exalted and panoplied with Power and Glory, He would be the same Jesus, with the self-same turn of mind, the self-same loving heart, and the self-same consideration for His own.

We also noted that He did not return at Pentecost, nor was He expected to Return within the life-span of His Apostolic ambassadors, who prior to their decease, made suitable suggestive arrangements for the carrying-on of their work after they had served their little day. Nor did He come in any wise at the fall and overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, for even though Jerusalem was then "surrounded by armies" there was nothing at that time, or in that episode, which gave rise to the fulfilment of "all things written" (Luke 21. 22) or gave ground for any expectation that "redemption was drawing near". (Luke 21. 28.) Banishment and age-long slavery was the outcome to that siege and fall; in consequence it *was not*, and *could not be* the "surrounding" of Jerusalem which Scripture (and hence our Lord) associated with His Return.

We also noted that our Lord taught He would be going away as a nobleman to a far country; and left His servants to have charge of His estate and interests; and that, after "a long time"—presumably the Gospel Age—He would return to make a reckoning with them over their stewardship.

During all that "long time" *He would be away from them*—not frequently or indiscriminately returning at every crisis-period of history. While He was due to be away, He would be away, right on till the "long time" was ended.

Accepting then that there is a right and proper time for Him to reappear, may we then expect that re-appearing "at any day" when once the end of His absence—the end of the Age—can be assumed to have come? Among the various little movements with Advent expectations one may sometimes hear and see the "Watchword" expressed "any day or moment now"!

A panel of Evangelical ministers and teachers

as long ago as 1917 set forth in a manifesto to the Christian world their thought, that consequent upon the release of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Turkish control, the Return of the Lord might be taking place "any day or moment now". That same expectation has remained unrewarded these thirty years, yet men still cling to the same phrases and the same hope! The poet, too, expressed it thus:

*"It may be at morn when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow
is breaking,
That Jesus will come in the fulness of
glory,
To receive from the world 'His own'.*
*"It may be at mid-day, it may be at twilight,
It may be perchance that the blackness of
midnight.
Will burst into light in the blaze of His
glory,
When Jesus receives His own."*

This expectation, to our understanding, is a profound mistake, yet one, perhaps quite excusable, by the fervency of their desire to meet and greet the Lord.

There is no Scriptural indication that the Lord will return to receive "His own" prior to the early stages of "the great Tribulation, such as was not since there was a nation"! His own words are decisive on that point. After pointing out a most crucial experience which would befall Jerusalem, and the returned Jew within the borders of "the land". (Matt. 24. 15-16; Dan. 8. 10-14, 17, 23-26; Dan. 11. 21-45) the Lord made reference to "great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now" for which Dan. 12. 1, is direct and emphatic proof.

Because another line of interpretation is held here and there concerning "the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet" its identity will not here be stressed. Our point will rest upon the evidence of "the Tribulation" it inaugurates, for those then living in Judea (Matt. 24. 16). This is a matter of precise and historic experience, and can be verified and tested accordingly. Consequently if the Lord links His Return, as the Son of Man, with that demonstrable and verifiable happening—and He does—then it is a vague and purposeless expectation to expect Him to Return "any day or any moment now" unless, at the same time we can adduce the proof that the returned Jew, now dwelling in Judea, has already experienced at the hand of the Desolator—no matter who or what it be—that first violent spasm of the great Tribulation, which yet will spread the whole world through.

The words of Jesus admit of no dubiety: "*But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened . . . and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven . . .*" (Matt. 24. 29-30.)

Obviously the whole of those tribulation days are not then at an end, for Jesus in His capacity as the "worthy Lamb" has come to earth for the express purpose of inflicting wrath and tribulation upon those who take part "with" or "as" His enemies (Rev. 6. 16-17) and this will be transpiring for some years after His first Return.

That is another and a longer story—too long by far for this present review.

It is therefore suggested that the Lord does not come—cannot come—until that first spasm of tribulation on the returned Jew, upon Jerusalem, and upon Judea has taken place!

Where then does the fact of the returned "Lord-of-the-servants" come in? Is this (Matt. 24. 30) the occasion of His Return? In reply to that query please note the relationship of the context in Matt. 25. 14-30 with Matt. 24. 29-31. The reckoning with the servants is a sequence of the return, but just how long a time transpires after the Return before the Reckoning begins is another matter—not easy for any to decide! Which means of course, that the Returned "Presence" of the Lord spans a period of some unknown length, during which He has many things to do prior to His appearance to the world, to rule and reign in righteousness. (Note the place of Matt. 25. 31-46 in this long sequence of things.)

We have previously noted that nothing in the Scriptures which describe our gathering up to Him requires our gathering "in the twinkling of an Eye". We have seen that "*hama*" signifies "together-ness", be its period long or short! Also that "*proton-epeita*" signifies "first then" (or afterwards) and that this quite allows for the dead in Christ really to "rise first", and that afterwards they that are alive and remain to the Presence of the Lord can actually be caught up "one by one" from the moment of the "henceforth", when the Blessed-dead-which-die-in-the-Lord-experience begins to be known by those whose change comes in the twinkling of an eye! Were we to throw the Book of Revelation in as evidence, on this point we should have the whole of Chapters 11, 12, 13, and nearly all the fourteenth, to set forth in support, but as other interpretations hold the field elsewhere, we refrain.

The evidence of Matt. 24: and 25: is quite enough to show that when once the signs of His Presence begin, the work to be accomplished calls

for a rather lengthy period of time for its accomplishment—a generation probably, for it is at such a time, and under such conditions, that the words of Jesus “This generation shall not pass” will find the adequate fulfilment they could not have under any other circumstances. (Matt. 24. 34.)

Where then in this wide setting of historic experience does the Re-appearance of the Lord come in? Though Matt. 24: gives the answer to the three-fold question of the disciples relative to His Return (and to the end of the Age) the Lord makes no reference to Himself or to His Return prior to the statement of v.30. As there is no reference to his return prior to this, it is to be presumed that no phase of that Return can precede the set-up of circumstances described in this and the verse preceding it. Here, it must be observed the evidence for His Return is not based on any “date”, or series of dates deduced from chronological calculations, but upon an episode of real and crucial experience in the life of the people inhabiting Jerusalem, and its adjacent territories in Judea. And, in the light afforded by v. 15, (and other co-related scriptures) there is no relief afforded at this time, other than by flight, from the oppressive and defiling action of the “Desolator”. He (or it) is permitted to “stand in the holy place” with none to say him (or it) nay!

The “trouble” which ensues from this profanation is the visible and earthly sign of what is about to take place in the unseen and invisible realm where the “sign” of the Son of Man in heaven is to be made manifest. Now if Jesus were to be made patently visible to every human eye at that stage of His Appearing, of what need or purpose is the additional “Sign”? Would not the sight of His own Person be enough, without any Sign, to convince beholders of His Return? Does not the fact that the “Sign” of the “Son of Man” is needed indicate that the Son of Man will be represented by the Sign, and that it is by beholding that Sign, and not the Son of Man Himself, that the tribes of the land, and of the earth, will be made aware of His Presence near the Earth?

Though at first affrighted by the thought, (because His immediate work and activity is towards His Church) the nations of the earth quieten down again, and become indifferent to their former fears concerning Him (Matt. 24. 37-39). Meantime judgment begins at the House of God—testings, siftings and separations occur, as the Lord and His messengers gather and assemble “His own”.

Various Scriptures dove-tail together as to the time and occasion of these tests and separations. First, our Lord's own reference to the Trumpet

blasts which attends these tests and separations is to be noted in v. 31. Following that, attention must be given to Rev. 14. 13-16. Here we learn that the time for the raising of the dead is come; the time for bestowing rewards upon prophets, “saints” and all who fear His Name, (Rev. 11. 18); the time when “blessedness” attends those who complete their covenant unto death faithfully! This is at the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, and as there are but seven of these, it is at the sounding of the “last trump”. Here, 1 Cor. 15. 51-52, and 1 Thess. 4. 14-17 are to the point, teaching us the same things.

Thus both these vital Resurrection passages link up with Matt. 24. 29-31, and are subject to the same controlling circumstances. Hence the Return of the Son of Man is indicated, not by chronological calculations, but by a “Sign” in heaven, and by a time of unprecedented distress in old Jerusalem. Obviously therefore, His Return is not a matter of “any day or any moment”, even in these advanced and turbulent times!

Now if the testimony of these two major signs seems to locate His appearing in some yet future day, how shall we account for signs which, to many saints, are accepted as tokens of His Presence here and now? Is there no sense or manner in which His directing Power and oversight regarding the affairs of this sad earth can be accounted for prior to His appearance as the “Son of Man”? Can there be some manifestation made which is tantamount and equal to a period of Presence, as from some given *past date*, additional to that “Presence in the midst” which has been, and still is, the appreciated priceless privilege of every company of His Saints?

Now first of all let us run our eye over the list of the “Seal-opening movements” in Rev. 6, and locate the first indication of His actual Presence and Judicial activity towards men! It will be found in v. 17—after the opening of the Sixth of the Series! Yet it is He, as Judah's Lion-Lamb, who has broken open not only the “sixth”, but also the previous “five”!

Again, run through the sections on the Trumpets and see where “He” first comes in this series, of events. (Rev. 8. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.) This cannot be earlier than Chapter 10—even if there! Yet it was “He” who by His overcoming, made all these “trumpet movements” possible.

Now there are very specific reasons why neither the “Seal” nor the “Trumpet” movements could begin in the days of the Early Church—Israel's hardness of heart, and banishment from Grace is involved in this—and which makes it essential for the students of these entrancing things to locate

that august Throne-Scene of Chapter 4, somewhere nearer the end of the present Age.

To make a very very long story short, so far as this present series is concerned, all we need to say is that when the dead old world, and the decrepit senescent Church began to wake up early in the Nineteenth Century, there was a most probable reason for it behind the scenes, when a Lion-Lamb took to His care the title-deeds of Israel's inheritance, and made it into the charter of Israel's long-awaited Redemption from all her age-long disabilities! What a wonderful century that Nineteenth Century was! The missionary and the Bible Societies; the Prison Reform movements, the abolition of slavery, the slow but patient fight against ancient privilege and oppressive ownership, and a score of other phases of what we have earlier clasified as "the white war"—Whence came that thrust and tension on behalf of social and personal righteousness which spread throughout the Christian world? Not from his Satanic majesty surely! Would he not have had the old dark days continue indefinitely—forever, if possible? Obviously another "power" had stepped in, from another standpoint, and for its own purposes; and, among its many many objectives was one long outstanding—the Jew.

In 1835 the first Jew to become Sheriff of London was elected to that dignity—in 1855 the same man was made the first Jewish Lord Mayor

of the metropolis.

In 1837 the first Jew was knighted by the queen—in 1849 the first Jew was elected as Member of Parliament in England, though not allowed to take his seat till 1858.

In 1868 Benjamin Disraeli became first Jewish Premier of England; his presence at the Treaty of Berlin (1878) secured right of entry to Palestine for his people, from the detested Turk!

These were the small beginnings in the turn of the tide, for these "tribes of the wandering foot", and need to be accounted for! Our solution is the Prince of the House-of-David had taken the Scroll of Inheritance from the hands of Him that sat on the Throne, and had begun to break its Seals, and His own people—His natural kith and kin—were among the first to benefit.

Removals of age-long restraints for Israel—*diffusions of light and truth for His Saints*; a slow righting of old wrongs for the multitudes, all resultant from a broken Seal, and a "white war"; and the drawing near of the day of God; He who had taken the Scroll had already *come to the place of the Throne*, to send aid and assistance (and slow deliverance) into the Earth! Will all this stand "in lieu of" and "as equivalent for" His pre-Son-of-Man Presence in the Earth? We think so—and it is founded and built on surer grounds than chronological calculations.

THE END

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

When in the ordering of Divine Providence "the hour" and "the man" arrive simultaneously, great things may be expected—and accomplished! Just such an occasion had arrived when Barnabas went to Tarsus seeking Saul. (Acts II. 25.)

Consequent upon that spell of sharp persecution arising out of Stephen's ministry—and death—certain brethren travelled into distant provinces, thus creating for themselves the opportunity denied them in Jerusalem. Among them were brethren apparently of Greek origin, who as they travelled homewards, came at last to Antioch, and there spake openly and freely to fellow Greeks about the grace and goodness of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A very considerable number of these hearers believed whole-heartedly and turned to the Lord. Here was an unorthodox situation—for these were Gentiles purely and simply—yet the hand of the Lord was with them.

When the tidings of these unexpected happenings reached Jerusalem, the mother Church sent

Barnabas—a brother well-trusted and greatly esteemed—to investigate, and presumably with instructions to report back.

Barnabas was both amazed and delighted by what he saw and heard, and—good man that he was—exhorted the new converts to stand fast in the Lord. But he quickly realised that this work was too big and too exacting for the local overseers to control efficiently, and that help must be found somehow, somewhere. Barnabas knew the man for the task; recollections of events and of a "contact" made several years before came to mind, and he was sure that but one man in all his range of acquaintanceship was capable of taking this task in hand. Hence that speedily determined journey to Tarsus to seek Saul.

But what of Saul? How had he fared since the day when a despotic Master peremptorily told him to "depart" from Jerusalem? We have not much evidence to call upon concerning these intervening years, and such as we have is mainly auto-

biographical. In an outline of his experiences in which comparison with other Israelites had been found necessary, Paul unintentionally lifts the curtain upon some of those earlier years—a span of life and experience which must include those spent in and around his native town prior to the call of Barnabas. This little chapter of autobiography is recorded in 2 Cor. 11-21-27, and records the story of countless beatings—some nearly unto death—five distinct scourgings by the Jews—to the utmost limit permitted by the law—three beatings by the Romans (by rods). Three times shipwrecked, with a whole day and night adrift on one of these occasions; in dangers of many kinds and in many places “in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure—so runs the grim and frank recital. Foxes had holes, birds of the air had nests, but Paul (like his Lord) often had nowhere to lay his aching head!

Now all this crucial and punitive experience had befallen him prior to the story of his wanderings in Acts 19. 21-23. Where is the record of these things in the Acts of the Apostles? There is no record of all these buffetings anywhere. We have the main records of his first and second missionary journeys, and while some of these experiences occurred during the one or other, there are some which cannot be accounted for during these journeys, or these later years. At least two of the Roman beatings and probably three of the Jewish floggings belong to those early years before Barnabas sought him out. Which means, of course, that the servant of the Lord, dismissed peremptorily from Jerusalem, had laboured, perhaps in the main unsuccessfully, in the hinterland above Tarsus, during these unrecorded years, and had had to pay very heavily, in suffering, for his fidelity to the Lord. How exactly and deeply do the words of the Lord to Ananias seem to have been fulfilled—“I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My Name”. (Acts 9. 16.)

Well, such was the man, and such the preparation for the work he had been called to do! In that quieter retreat, away from the stress and turmoil of faithless Jerusalem, the Lord had been inuring him to pain and persecution, to odium and disesteem in readiness for the arduous hours which lay ahead!

Thus when came the Gentile's hour, there came the “man” prepared of God to match the hour—and great things began to be accomplished!

His purposes had ripened fast

Unfolding every hour;

The bud had a bitter taste,

But sweet would be the flower!

A whole year was spent in establishing and consolidating the Church in Antioch; then forth to the wider work he (and Barnabas) was called to go!

The lesson here for us is that there are tides—ebbings and flowings—in the history of the Lord's people; set times and set hours for this thing or that, and that it is the Lord who arranges them. Nothing is more obvious in the stories in Acts than that the Hand of God—or the Spirit of God—supervised and directed everything.

“The Holy Spirit said”; “the Spirit suffered them not”; “Come over to Macedonia”; etc., etc., token upon token of the Spirit-led life!

“The Spirit-led life”! “the hour” and “the man”! Are not these things the essentials to-day! Perhaps not in great world-shaking movements as yet, but in the more quiet and more preparatory ways. It is an unbecoming lack of insight and charity to think that God's over-ruling Providences fall only inside our little Fellowship, and that His Hand controls none outside. In these coming days of intensive strain, some poor sufferer's “hour” may come, with you, or me, the intended “man”! How if that is so? Are you going to say “I've tried and tried, and tried in vain, and am quite sure there's not another single grain to be gathered to the Lord. The whole field's been raked and combed and gleaned until it stands utterly bare of wheat”! If that is how you—we—feel, some one's “hour” will come, without the “man”, or without the first-intended man! There are still “lonely hearts to cherish while the days are going by”—which a spirit of defeatism will allow to pass by unhelped and unblessed!

“Only a word for the Master

Lovingly, quietly said,

Only a word, yet the Master heard,

And some fainting heart was fed.

“Only a look of remonstrance,

Sorrowful, gentle and deep,

Only a look! Yet some strong man shook,

And went alone to weep.

“Only some act of devotion,

Willingly, joyfully done,

Surely 'twas nought! (So the proud world thought)

But yet souls for Christ were won.

“Only!—but Jesus is looking,

Constantly, tenderly down

To earth, and sees, Those seeking to please,

And these things he stands ready to crown.”

Kindly Providence will continue to call for the “man” until its prearranged “hours” are outrun! Let us be sure of that!

The Three Epistles of John

A.O.H.

Part XVI. I John 3.17-24

Comments on the writings
of the "Beloved Apostle"

"But whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (vs. 17.)

The Apostle John, for all his deep spirituality, was eminently practical. His Christianity was a faith to be exercised on earth toward others as well as in heaven toward God. The Christian society to him was much more than a congregation of individuals, each of whom had been individually made right with God and each of whom individually had to make his or her calling and election sure. The Christian society was a brotherhood in the deepest sense, a brotherhood such as the world had never known before and could never know apart from this, the supreme example of brotherliness. It is impossible, therefore, John insists, for any truly to be regarded as a member of this brotherhood if they fail to act up to the spirit of brotherhood. It just means that there can be no such thing as destitution within the Christian community unless all are destitute. At least that is what it means in theory; in practice, because the Christian community in the world has never reached up to the ideal set before us, it cannot be said that this condition is truly attained. Yet there are many indications that a great number of those who are Christ's and at the same time are in possession of "this world's goods" to a more than usual degree, have truly appreciated the spirit of this injunction and do minister to the material needs of their needy brethren. The Lord, who seeth in secret, will one day reward them openly; but they do not these things because of reward. They do them because the love of God that is in their hearts leads them irresistibly to make use of the ability they have to give happiness and comfort to the Lord's afflicted ones.

An old Persian poem runs, in its English translation, something like this:

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight of his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel, writing in a Book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the Vision in the room he said
"What writest thou?" The Angel raised his
head

And with a look made all of sweet accord,
Replied "The names of those who love the
Lord!"

"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not
so!"

Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still, and said "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."
The Angel wrote, and vanished; the next night
He came again with a great wakening light
To show the names of those whom love of God
had blessed.

And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

No one can love God who does not also love his brother—and all men are brothers in God's sight—but no man who at first does not love God, if he have true love for his brother and his neighbour in his heart, will go very far before he has become a lover of God also.

The expression "bowels of compassion" is not a very happy one in modern English uses, and is meaningless to boot. The word has changed its meaning since the days of the Authorised Version translators. In King James' time it meant the inward parts, including the heart, which then, as now, was a synonym for the inward affections. The same Greek word is better translated in 2 Cor. 7. 15; "His inward affection is more abundant toward us" and in Luke 1. 78 "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us". The Septuagint uses the same word in Prov. 12. 10 "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel". This meaning, "inward affection" should be applied wherever this word is used in a metaphorical sense in the New Testament, viz., 2 Cor. 6. 12, Phil. 1. 8 and 2. 1, Col. 3. 12, and Philemon 7, 12 and 20. All these occurrences, it will be noticed, are in the writings of Paul; he evidently had a great love himself for the sentiment that this word denoted.

Incidentally, in classical Greek the word is used by Herodotus to denote the inward parts of sacrificed animals, the lungs, liver, heart, etc., which were roasted by fire and eaten by the offerers. These were supposed to be the life-producing and life-sustaining organs—as indeed they are—and in the same way did the High Priest of Israel offer these same organs on the Brazen Altar in the Court

of the Tabernacle during the progress of the Day of Atonement sacrifices. It has often been said that these "inward parts" thus offered in sacrifice represent the heart's devotion and best endeavours of the consecrated life; here is the physical basis for that thought.

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." (vs. 18-20 R.V.)

The Revised Version gives a better rendering of the Greek in verse 20 and in so doing completely changes the sense of the passage and makes it more harmonious. The A.V. has it *"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things"*. It can fairly be argued from that sentence that John is issuing a warning. If we have as it were a guilty conscience, a heart that is telling us inwardly that we are doing wrong, we may depend on it that God, who is greater than our heart, knows all about that wrong doing also. He who searcheth the heart can read our inmost thoughts and there is nothing hidden from His penetrating gaze. Now that is perfectly true but it is not what John is talking about just at present. He is giving comfort and assurance, not warning. He is telling us that if in our natural depression and foreboding on account of inward sense of sin and shortcoming, we are disposed to condemn ourselves unduly, this knowledge that we are loving Him and His children not in word only or by tongue only, but in deed and in truth, will constitute an assurance to us in every such time of self-condemnation. We shall assure our hearts that God, who knoweth all things, knows of the sincerity of our love and has taken note of the deeds that accompany that love, and in so doing has counted us acceptable in His sight notwithstanding our weaknesses and shortcomings on account of which we tend to condemn ourselves too severely.

It is admittedly true that some disciples do not view in sufficiently serious light their failures to reach up to the Divine ideals. There is almost certain to be some particular weakness or failing or indulgence—different in different people—which we do not repress or condemn so strictly as we should. But on the whole it is probably true that most of the Lord's children are too severely self-condemnatory; usually the more earnest they are in their consecration the more they tend to condemn themselves too severely. It is good for us that our Lord judges us neither too leniently nor too harshly—and, too, that in His judgment He

guides us in His way so that we may do better in future.

It is our part therefore to see to it that our love, expressed in word and speech, is worked out in our lives. It is easy to read about the virtues of love, or to listen and give mental assent to discourses extolling the quality of love, and all that may fairly be described as "loving in word". It is nearly as easy to talk about love, to profess the characteristics of love, to exhort others, from the platform or pulpit, or in conversation, to love in daily life. That is truly loving with the tongue. But all of this, desirable and good as it may be—and John certainly does not mean us to understand that we are not to read, hear and talk about Christian love—is of no value at all to us unless that same love is demonstrably effecting its good works in our hearts and lives. It is quite possible for any of us to "preach to others, and oneself be a cast-away". After all, it is not until one begins to put these things into practice that one really finds out what they mean. Many an audience has sat listening to an eloquent exhortation to Christian love, with much nodding of heads in assent and many eyes riveted on the speaker; and after it is all over many in that audience have gone back to their daily routine without any intention of applying the things said to the incidents of daily life—it has just not occurred to them so to do. John wants us to take his words very seriously and make them our own, but not to be content with that. He wants us to go away and put them into practice and see for our selves how they work out.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (vs. 21-22.)

This expression "if our heart condemn us not" is not an antithesis to verse 19 but is a development of that verse. The fact that we know our love to be one that is practised in our lives gives us assurance in heart against unnecessary and unjust self-condemnation. Therefore, since our heart no longer condemns us, we have a confidence—a boldness, is the real meaning of the word—toward God which enables us to approach Him in full confidence and assurance of faith. As the writer to the Hebrews says "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith". (Heb. 10. 19-22.) We ought to realise, and hold as a fundamental article of our faith, that when in His wisdom and mercy and love our Heavenly Father sees fit to accept our proffered offering, the dedication and con-

secration of our hearts and lives to His service, He also gives us the privilege of access to Him. He has cast all our sins and shortcomings behind His back. He stands ready to help us over every obstacle, even though many of those obstacles are of our own making. We may have that confidence all the time that we retain the witness of our own heart's sincerity.

That is why John can say so confidently that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him". It is because we "keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" that we receive whatsoever we ask. We ask only for those things that it is His Will we should have. True, we, all of us, voice many requests for things both spiritual and temporal that we never receive. There is a reason. We attach to every such request the unalterable proviso "if it be Thy Will". If the request is not going to be in accordance with His Will—and at the time of proffering the request we do not know whether it is so or not—then *part of the request is that it be not granted*. So that if such a request is not granted, that is just what we asked for! It is literally true therefore that if we are keeping His commandments, which include desiring His Will to be done in all things, we do receive the answer we want to every request we make. It is "yes" or "no" according to the Divine Will; and it is that for which we ask. We accept the decision and we shape our course accordingly. The making of the request, whether it be granted or not, is good exercise. The acceptance of the decision, if it be in the negative, is good discipline. The receipt of that which is asked for, if the Lord's Will be to grant it, affords the opportunity for good practice, the making use of the gift for its intended purpose to the glory of God.

At last then, John comes to the conclusion of the second "book" in this his first epistle. Chapters 1 and 2 formed the first self-contained little treatise, chapter 3 the second, whilst chapters 4 and 5 constitute a third that introduces further and deeper doctrinal truth concerning the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now in verses 23 and 24 he gives a fitting conclusion to his long exhortation. *"This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commendment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in them. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."*

There is so much that might be said about that final word; and yet, because it is a final word, it were perhaps better to leave it to convey its own message, unelaborated. It was Jesus Himself who declared that love for God was the first and greatest commandment, and love for one's neighbour was the second, and like unto it. Now John transmutes that word into one that is of more particular significance to the Church, the members of the Body of Christ. Just as those words of Jesus are true in the larger, the universal sense, so in a more restricted sphere love of the Lord Jesus is the first and great commandment, and love for the brethren is the second. That has been John's insistence throughout his epistle. Those who realise that fact, and act upon it, and whose love both for their Lord and for their brethren is worked out in their lives, dwell in God, and God dwells in them. And the Holy Spirit gives its witness in the heart of each believer, that this is so. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

"THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS..."

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. 24. 34.)

Many attacks have been made by Atheists, Freethinkers, and Higher Critics upon the bonafides of our Lord as a teacher sent from God on account of His words in verse 34. Looking at the long category of events foretold in this Olivet conversation, and not noting with sufficient carefulness what proportion of these forecasts were included in the scope of "all these things" they have claimed that Jesus' words were falsified by events. This is a serious charge to lay against One who said *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away"*.

They have included all the signs and portents connected with His Second Advent in the scope of "these things". Manifestly that was a wrong thing to do. The "All these things" of Matt. 24. 34, must be governed and defined by the meaning of the same words, from the same lips, as recorded in Matt. 23. 36. "All these things" refer only to the crimes perpetrated upon the Prophets by the fathers, and to the "filling up of the Cup" by that generation as it slew the Stephens, and the James and Peters and Pauls, who came in Jesus' Name, and the retribution that came from "All these things" could fall only on that people, and only while they were unrepentant concerning their

crimes. Jesus spoke of many things associated with His return which lay outside the scope of "all these things". It will not be forgotten that Jesus was answering three questions, not one. It would therefore be most improper to place all His words in reply to the one question "When shall these things be?" Even the sign of the budding fig-tree—the return of Jewish favour—should not be included; for that indicates punishment ending and restoration begun.

Again, signs applying to peoples other than the Jew should not be included, for they were not the children of those ancient fathers who had slain God's prophets. Further, the particular signs applicable to the Christian Church, in verses 42-51, must obviously be omitted from "all these things".

However, when we have cleared the ground of our enquiry from all these mistakes and misunderstandings, there yet remains one other point to be cleared up, and set in order. That point has to do with the word "fulfilled" in verse 34. It is generally understood that this word should have the same meaning as the words "accomplished" or "completed". But the word used by our Lord does not mean "come to pass" in the sense of being ended; but "come to pass" in the sense of beginning to happen, or beginning to take place.

One Greek scholar and writer says on this word "The Lord concludes this special prophecy of the tribulation by adding, 'Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass till all these things begin to take place'." He then explains that the Greek word *Genetai* used by our Lord here is a derivative of the Greek *Ginomai*, which has a wide variety of meanings, few of which are so definite as the thought in our word "fulfilled". He further says "The word is *genetai* from *ginomai* and means 'to begin to be'; 'to come to be'; and is quite different from *pleroo* which does mean 'to fulfil'." In Luke 21. 32 which is the parallel passage, we have the former word "begin to be", while in verse 24, we have the latter word "fulfilled" (referring to the Times of the Gentiles). Professors Young and Strong, in their concordances verify this suggestion regarding *ginomai*. Young shows it to be translated "be"—(the verb "to be") 249 times; "come to pass" 82 times, and many other forms which show a present and not a past fulfilment. Strong says *ginomai* (to cause to be; "to become")—is used with great latitude. He then gives a list of words which include "arise", "be assembled"; "be" "be brought to pass", "continue" and many more indicative of a present happening. As an instance we may note a form of *genetai* in John 13. 2, which in our Authorised Version is translated "and supper being ended". It is quite clear from verses 26-28, that

supper was not ended but was only just beginning. The Revised Version renders it "and during supper". The Diaglott translates it "as supper was preparing".

What the Lord really said was "This generation shall not pass till 'all these things' 'begin to happen.'" And they did begin to happen to that very generation! As if to show that this is the correct thought the Lord throws in a very illuminating phrase when He said "THE END is not yet"—"these are the BEGINNING of sorrows".

This throws a new light on this baffling passage. The cup of Divine retribution was placed to the lips of that generation, and they drank deeply of its bitter draught, but that generation did not empty the cup. The great tribulation only BEGAN in their days. The overthrow of their city and nation was only the beginning of those special curses incorporated in the terms of their national Covenant. Warning the fathers of the penalties which the forsaking of their Covenant would entail (Deut. 28. 15-68) he told them God would pluck them out of their land and curse them in field and home, and cast them into the wide places of the earth. Nowhere, not even in the Papal catalogue of cursings, are such terrible words to be found; and in their infliction there is nothing so terrible to be found in the records of history. That it had a portion of its fulfilment in the siege of Jerusalem is certain when we read verses 49-57; and that the nation from far is the Roman nation seems to admit of no doubt whatever. Then verse 64 says "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth to the other". Jesus said, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations" (Luke 21. 24).

Evidently then, while the sack of Jerusalem saw the beginning of their "great tribulation", yet, terrible as it was, it was only the beginning of sorrows and not the end. It was to continue till they should repent and be prepared to say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". Our Lord calls it "the tribulation of those days". "Those days" span an Age—the period that lies between Jerusalem's destruction, and that happier day when God pours upon them the spirit of supplication, when every family shall weep apart. (Zech. 10. 12.)

When therefore the Lord said "this generation shall not pass till all these things begin to come to pass", His words were not intended to cover all the signs and portents associated with His *Parousia*, but had reference only to the retributive measures due to be inflicted upon that rebellious nation, and to have their beginning with that then present generation.

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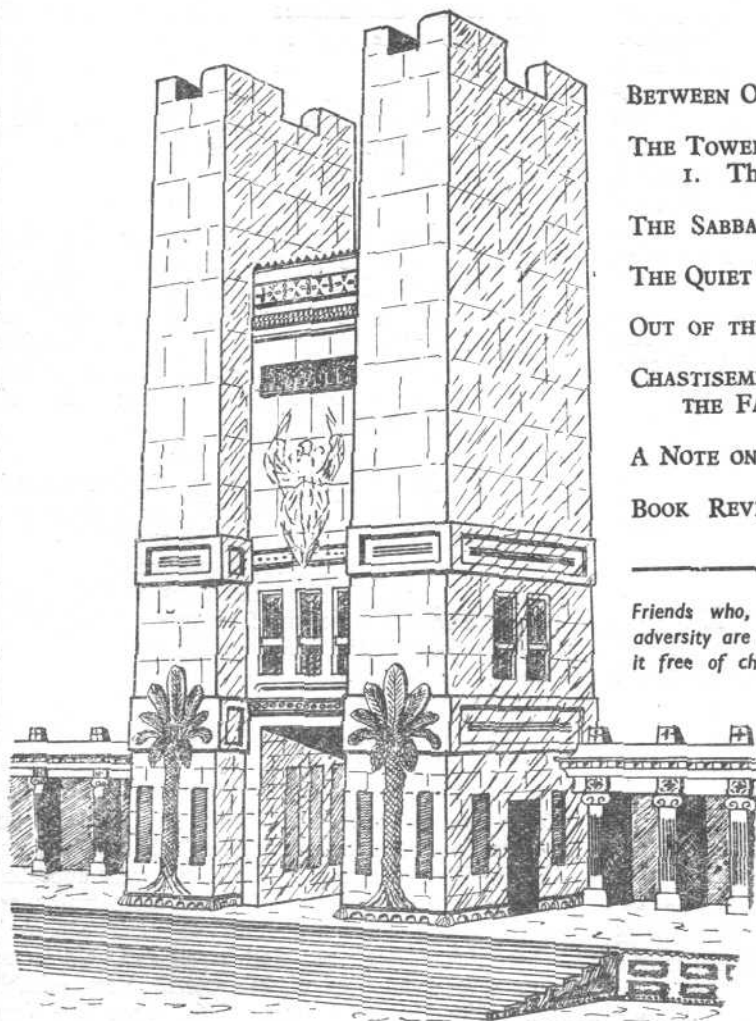
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And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The magazine edition of "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" is available in stock for free use by all who can use quantities to good advantage. The loving zeal of a brother has made it possible for a goodly number to be offered free of charge in this manner and we will welcome applications for reasonable quantities until this quota is exhausted, after which the normal price will be charged. Just say how many you can profitably use and we will be glad to send as many against that request as we can.

* * *

The story of the Tower of Babel has always intrigued by its brevity no less than its mystery. What really did happen and when did it happen? Who were the builders? Does any trace of it remain to this day? Nineteenth century commentators did their best to answer such questions but Biblical archæology was young in their day and they had very little upon which to build. Twentieth century research has brought to light much more material but modern Christian thought has but little use for the Old Testament stories. We commence in this issue a short series telling the story of the famous Tower so far as it can be pieced together from what the last forty years has revealed. It is an important story, for it contains important lessons for Christians to-day and we trust that our readers will find the series interesting.

* * *

Birthday cards of the Scriptural type are a problem nowadays. Purchase tax makes them expensive but even so there are continual enquiries for them. We have therefore decided to keep some in stock for the benefit of those who cannot obtain them easily elsewhere. They will be put up in packets of one dozen, complete with envelopes, consisting of five postcard type and seven folded cards of various designs and sizes, all cards in any one packet being different. The price will be 5/- per packet post free, and they should be ordered as the "BC" packet, or "Birthday Card" packet.

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 20th October, and meetings in the afternoon and evening are planned. There will be an address in the afternoon followed by a question meeting and another address in the evening. The speakers will be Bros. Alex. Guy (London) and A. Spain (Swanscombe). A very warm welcome is extended to all who can make it possible to attend. As usual, the afternoon session commences at 3.30 p.m. and the evening session at 6.30 p.m.

Scriptural Christmas Cards are again in stock this year and we are now able to supply orders as received. It is suggested that the friends obtain their requirements as early as possible since our stock may well be exhausted before December. The varieties available are generally similar to those of last year, all folding cards, complete with envelopes, and are put up in packets of ten well-assorted cards of differing sizes and types, at the following prices, all post free: 3/9d., 4/3d., 4/9d., 5/3d. and 6/-.

* * *

The series "*The Three Epistles of John*" is now to be discontinued for a few months, the exposition having arrived at the end of chapter 3, which is a suitable place for a pause. This gives opportunity for other themes to be treated in the "*Monthly*" and after a little while "*The Three Epistles of John*" will be resumed from the beginning of chapter 4.

* * *

As Christmas time approaches the Benevolent Committee will be seeking to make the best use of its resources in giving some little extra cheer to those upon whom the "toils of the way" are pressing hardly. All communications for the Benevolent Fund should be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, who will gladly acknowledge same.

* * *

Acceptable children's books for Christmas are in stock as follows. For full details see back page of this issue. The Bible Story Book and "*Little Life of Jesus*" are specially recommended.

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THE TOWER OF BABEL

I.—THE CITY THAT DEFIED GOD

An Excursion Into
Ancient History

Fifty miles south of Baghdad, on the railway that runs to Basra there is a little wayside station, a station set in a wilderness showing no signs of human habitation, a station so unimportant that the trains do not stop there except by special request. There are no station buildings; there is no station staff, no town or village busy with life and activity; only miles of broken brickwork, groups of palm trees, and a few jackals and lizards. The express trains, northbound to Baghdad and southbound to Basra, hurry past the flimsy, desolate platform so quickly that the interested traveller has barely time to read the one word, painted in Arabic and English upon a board about four feet long—"Babylon"!

How are the mighty fallen! That wooden platform with its painted sign marks the site of what was once the mightiest and most magnificent city on the earth, a city that for size and wealth would have compared favourably with the greatest of cities to-day, a city that throughout a considerable portion of human history was the acknowledged queen and mistress of all nations. Merchant vessels from Africa, from India, and even, it is thought, from far-off China, made their way up the great river, the River Euphrates, from the sea four hundred miles distant, bringing the produce and the riches of the four corners of the earth to her quays. Caravans of camels and asses, bearing the wealth of the interior lands of Asia and Arabia, travelled the trade routes which ran over desert and mountain, through valley and plain, to converge at last on the market squares of Babylon. Here were gathered the rich men and the merchants of the earth, and all in the city shared in their prosperity. Sometimes native kings dwelt and ruled in her palaces; sometimes alien conquerors imposed foreign rule and sat upon the throne, but always Babylon paid tribute and remained through all political changes the unquestioned commercial centre of the world. Her palaces and her temples were the admiration and the envy of all who came to see. Her public monuments, her architecture and her many works of art displayed the creative artistry, no less than the mechanical skill, of the people that had created this great city. For three thousand years she remained thus, arrogant in her proud title of the "lady of kingdoms" (Isa. 47. 5), flaunting herself before the admiring world as the achievement of men who had given themselves

over frankly and avowedly to the law of brute force, proclaiming abroad their determination to live their lives and build a nation that should endure for all time, without God, in defiance of God—and to-day there is nothing left of all the glory that was Babylon save a few masses of mouldering brickwork and a wayside station through which the trains pass without troubling to stop.

This was no "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11. 10)! Some cities of antiquity there have been, such as Ur of the Chaldees, Damascus, Haran, Antioch, and, of course, Jerusalem, which have at one time or another—perhaps at many times—been the scene of great manifestations of the Divine purposes, or noted for some important event in the history of the Divine Plan of Redemption, but not so Babylon. In all its long history it never contributed to the building of the Kingdom of God and never housed within its walls any who lived and worked mightily for God except for that twenty years or so when the saintly Daniel served as Chief Minister to its famous king, Nebuchadnezzar II. Babylon was founded in impiety, rebellion and godlessness. It existed, millennium after millennium, without God, and it disappeared at last, utterly, as will disappear utterly at the end all that is opposed to God and His righteousness. The history of Babylon is the history of evil, its rise, its seeming triumph, and its eventual utter overthrow.

The tragedy of Babylon was that in rejecting the true God its founders made themselves slaves to false gods. In their pride and hardness of heart they made themselves gods in their own image and likeness, re-shaping that knowledge of God and His Plan which had been handed down to them, to suit their new godless world. There was religion and worship, of a sort, in their schemes of things. They did not dispute the existence of God but they did deny His claim to their lives' endeavours and their worship. "*The Gate of God*" was the name of their city in their own tongue, and at an earlier period "*the Place of Life*", but it has never been either a place of life or a gate of God through all the long ages of its existence. It always made a place—an important place—for religion, but it was a religion of false gods, gods that deluded and blinded and intoxicated, gods that had no power to save and did not save. When the time for Babylon's fall was come, all men found that her

boasted gods were altogether powerless to avert her destruction.

The city of Babylon grew up around the Tower of Babel. Long before the city became an important commercial centre it had been a military stronghold from which the sons of Shem sallied forth to extend and consolidate their rule over the sons of Ham. Before then it had been a small town sacred to the worship of the god Marduk, a group of houses surrounding the great temple that had been erected near the Tower. All that is known about those far-off days goes to bear out the historical accuracy of this simple narrative telling of men who said one to another "Go to, let us build a city, and a tower . . ." (Gen. 11. 4).

The founding of Babylon is usually dated at the time of its first recorded king, Sumu-Abum, about one hundred years before the call of Abraham, but it is clear that the city was in fact much older. About the first definite mention of the place in history is in the records of the renowned Semitic king Sargon, said to have been the first great military conqueror of antiquity, who lived about six hundred years before Abraham. In Sargon's day the Tower of Babel was already standing, and he had taken some of the sacred earth from the holy enclosure in which the Tower stood wherewith to sanctify his newly-built capital city of Akkad, for which profanity, the chronicler tells us, Marduk the god of Babylon was angry and sought to slay him. Sargon averted his threatened fate by carrying out extensive rebuilding and renovating works on the Tower and its associated Temple, a circumstance which seems to indicate that the Tower of Babel was already old in the time of Sargon.

It is only since the investigations of German archaeologists under Prof. Koldewey at Babylon during the period 1910-1914 that the true site of the Tower has been fixed with any certainty. In the nineteenth century the ruins of Babylon had hardly been explored, and Bible commentators were in the habit of crediting the somewhat dubious honour of identification with the Tower to the celebrated "Birs-Nimrud" (Tower of Nimrod) at Borsippa, fourteen miles south-west of Babylon. The solitary upstanding remnant of vitrified brickwork which still stands above a mound of rubble, a hundred feet above the plain, was pointed to as visible evidence of Divine destruction by fire from heaven, judgment upon the impious rebels of a bygone age. But it is now known that the Birs-Nimrud was the Temple of the Babylonian god Nebo (mentioned in Isa. 46. 1), the building that was called by the Babylonians *E-zida* "The House of the Seven Planets", and that it is historically speaking, a building of much more recent date than

the one whose history is related in Gen. 11. "Birs-Nimrud" has not yet been fully excavated. Life all Babylonian temples, it contained an abundance of rooms and courts, corridors and passages, and some of these have been explored and cleared, and enough of the place is known to render quite obsolete its identification with the Tower of the Genesis story.

It was Koldewey's work at Babylon which revealed the remains of the Temple of Marduk, once one of the world's wonders, and its great Tower, the Tower of the Bible story. This Tower and Temple was the original sacred place around which the city grew and became important; the first little township was probably no more than a home for the priests attendant on the Temple service. On the east bank of the Euphrates, at the centre of the city ruins, Koldewey found, buried under sixty feet of sand and earth, the ruins of a Temple which he recognised as the one that has been so fully described by Herodotus and other ancient writers who saw it before its final destruction. To the north of the Temple, and within the enclosed area that has been called by modern excavators the "Vatican of Babylon", Koldewey found, below the reeds and muddy slush of an extensive marsh, all that now remains of the Tower. There is not much left to see; some long lines of brickwork about four feet high, sixteen steps of a brick staircase at the south-western corner, the foundation lines of some thirty or so chambers which were used for religious purposes, and traces of the enclosing walls and gateways. But by comparing what has been found with the records of the ancient writers there is no doubt that here is the building which the Genesis writer had in mind when he penned the story of the Tower of Babel. That giant structure which was to endure for all time as a monument to the people who wished to make themselves a name that they be not scattered upon the face of the earth is represented to-day by no more than a few lines of brickwork half hidden by masses of reeds and rushes. And the people who would fain have become immortal among all the nations of the earth, have with all their greatness and all their civilisation given place to a struggling population of half-starved Arabs scratching out a meagre existence on the barren desert that once was the fertile and prolific "plain in the land of Shinar" of the ancient story. So may all thine enemies perish, O God!

The tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis are intensely interesting and supremely important narratives, for they are the only known records of the centuries which immediately followed the Flood.

Babylonian and Sumerian histories do not go back so far. The account is very brief, but a close study reveals much more than is apparent on the surface, and it is with this end in view that we proceed

to a detailed examination of the first part of the eleventh chapter of the Book of Genesis—the story of the Tower of Babel!

To be continued

THE SABBATH

*Reflections upon an
important theme*

It is a command to the Gentile as well as the Jew to keep holy the Sabbath Day, we have been told, since Adam was not a Jew (Gen. 2. 3).

This is a sweeping statement. If true, especially as we have agreed to do God's Will, we ought, for example, to refrain from using Cafés on Convention Sabbath Days, because the command is explicit "in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant . . ."

We shall do well to try and understand this subject, for it is apparent that due observance of rest upon those days we call the Sabbath is not what it was. Indeed, there are those who aver that God's terrible judgments will be visited upon the people who profane God's Sabbath.

Searching out the reasons for the Sabbath, we discover, among others, two noteworthy statements: (1) "wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it", (2) "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them that they may know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

If the sabbaths were to be a sign between God and His children under the law, and the law was given only to Jews, then there can be no specific command to the Gentiles written, spoken or implied. But this appears to pale before the significance that the sabbath is one of the institutions by which God sanctifies His people. Consider how great an influence this would have had upon all the peoples around Israel if they had not polluted God's sabbaths—(Ezekiel 20).

Always the burden was to sanctify this people and they would not. For forty years they were fed miraculously, gathering sufficient on the sixth day to last two days, yet God had to say to Moses "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the

sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day".

What a marvellous work it would have been if by this sign of the sabbath the Lord had sanctified Israel. He chose them because He would keep the oath which he had sworn to their fathers that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed". Why, oh why, would they not let Him bring that blessing?

"Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

Looking at the history of the children of Israel, at the history of the nations and at present day observances, it is difficult to see how the seventh day, be it Saturday or Sunday, is hallowed. Despite this, it is inconceivable that God is mocked. Attention is quite intentionally focussed on the seventh day as God's Day of Rest. It is this that He hallows. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." Clearly something is being taught.

The children of Israel profaned God's Sabbaths, both those for themselves and those for the land. So it happened that God swore in His wrath "they shall not enter into my rest". It is, of course, true that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath, yet one cannot escape the constant reference to "My Sabbaths", "My Rest".

What is so marvellous about God's Rest? We are asked diligently to study and discover, so it seems, just in the same way that in the study of good and evil we are asked to marvel that "I, the Lord, do all these things". The profound out-working of God's purpose in good and evil may baffle the human mind, especially in trying to unravel how exactly supreme righteousness will triumph in the end, but God's Rest . . .

Rest! Doing nothing!! Asleep!!! Who has the eyes that run to and fro throughout the whole earth? (2 Chron. 16. 9). It is agreed that no active work of creation has taken place since the

creation of man, and therefore the Rest of God has continued in this respect for some thousands of years. Just exactly how long this will continue is not known, except of course to God Himself (Acts 15. 18) but inactivity!—not with a God of Love!

The children of Israel were to "*Fear not, but stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord*" (Exodus 14). And the same with Jehosaphat, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "*just stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord with you*" (2 Chron. 20). Two mighty works, these, and we are also to Watch and Pray. Something we will notice is to grow and grow and fill the whole earth, even though it is made without hands (Dan. 2. 34, 35). Those who watch will see the erection of a house, not made with hands, that is to be eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5) and they will discern in this growing "*the completeness of Him who everywhere fills the universe with Himself*" (Eph. 1. 23 Weym.). The incipience of these mighty works, coming unawares upon those who have eyes but do not see, is the Glory of God's Rest.

The Sabbath is sanctified (Gen. 2. 3) and we now begin to see how a great Influence is seeming to do wondrous works, so well illustrated in the building of Solomon's Temple without the sound of a hammer (1 Kings 6. 7). Simeon saw something by the Spirit, saying "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel*".

Certainly Jesus was for Jew and Gentile. Paul's message, to the Jew first, is also correct. But when the Holy Spirit guided Simeon, was it saying the Gentile would be enlightened first and the Jew would only understand when the glorious Kingdom was set up as the Glory of "*thy people Israel*"? In regard to entering into that Rest it would appear so, for only a remnant of the children of Israel became part of the called out class—the Church. Yet it was to these Jesus had said "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*".

Who is this that can say "*I will give you rest*"?

Authoritatively! As one speaking from God Himself!

He that is "*Lord of the Sabbath*"! (Matthew 12).

Presumption! Not if God Himself gave the authority. This is my Beloved Son! He will guide you unto My Rest. How? By performing miracles on the sabbath? This, that angered the Pharisee, was it really coincidence, or did it

illustrate what would happen when mankind enters into "*My Rest*"? It may be true that the world grows more irreligious but it is equally true that mankind prays for just this Rest. Not merely peace in our time, but Peace. They may not know exactly what they want, but they are really calling for the Prince of Peace.

So God is still resting; asking you to watch the perfecting of His purpose. Incontrovertibly it goes on like the White Horse (Rev. 6) conquering and to conquer. Esau had to serve Jacob (Gen. 25. 23) and everything that followed led (however devious the pathway) to fulfilling God's Will. Queen Vashti was banished—to fulfil God's Will (Esther 4. 14 "*who knoweth*" indeed!).

And, if we will ponder, in this so-called Godless age, there is happening before our eyes the elimination of the ultra rich and the extinction of the ultra poor. The "*Lords and Masters*" of Creation now advocate Social Reforms. Some of us are young enough to know those within these ranks who would (as they say) turn over in their graves if they heard some of the things their successors are saying. The mob cries "*Vote Catching*"—the consecrated Christian, "*this is the Lord's doing*".

Without lifting a hand!

"*Come unto Me, and I will give you Rest.*"

He will gather from the four corners of the earth all who will rejoice in these blessings, and they, knowing now the significance of God's Rest, will gladly keep the Sabbath in that day (Ezekiel 46. 1, Isa. 66. 23), "*For His yoke is easy and His burden is light.*" And now:

Shall we renew our minds and learn the perfect will of God? If so, we shall discover the truth and as we believe will enter into His rest, as saith the scripture "*God did rest the seventh day from all His works*", "*For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God from His*". Not that we shall be inactive: it is a daily renewing, this process of submerging everything into His Will, so we shall "*labour therefore to enter into that rest*", fearful of ever falling into Israel's example of unbelief, realising that the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of life and the right to life, discerning even the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Conviction, assurance, persuasion; that was the material out of which the chain was made that linked Paul to a living, loving Christ. And with Christ in life, no enemy or persecutor mattered!

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

STURDY GROWTH

*For every hill I've had to climb,
For every stone that bruised my feet,
For all the blood and sweat and grime,
For blinding storms and burning heat,
My heart sings but a grateful song—
These were the things that made me strong*

*For all the heartaches and the tears,
For all the anguish and the pain,
For gloomy days and fruitless years,
And for the hopes that lived in vain,
I do give thanks, for now I know
These were the things that helped me grow!*

SINCERITY

The sweetest and most inspiring thought that a Christian can hold in his heart as he faces life's responsibilities is that God knows the sincerity of his heart devotions. To be able to look up into the face of God and confess amid all the fluctuating experiences of one's life, "Thou knowest that I love Thee" is to know a refuge and a place of rest for every glad and every troubled hour in life.

PROMPTITUDE

Every member, in proportion as it is in harmony with the head and its spirit of love for the members, will be prompt to act. Sometimes in our human bodies the hand may stretch forth assistance to the injured member so quickly that it seems impossible to conceive that the message first went to the head, and that our hand was subsequently directed by the head to assist; and so it is with the members of the body of Christ.

JOY

Christians have a joy of spirit, of which no earthly experience can rob them, and their joys increase daily, yearly, as they ripen in Christian experience, and as they grow in knowledge and in grace. Theirs is a privilege of access to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and a privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father and with their Lord Jesus Christ. They may rejoice in the privilege of being God's ambassadors, and of telling the Good Tidings to others, thus to "show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Oh, great are the privileges and mercies and blessing of these Spiritual Israelites, far more than compensating for their discipline, tribulations and oppositions!

TRAVELLERS

Travellers we needs must be, since here we have no continuing city; but it is left to us to determine whether as aimless wanderers we will journey along the road of life or whether it shall be as pilgrims that we will take that road. The pilgrim is he who has the wishing heart; who has seen a vision of the City of God and has willed to seek it along the pilgrim's way, his heart like a compass is ever pointing to that city of his fondest hopes.

LIGHT

Light enters the smallest opening accessible to it. It searches out the recesses that would otherwise remain dismal and dark, thus penetrating the gloom. It is a fact disclosed by science that it lays hold of the lurking germs of disease whether in the home or in the human system. Of Him who came as the world's light, such is His ministry. Instead of sin fastening upon Him it could not even stand in His presence.

SOBRIETY

Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

DEEDS, NOT WORDS

*They do the least
Who talk the most,
Whose good designs,
Are all their boast;
Let words be few.*

*They do the most
Whose lives possess
The sterling stamp
Of righteousness;
For deeds are true,*

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

The route of the Exodus

According to Exodus 13. 17, when the Israelites left Egypt to travel to the Promised Land, "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea". The regular road from Egypt to Canaan lay along the sea-coast and was known as the "Way of the Philistines" because it ran through their land. It was a main trade route and had been so for centuries; it was along this road that the Midianite merchantmen had taken Joseph to sell him as a slave in Egypt, centuries before the Exodus. Why then did Moses lead his people by such a tortuous way through the mountains of Sinai, involving that fearful trek of forty years, when they might have travelled on the high road, by which the distance from Egypt to Canaan was only about two hundred miles—the distance from London to Manchester — and completed their journey in a few weeks? The answer is in this verse and in the records of history. God led them not that way "lest the people repent when they see war". During the half century before the Exodus the reigning Pharaoh (Thothmes III) made no less than seventeen warlike expeditions into Canaan. That high road was the almost continual scene of invading armies, marching and counter-marching. Canaan, for many years a colonial possession of the Egyptian power, was in open rebellion. Israel, hidden away in the fastnesses of Sinai and Kadesh for forty years, was mercifully spared all that, and by the time they stood on the plains of Moab waiting to cross Jordan into the Land of Promise, both Canaanites and Egyptians were exhausted by long years of conflict, and in no degree disposed to resist this new and virile people coming in from the desert. That was the principal reason that Joshua and his hosts were able so easily to subdue the Canaanitish tribes and take possession of the land.

* * *

Mark's Gospel

The Gospel of Mark was the first of the four Gospels to be committed to writing. Recent scholarship points to a date about the year A.D.65 for its composition—or about 35 years after the crucifixion

of Jesus. If, as is generally thought, John Mark was a lad of about 14 at the time of Jesus' ministry he must have been nearly fifty years of age when he wrote his Gospel—and Peter, who is thought to have inspired much of Mark's writing, an old man, perhaps seventy years old. The structure of the language used in this Gospel shows it was written by one who thought and wrote in Aramaic—the common language of the peasantry of Palestine—and this fact accords with what we know of Mark. It is evident too that Matthew and Luke, who both wrote later, had Mark's gospel before them when they prepared their own. There is something appealing in the thought of this fourteen-year-old boy, probably always on the outskirts of the band of disciples surrounding our Lord, listening to all that went on and in his boyish fashion endeavouring to take it all in, becoming the one who in after years should first give to the Church of Christ a written record of the earthly life of One Who "spoke as never man spake".

* * *

Progressive truth

"Science is knowledge, and the primary characteristic of knowledge is not that it is for ever changing, but that it is for ever growing. Of course, all growth implies change, so that science must continually change—like the tree which is for ever budding out in new directions—but this is only a secondary effect. The correct comparison is not with sand-castles, which change because they are continually washed away and replaced, but with a vast building which changes as one floor is built on top of another, or a new wing is built where none stood before. This building is not like a mediæval cathedral, each building after his own taste and fancy. It is an embodiment of scientific truth, and the truths of science are the same no matter who discovers them. Whatever artificers build the structure, the blue-prints have previously been drawn by Nature herself."

(Sir James Jeans.)

That pronouncement, by one of the most enlightened scientists of our generation, might well be spiritualised and the word "doctrine" substituted for "science". After all, doctrine is the science of the things of God, and we Christians should expect that our doctrines remain established, consistent, yet ever growing, affording deeper and

clearer views of Divine truth and a more accurate understanding of the Divine Plan, but unchanged in their fundamentals. The great truths of the Christian faith were first of all proclaimed by the apostles and prophets, and if we think that we hold and understand doctrines that were hidden from Paul and Peter we simply betray our own egotism and spiritual short-sightedness. What we do see is a greater superstructure built upon the doctrine, because two millenniums separate us from the apostles and prophets and there has been much development. The foundations remain, just as they were set by those faithful "fathers in God" of olden time.

* * *

"I have found a Ransom."

Job 33: 24.

Elihu's discourse to the friends of Job includes a reference to the redemptive work of Christ so remarkable for so early an age that many commentators refuse to interpret the words according to their plain meaning. It is only when the knowledge of the Divine Plan reveals the literal truth of Elihu's statement that as a result of this "ransom" the flesh of man shall be fresher than a child's and he shall return to the days of his youth, that the beauty of this passage is fully appreciated. "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him and saith 'Deliver him from going down into the pit. I have found a ransom'". The word translated "deliver" means "to buy back for a price", having much the same meaning as "anti-lutron" in the New Testament; and the word "ransom" has the significance of "atonement". Thus in these far off days when the world was young we have a plain statement of earthly restitution to be effected as a result of a giving of a "Ransom for All".

* * *

The brightness of His glory

From whence did the writer to the Hebrews obtain his description of Jesus the Son in Heb. 1: 3 "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person?" Nothing like it occurs in the Old Testament. A very similar phrase is found in the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, one of the books of the Apocrypha. In a passage devoted to the praise of Wisdom personified (Wis. 7: 26) we are told that Wisdom is "the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness". This evident application of "Wisdom" of pre-Christian literature to the person of our Lord is an additional justification for the thought that "Wisdom" in the eighth chapter of Proverbs

is in fact a description of the pre-human Lord. "Wisdom" and the "Word" or "Logos" was "made flesh" when Jesus came to earth as man, as St. John explains in the first chapter of his Gospel. Proverbs 8 tells of His existence with the Father "or ever the earth was" and the apocryphal Book of Wisdom, although not of the inspired books of Scripture, supports this teaching; Hebrews sets the seal by likening our resurrected Lord, set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to that Wisdom which is the brightness of his glory and the image of his person, using the language of Israel's sacred writings of olden time.

* * *

Simplicity of Speech

Lord Justice Birkett (Sir Norman Birkett) speaking to the boys at a public school recently, uttered this tribute to the Bible.

"Here is a mystery which seems past finding out—how it comes that certain simple words placed in a certain order can yet move the human heart beyond all expression, as they do."

"Open the Authorised Version of the Bible almost anywhere you like and you will find exactly what I mean."

The simplicity of the Gospel message is mirrored by the simplicity of the words in which it is conveyed to us. That is why the Bible has a message for all, learned and unlearned alike. Books written to explain the Bible are often far more difficult to understand than the Book they profess to explain. And that is true of many sermons and addresses and expositions given from the pulpit and platform. In all our service and ministry let us seek for simplicity of expression, for that will appeal to the greatest number and effect the greatest good. If so able and eloquent a man as Sir Norman Birkett, who is one of the most famous barristers in this country, recommends simplicity of speech and writing as a desirable thing, and points to the Divine Word as an example, we surely do well to follow suit.

Although there must be trying experiences, there is also possible to us a great joy as we realise how we may have partnership with our Lord's sufferings, —broken with Him— with the knowledge and anticipation of being raised with Him to co-operate in His future work of blessing. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8: 18). "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim. 2: 11).

CHASTISEMENT AND AFFLICTION IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

— AN EXHORTATION —

"Lo! how happy is the man whom GOD correcteth! Therefore the chastening of the Almighty do not thou refuse; for he woundeth that He may bind up, He smiteth through that His own hands may heal. In six troubles He will rescue thee, and in seven there shall smite thee no misfortune." (Job 5; 17-19.)

"Train up a child in the way it should go" is the injunction God lays on us, and it is the principle on which He Himself is acting with His Church. He is training up His children here; this is the true character of His dealings with them. The education of His saints is the object he has in view. It is training for the Kingdom, it is education for eternity. How momentous, then, is this training. It is the Church that is the subject of it, and it is to prepare her for an everlasting Kingdom.

In bringing many sons unto glory it was needful that even the Captain of their salvation should be perfected through suffering. Surely then God lays vast stress upon this discipline. Knowing this the Apostle quotes Proverbs and exhorts us on this very point. (Heb. 12 and Proverbs 3.) It is too solemn to be despised, too momentous to be overlooked. The education of God's family is concerned in it; the preparation of an heir of glory depends on it. This discipline commences the moment we are taken into the family. It is not always visible, neither are we at all times conscious of its operation. Nevertheless from the very day we are begotten again to a living hope it begins. It ends only with life. It is a whole lifetime's process, it is a daily, an hourly discipline which admits of no cessation.

1. It is the *Discipline of Love*. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath nor vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern, but that of the family is LOVE. We are sure of this and the consolation it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us, there will be no needless suffering. If we could but realise this there would be fewer hard thoughts of God even when His strokes are most severe.

2. It is the *Discipline of Wisdom*. He who administers it is the "God only wise" (Rom. 16, 27). What deep wisdom, then, must there be in all His dealings! He knows exactly what we need and how to supply it. He knows what evils

are to be found in us, how these may be best removed. His training is no random work, it is carried on with exquisite skill. The time and the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God. The fittest time is chosen, just the very moment when it was called for and when it will be most profitable. The surest and at the same time most gentle method is devised. The instrument which will be surest, yet safest, most effectual yet least painful, is brought into operation. For all is Wisdom in this discipline of God.

3. It is the *Discipline of Faithfulness*. "In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me," said David, and again, "It is well for me that I was afflicted that I may learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now Thy word have I kept." All is the doing of a faithful God, a God who is faithful to us as well as faithful to Himself. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend", and the child of God finds in trouble the faithfulness of the truest of friends. He is so faithful that He will not pass by a single fault that He sees in us, but will forthwith make it known that it may be removed. He gave this command to Israel, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and not sin upon him," and He Himself acts upon the command He gave. He is too faithful a Father to suffer sin upon His children unproved. He is true to us whether in sending the evil or the good; shall we not say more true and more faithful when He inflicts the evil than when He bestows the good? It almost at times seems to break the heart of a loving friend to be obliged to say or do anything severe towards the friends he loves, yet for love's sake he will do it. In faithfulness he will not shrink from it, and in so doing is he not his true friend? So with a chastening God—He is faithful when He blesses, more faithful when He chastens. This surely is consolation. It may well allay all murmuring and establish our hearts in peace.

4. It is the *Discipline of Power*. He who is carrying it on is not one that can be baffled or forced to give up His design. He is able to carry it out in the unlikely circumstances and against the most resolute resistance. Everything must give way before Him. This thought is one of the most comforting connected with the discipline. If it could fail, if God could be frustrated in His designs

after we have suffered so much! To be put to pain by one who is not able to make good to us the profit of this would add bitterness to the trial. And then our hearts are naturally so hard and our wills so stubborn and inflexible that nothing save an Almighty pressure applied to them can work the desired change. When the soul is at strife within itself, when the flesh rises up in its strength and refuses to yield it is most blessed to think upon God's chastening as the discipline of POWER. It is this that assures us that all shall yet be well, and it is in the strength of this that we gird ourselves for the battle, knowing that we MUST be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us".

There might be love in the dealing—love to the uttermost—and yet all be in vain. For love is oftentimes helpless, unable to do anything for the beloved object. There might be wisdom too, and yet it might prove wholly ineffectual. There might also be untiring faithfulness and yet no results, it might be altogether impotent even in its most earnest attempts to bless; but when it is infinite POWER that is at work we are sure of every obstacle being surmounted and everything that is blessed most surely coming to pass. My sick bed may be most lovingly tended, most skilfully provided for, most faithfully watched, yet if there be no power to heal, no resistless energy, such as sweeps all hindrances before it, then I may still lie hopeless there, but if the power to heal be present, the power that makes all diseases fly at its touch, the power that if needs be can raise the dead, then I know of a truth that all is well.

Oh! brethren it is blessed indeed to remember that it is the discipline of POWER that is at work upon us. God's treatment MUST succeed even in reference to its minutest objects. It is the mighty POWER OF GOD that is at work within us and upon us, and this is our consolation. It is the grasp of an infinite that is upon us and nothing can resist its pressure. All is LOVE, all is WISDOM, all is FAITHFULNESS, yet all is also POWER. The very possibility of failure is thus taken away. Were it not for this Power there could be no certainty of blessing, and were it not for this certainty how poor and partial would our comfort be! He who chastises us is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power which doth energe itself within us. (Eph. 3. 20.) Hence to a soul conscious of utter helplessness and weary of the struggle within between the spirit and the flesh, there is "strong consolation" in remembering the Power of Him whose hand is grasping him so firmly on every side.

It is God that made the heavens and stretched

them out in their vastness and majesty, who moves the stars in their courses, the framer of light and darkness, the builder of the everlasting hills, who raises and stills the mighty deep, who is the God that is chastening. Each aspect of Jehovah's Power becomes a new source of consolation in the day of chastisement and sorrow.

Such then is the nature of the family discipline when viewed in reference to God. Love, Wisdom, Faithfulness, and Power unite to devise and carry it out. It must then be perfect discipline, the completest and most successful that can be thought of or desired. It is well to look at it in this light, for it is thus that we become entirely satisfied with ALL that comes to pass and feel that "It is well".

Now let us consider it in another aspect. We have seen what it is when coming from our Heavenly Father. Let us see what it is when operating upon us. As we observed before, God's object in chastisement is the education of His children, the training up of His chosen family, and it is their imperfect spiritual condition that makes this necessary. Let us enquire in what way it is set to work upon the mind—the will—the heart—the conscience.

1. *It is the training of the mind.* We are naturally ignorant and unteachable in the things of God which the ease of prosperous days increases, but God at length interposes and compels us to learn. "*A rod with rebuke giveth wisdom.*" (Prov. 29. 15.) He sends trial and that makes us willing to learn (we become aware of our ignorance and seek teaching from above). God begins His work of instruction. We learn now the deep meaning of words which we had hitherto used but as familiar sounds. Every promise stands out in illuminated splendour. How fast we learn in a day of sorrow! It is as if affliction awoke our powers and lent them new quickness of perception. We advance more in the *real practical knowledge* of our Father's word in a day than in years before. A deeper experience has taken us down into the depths of Scripture and shown us its hidden wonders. As David said, "*How happy the man whom thou correctest, O Lord, and whom out of thy law thou instructest*". what teaching, what training of the mind goes on upon a sick bed, or under pressure of grief! And oh, what great and wondrous things will even some little trial whisper in the ear of a soul that is "learning of the Father". In some cases the profit is almost unfelt during the continuance of the process. We think we are learning nothing, but disaster stuns us. We become confused and nervous, we seem to derive no profit yet before long we begin to feel the blessed results. Maturity of judgment, patience in listening

to the voice of God, a keener desire for His word, a quicker discernment of its meaning, these are soon realised as the gracious results of chastisement. The mind has undergone a most thorough discipline and has made wondrous progress in the knowledge and spirit of Divine Truth.

2. *It is the training of the will.* The will is the seat of rebelliousness. In actual practical experience, brethren, do we get opposition from our old will? Here the warfare is carried on. "The flesh desires the contrary of the Spirit and the spirit the contrary of the flesh"; these are opposed to each other, so that you do not perform the things which you wish. At the time of our entrance into the Family the will is bent in the right direction, but it is still crooked and rigid. Rebelliousness is still there. Prosperous days may sometimes conceal it, so that we may be almost unconscious of its strength, but it still exists. Furnace heat is needed for softening and straightening it, no milder remedy will do, yet it must be done. The will is the soul's citadel or fortress, hence it is the will that God seems so specially to aim at in chastisement. Fire after fire will He kindle in order to soften it and blow after blow will He bring down on it to straighten it. He will not stay His hand till He has thoroughly marred our self-formed plans, and shewn us the uselessness of our self-chosen ways. This is specially the case in long continued trials. The bending and straightening of the will is often a long process during which we have to pass through waters deep and many. Long drawn out trials seem to be specially aimed at the will. It is only by degrees that it is brought into harmony with the will of God. We can at a stroke lop off the unseemly branch of a tree, but to give a proper bent to the tree itself requires time and appliances constantly applied for months or years. Yet the will must give way, however proud it must bend. God will not leave it till He has made it one with His own.

3. *It is the training of the heart.* In fallen man the heart beats false to God. When first we come to appreciate God's gracious invitation to surrender ourselves to Him it becomes in some measure true. "My son, give me thine heart." Yet it is only so in part. It still clings too fondly to the dust, it is not wholly God's and this cannot be; God must have our heart beating truly towards Him for He said, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God". It is our true hearted or zealous love that He wants. False throbblings of our heart after other objects than Himself He cannot suffer, but must correct, or else forego His claim. Hence He chastens and spares not till He has made us fully aware of our failing in this respect. He strips the leaves whose

beauty attracted us, He cuts down the flowers whose fragrance fascinated us. Then when He has shewn us each object of earth in its nakedness and deformity He presents Himself to us in the brightness of His own surpassing glory. And thus He wins our heart, thus He makes it true to Him.

*Show me Thy face—one transient gleam
Of Loveliness Divine
And I shall never think or dream
Of other love save Thine;
All lesser light will darken quite,
All lower glories wane,
The beautiful of earth will scarce
Seem beautiful again.*

*Show me Thy face—the heaviest cross
Will then seem light to bear,
There will be gain in every loss,
And peace with every care.
With such light feet the years will fleet,
Life seem as brief as blest,
Till I have laid my burden down,
And entered into rest.*

Yet this is no easy process. The training is hard and sore; the heart oftentimes bleeds under it, yet it must go on, no part of it can be spared, nor will it cease till the heart is fully won. If the chastener should stay His hand before this is effected, where would be His love? He knew this when He said to Israel, "Let them alone", it was the last thing His love consented to do. One of the sharpest words He ever spake to Israel was, "Why should ye be smitten any more? Ye would again turn aside". (Isa. 1. 5.) Let us remember this and not faint even though the heart has been long bleeding. Let us remember it and seek to make the sorrow shorter by gladly joining with Him in His plan for getting possession of our whole heart. His love will be the sweeter and it will abide and satisfy us for ever. And how wonderful it is for us to be thus trained up to love Him here with whom, in love and fellowship unbroken, we are to spend the everlasting day.

4. *It is the training of the conscience.* God's desire is to make it altogether tender. He wishes it to be sensitive in regard to the very touch of sin and earnest in its longings after his holiness. To effect this He afflicts, and affliction goes directly home to the conscience. The death of the widow's son at Sarepta immediately awakened her conscience and she cried to the prophet, "O man of God, art thou come to call my sin to remembrance?" So God by chastisement lays His finger upon the conscience and forthwith it starts up into new life.

We are made to feel as if God were now looking into our hearts and commencing a narrow search. Further, we see in this affliction God's estimate of sin. This teaches the conscience by making the knowledge of sin a thing of experience, an experience that is deepening with every new trial. In these last days how little there is of tenderness of conscience. The world seems to know nothing of it save the name. It is a world without a conscience, and brethren, we ourselves know to what extent we lack this tenderness of conscience. For this God is chastening us; this training of the conscience is of greater moment than many deem it. God will not rest until He has wrought it. Let us not overlook it but continue to strive against everything that would tend to produce insensibility. "*Quick as the apple of an eye, O God my conscience make.*"

Such then is the family discipline! We have seen it as it comes forth from our Heavenly Father, and we have seen it as it operates upon us; and is it not all well? What is there about it that should call forth one murmur of lip or heart? That which opens up to us so much more of God and lets us more fully into the secrets of His heart must be blessed, however hard to bear. That which discovers to us the evils within ourselves, which makes us teachable and obedient, which trains up our whole being for the glorious kingdom; that must be PRECIOUS indeed. Besides, it is our Father's

will, and is not this enough for the trustful child? Is not chastisement one of the methods by which He intimates to us what He would have us to be? Is not His way of leading us to the Kingdom the safest, surest, shortest way? It is still our Father's hand that is guiding us, though it has to lay hold of us with a firmer or maybe rougher grasp. It is still our Father's voice that speaketh to us as unto children, though may be in a sharper tone to constrain our obedience. It is not designed even for a moment to separate between us and our Father or to have one suspicion of our Father's heart. It is not one of the tests of sonship, and shall that, without which we are not accounted sons, make us doubt our sonship or suspect the love of our Father? That love claims at all times, whether in joy or sorrow, our full hearted peaceful confidence. It is at all times the same, and chastisement is but a more earnest expression of its infinite sincerity and depth. And shall it cease or sink low at the very time when it ought to be loudest and strongest? Should not trial draw from us the Apostle's triumphant boast "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" (Rom. 8: 35 and 37-39 Diaglott.) For is it not just when we are brought under chastening that we enter upon the realities of consolation, the certainties of love and the joys of heavenly fellowship in ways unknown before?

A NOTE ON ISAIAH 65.20

Two readers, each commenting on the article "*The Little Season*" in our August number, have suggested that the reference to death being "unknown for a thousand years" during the Millennial Age, is a slip. There was in fact no slip; the statement was intentional; but since the comment was evidently based upon a not unusual interpretation of Isa. 65. 20 we are printing a few words on that scripture here in case others also may have noticed this same point.

There is a very general impression that Isa. 65. 20 limits the time of trial to one hundred years in the early part of the Millennial Age. It is suggested that those who have made no progress towards perfection during that period will be cut off in eternal death without further opportunity. The idea rests solely upon this particular text; nowhere else is there any similar word given, and standing as it does, the text is in contradiction to those Scriptures that give one thousand years as the duration of mankind's "day of grace" in the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

First of all, then, let the words of the text be examined.

"*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.*"

There is nothing said here about the death of the sinner, either at a hundred years or at any other time. The "child" is said to die at a hundred years—for what reason is not stated—and then the sinner who attains to a hundred years is apparently to be counted "accursed". Whether or not that involves death the prophet does not say.

Suppose, however, that the interpretation above referred to is the true one; that the sinner has one hundred years only to make a start in the way of righteousness. How does this accord with the fundamental principles of the Divine Plan?

In the Millennial Age, as in this present Age, repentance, conversion, and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be the essential first steps in

coming to God. There will be no "progressing towards perfection" until those steps have been taken. Until then the sinner remains a sinner. After that time, he is a sinner no longer. He will have become justified by faith and enjoy peace with God. Thenceforward, progress towards human perfection, physical, mental and moral, will continue until the repentant one is ushered into his everlasting inheritance. This is a truth that has not been stressed in the past as much as it should. It has been customary to speak of man's progress towards perfection in the next Age as though it were a kind of mechanical process, based upon nothing much more than an intellectual acceptance of the Divine rule "Do right, and live". There has been a distinct loss in this failure to recognise that repentance and conversion will be very important factors in the work of that Age. Now if the old idea of Isa. 65. 20 were the correct one it would of necessity imply that the time allowed for repentance and conversion is limited to one hundred years, the first hundred years of the Age. None who had not taken at least that first step by the end of the first century of their awakening from death would survive. That in turn obviously limits the day of grace, the day of salvation, for each man, to one hundred years. Yet "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17. 31), and that day is one thousand years long! God has set apart such a day to give all men a full, fair opportunity of life. He waits for their repentance; like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, He is anxious to receive them even at the eleventh hour, if so be that at so late a time they will lift up their eyes to heaven and say "I have sinned against heaven and before Thee". It is entirely foreign to our knowledge of the Divine character to think that, if a man should remain obstinate and unrepentant for nine hundred years out of the thousand, and should then repent, the Father would refuse to have him. We hold firmly to the principle that God has ordained a time which is sufficient to give full opportunity for repentance to all who are capable of repentance—and must then conclude that the full benefits of that glorious Age will be available to all men.

Now let the text be examined critically. It is part of a passage (Isa. 65. 11-25) that describes Divine judgment on the evil doers of the Millennial Age, and the ultimate victory of the righteous of that Age, culminating in the eternity of the Kingdom. Emphasis is laid upon the long duration of the Age compared with the brevity of human life now, and the blessedness of that Age compared

with the miseries of the present. "*The former troubles are forgotten*" (vs. 16) and God creates new heavens and a new earth in which there is peace and security, "*and my chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands*" (vs. 22). The key thought therefore is the longevity of Kingdom conditions—long life for all with freedom from fear and poverty. Verse 20 must fit into this key thought because it is part of the prophet's train of reasoning and intended to assist in the description of Millennial conditions which he is trying to draw.

Now let the verse itself be divided into its various parts. There is to be no longer an "infant of days" ("infant" is "ad", a baby) "*infant of few days*" "*a child that dies untimely*" say other translators. That means there will be no short-lived babies—logical enough in an Age in which the Adamic death sentence has been abolished. "... Nor an old man that hath not filled his days"; "*shall not complete his time*," "*shall not have the full length of his days*" say others. No man need expect premature death—he will have his full expectation of long life. Logical enough also! "For the child shall die an hundred years old." "Child" here is "naar", a lad or youth, anything from fourteen to twenty-four or so. Taking the statement just like that it contradicts the previous one. If the young men, without any reason stated are to die at one hundred years old, how then are there to be any "old men" enjoying the full length of their days? "But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." The conjunction "*but*" appears to indicate that the "accursed" condition of the hundred years old sinner is something less desirable than the affliction of death upon the hundred-year-old youth who is not even said to be a sinner which appears to create an absurdity.

The first half of the verse, then, is understandable and the second half is not. Let the least understandable part be examined more closely.

In the Hebrew Bible the connecting word "for" in "*for the child*" etc., is explained by Gesenius, the most authoritative Hebrew grammarian, to have the general meaning of "that". He devotes over three pages of his lexicon to explaining the usage of this word. In the text under consideration, the correct rendering into English is, "There shall be no more a short-lived babe . . . *that* the lad should die an hundred years old, *and that* the sinner, being an hundred years old, should be accursed." In other words, the days will not be so restricted that anyone will die at so early an age as one hundred years, or the patience of God so short that any sinner will be pronounced accursed at so brief a time as one hundred years of trial.

The literal word-for-word Hebrew rendering of these two phrases runs "...that the-boy, son-of-a-hundred years, he-would-die, and-the-sinner, son-of-a-hundred years, he-would-be-accursed".

Thus seen, the text is in full accord with the Book of Revelation and the prophetic writings which speak of a long period of time, defined six times in Revelation as a thousand years in duration, set apart by God for the missionary work of the glorified Church, in this world, to effect the reconciliation to God, through repentance and acceptance of Christ, of "whosoever will". The door

of hope does not close until the end of the Age. The General Resurrection takes place at its beginning, and thereafter throughout the entirety of that Age there will be no death and no passing of final judgment. During its whole course none need fear that life will be cut short, or sentence be executed, either in so short a time as one hundred years, or in any other period short of the full time. There will be no short-lived children and no premature ageing, that men may die or sinners be condemned too soon. Only at the end will the King make the final apportionment and God's long Day of Grace come to its close.

BOOK REVIEWS

"The Books and the Parchments" (F. F. Bruce) 259 pp. Index. Pickering and Inglis 13/6d. (\$2.00) post free.

An interesting and informative collection of information on the languages and manuscripts of the Bible. The author, a lecturer at the University of Sheffield, is well qualified for his task, and the book is written in an easily understandable fashion. Separate chapters deal with the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages, the Samaritan, Septuagint, Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, and early English versions, and some space is given to the Apocryphal books. The manner in which the books of the Bible were brought together is very clearly described and altogether this is a book that ought to be found very useful to almost all our readers.

"The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament." 1,105 pp. S. Bagster & Sons. 42/- (\$6.00) post free.

This extremely valuable work, out of print for a long time, has just been re-printed and can now be supplied. The book is produced in Bagster's usual style, dark cloth boards with gold blocked title, and weighs 4lb. It contains:

Vocabulary—every New Testament Greek word with English equivalent.

Greek Concordance—every Greek word in alphabetical order, in Greek and English letters, with all texts printed in full.

Index, English to Greek—every New Testament English word in alphabetical order, with all Greek words used to translate it and the page in the concordance where they are to be found.

Index, Greek to English—every Greek word in alphabetical order with all English words into

which it is translated and the concordance page where they may be found.

A concordance of various readings occurring in different versions of the New Testament Greek text. Just an example; the word "*thanatos*" in the Greek concordance has 114 texts printed below, each showing "*thanatos*" translated "death". "*Parousia*" has 24 texts, showing 22 translated "coming" and two "presence". The book is an invaluable aid to the student of New Testament Greek and to all who interest themselves in the original language of the Scriptures.

"Bagster's Keyword Concordance." 93 pp.

S. Bagster & Sons. 4/6d. (60c.) post free.

A slim cloth-bound concordance to the Bible, printed on thin paper with stout cloth covers, size 8in. by 5in., and weighing only a few ounces, useful for carrying to study meetings and the like. The only drawback is the smallness of the print, necessary of course in the production of a light-weight small size book such as this.

"Village India." (Pittman) 158 pp. 7/6d. cloth.

"Night Came to Japan." (Gosden) 153 pp. 4/6d. paper.

"The Quest of Souls in Qualboe." (Watt) 157 pp. 6/- cloth.

Three books of missionary work in India, Japan and Africa respectively, published by Marshall, Morgan and Scott, and all three giving vivid impressions of the experiences endured by those who fulfil the Lord's command to preach the gospel in all the world for a witness to all nations, before the end shall come. "*Night came to Japan*" is a particularly interesting description of the progress of Christianity in that country during and since the last war.

PUBLICATIONS—Post free.

BOOKLETS

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Jacob's Trouble A very full treatment of the prophecies dealing with the Holy Land at the Time of the End. 88 pp. 9d. (15c.) each; 6 for 4/- (60c.).

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.

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NOVEMBER, 1951

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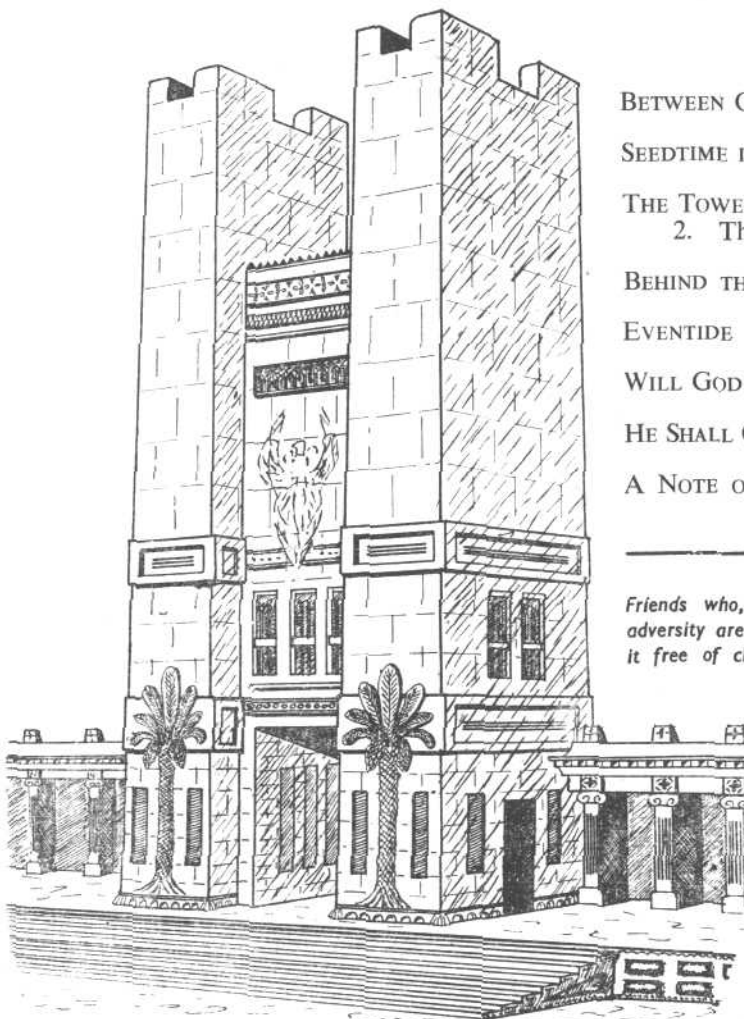
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The magazine edition of "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*" is available in stock for free use by all who can use quantities to good advantage. The loving zeal of a brother has made it possible for a goodly number to be offered free of charge in this manner and we will welcome applications for reasonable quantities until this quota is exhausted, after which the normal price will be charged. Just say how many you can profitably use and we will be glad to send as many against that request as we can.

* * *

Those who habitually use Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Bible may be interested to learn that a complete Concordance to the Bible in the Moffatt translation has now been published. This book serves the same purpose to readers of Moffatt as Cruden's Concordance does to the Authorised Version. The book is expensive—naturally so in view of its nature and size, especially since the demand is not likely to be large—and is published at 52/6d. We will be glad to secure and despatch copies to any of our readers who cannot obtain it easily locally, at 54/6d. post free (\$8.00 to friends in U.S.A. and Canada).

* * *

It is desired to impress upon friends writing from the American continent the desirability of using the British "4" in our address. The American style of "4" bears a strong resemblance to the English "7" when written hastily, and we get frequent cases of Transatlantic letters being delivered by mistake to No. 27. Please write "24" as it is shown in this magazine.

* * *

A synopsis of certain lectures given in the Manchester district during the past two years has been prepared under the title of one of those lectures, "*Will God be silent for ever?*" and this synopsis, slightly abbreviated, is published in this issue for the interest of those who have these lectures at heart and would like to know more about them. A title such as this can be treated in many different ways; the theme underlying these lectures is clearly that of judgment, coming inevitably upon a world that has strayed from the right way and can only find the way back through the fires of affliction. The article needs to be read with that realisation in mind.

* * *

Birthday cards of the Scriptural type are a problem nowadays. Purchase tax makes them

expensive but even so there are continual enquiries for them. We have therefore decided to keep some in stock for the benefit of those who cannot obtain them easily elsewhere. They will be put up in packets of one dozen, complete with envelopes, consisting of five postcard type and seven folded cards of various designs and sizes, all cards in any one packet being different. The price will be 5/- per packet post free, and they should be ordered as the "BC" packet, or "Birthday Card" packet.

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 17th November, at 6.30 p.m. Speakers will be Bro. H. Nadal and H. C. Thackway.

* * *

Scriptural Christmas Cards are again in stock this year and we are now able to supply orders as received. It is suggested that the friends obtain their requirements as early as possible since our stock may well be exhausted before December. The varieties available are generally similar to those of last year, all folding cards, complete with envelopes, and are put up in packets of ten well-assorted cards of differing sizes and types, at the following prices, all post free: 3/9d., 4/3d., 4/9d., 5/3d. and 6/-.

* * *

Acceptable children's books for Christmas are in stock as follows. For full details see back page of this issue. The Bible Story Book and "Little Life of Jesus" are specially recommended. *Bible Story Book*. The finest book of Bible stories we have found; a wealth of pictures, both coloured and black-and-white. A splendid gift. 25/- post free.

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Jesus the Babe Born to be King. A simple 16 page paper covered coloured picture book for the tiny tots. 1/6d. post free (25c.).

SEEDTIME IN THE EVENING

An Exhortation

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good". (Eccl. 11. 6.)

There is wise counsel in the Book of Ecclesiastes for both the youthful Christian and the mature Christian, for the one who is setting out on life's journey and the one who is within sight of its end. "Evening" in Ecclesiastes is the second half of life, the time when youthful vigour and enthusiasm has begun to temper into the more measured pulse and the more dispassionate outlook of mature years. It is in such an evening that the activity of earlier days tends to give place to relaxation of effort; the disappointments and disillusionments that come to everyone in life lead to a cessation of missionary effort and a settling down to enjoy the social fellowship of the Church without further shouldering of its responsibilities. It is in such a time that this exhortation comes with its urgent appeal, "In the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that". There well might be work done in the end of life that shows greater and grander results for the Lord than more spectacular work undertaken in earlier days.

The same thing is true in the life of the Church. The Nineteenth Century was a period unique in the annals of Christianity. During that century were seen all the signs of the End as predicted by our Lord in that discourse of His to the disciples which is recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. The Nineteenth Century was the Watcher's time of realisation. It saw the commencement, and the measurable completion, of the Harvest of the Age. The time came during that century when it could truly be said that at last the gospel of the Kingdom had been preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. Christian missionaries had reached the ends of the earth and all peoples, nations, and languages had received some part of the witness. That in itself was the first sign of the End Time, the first evidence that the days of the Second Advent were commencing. At the same time came the rich feast of Divine revelation and Bible truths promised by Jesus in His parable of the man taking a far journey. Another evidence of the Second Presence; the servants that sat down to meat and were served by their Master. These

things are in the past; they cannot be repeated; they can never be true in this Twentieth Century as they were in the Nineteenth. The blossoming of the fig tree in Israel's revival dating from 1897; the apostasy from the faith resultant from misapplied science and the influence of the theories of evolution, dating from 1859, when Charles Darwin published his "*Origin of Species*"; the steady breaking down of the Gentile powers, having its beginning in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the loss of Papal temporal power at the same time; all these events were signs that the end of this Age and the dawn of the next were at hand. And the message of God for those times concerned all those signs, pointed to them as evidences of what must shortly come to pass. In the power and enthusiasm of those visible happenings a great work was done and a mighty message was proclaimed. But the message was given and it has done its work. The signs have been seen and have receded into the distant years and now these things are nearly a century old. The message that depended on those signs no longer has the force that it did because we live in a new day and a new generation that knows them not. The signs inspired and supported a great work in Christendom but now the signs are finished and the work is done. What comes next?

There are some who say that nothing comes next; that the time for the cessation of all Gospel preaching has come and that the remaining members of the Church on earth have nothing left to do but to "build one another up on their most holy faith", sit down quietly and wait for the Lord to take them away to heaven and bring this wicked world and all its wicked works to an end. It is virtually suggested that Christians who think otherwise, particularly if they still persist in preaching the Gospel, are nearly as bad as the said wicked world. At any rate, they are said to be "spiritually blind", "not continuing in Present Truth", "partakers of milk and not of strong meat" and, generally speaking, in a condition greatly to be deplored. The fact that the active prosecution of the Church's age-old commission to preach the Gospel is made a crime instead of a commendation, in the interests of an unintelligent bigotry, only goes to show how easy it is, when the years have brought their disappointments, to lose sight of the first principles of the

Christian faith. The Christian group that loses its missionary zeal signs its own death-warrant and will shortly die; that fact has been exemplified scores of times in past centuries and it is being exemplified before our eyes to-day. Christianity is a missionary faith and we cannot enjoy a healthy Church life unless in some fashion we incorporate some kind of missionary endeavour in our activities.

On the other hand we should not necessarily conclude that the precise form of activity in which the message was enshrined during the Nineteenth Century must be continued without change in the Twentieth. That is a very common mistake. There is a strong tendency to herald the Kingdom in the same manner and the same terms that were effective in 1881. They are not necessarily so appropriate in 1951. What guidance, then, may we take from the Gospels?

"Or whether they both shall be alike good"! Is it possible that in an "End Time" dispensational sense we may reasonably expect a "morning" and an "evening" sowing—the same seed, yet distinct works, each producing its own results and each, in the end, "alike good"?

It is a fact, at any rate, that our Lord enshrined two distinct thoughts in His final instructions to His disciples respecting their life work—and therefore our life work. According to Luke and Mark he told them to *preach* repentance and remission of sins among all nations, and to *preach* the Gospel to the whole creation. (Luke 24. 47; Mark 16. 15.) According to Matthew He also told them to *teach* all nations, "*bidding them observe whatsoever I have commanded you*". (Matt. 27. 19.) There is a world of difference between the words "preach" and "teach", and there is no reason to doubt that all three Evangelists' accounts embody part only of all that Jesus said to them at His departure, and each injunction was actually spoken separately and in its own setting. We might do well, therefore, to examine more closely than we have done heretofore the differences between these several versions of His parting words.

The word "preach" is from the Greek "*evangeliso*", meaning "I tell good news", or from "*kerusso*", which means "I proclaim as a herald". "Teach", on the other hand, is from "*matheteuo*", which denotes the instruction of pupils or learners, the making of disciples. In the Christian way preaching comes first and is followed by teaching. The Apostles at Pentecost first proclaimed good news and went about as heralds, announcing the Kingdom of Heaven, and then settled down to teach their converts. In the individual Christian life it is inevitable that the

early years are taken up with declaring the message, telling out the good tidings of redemption that is in Christ Jesus; only when the experiences of the way, and progress in the faith, has brought maturity of knowledge and character, can the believer begin to teach. Preaching belongs to youth and teaching to mature age; preaching is the work of the morning but teaching that of the evening.

There are two notable instances of this principle in the recorded lives of great men of God—one in the Old Testament and one in the New. It is almost as if the Holy Spirit has provided in advance for the question that must arise in the minds of those who find their life's work apparently a failure. Here we have two of the mightiest men of faith in the Biblical record, men whose early life and middle age was spent in prominent activity, and who received esteem and honour from those whom they served, ending their lives in relative insignificance and obscurity. One of those men was Samuel the Prophet and the other was Paul the Apostle. Samuel was dedicated to the service of the Lord from childhood and, as he grew up, rapidly became the leader of the nation in things ecclesiastical and secular. Israel looked to him for guidance and for strength. At the zenith of his power he travelled the country regularly, sitting in judgment annually in three different towns, administering justice and rectifying abuses. His wisdom as an administrator was no less famed than his sanctity as a prophet. He has very truly been called the greatest of the Judges. But the last glimpse we have of the life of Samuel shows him bereft of his power and glory, living in quiet retirement at Ramah, teaching a company of the prophets. A group of young men, gathered around him to learn of his wisdom and pass it on to the next generation, was all that remained of his life's work. Yet there is no indication that Samuel fretted or repined at this apparently ignominious ending to all that he had achieved for Israel. He knew—none better—that he had fulfilled the place for which his Lord had selected him, and carried out the work He had given him to do, and if for the rest of his remaining days he was to labour in a much more modest and unnoticed way than heretofore, he was well content so long as he knew it to be God's will.

The Apostle Paul was in similar case. After a lifetime spent in travelling the length and breadth of the Roman world, the acknowledged leader of the Apostles and of Christians everywhere, he settled down at the end of his days—so far as the Scriptures reveal—to teach, contentedly, in his own hired house in the city of Rome, those who came to him. The last verse of the last chapter

of the Book of Acts is wonderfully eloquent. Many years had Paul preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming it as a herald, telling it as good news, but now those days were past and done. His mission now was that of a teacher, giving quiet but none the less effective instruction to those who came to his modest lodging to learn of him. Did the stalwart old warrior, hero of a thousand battles, repine at being thus laid aside? We know that he did not; we know that he employed his powers with as keen diligence as ever to the new task his Lord had set him.

And for what purpose? What was the incentive that led Samuel quietly to remain in his house at Ramah, teaching those few young men who had gathered round him? What was in the mind of Paul as he stayed, day by day, in that house somewhere in the back streets of Rome, receiving and discoursing with those who came to him, the while the busy outer world pursued its interests and the millions of the great Roman empire waited for the Gospel? It was, to use words first uttered in another connection, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord". (Luke 1, 17.) John the Baptist was a man of the old dispensation, the Jewish Age, and he appeared in the end of that Age to make ready a nucleus who would take up the work of the new dispensation, the Gospel Age, and carry it forward to a glorious conclusion. John himself never entered the Gospel Age; his work finished, he was laid aside to await his final destiny. The people he prepared took up the flaming torch and carried it on, passing it in turn to their successors. Paul knew that, and he devoted the last years of his life to teaching those who were to guard the interests of the Christian faith in Rome and plant them firmly in the new Roman Age which was to dawn after the persecution in which Paul himself lost his life had ceased.

So it is with us now. We, the members of Christ's Church still on earth, are, like John the Baptist, making ready a people prepared for the Lord. Our time on earth, like his, is limited; the end of the Age draws nigh, and with it the closing of the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus". But when the last members of the Church have been gathered to meet their Lord, and the world is entering into the last stage of trouble that immediately precedes the Kingdom, what of the Truth? Will it be known in the earth? Of course it will! God has never left Himself without witness in the earth, and in times of catastrophe and judgment such as that which will then be upon the world He will assuredly have some who know the Truth and the explanation of events and will declare them. Perhaps it is the

final mission of the Church on earth, the "final witness" for which so many look, thus to "make ready" such a people, by quiet teaching and instruction in such manner as opportunity affords or opportunity can be made. Elijah, disheartened at the apparent failure of his life's work, fled to Sinai. "Take me away, O Lord", he pleaded, "for I am not better than my fathers". But the Lord had yet a work for him to do. "Go back!" was the peremptory command—and Elijah went back, not to stand before Israel and declare his witness to the one true God in public and spectacular manner as of yore; not to stride into the presence of kings and nobles and denounce them for their apostasy while other men looked on with bated breath; but to make preparations for the continuance of God's work after his own decease! "Go, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be prophet in thy room". The judgments of God, shortly to come upon Israel, were made sure by the anointing of Hazael the destroyer. The destruction of Israel's apostate worship was ensured by the anointing of Jehu the iconoclast. The continuance of the work of God and the knowledge of God was provided for in the anointing of Elisha; and it is significant that all Elisha's miracles are miracles that picture restitution—Millennial conditions. The healing of poisoned water and food; the increase of meal and oil—the giving of life to the dead!

So it may well be with us. The Lord calls us in our times of discouragement and slackness of effort to "GO BACK"; not necessarily to do the work that produced such good results thirty or forty or fifty years ago, but to do the work that is necessary to these present times. The Lord will not leave Himself without witness in the coming years; but to us He surely extends the privilege of making arrangements, like Elijah, for the witness that is to be after our own earthly course is run. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good".

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 should we not be very circumspect therefore and walk very humbly before our God, realising that by nature we are "children of wrath" even as others?

THE TOWER OF BABEL

2.—THEY FOUND A PLAIN

An Excursion Into
Ancient History

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech". (Gen. 11. 1.)

Any attempt to fix a date for the events related in this chapter must of necessity be very guarded and free from dogmatism; the only time indication that can be made to yield a clue is that which is given in this verse. The chronicler commences his story by referring to a time when the "whole earth" spoke one language. The ordinary student of human history declares scornfully that there was no such time; that language differences must have existed from the first appearance of mankind upon earth. The believer in Bible history, however, has the advantage of knowing that there must have been two such times; one, the period immediately following Eden, when the first human family lived together, and the other immediately after the Flood, before the sons of Noah and their families had separated and scattered over the earth. Gen. 11 could very reasonably refer to this latter occasion.

The old question as to whether the Flood was only local to Western Asia and that men in other parts of the world may have survived that disaster need not interfere with the present study and does not affect its conclusions. The writer of Genesis is concerned only with the posterity of Noah and would not be in a position to be aware of the fact even if other far-off tribes or nations had survived. When he says "the whole earth" he certainly means that earth with which he is acquainted, the territory we now call Western Asia and North-Western Africa. The word "earth" here is *"erets"*, which means the face of the land. It certainly denoted the whole earth so far as the writer had knowledge, but it need not be extended to mean more than that part of the earth with which Bible history is concerned.

At this point we ought to take the tenth chapter of Genesis into consideration. In that chapter the historian records the distribution of the descendants of Noah's sons for the first few generations over the earth. He shows how the children of Shem, Ham and Japheth developed into three main divisions of the human race, each division settling in a different part of the earth. These main divisions are fairly well agreed by anthropologists to-day and there is nothing unreasonable in accepting the accuracy of this part of the story. Now the tenth chapter declares that these

patriarchal nations, subdivided into various tribes, were settled "after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations". In that expression is noted the birth of languages. It was the scattering of men into remote parts of the earth that gave rise to differences in language; as they migrated into new territories and lost all touch with their former friends, so new words came into use, new methods of speech, diverse grammatical structures, so that quite soon the speech of men of different tribes became mutually unintelligible. Each succeeding generation added its quota of new and changed terms, and the process has continued from that day to this. A simple illustration will demonstrate the fact. Wycliffe translated the Bible into English only five centuries ago but our language has changed so much since then that we, his countrymen, can read his translation only with difficulty and in some places it is almost unintelligible. Here is an example: *"Whether profeicies schulen be voidid either langigis schulden ceesse"*. That is one of the most well-known passages of the Bible—"whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease". Here is a sample from Richard Rolles's translation of the fourteenth century also: *"Faine and glade genge, mare and lesse, for thou demes folke in euennesse"*. Who would think, now, that sentence to be English as it was spoken only five centuries ago, for *"O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously"*. (Psa. 67. 4.)? If Wycliffe and Rolles came back from the dead to-day they, likewise, would have the same difficulty in reading our modern translations.

As illustrating the facility with which new languages can develop, as they must have developed in the early days of Genesis when men began to spread abroad over the face of the earth, it is an interesting fact that in 1893 a wild tribe of some thirty people was discovered in the Wentworth district of New South Wales, Australia, speaking a completely unknown dialect. It was found that this little community had sprung from one "blackfellow" (aboriginal Australian) and a few "gins" (native women) who had gone into hiding in this remote country thirty years previously. The ordinary natives who were with the white men who found this little tribe had considerable difficulty in making themselves under-

stood or in understanding the wild men's speech, although they were of the same race. That separation of thirty years and the growing up of a new generation which had never had contact with the world around had sufficed to create what was virtually a new language, understood only by the thirty or so wild people who spoke it.

Now after speaking of this division of the human race into nations speaking divergent languages, the historian goes back to the time when there was only one language and relates the story of the Tower of Babel as marking the point at which the division into languages had its beginning. That ought to give us our first clue as to when these things happened. It was before the separation of Noah's family into the three great divisions of mankind. The abandonment of the attempt to "build the city" (Gen. 11. 8) marked the separation itself.

Can we "pin-point" the time of this separation more closely? Genesis 10 seems to give some help in this direction. Let us put ourselves in the position of the writer of this chapter. We find that he records the sons of Japheth only to the second generation—five of Japheth's grandsons are named and a couple of tribal names, but nothing further. Of Ham much more is said; there are names of his descendants to the third generation and a great number of tribal names. But it is of Shem that most is said; his children of five generations are recorded, and in the eleventh chapter the genealogy of one of them, Peleg, is carried on to the time of Abraham.

Now the obvious conclusion from this is that the writer of Genesis 10 was himself a Semite, of the family of Shem, and that his knowledge of Japheth's children extended only to the second generation. After that the two families diverged, and Shem's descendants had no further knowledge of the lives and welfare of Japheth's offspring. That in turn would indicate that it was in the second generation after the Flood, during the lives of the sons of Gomer and Javan (Gen. 10. 2) that the separation took place, and this therefore would quite likely have been the time that the Tower of Babel was built.

How long after the Flood? Noah was five hundred years old when Shem was born; Shem was one hundred years old when Arphaxad was born; Terah was a hundred and thirty years old when Abraham was born, and Abraham a hundred at the birth of Isaac. Two generations at this time could easily span a period of two hundred years, and by that time the three families could have increased so much that the dissensions which inevitably arise where large numbers are con-

cerned could well explain the story of the Dispersion.

About two hundred years after the Flood, then, whilst Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth were all still alive, there was a great migration of people all speaking one language, journeying toward a plain in the land of Shinar. Where did they come from and why did they seek this plain?

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed eastward, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there". (Gen. 11. 2.)

"Shinar" is the Hebrew equivalent of the native name "Sumer", by which we know the original people secular history reveals to have lived in Mesopotamia. The Sumerians are the earliest civilised people known to history, and archaeologists never weary of extolling their artistic skill and stressing the fact that the farther back research into their history is conducted, the more skilful and civilised they appear to be. The world was stirred in 1930 by the discoveries of Sir Leonard Woolley in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace, which was a Sumerian city. Genesis 10 mentions others of their cities, Erech, Accad, Calneh; in fact, there were twenty or so powerful Sumerian city-states on the Euphrates plains during and about the times of Abraham and for many centuries before him. These Sumerians were descendants of Ham, and as the centuries rolled on they spread southwards along both shores of the Persian Gulf as far as India on the east and into Abyssinia on the west.

The writer of Gen. 11, of course, referred to the land by the name it bore in his own day—Gen. 11 was probably written not long before the time of Abraham and many centuries after the events it relates. When the people, journeying eastward, found the plain, it bore no name; it was as yet undiscovered and uninhabited.

Why "eastward"? The Authorised Version says "from the east", which means the exact opposite. The translation is faulty; the marginal rendering is correct. In taking advantage of this slight clue to the identity of the Tower builders it has to be pointed out that the Sumerians oriented the four points of the compass differently to us; their "east" was our south-east and their "north" our north-east. The writer of Genesis 11 would naturally write in conformity with the system in vogue in his day, and from this it follows that the wanderers were travelling in the same direction as the flow of the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, both of which run south-east into the Persian Gulf.

From whence did they come? Evidently from the place where the Ark rested. There is no need at this time to take up the question of the precise

locality. The narrative in Genesis says that the Ark rested in the seventh month upon the mountains of Ararat. (Gen. 8. 4.) Ararat was the name of the whole mountainous country lying to the north of the Euphrates plain, the "plain of Shinar", into which the colonists had now penetrated. Nowadays the name is only used for one mountain in that land, but the Scriptural "Ararat" covered all of what is now known as Armenia and Kurdistan. There are several mountains in this whole territory with which one legend or another associates the descent of the Ark, but one thing is common to all of them. If travellers starting from any one of these mountains should set out to find a sunnier and less mountainous land for pasturing their flocks and building their cities, they would inevitably follow the course of either the Euphrates or the Tigris, both of which rivers commence in the mountains of Armenia, and in such case they could not help passing through the very plain in which Babylon was built. The short statement in verse 2, therefore, is perfectly consistent with the emerging of the family of Noah from the mountainous country in which the Ark came to rest, in search of a fertile pasture land. The distance would be something between three and four hundred miles.

The number of men involved could not have been very great by modern standards, even so long as two centuries after the Flood. There is sufficient evidence in the genealogical notices of the Old Testament to show that human beings took longer to attain maturity than now, and that the intervals between births of successive children were inordinately long compared to what is normal

to-day. Thus Terah, the father of Abraham, had three sons only, and perhaps as many daughters, over the space of sixty years. Noah may have had other sons than the three we know, but if so there is no record of them; apparently he had no daughters unless they were unbelievers and not saved in the Ark. At any rate, one of his sons at least, Shem, was born when he was five hundred years old, and none of the three seem to have had any children until after the Flood a century later. An analysis of all such data in the early chapters of Genesis justifies the conclusion that Noah's posterity two centuries after the Flood probably did not number more than four or five hundred.

So they entered the plain of Shinar, this travelling band of explorers, finding their way into new and untrodden regions of this wide earth which had been desolated by the Flood and now lay before them, in all its fertility, without inhabitant, theirs for the taking. Noah himself may not have been with them; he may have settled with a few of his grandchildren at some point between the mountain of the Ark and this land of Shinar that the others had discovered. There may have been one or two such little groups remain behind while the main body pushed on. But there is not much doubt that the writer of Genesis 11 meant us to know that the three tribes, those of Shem, Ham and Japheth, all speaking the same language and having much the same aims and ideals, arrived together at this fertile spot, and that it was here they separated, and from here that they spread over the face of the globe, "after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations".

To be continued.

BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

The very real difficulty of getting reliable information as to the position of Christianity behind the so-called "Iron Curtain" lends interest to the following extract from the formal agreement made on 7th October, 1948, between the government of the Hungarian Republic and the Hungarian Reformed Church, to define the relation between the Church and the State in that country. The full agreement is in "*Five Years of Hungarian Protestantism, 1945-1950*", published in English by the Hungarian Church Press, Budapest.

* * *

"Article 3. The government of the Hungarian Republic regards, according to the prevailing legal regulations, the following activities as pertaining to the free function of church life: the holding of

Divine services, in church buildings or in other suitable public buildings, in homes and in open places, the holding of Bible classes in church buildings, in schools, in private homes, in congregation halls; the colportage of Bibles and tractates; the holding of congregational or national church conferences, evangelistic meetings, the compulsory religious instruction in public schools and the charitable work of the church. To this end, it permits the free use of class rooms and other suitable premises of public schools, everywhere where this may be necessary, outside the regular school hours, according to the agreement with the school authority and with the obligation of paying for damage which may occur owing to the church's use of these premises, for Divine service, Sunday School, Bible Classes, choir meetings and

other religious and church meetings and gatherings, until the congregations will be able to acquire their own buildings for these purposes.

"Article 4. The government of the Hungarian Republic takes cognizance of and honours that obligation of the Hungarian Reformed Church which, according to the command of Christ and her Confessions, pledges her to exhort the believers to charity and especially to the care of the poor, the lonely, the orphans and old people. Therefore it secures the right to the maintenance and developing of charitable institutions and the collection of charitable offerings, within the bounds

of the prevailing legal regulations".

There seems to be all the liberty in this that is needed for a thriving and healthy Christian life and activity. How the agreement works in practice we, of course, cannot say; there are many of our brethren in this country who would be glad of the same provision for the free use of school buildings as apparently is the case in Hungary. We have full freedom to preach the Gospel in England; that freedom is oftentimes limited by the difficulty of obtaining a place in which to practise and manifest our worship.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

It is to another facet of the Apostle's many-sided character we turn for our inspiration to-night, to take note of him as a near and fitting companion for the Man of Sorrows, and likewise one acquainted with grief. Beneath the stern and rugged exterior of the untiring zealot and intrepid evangelist lay a heart, tender as a woman's, patient as a nursing mother's. Without the ardent enthusiast's fire, the work entrusted to his care would have chilled and killed his very soul; without the ready tears and burning words, the work would still have failed. The convert won at such laborious cost must needs be watered and admonished day and night with tears; hence, be the cost to himself what it may, the tender lambkin must be guarded and guided to the safe protection of the heavenly fold.

Citing words descriptive of his sufferings, we note how nearly he came to the laying down of life for some unruly members of the flock, "... we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself . . . we felt that we had received the sentence of death". (2 Cor. 1. 8, 9; New Revised Version—for "we" read "I" throughout this touching passage.)

Of what does Paul speak in this paragraph? Close attention to the context discovers an excess of mental strain reacting back upon an enfeebled body, and producing a state of nervous and physical ill-health bordering on utter collapse. "We (I) despaired of life itself"—so near had he come to passing out! "But that", says he, "was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us . . .". The

decline had been arrested; the turn for the better begun, but recuperation was not yet complete, but He who had so far intervened would supervise still further till recovery was complete!

But why had all this occurred? What had brought him thus nigh to death? It was the state of the Corinthian Church! It was the multitude of prevailing evils in their midst which had so pressed both heart and mind that anxiety on their behalf had led to excessive tension, and (like unexpected bad news so often does) had made him really ill—very ill indeed!

After Paul's unfruitful attempt to proclaim the truth to the Athenians (Acts 17. 16-34), he had gone forward to the seaport metropolis of Corinth. The Lord "had many people in this city" and Paul was counselled by his Lord to be not silent, but speak out and be not afraid. (Acts 18. 5-10.) Here he laboured for a year and a half, and gathered together the nucleus of a much-diversified Church, consisting of both Gentile and Jew. Opposing Jews eventually drove him forth and left the infant Church thus open to attack from without and defection within. Subsequent to his departure an itinerant Jew, Apollos, an eloquent and learned man, and mighty in the Scriptures, arrived in Corinth with letters of commendation from brethren in Ephesus. Disputing with the Jews in public places, he powerfully confuted them and showed by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 18. 24-28.)

Apollos thus ingratiated himself into the affections of a part of this Church, and unwittingly lent his name as a rival to that of Paul! Thus, faction arose in the little company. Nor was that the only rupture in their midst. A more terrible thing also appeared among them, which was not

only not reprov'd, but was actually tolerated by those in charge. (1 Cor. 5.) Brethren were also seeking process of law against brethren, thus exposing to unbelievers' eyes the scandals in their midst. (1 Cor. 6.) Drunkenness and other intemperance were vitiating their supposed "agape" (1 Cor. 11.), while riotous disorderly scenes marked their public gatherings. (1 Cor. 12.)

On hearing of this state of things, Paul dispatched Timothy on a roundabout journey with Corinth as its final stage. *"I sent Timothy to you, my beloved and faithful child, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church"*. (1 Cor. 4. 17.) But before Timothy arrived, Paul learned through certain of the household of Chloe that things were worse than was at first reported to him. Additionally, he had received a letter of enquiry, covering many points of doctrine and practice, from those loyal to his name and person in Corinth (1 Cor. 7. 1.), hence Paul wrote again—the first of the two epistles which we have—and sent it by the hand of Stephanas to the Corinthian Church, at the same time sending Titus to visit them, in order to report back to Paul concerning the response of the Church.

He had intended following the letter, to complete in person the cleansing work which he hoped his letters and his messengers would initiate, but this he was unable, at any early date, to do.

Of the agony of mind which afflicted him he tells in 2 Cor. 2. 12. *"My mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there"*. Of the same intense strain we read again 2 Cor. 2. 4. *"I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears . . ."*. Unable to rest here, he plodded on to Macedonia—to Philippi, perhaps, and to Luke, his kind physician—and there, it seems, the strain proved too much, and there for the Name of Christ, and the welfare of ungrateful saints, the faithful under-shepherd of the flock collapsed and came nigh unto death.

Was all this anxious care necessary on his part? Could not "He" look after them without this anxiety unto death on the part of Paul? Ought not Paul to have bidden his restless heart to "rest in the Lord"?

Queries of this kind entirely misunderstand the spirit of an under-shepherd's care! Paul could not but be anxious concerning the wayward members of the flock, if he would be like his Lord! To have shown himself indifferent or unconcerned about the state of things in the Corinthian Church would have been proof positive that the spirit of his Master—the great Shepherd of the Sheep—did not dwell richly in his heart. The more

grievous the extent of the suffering in his soul, the greater the measure of "His" likeness there.

*"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer: This sheep
of mine*

*Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep"*.

Paul had many faithful sheep beneath his care elsewhere—at Ephesus, at Antioch, at Philippi—and these were quietly resting in the fold; but some were astray at Corinth, and because circumstance chained his willing feet, he must wait, and pray, and suffer for their sake!

And the consequence, "... the God of all Comfort comforted us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God". Blessed be God! Comforted, to become comforters! But comfort bespeaks "the tribulation", otherwise its value is gone!

*"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love,
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

*"Blest are the sons of peace,
Whose hearts and hopes are one,
Whose kind designs to serve and please
Through all their actions run.*

*"Before our Father's throne,
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.*

*"We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathising tear.*

*"When we asunder part,
O may this mutual love
Encourage every fainting heart
His zeal and faith to prove.*

*"Our glorious hope revives
Our courage every day,
While each in expectation strives
To run the heavenly way"*.

Under-shepherd Care! Anxiety for our brother's good. Deep concern, at our own cost, for the welfare of the flock! Is this still a thing to be sought for, if needs be, even unto death?

"Be ye imitators of me", says Paul, *"as I am of Christ"*! It was thus that Christ impressed Himself upon His faithful follower then—and will do so again to-day, if . . .!

WILL GOD BE SILENT FOR EVER?

A QUESTION FOR THE TIMES.

Will God be silent for ever? Why ask such a question? Is not God ever speaking through His Word? Do we not read, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son"? (Heb. 1. 1-2.) This is, of course, true. It is only through the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles and prophets that we have a knowledge of the purposes of God. As the well-known hymn says, "*God through His Word to us doth speak*". The Psalmist in his day said, "*The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple . . . the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes*". "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path*". "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple*". (Psa. 19. 7, 8; 119. 105, 130.) The Psalmist realised that what was written, the Law and Testimony, was the Word of God for His people at that time. Yet in another Psalm we find the words "*Keep not Thou silence, O God*".

There is no contradiction here. It brings us back to our question "Will God be silent for ever"? In what sense is God silent?

As we look into the Word of God we find that He is in certain respects silent and inactive towards wicked conditions which develop in the earth until, in his due time, He speaks and sets things in order. The Psalmist knew this and so expressed himself—"*Keep not Thou silence, O God; hold not Thy peace, and BE NOT STILL, O God*" (Psa. 83. 1). This conveys the thought of breaking silence with some definite action. In view of the present world situation many people ask why God permits it, and why He does not DO something about it. Before long He will answer! He will speak in no uncertain terms, and in such a manner that all will know about it. His acts will speak louder than words. Through the prophet the Lord says, "*I have long time holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once*" (Isa. 42. 14). The previous verse says, "*The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man*" (a man of war, as in Exod. 15. 13), "*He shall cry, yea, roar; He shall prevail against His enemies*". At the right time the Lord speaks in a very definite way!

So the Psalmist could say, "Our God shall come and not keep silence . . . He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people . . . But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and casteth My words behind thee . . . Thou givest thy mouth to evil . . . Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother . . . These things thou hast done, and I KEPT SILENCE . . . but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes". (Psa. 50. 3-21.) This is why God speaks, or breaks His silence—to set right something which is wrong—to put things in order.

Through the Prophet the Lord says, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good . . . a people that provoke Me to anger continually . . . Behold, it is written before Me: *I will not keep silence, but will recompense*, even recompense into their bosom . . . Ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget My holy mountain . . . Therefore will I number you to the sword . . . (Isa. 65. 1-12.) Here the Lord addresses a people who had refused to give heed to the Word He had given them—the Law and the Testimony. They had put His Word behind their back, and so in fulfilment of that word, God was going to give them to the sword.

It is worthy of note that the Lord's judgment is according to His Word previously declared to His people.

Before they entered the Land of Promise, Israel were told that if faithful to their God they would enjoy His blessing and all the good things of that land, but if disobedient, if they forsook Him and broke their covenant with Him, then certain calamities would befall them. One of the most severe of these was that their enemies would come against them with the sword, and prevail. The Lord God of Israel said this should be so. His Word never fails. He is faithful and keeps His Word.

In the days of Isaiah the people of the Lord were in a deplorable condition. They had forgotten Him, broken their covenant and become rebellious. They were likened to Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord graciously pleaded with

them—"Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword". (Isa. 1. 1-19.) "Therefore will I number you to the sword" was the Word of the Lord. It was His judgment upon His people. He brought the Assyrian host against the land of Israel (Isa. 8. 6-8). They were the rod of His anger against an hypocritical nation (Isa. 10. 5, 6). Later through another prophet the Lord said, "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard and wonder marvellously: for I work a work in your day which ye will not believe, though it be told you. 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 which are not theirs". (Hab. 1. 5, 6.) The verses preceding this statement show the dreadful condition of God's people. His law disregarded; violence abroad; this brought the cry "*O Lord, how long . . . ? Why . . . ?*" In answer the Lord said He would DO something which would not be believed even though it were told. That which He was about to do was to bring the Chaldeans against the land of His own people. They came, overran the land, took captive the people who were not killed, and destroyed the holy city and the temple (2 Chron. 36. 14-20, etc.). This was in fulfilment of God's law and the word of His prophets. "*The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men*" (Dan. 4. 17, 25), and He was shaping the course of events. He raised up the Assyrian and the Chaldean to fulfil His purpose, and used them in judgment against His own people.

The Assyrian had been used as a rod in the hand of the Lord to chastise His people, but he became proud and took the glory to himself. "*The axe boasted itself against him that heweth therewith*". The Lord said He would deal with the Assyrian according to the slaughter of Midian (Isa. 10. 5-26). Before the walls of Jerusalem the messengers of the King of Assyria reproached and blasphemed the Holy One of Israel. The Lord answered. He spoke in action. His angel smote the camp of the Assyrians. In this way the Lord fulfilled His word "I will break the Assyrian in My land" (Isaiah—chapters 36 and 37; 14. 24, 25). Thus the Lord deals with those who set themselves against Him and reproach His Name.

God's Word against the Chaldeans also was fulfilled. Through the prophets He said He would make Babylon like Sodom and Gomorrah. He

would sweep it away with the besom of destruction (Isa. 13. 10-22; 14. 22, 23).

These things did not just happen. Nor did they come about because of the designs of men or nations. God, as always, was shaping the course of events. He raised up the Assyrian and the Chaldean powers, and used them to fulfil His purpose. In this sense they were His servants (Jer. 25. 9). When they set themselves against Him He spoke against them in action. They tasted the severity of His judgments.

What is there in all this for us in our day?

Looking back at the doings of the nation of Israel—how they forgot the Lord their God, were persistently unfaithful and rebellious, and finally rejected their Messiah—the verdict generally is, that they were a "bad lot". But compare all this with what Christendom (the so-called "Christian" nations) has done, and we must admit that Christians have no reason to despise the Jews.

In Christendom God is forgotten and His Word rejected. As the Apostle Paul said concerning these last days, men have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3. 1-4). The Name of God is used and He is formally worshipped, through Christian organisations, but this is no more acceptable to God than the formal worship in Israel (Isa. 1. 11-15). The Christian nations are not governed by the Word of God, nor the teachings of Jesus Christ, as they should be. In this Christendom has rejected Jesus just as definitely as the Jews did two thousand years ago.

There always was a faithful remnant in Israel, even in the worst days of their history. In Christendom to-day there are people who trust in God and believe His Word, and seek to follow Jesus and to keep His Words. The Word of God has a particular message for these, that they may know His present purpose, and proclaim it in the earth.

As we analyse the situation in Christendom we see the same conditions as were found in Israel. Christendom is just as guilty before God as was Israel. The same mistakes, the same errors, the same transgressions, the same forgetfulness of God and His Word.

How will God deal with this? As He did in the past! He changes not! His judgments are ever the same. We have had two world wars in our time. What has suffered most as a result? The answer is—Christian civilization! And is it not this which is threatened by another world war? The fear expressed by thinking people is that another world war will bring the end of civilization as we have known it—our "Christian" civilization.

There is a reason why this "Christian" civilization must pass away. We are all convinced that the long promised reign of Christ, under which all men are to be delivered and blessed, is at hand. The state of affairs we see in Christendom cannot continue under the righteous rule of Christ. Will not the Lord first bring Christendom to account, as He did His own people in the past?

As we ask the question, "*Will God be silent for ever*"? we are really asking—"Will God allow the present state of affairs to continue"? Will He allow Himself to be misrepresented in Christendom for ever? Will He allow godless nations for ever to set themselves against Him? The answer is "NO"! He has full control of the world situation, and at the right moment will take action. Once again He says, "*I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom . . . I will number you to the sword*". This is spoken against His own people—Christendom in this day—but it is linked up with a promise of deliverance and blessing for His servants. It is the time when the old heavens and earth are due to pass away, so the Lord says, "*For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth*" (Isa. 65. 6-17).

God will finally speak at Armageddon. It will be "*the battle of the great day of God Almighty*". The "*kings of the earth*" will be gathered together for this battle, "*into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon*" (Rev. 16. 13-16). Against whom are they gathered? "*Against Him that sat on the horse*" (Rev. 19. 19). He is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war. He is the Word of God—He who was in the beginning with God, He who was made flesh in order to give Himself a Ransom for All. He who became mankind's redeemer is in this righteous war seen as mankind's deliverer. He it is who will smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron (compare Psa. 2. 1-9; Rev. 2. 26, 27; Rev. 19. 15).

The prophet speaks of the time when God has brought from amongst the nations His own people Israel. In an earlier chapter of that prophecy the Lord said He would gather them from the countries where they had been scattered, would cause them to pass under the rod and purge out from among them the rebels and them that transgress against Him—for such shall not inherit the land of Israel. This is in order that they may be a people acceptable unto Him (Ezek. 20. 33-44). Through the prophet the time is pictured when in the last days of this age they will be gathered out of many people . . . dwelling safely, without walls, having neither bars nor gates . . . having cattle and goods, dwelling in the midst of the

land. It will be a time of peace, prosperity and apparent security, for them. At this point "Gog", and his multitude, a mighty army, will come against the land "*to take a spoil, to take a prey . . . to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods*"—in other words to rob them. But God says, "*I will call for a sword against him . . . I will plead against him . . . I will magnify myself and sanctify myself and be known in the eyes of many nations*". "*They shall know that I am the Lord*". (Ezek. chapters 38 and 39.) God will speak and be known and magnified in the earth by reason of His mighty acts in the overthrow of His enemies. Men will then know that "*He whose Name alone is Jehovah, is the Most High over all the earth*". (Psa. 83. 1, 2, 17, 18.)

The Psalmist spoke of the day when this would happen—"The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved, He uttered His voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth" (Psa. 46. 6-11). It is to His Beloved Son that God says concerning those who set themselves against Him, "*thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*" (Psa. 2. 1-9, compare Rev. 2. 26, 27). This is the first mighty act of earth's new and righteous King. The prophet Isaiah foretold the breaking of the Assyrian oppressor in his day. This was literally fulfilled as recorded in chapters 36 and 37 of his prophecy. The prophecy is not limited to that day, but tells of a future greater breaking and deliverance by and through "He whose right it is" to possess the Kingdom. The prophet says, "*Thou hast broken their heavy yoke, the bar that bent their shoulders, and the whip of their oppressors, as at the triumph over Midian. The stamping warrior's boot, the blood-stained war attire, shall all of them be burnt as fuel for the fire*"—(Isa. 9. 4, 5. *Moffatt*). These words may be applied to the breaking of the Assyrian, and the deliverance of Israel from their yoke of bondage. The words which follow, however, show that something far greater is visualised by the prophecy. It continues, "*for (as a guarantee of this) unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there*

shall be no end". This tells of the *final* breaking of those who defy God, which is to be followed by the lasting reign of peace and blessing.

He who rode into Jerusalem upon the foal of a ass and was proclaimed as the King of Israel is seen in vision as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, as a victorious warrior upon a white horse, going forth in righteousness to judge and make war (Rev. 19. 11-21). This is a war against

all unrighteousness in the earth, in order that righteousness may be established. "*The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*" (Isa. 32. 17). We "look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness . . . Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3. 13, 14).

"He shall carry the lambs in His bosom"

A word of encouragement.

How often in the Bible we find reference to the lambs. Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and His sheep. What is the difference between the lambs and the sheep? As always we need only to compare things spiritual with things material for the answer, for is not this the way our Heavenly Father stoops to our need?

Instinctively we connect lambs with the innocence of children and rightly so, for they represent innocence. Jesus said "Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God" and this, therefore, means that we have to become innocent as they are. Some will, perhaps, say how is this possible, and like Nicodemus say "How can these things be"? Let us consider, then, how these things can be, that we may do those things which are pleasing to our Loving Father and enter into the Kingdom.

The first thing our Father requires is implicit trust. Every little child who has loving parents trusts them implicitly, goes where they send him, and if he is obedient, does what they tell him. He knows that they will only tell him to do what is good for him, and that they love him and that any discipline he receives is for his own good, and when he comes to manhood he is able to look back and thank them for training him to become a good citizen and is grateful for all their love and care and forethought for his well-being. So is it with our Heavenly Father. He is seeking to bring us always to our highest good, and He guides us by His Holy Spirit and, even though we do not in the least know to what He is guiding us, we can safely trust in Him, looking to Him for everything, instruction, guidance, dependence on Him alone. For does the psalmist not say "It is vain to put confidence in man".

This, then, is the only attitude which opens the doors of heaven to us. We have accepted His

"free gift" of grace, His full salvation, and we allow ourselves to be led "whithersoever the spirit leadeth". What rest and tranquillity of peace will be ours when we thus allow ourselves to lean confidently on the Saviour's bosom. Yet, how often we forget to trust our dear Saviour and instead of confiding in Him and trusting in His salvation for us, His "all-sufficient merits" we try and do the works ourselves. Then, alas, as we must always do when we drop back into the "Covenant of Works" we stumble and fall. It is only in complete surrender, by realising our own helplessness and the hopelessness of our case, that we can go forward. For Jesus Himself said "Without me ye can do nothing". (John 15. 5.)

We will do well then if we continually recall that our salvation is by grace alone. St. Paul reminds us of this in his epistle to the Ephesians, for he says—

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God".

Not of works *lest any man should boast*.

(Eph. 2, 8 and 9).

This is to "enter into rest"; to cease from the fret and worry of striving to do what we cannot possibly do, and what Jesus came to do for us. Oh let us be thankful and rejoice in our salvation. Let us accept with outstretched, eager hands, that most precious gift which He suffered so much to give us His children, for "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*". Then, as we realise our own utter worthlessness, we shall long to bring others to Him. When the full realisation of this breaks in on our souls we grasp the wonder of St. Paul's words that "He became sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteous-

ness of God in Him". (2. Cor. 5, 21). Oh the wonder of it, to know He has done it all for us!

How anxious should we be to "rest in His love" and be glad to accept willingly the "free gift" which He won for us by His great sacrifice and, with the Psalmist, joyfully cry:—

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only". (Psa. 71, 16).

This is to rest confidently on Jesus' bosom and like David again, let us acknowledge that

"All things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee". (1. Chron. 29, 14.)

All love, all wisdom, virtue, goodness, whatever of these there be in us is of Him alone, and to realise and acknowledge this, and that we have nothing whatever of ourselves, and to be glad that it should be so, this is Innocence. This is to be "gathered in His arms, and carried in His bosom". Jesus said "My sheep know my voice and follow me", and it is good to be a sheep, but oh how much more lovely to be one of His Lambs, and as He—the spotless Lamb—ever sought the glory

of His Father and who said that "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me" let us endeavour to do His Will also.

Let us seek His honour and glory who alone won the victory, and remember that, as we started on our journey relying upon His help alone, only thus can we complete the journey and reach our goal.

Then, just as our earthly parents desire all good things for their children, let us remember that so does our Heavenly Father desire—far more than any earthly parents could do—to give us good things. For did not Jesus say:—

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

*"And Thou hast brought to me
Down from Thy Home above
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love;
Great gifts Thou broughtest me;
What have I brought to Thee?"*

A NOTE ON LUKE 11.51

"From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple . . . it shall be required of this generation". (Luke 11, 51).

"From the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar". (Matt. 23, 35).

Who was this Zacharias? From Matthew's account it might be thought that he was the prophet whose book appears in the Old Testament "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah" (Zech. 1, 1). There is no indication in the Old Testament of the manner in which this Zechariah met his death. Josephus records the murder of a Zechariah, the son of Baruch (Berechiah) in the Temple at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which of course, was still nearly forty years future when Jesus spoke these words. There was also a Zechariah, son of Jehoida, who was stoned to death in the court of the Temple at the command of King Joash of Judah. (2 Chron: 24, 19-22.) This Zechariah, dying, cried out "The Lord look upon it, and require it" (i.e. require his blood at the hands of the murderers, and exact retribution.) The Second Book of Chronicles is the last book in the

Jewish arrangement of the Bible and therefore this account, which is the last occasion in that book where a righteous man is put to death, becomes the last such account in the Bible, just as that of Abel is the first. It might well be that Jesus was referring to this Zechariah when he spoke the words of the text; the circumstances would make him the most fitting choice for the Lord's purpose. The only difficulty is the reference in Matthew to "the son of Barachias". It has been thought that this is an interpolation by some transcriber anxious to identify the one referred to by our Lord with the famous prophet of the Restoration. The Jews had no detailed tradition of the death of that Zechariah; they had preserved very vividly the recollection of the earlier martyrdom of this one in the days of King Joash, even going so far as to assert that his blood had never ceased to flow but could still be found in the Temple precincts. Jesus would obviously want to take hold of the most forceful example in His denunciation and on the whole it does seem reasonable to conclude that the incident He referred to was in fact the one that is recorded in 2 Chron. 24, and that He meant to take the first and last occasions of the shedding of innocent blood that the Jewish Bible has on record.

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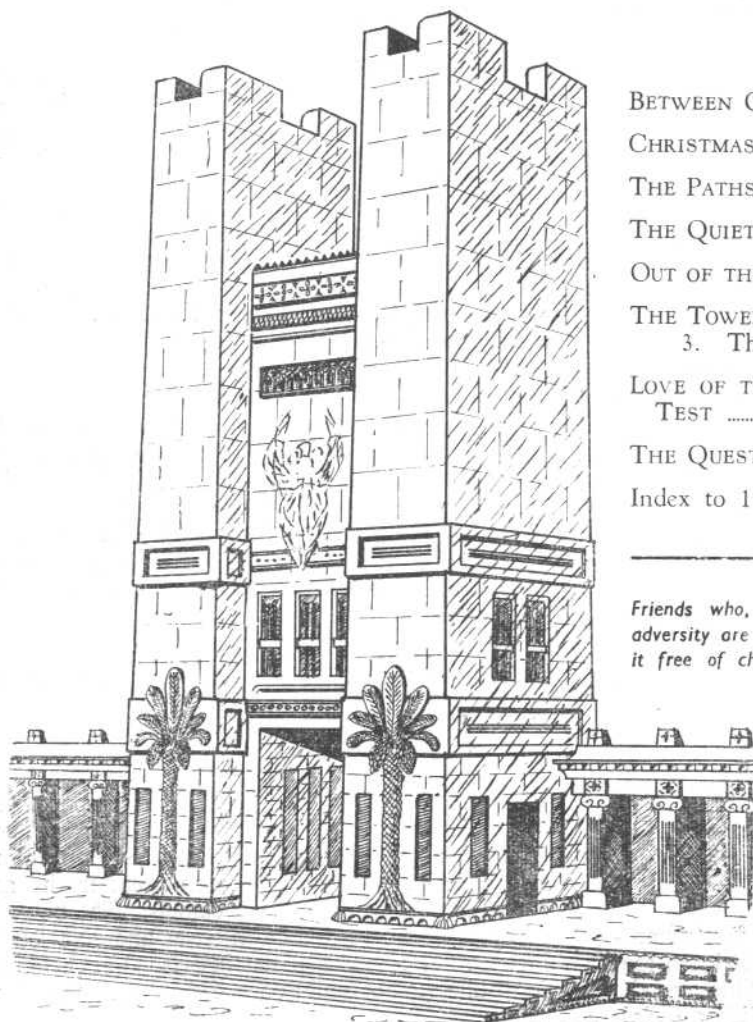
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Some friends were disappointed when the new translation of the Epistles of St. Paul, by Arthur Way, went out of print so soon after publication a year ago. We are glad to say that a new edition has now been published and that we have a good stock in hand. The book is entitled "*The Letters of Saint Paul*" and consists of 228 pages, comprising a chronology of the life and writings of the Apostle Paul and a brief sketch of related matters, and then a translation in modern English of all the Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The translation is a vigorous and forceful one and should find many admirers. The price is 11/- post free (\$1.75).

* * *

Brother Lardent advises that he is able to supply his usual "*Christian Home Calendar*" for 1952, same style as last year, consisting of monthly turn-over pages, each with Scripture picture in full colour and text for each day, size 10" x 7", at 2/10d. each, 8/3d. for three copies, post free. Please order direct from Mr. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, and not from Welling.

* * *

A few last minute thoughts for Christmas presents—these books are in stock, new, and can be sent by return at post free prices shown.

"*Palestine the Land of my adoption*" (Clapham). 194 pages, two maps, 16 monochrome photographs, full page size and four coloured plates. An interesting up-to-date account by one who is resident in the country. 12/6d.

"*The Pilgrim's Progress*." A modern book with modern illustrations in colour, suitable for teenagers and young people. 318 pages. 12/6d.
In Green Pastures. 243 pages, daily devotional readings. 4/6d.

The Man Who did not sin (Newman Watts). A story set in the Millennial Age—useful for young people whom it is desired to interest in the future hope for mankind. 154 pages. 5/-.

* * *

Those who habitually use Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Bible may be interested to learn that a complete Concordance to the Bible in the Moffatt translation has now been published. This book serves the same purpose to readers of Moffatt as Cruden's Concordance does to the Authorised Version. The book is expensive—naturally so in view of its nature and size,

especially since the demand is not likely to be large—and is published at 52/6d. We will be glad to secure and despatch copies to any of our readers who cannot obtain it easily locally, at 54/6d. post free (\$8.00 to friends in U.S.A. and Canada).

* * *

The monthly united meeting at Caxton Hall will be held this month on Saturday, 15th December, at 6.30 p.m. Speakers will be Bro. D. Parker and J. H. Sharman.

* * *

Scriptural Christmas Cards are again in stock this year and we are now able to supply orders as received. It is suggested that the friends obtain their requirements as early as possible since our stock may well be exhausted before Christmas. The varieties available are generally similar to those of last year, all folding cards, complete with envelopes, and are put up in packets of ten well-assorted cards of differing sizes and types, at the following prices, all post free: 3/9d., 4/3d., 4/9d., 5/3d. and 6/-.

* * *

Acceptable children's books for Christmas are in stock as follows. For full details see back page of this issue. The Bible Story Book and "Little Life of Jesus" are specially recommended.
Bible Story Book. The finest book of Bible stories we have found; a wealth of pictures, both coloured and black-and-white. A splendid gift. 25/- post free.

A Little Life of Jesus. This is the well-known book by Basil Mathews—a very fine life of Jesus for young people of all ages up to 16 or so. 6/9d. post free (one dollar).

The Ten Camels. This book, published by our Australian brethren, comprises the story of the Divine Plan told to a little girl in a very appealing and effective manner. The ten great truths are each brought by one of ten camels. The book is roneo-printed with red cloth cover and gold lettering, several coloured plates inserts. Very suitable for quite young children. 6/6d. post free (one dollar).

Jesus the Babe Born to be King. A simple 16 page paper covered coloured picture book for the tiny tots. 1/6d. post free (25c.).

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Some seasonable thoughts

"We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (Matt. 2. 2.)

All the world worships a baby. Its innocence and freshness, no less than its helplessness, command the adoration of all around, and these Wise Men from the East were no exception to the rule. They had watched and waited for many long years for He that should save the world and they had found Him at last in the form of a little child. Not amid the pomp and glory of kingly courts, the ritual and ceremony of sanctuary and temple, the wealth and magnificence of city and market—but in the quietude and simplicity of a cave in a Judean hill-side, did they find the Saviour of all men. And beholding the child—they worshipped.

They were, all three, probably old men. It is not likely that they ever saw the child again. They certainly never knew Jesus of Nazareth the leader of men. Their worship was of a child and not of a man; their adoration directed to a hope and an idea rather than to a calling and a life's devotion. Their journey was prompted by sentiment more than by sacrifice. They came, worshipped, presented their gifts, and went away. We see them no more; history knows nothing further about them. Their contribution to the outworking Plan of God was almost negligible; they have provided a theme for Christmas cards and Christmas carols and to that extent added some little moiety to the beauties of Christian worship, but that is all.

The faith and belief of a great many disciples in this our own day fails to rise to any higher level. In far too many cases and to much too great an extent the faith of Jesus is maintained on a level of sentiment and a form of intensified baby-worship. A great many Christian hymns and a considerable amount of devotional preaching takes one no farther than an exaltation of the personal attributes of Jesus, viewed more or less through the veil of his flesh. *"My beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."* That is the idol in the hearts of a great many whose conception of the Christian life enshrines a feeling of personal security and acceptance with God but does not include service and sacrifice, all that we mean by the expression "the consecrated life." A brother, once spending some little time in a country meeting room of some evangelical body of the more emotional type, found himself assailed on all sides by an almost constant barrage of "I do love Jesus" "Do you love Jesus" "Isn't it lovely to be loved

by Jesus" and so on. That sort of thing is not often found in our own fellowship but it is all too common in the Christian community generally and it is, in a spiritual sense, unhealthy. The Christian is called to a sterner and more practical life and with the world in the state it is in to-day we need more than ever to turn our eyes away from the babe in the manger and look to the Galilean preacher as he moved among the men and women of this sin-stricken world, treating kings and priests and publicans and harlots with complete impartiality and absolute understanding.

In somewhat similar fashion there is a tendency to behold with such whole-hearted regard the spectacle of the dying Christ on the Cross as again to forget the value of His life. Whilst we must hold very tenaciously to the oft-repeated Scriptural truth that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" and that only through faith in the saving power of His death can anyone attain reconciliation with God and everlasting life, still does it remain true that unless we give due heed to the lessons of His life and so learn to walk as He walked, we shall never progress beyond the immature stage of personal adoration which was all that the three Wise Men achieved. It is no use our hailing Jesus as the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world if we ourselves do not learn and then accept for ourselves the life of devotion and service which alone will eventually provide the means God has ordained for the actual removal of the effects of sin. Jesus died on the Cross and by that act made it possible for all men to be restored from the death that comes upon them in consequence of human sin; but the power of the Lord's life on earth, reflected through the lives of those who in this Age have been His faithful consecrated followers, is going to be called for when it comes to removing sin's effects in the minds and hearts of earth's millions thus restored from death. In the ancient Tabernacle ceremonies ordained by the hand of Moses there were offerings first made to make reconciliation—a covering—for sin, but before the ritual was complete it was necessary that all the transgressions and all the sins of the House of Israel, covered over from God's sight as they had been by the sin-offerings just presented, had to be loaded in a figurative sense on the back of a beast and taken away into a far land from which they could never be brought back. The Millennial Age is set aside for just such a bearing away of sin; as men accept

for themselves the redemptive work of Christ, and in the power of that "pouring out his life unto death" of Jesus' three and a half years' devotion and sacrifice at the First Advent, and the similar pouring out of life unto death of His Church during the two thousand years of the Gospel Age, begin to progress toward human perfection, so their weaknesses and imperfections and failures to live up to God's perfect laws will be steadily taken away into a "land not inhabited"—away from this whole earth which is the abode of men. Thus, at the last, when transgression is cleansed from the earth, the great High Priest can pronounce the final blessing "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

The message of Christmas to the instructed Christian, then, is not so much a remembrance of Jesus in His childhood as it is of Jesus as He afterwards became. It is a looking forward to the promise of the future and a willing acceptance of all the obligations which real association with that hope implies. The Wise Men from the East were not the only ones who looked and waited for the Saviour. Others there were, better instructed in the ways of God, who perceived deeper values inherent in that tiny form and lifted up their hearts to God in gratitude not only because they had seen the Saviour but because God had now commenced His promised work in the world and the days of inactivity had ended. Anna and Simeon in the Temple, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary the young mother, and Joseph her upright young husband; these were made of other stuff than the Wise Men, and whilst the latter were not lacking in faith and piety, these added to those things a willingness and even anxiety to be used in the outworking purposes of God that has immortalised their names in the annals of those who have rendered God service.

These people who "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2. 38) were practical, matter-of-fact believers in the reality of God's promises. They all cherished a deep and sincere devotion to God and reverence for the revealed Word; they all believed passionately in the coming Kingdom and they all watched and waited for Messiah. But their knowledge and their hope and their watching was not merely academic. They expected in Messiah not merely an embodiment of all that is pure and just and holy, not merely a royal expression of the Divine majesty on earth, but they looked and waited for One Who would assuage the sufferings of the oppressed and bring to an end the ravages of hitherto incontrollable disease; One Who would care for the lowliest and most insignificant of His creatures, carrying the lambs in His bosom and gently leading those that were with young, as the

prophet Isaiah had predicted. They knew, did these peasants and artisans, and the lowly priests who ministered to them, how much the world needed that kind of Messiah. The magnificent vision of a King seated on David's throne must have weighed very little with them compared with the picture of a Man who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, nor fail nor be discouraged until He had set judgment and justice in the earth. And when, at that first Christmas season, they set wondering eyes upon the babe whom Simeon had blessed and declared the Lord's Anointed, they saw not the babe that then was, but the Man that was to be. "*This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel*" declared the saintly old man, and his hearers knew that there must be sorrow and heartache, and stern endurance, before all that the prophets had spoken could come to pass.

That is the message for this Christmas and every Christmas. We look, not at the birth which took place two thousand years ago, important though that birth was for all that came after. We look rather to the things which sprang from that birth, and not least of all to the Kingdom which is the fulfilment of the promises made at that birth and which is now so imminent. We look at the world in which we live and see it peopled by men and women living much the same kind of lives and oppressed by much the same kinds of sins and weaknesses, and troubles and distresses, as in our Lord's day. He moved among them and helped them, while He could. His preaching to them the gospel of the Kingdom was illustrated by the practical acts of mercy which He did. His call to single-hearted devotion to God and holiness of living was underlined by His own example. He was the perfect pattern, to man, of how man should live and behave toward his fellow-man. Surely we can do no less than follow His example.

Yet with all this He was no recluse, no visionary, no "holier-than-thou" ascetic. He was the perfect example of the man who is "in the world but not of the world". He could mix with men and women of every station in life and put them entirely at their ease, and yet remain Himself immeasurably above them. He could sympathise with them in their petty troubles and help them out of their day-by-day difficulties without ever condoning their weaknesses or pandering to their faults. When the wine ran short at the wedding feast, He made more. When the five thousand omitted to bring provisions for the day, He created a supply. When the little children came running to Him, He received them. How truly then had it been predicted of Him "surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows". Now we, if we are to continue His brethren, must needs follow the same course.

Let us then, as this Christmas season runs its course and we enter upon a new year, take to ourselves the word of Scripture which says "as he was, so are we in this world" (I Jno. 4. 17). Let us seek to manifest and practice toward all men the same tolerance, understanding, goodwill and ever ready impulse to help and heal that He manifested in such abundant measure. So doing, we shall exemplify in very truth at least one phrase of the angel's song, sung to the shepherds at the time of His nativity; "Goodwill to men". That is the real spirit of Christmas. The bringing of gifts is only secondary. All the gold and all the frankincense and

all the myrrh left by the three Wise Men to brighten and perfume that Judean cave wherein lay the Holy Child counted for little in the courts of Heaven compared to the ecstatic praise of the little band of faithful workers which surrounded the same babe in the Temple courts only a few days later. "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*" That is the spirit in which we must go forth into the world to-day, and in that spirit we shall gain our needed experience wherewith we will be fitted for our Master's service in the great Day of Salvation yet to come.

THE PATHS OF MERCY AND TRUTH

An Exhortation

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant". (Psa. 25. 10.)

It is extremely sweet doctrine to be assured that every step of the consecrated life is under the control of our loving Father in heaven. At all times it is comforting to be reminded that "All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose," but it is especially helpful to have this assurance repeated frequently in seasons of trial and difficulty. Most of the children of God are such leaking vessels, that the sweetness of the morning's promise is apt to be forgotten before tired eyelids close for the night's repose. And for that reason every consecrated child of God needs the frequent reminder that every phase of his life is under the supervision of an eye that never sleeps; that all the way he is kept in the hollow of a hand that never grows weary. It is not that we want to forget that sublime fact—it is not that we find any pleasure in the slips of memory which afflict our advancing years. But because the summers and winters steal by with increasing speed (or so it seems) and because modern life is so full of responsibilities of so many kinds, the things that belong to the higher life seem at times to be crowded into a very small corner of our day, even if they are not fully crowded out for a time. But no true child of the Father in heaven is ever averse to being reminded again and again of that loving Father's care. He will find it soothing to his heart, after a worrying day, to be told again that he is one of the sheep of His pasture; that the Lord is his Shepherd and that whether his pathway lies through the green pastures or the valley of shadows, the Lord is with him to keep and protect him all the way. When, during the day, the tender spirit

of the New Creature has been wounded by the instability or harshness of some poor son of Adam, how good it is to be told of a Friend who standeth closer than any brother, to whisper a word of comfort to our aching heart. It is the perfect end to any day to be able to listen to the gentle assurance of tongue or pen that no act or word need have cost us our Father's smile. Not that the day's page would not show blot or smudge (for indeed, no day is entirely free from short-coming or failure) but because by the grace of God, so many of His paths are paths of mercy. Long ago, the Father of Mercies made provision for our need. He sent down from heaven a Saviour, who, by His death, can save His people from their sins. Himself without sin, yet in His compassionate love for men, became Himself the bearer of their sins. He gave Himself, the "*just for the unjust that He might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18). He reconciled us by His death; He now lives to save us by His living, loving care (Rom. 5. 10). The path of mercy, from our first feeble Christian days, till now, is hedged about by His precious blood. It is a scarlet trail, for precious blood made possible our first faltering step in Grace, and precious blood has made safe our every further step.

From those first feeble feelings after God, when escaping from the darkness of sin, till now we know our God (and also are known of Him) the blood upon the lintel has been the constant pledge of our security and safety. No day has passed but that we have drawn upon the store of compassionate mercy—yet our constant claims have not impoverished the store, nor exhausted its supply. New every morning, and fresh with each evening's shades have been these resources of grace, for that precious

blood was of compensating worth for every man, and for all time, and so, because Divine Law was satisfied, Divine Grace has been free to come to our relief, abundantly—yea, more than that, we have received super-abundantly of His Grace. Thus, many paths in our lives which the Lord has directed have had their commencement in His Mercy, while all along the way, the shady bowers and quiet resting places have been fragrant with His Grace. Let us thank our Gracious God for His Goodness.

But along with Grace He gave us knowledge; along with mercy He gave us truth! "*The paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*" First those simple elementary truths which told us of our need for a Saviour to free us from our sins, and to release us from Father Adam's condemnation. The truth about God's own love was wonderful—it cost Him His dear Son. The greatness of His Gift was the measure of His Love. That truth was sweet to our famished hearts. It was the first satisfying Truth we had ever learned. No collegiate course ever imparted Truth so satisfying and refreshing. Nor has any instruction from any other source in later days, brought such abiding joy. To the end of our earthly days, nay, let us say for all eternity, the remembrance of that blessed fact that God loved the world so much that He gave His Son to die, will never lose its soul-reviving power.

But Redeeming Love was but the prelude to Paternal Love. We learned another transcendent Truth that He who redeemed us at such infinite cost desired to have us as His sons and daughters. He called us to follow in the footsteps of His First-born Son, that we might enter the innermost circle of His family, and be the Father's eternal delight. Our gracious God caused His beloved Son to become unto us a channel of Wisdom, Justification, Sanctification, and ultimate Redemption. And in order that all these steps of Grace might be realised in us, and experienced by us, He gave us Truth accordant with each step. He taught us not only to learn the Truth, but also how to profit by that Truth. Knowledge thus acquired, then rightly applied, became in us "*Wisdom.*" Knowledge that the Victim died for sin (and that means, among other things, for my sin; for our sins) led us humbly to seek our acquittal at God's hands, so that henceforth there should be no condemnation laid to our charge.

Knowledge that God desired the submission of our lives, so that we should no longer serve sin, but live solely unto Him, brought us to the point where He could invest us with His Holiness, and set us apart to His Will and Purpose. What a wonderful school God keeps! What an excellent syllabus He has arranged! How incomparable is the education He provides! He educates His pupils

for Eternity; for Omniscience! He trains them for Kingship for the highest Throne! He dedicates them for a Priesthood—to succour untold millions "who are out of the way!" He moulds them to be replicas of Himself, to be channels of His great Love, of infinite Mercy and tender Compassion.

This is all so wonderful, but—(is there a "but" in this overflow of grace?); yes indeed,—this glorious accomplishment is contingent upon the keeping of "His covenant and testimonies".

God requires as the condition of His oversight in our lives, first, a covenant of sacrifice—a vow intelligently and solemnly sworn—and then obedience to His Sovereign Will throughout our days. Disobedience would dam the refreshing streams of mercy and grace. Forwardness and headiness would blight the fruitage of His Truth. His word would cease to satisfy, and soul hunger, such as no plenty on earth could gratify, would set in. But if His children keep His Covenant, and observe His testimonies, then "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature" can interfere or block one single path of the Lord's mercy and truth in their lives.

Do we know that this is true? Then happy indeed are we!

CARDIFF HOME-GATHERING

The Cardiff brethren report that their autumn gathering was a source of blessing and encouragement to them. Friends came in good numbers, evincing love for the Lord and for one another. Bros. Sharman, French and Murray gave addresses of exhortation calculated to increase the desire to study God's Word, and more faithfully to serve the cause of our Lord and Master. A feature of the gathering was the spontaneous and warm-hearted singing during the frequent occasions arranged for praise and testimony. The Lord's spirit, manifested by the brethren, was a clear indication of His presence with them and with multiplied blessing. The occasion marked yet another milestone of life's journey and the friends parted with the hope of reunion again in God's own time. Truly it was a privilege to dwell together in the House of the Lord.

* * *

He who walks aright in the "Way of the Cross" will not attempt to take God's business out of the Father's hands, nor attempt to run or adjust this world's tangled affairs before His due time, or in any other than His own way. Our privilege is to "rest" in Him.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

TRUTH

*All Truth is calm,
Refuge and Rock and Tower ;
The more of Truth the more of calm,
Its calmness is its power.
Truth is not strife,
Nor is to strife allied ;
It is the error that is bred
Of storm, by rage and pride.
Calmness is Truth,
And Truth is calmness still ;
Truth lifts its forehead to the storm,
Like some eternal hill.*

—H. BONAR.

CAUTION

Beware ! Oh beware, then, of ever resisting the Lord's will—even in the least thing. The more intensely we realise unseen and eternal things, the more we can afford to dispense with the things of time and sense. The unspeakable importance of Eternity throws into the shade our earthly circumstances. Our eternity is suspended upon the way in which we pass through a very short span of time, and this very brief period of time takes its complexion from the moments which go to make it up. Our experiences *now* are fitting us to judge the world later.

We are nearing "Home."

JOY

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

QUIETNESS

"Beware of much talk ; remain in some secret place and enjoy thy God ; for thou hast Him whom all the world cannot take from thee. I am He to whom thou oughtest wholly to give thyself up, that so thou mayest live the rest of thy time, not in thyself but in Me and be free from all anxious cares."
—(Thomas a Kempis, 1380-1471).

DISCIPLINE

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night, spices smell best when bruised, young trees root the faster for being shaken and gold looks the brighter for scouring. Such is the condition of all God's children. They are most triumphant when most tempted ; most glorious when most afflicted ; most in the favour of God when least in man's and in their own. As their conflicts, such are their conquests ; as their tribulation, such their triumphs. They live best in the furnace of persecution.

TIMES

Do we begin to wonder why it is that no man yet knoweth "the day and the hour ?" Let us then remember that the same all-wise Father Who for our encouragement and strength has given us the signs of the times has by that same wisdom with-holden the times of the signs.

PROSPECT

When we shall be raised in His likeness in the resurrection, we shall not have our fleshly brains for recollection, and we therefore shall be dependent upon the Divine Power for the memory of all the experiences of the present time. So when we read, "So also is the resurrection of the dead ; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15. 42-44), we have this thought, that the Divine Power will impress this spiritual body with the knowledge of all the blessed experiences of the present time, so that these experiences shall not be fruitless, but profitable to us, making us better qualified and more able for the Divine service.

LOVE

*It is not the deed we do,
Though the deed be ever so fair,
But the love that the dear Lord looketh for,
Hidden with holy care
In the heart of the deed so fair,
The love is the priceless thing,
The treasure our treasure must hold ;
Or ever the Lord will take the gift,
Or tell the worth of the gold
By the love that cannot be told.*

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of interesting items

Bible Emphasis

If the Bible be divided along the lines of its three predominant themes, viz., History, Doctrine and Prophecy, and the amount of space devoted to each be examined, an interesting analysis results.

In the Old Testament, the books from Genesis to Esther are mainly history, those from Psalms to Song of Solomon, devotional and doctrinal, and from Isaiah to Malachi prophetic. In the New Testament the same order is shown: Matthew to Acts may be fairly described as history, Romans to Jude as doctrinal, and Revelation as prophetic.

The proportion of page space thus given to these three main classifications is roughly:—

History		60%
Doctrine		15%
Prophecy		25%

This does not mean that doctrine is to be regarded as of very minor importance; there is much in the historical and prophetic books that is vital doctrinal teaching. What perhaps is a desirable conclusion to draw is this: the amount of space given to historical accounts would seem to indicate that our consideration of the lives and actions of those who served God, or rejected God, in past days is very necessary in the ordering of our own Christian lives. The greatest lessons of life can perhaps best be learned by the study of things that happened in times gone by.

That, at any rate, must be a potent factor in the educational and remedial work of the Millennial Age. Each one of the resurrected hosts will have a comparatively narrow range of personal experience on which to call. There is much of the evil consequences of sin and the beneficial results of righteousness with which he can only become acquainted by hearing of the lives and deeds of others. The study of history will surely take a very prominent place in the work of the Millennium!

"Coats of Skins"

"Unto Adam also and to his wife the Lord made coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3. 21.) There is no necessity to assume, as commentators of a century ago did assume, that a beast was slain in order to provide the garments referred to in this passage. From the succeeding chapter it is seen that man's first essay in the pastoral field was the tending of sheep (Gen. 4. 2). Herds of cattle were not kept until much later, in the days of Jabal (Gen. 4. 20), probably several centuries

after the days of Eden. It would appear reasonable to conclude that these garments of skins were of wool or goat hair, and as such did not demand the slaying of the animal for their production. There is something inappropriate in the idea of animals dying a violent death within the lovely precincts of Eden that makes it much more in keeping with the spirit of the narrative to conclude that not until Abel brought the firstlings of his flock to the altar of sacrifice were violent hands laid on the brute creation; and by that time the rapidly increasing human race was probably already manifesting those seeds of violence which became so tragically manifest at length in the first recorded human death—that of Abel, slain by his brother.

The Death State

Justin Martyr, one of the "Early Fathers," a Greek Christian born in Samaria about A.D. 89, converted about A.D. 132 and martyred at Rome A.D. 165, had this to say in his writings as to the state of the dead:

"If therefore you fall in with certain who are called Christians, who confess not this truth, but dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in that they say there is no resurrection of the dead, but that immediately when they die, their souls are received up into heaven—avoid them and esteem them not Christians."

If a leader in the Church could express himself thus strongly it is evident that in his time, some forty years after the death of the Apostle John, there was little dissent from the Apostolic teaching that the dead are asleep in the grave, waiting the call of the Lord to come forth at the time of the setting up of His Kingdom.

Holiness

Holiness is a word usually associated with religious life and experience. We have an equivalent in the word "Saintliness." Our modern English word "Holy" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, "Hal." Holiness comes from a kindred word—"Halig." In the less-developed language of our forefathers' day these words did not have the almost exclusively religious meaning which the modern word has, but were applied to various physical and mundane things too. We have several kindred words to-day which spring from the same roots. One such is "hel"—a word denoting good sound

health. Another such is "heal"—to make sound or well. Still another is "whole"—(or "wholly") meaning "entire," "complete," "nothing lacking."

Our modern word "Saint" comes from the Latin "Sanctus"; and means "one set apart"—i.e., one wholly devoted to a purpose, usually a religious purpose. The words "holy," "Holiness" and "Hallow" (used instead of holify) and "Saintly," "Sanctification" and "Sanctify" are synonyms for each other respectively, and stand, almost without exception, in our English Bible as the equivalents of one Hebrew word (*Qadash* or *Qodesh*) in the Old Testament and one Greek word (*Hagios*) in the New Testament. How accurately the Greek "*Hagios*" corresponds, to the Hebrew "*Qadash*" may be seen by the fact that the Septuagint translation (a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) uses that word exclusively to pass over into the Greek tongue the old Hebrew thought on holiness. This is of great advantage to us, and helps us to carry forward the Old Testament thought into New Testament days. It affords us additional advantage also to have two sets of English words by which to define that ancient Hebrew thought.

* * *

Angel's Food

"Man did eat angel's food." This expression occurs in *Psa.* 78:25 and refers to the manna sent as food for the Israelites in the wilderness. In the past, some thought that manna was indeed the food of angels, on the strength of this verse. The word here translated "angel", however, is "*abbir*" which is nowhere else rendered "angel" but is rendered "bull" four times, "strong" or "strong one" (referring to bulls) four times, and "chiefest" "mighty", "mighty one" and "valiant". The verse in *Psa.* 78 appears to mean that man ate mighty or strength-giving food—the food of the mighty; thus contrasting the Divine provision for Israel with the poor provision they would have to depend upon if the power of God had not been exerted on their behalf.

* * *

Man's Primeval Perfection

"Neither in Egypt nor in Babylonia has any beginning of civilisation been found. As far back as archeology can take us, man is already civilised, building cities and temples, carving hard stone into artistic form, and even employing a system of picture writing; and of Egypt it may be said, the older the country the more perfect it is found to be. The fact is a very remarkable one, in view of modern theories of development, and of the evolution of civilisation out of barbarism. Whatever may be the reason, such theories are not borne out by the discoveries of archeology. Instead of the progress we should expect, we find retrogression and decay; where we look for the rude beginnings of art, we

find an advanced society and artistic perfection. Is it possible that the Biblical view is right after all, and that civilised man has been civilised from the outset?"

—Dr. R. Bell Dawson, F.R.S.

* * *

The Divine Call

It is surprising when we come to reckon up the instances how often it has pleased God to come down into the daily rounds and daily lives of His people, to equip them or call them to His service and favour, not when they were secluding themselves for purposes of devotion, but while engaged in the common-place, every day duties of very humble callings. Moses received his call and commission by a Voice issuing from a burning bush while tending his father-in-law's sheep on the slopes of Mt. Horeb. Gideon, as he threshed out the wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, was greeted by the Angel of the Lord, and charged to deliver his people from the hand of their oppressors. David, the shepherd boy, attending the ewes, great with young, is called by God to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. Elisha, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, finds the mantle of Elijah thrown across his shoulders, thereby designating him to be the prophet of the Lord in the room of Elijah. Even the shepherds on the hill sides of Judea, while watching over their flocks by night were blessed, above men, by the songs of the Heavenly Host, as they sang of the babe of Bethlehem. Peter and Andrew were casting a net, when Jesus walked by, and called them to be "fishers of men." Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, entering up the payment of tribute, when the Lord called him to apostleship. Within the narrow sphere of "the common round, the daily task," the Lord found His servants and equipped them for greater things.

* * *

King Asa's disease

King Asa of Judah was diseased in his feet, "yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians". (2 Chron. 16:12.) This is not to say that Divine displeasure is upon those who seek to obtain relief from sickness and physical ailments by means of the skill of the medical profession. In Asa's day the only physicians were the priests of idolatrous faiths and their "cures" were invariably mixed up with the worship they professed. Asa preferred to become contaminated with such rather than go to his God for instruction. It may be remembered that good King Hezekiah, in like case, went to the prophet Isaiah, and he, although not a physician, was evidently guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection of a remedy that proved effective. (See *Isa.* 38:1 and 21.)

THE TOWER OF BABEL

3.—THE BUILDING OF THE TOWER

An Excursion Into
Ancient History

"And they said 'Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime (bitumen) had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen. 11. 3-4).

A broad, level stretch of greensward dotted about with date palms and bordered on its western side by the smoothly flowing waters of the Euphrates. That was the spot upon which the builders decided for the execution of their design. Untouched as yet by the hand of man, undefiled by buildings and unblemished by cultivation or irrigation, it was virgin ground, a fitting place for the tower they would create to be the centre and the symbol of their new religion and the false gods they would set up. They had left the God of Noah and of Shem behind them in the mountains; here in this new and sunnier land, so much more prolific and fertile than the one they had left, they would forget the obligations and duties they had been taught were theirs, forget the God who had delivered their fathers with so great deliverance in the days of the Flood, forget the command to spread over the earth and populate it and bring it into subjection. Here they would settle, in this delightful plain, where the sun shone warmly all day and the blue waters of the ever-flowing rivers brought forth vast yields of rich golden grain and delicious summer fruits. Here they would become a mighty people, living and ruling in denial of God's authority, and making for themselves a name which should indicate their own assumption of power to decide and plan their own destiny, without God.

That seems clearly to have been the intention. God's command to the sons of Noah after the Flood was "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . . bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein." God had made a covenant with them, one that was to be for the benefit of their seed after them. (Gen. 9: 9.) Quite evidently men were conscious of certain obligations toward God, and particularly that they were to spread over the face of the earth in order that it be adequately populated and brought into subjection. It is a strange thing that just as the first man failed to carry out his commission to subdue the earth and chose instead the way of selfishness, so did these. Rather than separate in obedience to God's command they chose

to remain together and trust in their own strength and prowess to hold their own.

Verse 3 may indicate that this settlement in the plain of Shinar marked their transition from a wandering, cattle-rearing people to a settled, agricultural one. This mutual exhortation "let us make brick" seems as though they were embarking upon something new. Nomad peoples have no use for bricks and building materials. They live in tents and move easily from place to place following their flocks and herds wherever fresh pasturage may be found. An agricultural people, on the contrary, tends to live in permanent dwellings, and with such communities it is not long before towns and cities make their appearance. It was so with Cain and Abel; Abel was a keeper of flocks and Cain a tiller of the ground; and it was Cain who built the first city. Here again history repeated itself in a remarkable manner. The sons of Shem for a number of generations after the Flood were keepers of flocks and covered all Syria and Arabia with their encampments; to this day many of their descendants follow the same calling. The sons of Ham, on the other hand, remained in Mesopotamia as tillers of the soil, developed a highly organised agricultural communal life, built great cities, and became famous for their artistic and industrial skill. It is hard to resist the thought that the family of Ham must have been the leading influence in this proposal to build a city and a tower, and such conclusion is reinforced by the fact that after the disruption that followed the attempt, the families of Shem and of Japheth left the plain of Shinar; the family of Ham remained and populated the land.

"Let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly" they said. The baked bricks of Babylonia are virtually indestructible. For many centuries the bricks of the ancient Babylonian cities have been used by the people of later generations for new buildings. It is said that the present city of Baghdad is almost entirely built of bricks taken from the old ruins, and that the names of Babylonian and Assyrian kings well known to Bible readers and students of history are continually met with, stamped on the bricks of which private houses in Baghdad are built. So thoroughly did those grandsons and great-grandsons of Noah burn their bricks that there is no reasonable doubt many exist to-day built into the structure of modern buildings. Babylon has been a brick quarry for generations, and such is the excellence

of the bricks that are still dug from the ruins that only a few years ago the market price of Babylon brick stood at a considerably higher figure than modern bricks manufactured in Iraq.

Now about this city and tower which they so rashly essayed to build. First of all, the Hebrew text does not justify the translator's italics, "whose top *may reach* unto heaven." The expression only means a tower whose top should reach into the heavens, that is to say, a tower to be celebrated for its extreme height, a height so great that it would seem as if it penetrated into the upper skies. If the records of the Greek travellers who saw the Tower before its destruction are correct, the builders certainly achieved their ambition. The height of their edifice was not equalled by man until the building of the modern "sky-scrapers" in New York.

It is of course impossible to determine just what the Tower looked like when it was built. There are several descriptions in the writings of classical authors who either saw it for themselves in the fourth or fifth centuries B.C., or who copied the descriptions of those who had, but these describe the Tower as it appeared in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and onward. Since, however, the Babylonians had a rooted objection to altering the structures of their sacred edifices, contenting themselves with repairing, rebuilding and embellishing them as king succeeded king, it may well be that the Tower seen and described by Herodotus in B.C. 440 presented much the same appearance as the original one which, we are told in Gen. 11, God Himself "came down to see".

Herodotus (often called the "father of history"), the Greek historian; Strabo, the Greek geographer of the time of Christ; and Diodorus Siculus, a Greek writer of fifty years earlier, are among the principal sources of information. There is also a clay tablet known as the Seleucid Tablet, discovered in the nineteenth century, lost, rediscovered in a private collection and translated in 1913, which gives a detailed description of the Tower and many of its measurements. This tablet was written about the 4th century B.C., by which time the Tower was in a ruinous condition but even so the information it contains shows unmistakably that it refers to the remains discovered by Koldewey in 1912 and to the Tower of Babel of Bible history.

The Tower stood in the centre of a great paved courtyard, measuring one-third of a mile each way, divided by a wall into two unequal portions, the southern part, the larger, being that which contained the Tower itself. The western wall of the courtyard was washed by the River Euphrates; its other walls faced upon three of the main roads of the city. Twelve gates gave access to this spacious area,

gates which had portals and side chambers very much of the design described by the Prophet Ezekiel in the vision of his Temple (see Ezek. 40.) In another respect also this ancient building bore resemblance to Ezekiel's Temple. Lining three sides of the courtyard there were a great number of small "chambers", or dwellings, similar to those described by Ezekiel as surrounding the Outer Court of the Temple. Something like forty or fifty of these dwellings—or, rather, of their foundations—have been excavated; the signs are that there may have been several hundred in all. It is surmised that here dwelt the priests who served in the ritual of the Tower and its associated Temple.

The Tower itself stood on an elevated platform six hundred feet square and was built, like all the "ziggurats" of Babylonia, in a series of stepped stages or terraces, each stage being smaller than the one below. The first stage was three hundred feet square, and was ascended by means of three wide stairways on the south side of the Tower. The successive stages, each ascended by similar stairways, diminished in size until the topmost, the seventh, about eighty feet square, was reached. Upon the top of this last stage, say the historians, there stood a sanctuary to Marduk or Bel, the god of Babylon, built entirely of gold, which caught and reflected the sun's rays to the sightseers standing far below. The height of the entire edifice was about six hundred feet—half as high again as the Great Pyramid in Egypt and taller than any building since erected by man until the era of New York's "skyscrapers" during this present century.

The whole of this enormous building was constructed of brick. Koldewey found that the central core, a mass of nearly two hundred feet square at ground level, was of sun-dried brick, and the outer casing, fifty feet thick all round, was of hard burnt brick—the oldest baked bricks in the world. Thus is the Scripture record confirmed to the smallest detail; "let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly" (thoroughly). The Seleucid tablet indicates that the lowermost stage, one hundred and ten feet high, was ornamented by gigantic buttresses reaching up the sides; in 1914 excavations on the north side of the Tower revealed the foundations of twelve of these buttresses. Buttresses, tower sides and stairways alike would most certainly have been embellished with enamelled bricks of various colours, and sculptures of the gods of Babylon and mythological monsters; although no traces of these remain, similar ones have been found in other ruins in Babylon.

This great structure was called by the Babylonians "E-temenanki", "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth". Its foundation, they believed, was rooted in *sheol*, the underworld, and its top was

the place of contact and communion with heaven, the habitation of the gods. Thus set, they believed it could never be overthrown nor destroyed, but would endure to all eternity. The inscriptions of successive kings, even so late as in the days of the prophet Daniel and after, repeat this belief time and time again, a striking testimony to the prevalence of that first object with which the Tower was built, as recorded in the Scriptures, "whose top shall reach into heaven".

Thus did the Tower stand, century after century, in all its ornate splendour, the meeting place between man and his false gods. To the south of the structure stood its associated Temple, known as "E-sagila", on a replica by "a magnificent building where was a golden image of the god Marduk weighing, according to Herodotus, nearly four tons. Once every year Marduk was taken for an outing. Seated in his royal conveyance, and accompanied by his son, the god Nebo, who had been specially conducted from his own temple (the now ruined Birs-Nimrud) at Borsippa fourteen miles away, he was conveyed along the Royal Road past the East Gate of E-temenanki, to the royal palaces and the gate sacred to the goddess Ishtar (Venus). Having paid his respects to this very important lady, he went on to the Euphrates where the state barge was in waiting, and having been duly installed in same, travelled by river to the West Gate of E-temenanki, where he landed and proceeded to his own special lodging, a shrine standing on the west side of the

Tower. Here he remained for eleven days while ceremonies were performed in his honour, and at the end of that time he was carried back by the way he had come. It was this ritual conveyance of Babylon's gods from place to place that was referred to so scornfully by Isaiah when he said "They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet shall he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble." (Isa. 46. 7.)

So the builders went on with their work, heedless of the watching eye of God, confident in their own powers and ability to achieve their design. Words not to be penned for another two millenniums might well have been spoken prophetically of them as they laboured. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." (Psa. 2, 1-5.)

So, watching their works, and listening to their words, and knowing the thoughts and intents of their hearts, when the time was ripe the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

(To be continued)

Love of the Brethren a Crucial Test

Mature counsel on Christian living

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."—Psa. 133. 1.

Psalm 133 is evidently prophetic and seems to refer to the brethren in "the Church, which is the Body of Christ". This thought is implied in the second verse, which says, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment", which is a picture of the Holy Spirit running down over the Body of Christ, the Church.

The Psalm seems to be specially applicable to our day, although it has always been a pleasant sight to see brethren dwelling together in unity. In times of persecution there would be greater unity, because there would be fewer likely to attach themselves to the Church; outside persecutions would

be likely to deter all but the truly consecrated. Such persecutions all would be likely to feel, and only those who had common interest and common cause would be drawn together.

But as persecution would cease and as more would come into the Church, who were not so zealous, the opportunities for differences would seem to increase. Although to-day there is much opposition to the children of light, there is, apparently, little persecution. The Truth has attracted a number, some of whom, probably, are not all that they should be. In fact, none of them are what they desire to be—copies of God's dear Son; but each and all should be striving to attain to the standard.

It might at first seem strange that there would be any friction between these favoured children of God. One would suppose that their hearts would

be so filled with the Holy Spirit that there would be no room for the works of hatred, envy, strife, jealousy, and that these would be crowded out by the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps such was the condition when we first made our consecration; and there was no room for these works of the flesh. But it seems that the causes of friction are increasing rather than diminishing. It is proper, therefore, that we should note the source of the difficulty and thus be enabled to ward off the danger and to be peacemakers amongst the brethren. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." (Rom. 15. 1.) If this standard be the measure, there are not so many strong as we might have hoped; therefore, it behoves each of us to become strong and helpful to the weak brethren in the Church.

One thing to be considered is that there is more opportunity for friction amongst those who are spirit-begotten New Creatures than there is amongst the world, as a whole. This statement might seem strange at first, but becomes more apparent as we examine. With those more enlightened there is a greater activity of mind, of thought. We love all things provided for us by our Heavenly Father. We discuss these—and there is much opportunity for discussion; for as no two persons look exactly alike, so no two persons think exactly alike. Some of the Lord's people boast that they do their own thinking. But the wisest course is for us to do our own believing. Some subjects are matters of inference and not of knowledge. We are taught of God. He tells us thus and so in His Word, and, if we accept these propositions as they come from the Lord, we can do so without too much discussion. It is pleasant, of course, for us to philosophise on the teachings of God's Word; it is our privilege to believe that which the Lord has stated to us. But whatever philosophising we do should be kept in restraint and in harmony with the Divine statement. And when we remember that while we are philosophising each other one is philosophising also, we see where comes in the doctrinal difficulty.

These different doctrinal matters are drawn from the Scriptures. But as soon as we begin to reason about the things not written, there is danger of conflict. Whoever sticks most closely to the Word of God will thereby not only do himself good, but will also be able to avoid controversy with other brethren and their philosophies. We presume that the Lord would not be averse to our having certain reflections along certain lines. We are, nevertheless, to remember that if we have a thought and present it to the brethren, and it does not seem logical to them, we are not to force it upon them, nor are they to force their views upon us. The difficulty seems to be that there is a tendency in such matters

to fight each thought to the finish, to want everybody to agree with us, whereas the proper way is to be content and let the matter rest.

Each brother has a right to his own opinion. We have no right to make our own views tests. The things that are tests are the things given us in the Scriptures; as, for instance, it is a test with us and as to our standing with the brethren that we should believe that Jesus Christ is the Anointed One and the Saviour of the world; that we are to be joint-heirs with Him and share in His inheritance; that we are bought with a price; that we are to have share with our Lord in the sufferings of this present time and in the glories to follow. Such plain Scriptural statements are to be the ground of our belief, and not any fanciful interpretations put on them by some others. Some see the more general outlines; some see the details and fail to see the general outline. While those who possess the different casts of mind are to be neither blamed nor praised, yet they must grasp the thought that we are to be willing to suffer for the Truth—in our loyalty to God, to the brethren and to the Truth in general.

We are to remember that these brethren who find it so difficult to dwell together in unity have this difficulty in part because of their real intrinsic worth, or character. There are some people whose characters are like putty; there are others in whom you can make a momentary dent, as in a rubber ball; still others are like diamonds. The class that are diamond-like have attained a firmness of texture, of character. The Lord is not looking for the rubber ball class now nor for the putty class. In due time the Lord will deal with all classes—the people who are of the putty kind and the people who are of the rubber ball kind. But we know that the Truth is appealing now only to the jewel class, the diamond class.

When learning that there is danger of stumbling each other, wounding each other, the knowledge should give us wisdom. We should be appreciative of the fact that our brethren have real characters. Even their differences show character. We should try to appreciate the fact and so exercise ourselves as not to irritate them. We are to counsel them, and to remember that they, as New Creatures, are just as desirous of pleasing the Lord as we are. We must, therefore, have patience with each other. There is one text in the New Testament which declares, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3. 14.) The intimation is that some of the brethren would be hard to love, and that, unless we had passed from death unto life, we would be unable to love them.



THE QUESTION BOX



Q.—In Col. 3. 1-10 we are told in vs. 6 that “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” and in vs. 8 that we must “put off” wrath among other undesirable traits of character. If wrath is one of God’s characteristics why are we counselled to put it off?

A.—The dictionary definition of “wrath” or “anger” is “emotion or passion aroused by a sense of wrong”. Divine “wrath” is referred to about twenty-four times in the New Testament and in many cases the context shows that the word includes the idea of judgment. Divine wrath always appears in connection with sin and against sin. The Greek word is sometimes used in classical Greek writings to refer to the punishment of evil doers. So we have “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3. 7.) “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness.” (Rom. 1. 18.) “The great day of his wrath is come” (Rev. 6. 17.) In every case where the expression “the wrath of God” or its equivalent is used it refers to the determinate counsel and will of God proceeding to the execution of judgment against sin. There is no thought of the hasty rashness that usually accompanies human manifestations of wrath, and that is where the difference lies. A man may be angry or wrathful from a perfectly proper motive, such as indignation at some act of meanness or cruelty committed by another; but in his imperfect state he is liable to allow his anger to get the better of his judgment and lead to some violent action which in itself might be wrong. Hence the Apostle warns us against anger and wrath because we are not yet fit to be trusted with the power of executing judgment upon evil. We are unable to be completely dispassionate and absolutely just in our estimation of the matter that has called forth our anger and therefore we are told, in another place, to “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” (I Cor. 4. 5.) The wrath of God is scrupulously fair and just; ours is not; that is the difference.

Q.—What is the meaning of our Lord’s words in Matt. 10. 23 when, sending the disciples out to preach in the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, He said “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come?” Did He refer to His Second Coming?

A.—The most reasonable understanding of the text is that He did. In sending out the disciples He told them, among other things, that they would be delivered up and brought before kings and

governors, and would be “hated of all men for my name’s sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved”. Now that, at least, did not happen to the twelve disciples until after the death of Jesus. Verses 17-22 are more truly descriptive of the persecutions and apostasy of the Gospel Age than of the disciples’ experiences whilst Jesus was with them. It seems evident therefore that Jesus was speaking to the disciples as representing all who would follow in their steps in after years. The commission He had just given the disciples, to go forth and preach “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (vs. 7) is the same commission that He afterwards expressed in the words “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark 16. 15.) That witness was to continue until His return, as we have it in the well-known words of Matt. 24. 14, “And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” This 24th Chapter repeats the warning given in Chap. 10 that the true believers would be delivered up and persecuted, and that some would betray their brethren. The expression “Son of man be come” seems clearly to point back to Daniel 7 and the vision of the Second Advent. It seems then that Jesus meant to convey that the mission upon which He was then sending His disciples would continue for the rest of their lives, and throughout the lives of all the believers who would follow them, generation after generation, until He should come again. They thought that He would return in their own lifetime; events proved otherwise, but it is still true that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached continually until the full revelation of the Lord upon the Throne of His glory.

PRACTICAL LIVING

The Christian life must be a practical one—a living out in the daily life of the many wonderful precepts and holy maxims found in the word of God. In a day when so many amazing features of the Divine purposes have been made clear—and there has been so much to learn, and so many things to define and classify—it could become an easy matter to allow the practice of the precepts to fade considerably from view. From so many quarters come the challenging appeals to “think” for oneself and to alter and adjust our thinking to this or that new definition that we could easily slide into the position of being “hearers of the word” only and not “doers,” giving up all our thought and attention to rectifying our doctrinal differences in preference to every other thing.

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Paul was a plain uncompromising teacher. When he knew he had the truth, he spoke it with confidence, and boldly declared that everything contrary to it was false doctrine; and he taught his disciples that it was not only their privilege, but their duty also, to be *established* in the faith and to know, on the evidence of God's Word why they believed, and to be able to give to every man that inquired for it a reason for the hope that was in them.

* * *

Whose "voice" is the most attractive to you — the voice of God, coming it may be, from some uncouth, perhaps common vessel? Or is the voice of human intelligence, the cultured but unchristian voice, the silver-toned voice of human "show", the voice that draws your undivided attention. We read of those who "know His voice".

We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. We should not wonder if in the beginning we often fail in our endeavours but that at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care and to our exceeding great delight.

* * *

The sculptor sees his masterpiece before ever the chisel touches the flawless marble: the musician conceives his galaxies of sound before ever pen is laid to paper. So God conceived His great masterpiece, Christ — unique, exclusive, peerless, perfect — a thing such as only an Omniscient and Omnipotent God could conceive. And, up to the sublime heights of this conception, this ideal, God must develop the material to make His instrument.

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