



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

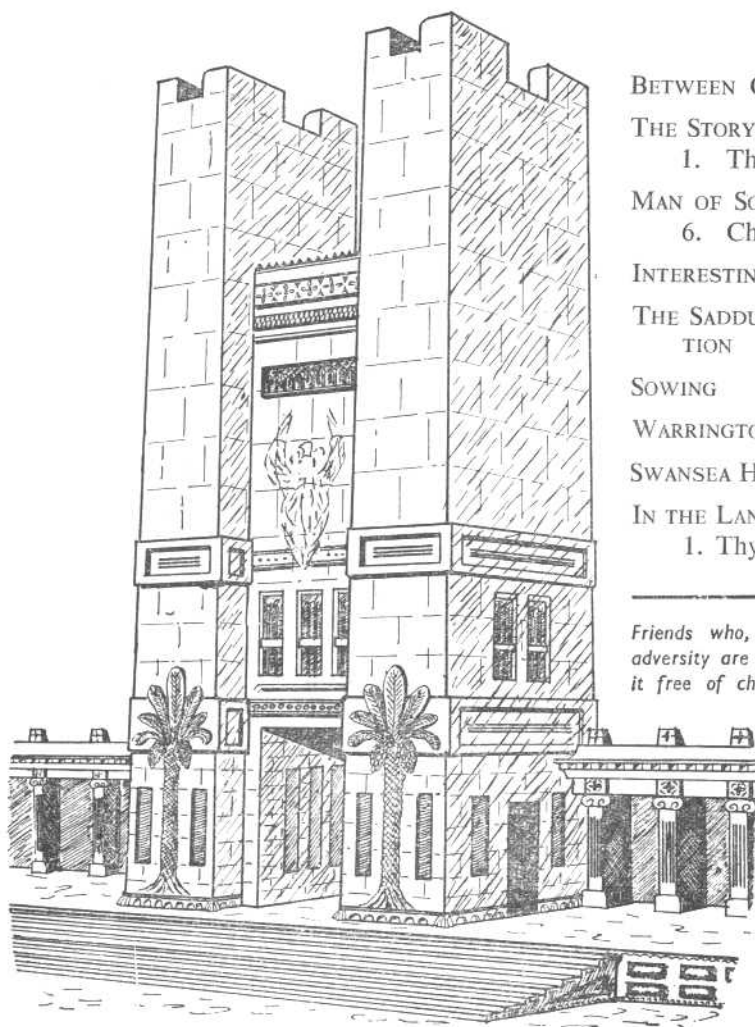
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CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	2
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD			
1. The End of a World	...		3
MAN OF SORROWS			
6. Chastened of God	...	...	5
INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED	...		7
THE SADDUCEES AND THE RESURREC- TION	...	...	8
SOWING	...	...	11
WARRINGTON ASSEMBLY	...	...	14
SWANSEA HOME-GATHERING	...	...	14
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN			
1. Thy children shall come again			15

*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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Bible Study Monthly

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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported partly by the fixed subscription, and for the rest, by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

These columns stress two important Scriptural truths, namely:

That God will not eternally condemn any one of His creatures until there has been a full and fair opportunity to learn and appreciate the difference between good and evil and the reason for God's decree that evil and evil-doers must ultimately perish.

That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Warrington announce that plans are in hand for the usual Easter Convention in that city. Further details will appear in due course and programmes will be circulated through the medium of the "*Monthly*".

* * *

Arrangements are being made for the usual London Convention at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, during the August Bank Holiday season next. Details will be available later and programmes will be circulated through the medium of the "*Monthly*".

* * *

The leaflet (No. 151) "*World Conversion—When?*" which was recently published and almost immediately went out of print, has been reprinted and is now available in stock at 1/9 for 25 and 12/6 per 100 (25c. and \$1.75 respectively in Canada and U.S.A.). This has proved a very much sought after leaflet and we are glad therefore to be able to continue the supply.

* * *

In response to a number of requests and suggestions we are resuming, for the next few months, the series of short fictional descriptions of life in the Millennial Age which was featured

some years ago, this time under the general title "*In the Land of Beginning Again*". Each of these little sketches pictures some aspect of the resurrection and the blessings that will come to mankind under the beneficent rule of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ "at His appearing and His Kingdom". Each sketch is in line with Scriptural teaching on the subject and generally illustrates some particular Scripture text, and the object of the series is to make these things more real to those who are not so appreciative of a philosophical treatise on the subject as they would be of a pen picture of the same. "*Truth, embodied in a tale, may enter in at lowly doors*" wrote the poet Tennyson, and experience goes to confirm the truth of that observation.

* * *

The book "*Plan of God in Brief*", in the Hebrew language, so generously furnished by our American friends, the "*Bible Harmony Truth Associates*" is available, on request, to Rabbis of the Jewish faith, free of charge, and to other readers at 5/3 post free. It is of course of use only to readers of Hebrew. We will be happy to send a copy to any Rabbi whose name and address is furnished us by any of our readers or other friends. The book is excellent practice for anyone studying the Hebrew language.

FREE TRACTS

Two-minute Tracts.

101 Times of Restitution.	109 Creation of Man.	113 The Three Worlds.
102 Call of the Church.	110 The Second Advent.	114 Times of Gentiles.
103 Day of Judgment.	111 Armageddon.	115 Satan.
104 Where are the Dead?	112 Restoration of Israel.	116 Angels that Sinned.
	105 What is the Soul?	
	106 The Bible Hell.	
	107 The Son of God.	
	108 The Holy Spirit.	

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 1. The End of a World

Of all the stories, histories and traditions that have captivated the minds of men, that of the great Flood which once destroyed the world seems to hold first place. It has found its way in one form or another into practically every nation and tribe on the face of the earth and references to the great catastrophe appear in the annals of nearly every generation from the present back to the beginning of history. Christian, Jew and Moslem, pagan peoples and savage peoples, all have their particular versions of the event, agreeing in the main and differing only in detail. Ancient civilisations of the Mediterranean immortalised the story in poem and song; colonies of aborigines in South America, in India and China kept alive the legend by oral repetition from father to son. The Jews enshrined the story in the Bible; the Moslems in the Koran. One of the oldest literary compositions the world possesses, the "*Epic of Gilgamesh*" written probably earlier than 2300 B.C. and therefore before the days of Abraham, preserves the Sumerian version whilst at the other end of history the daily newspapers of the past few years have recorded the efforts—and failures—of various expeditions which have set out from Britain, America and Holland to explore Mount Ararat in the expectation of finding the remains of the Ark. And the fact that this latest—and somewhat belated—enthusiasm for the verification of Scriptural truth, coinciding as it does with a certain tendency in the political world to surround Russia with observation posts, has drawn from the Soviet Government the not unreasonable comment that the alleged search is but a cover for other and vastly different activities (Ararat is on the Russian frontier) makes no difference to the editorial view that such expeditions constitute "news" in the newspaper sense of the term.

Any attempt to tell the story of the Flood, therefore, must involve references to a great many historians and writers, from the unnamed scribe who first penned the story which appears in the Book of Genesis and in a different form in the "*Epic of Gilgamesh*", to the equally anonymous journalists and others of our own generation busily writing up vivid accounts of men of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries who claim to have climbed—or flown over—the celebrated mountain and seen with their own eyes the ruins of the famous vessel. It must take into account

the incidental evidences afforded by the discoveries of archæologists and the investigations of geologists, for the rocks of the earth and relics of past ages have some testimony to offer. Likewise the studies of astronomers and geographers have much to contribute when it comes to considering the natural causes of the catastrophe; the fact that it was a visitation of Divine judgment upon a sinful world makes it no less true that the Flood was a stupendous cataclysm of Nature.

First and foremost to the Christian, however, comes the moral and dispensational teaching of the story. This was the first example in the history of humanity of what may be termed collective judgment—the execution of a judicial sentence upon a whole community which had transgressed the law. As such it was an assurance of the active intervention of God in human affairs when the state of society demands such intervention. The Flood was the end of a world, the wiping of the slate clean and the making of a fresh start. We in this day live in just such another period, another climax of human wickedness and rebellion which is to bring down fresh Divine judgment, another end of a world, and another fresh start. The story is of surpassing interest to us to-day on that account, for it exemplifies the principles upon which Divine judgment operates, and it shows above all things that with the onset of judgment there comes also a means of deliverance through repentance. The men of the antediluvian world were not left without warning of what was to come; any who wished could have been saved in the same way as was Noah and his family. It need not be assumed that the patriarch was the only man of his generation who knew how to build a boat. The exercise of belief in the message which was being proclaimed and the necessary activity in harmony therewith would have enabled many more—in fact "whosoever would"—to be saved. But no one believed, save the one family, and so they all perished.

The promise of the future is associated with all this. After the storm comes the rainbow. For the first time in the Bible there appears the Divine guarantee of perpetuity for the earth and its inhabitants. God makes a covenant, not only with man, but with the lower creation as well, affirming His intention that no more would the earth be

physically depopulated as it had been then. The earth is to be the scene of the Divine promises, and for the fulfilment of those promises it is essential that the earth should remain. The second progenitor of the human race will succeed where the first one failed. In that we have a clear anticipation of the inspired words of St. Paul three thousand years later, when he declared that although by the First Adam came death, by the Second Adam there will come the resurrection from the dead and restoration to the full glory of God. In the Sumerian legend, which is a considerably distorted version of the original story from which the Genesis account is also drawn, Noah and his wife were endowed with immortality and taken to dwell with the gods in the Sumerian Paradise. That, after all, may have been but an early poet's realisation of the fact that only by means of the cleansing effected by the Flood could men hope to obtain the exalted status of sons of God and enter at last into the everlasting inheritance which God has prepared.

To this day the lands of ancient Sumeria, Babylon and Assyria, the modern Iraq, abound with legends of the great Flood, handed down from father to son through the generations. Even were there no written records surviving and no Bible account, the entire story could be reconstructed in detail. The ruins of Shuruppak, the city where Noah is supposed to have lived before the Flood, are still there. The place where he built the Ark and the nearby village where his wife was born are pointed out to the credulous. The course of the Ark during the hundred and fifty days that it was afloat can be plotted from the various stories, including the near escape from shipwreck on Mount Sinjar in western Iraq and its final landing in the northern mountains. To the extent that such traditions help to fill up gaps in the Bible narrative they can be viewed with a certain amount of interest, for some of them at least may well possess a basis of truth, surviving their telling and re-telling through the ages. We need not think that men have remembered nothing whatever of the Flood save the details that are recorded in the Book of Genesis.

The story of the Flood and its relation to the overruling purposes of God, the Divine Plan, can only be understood when something of the condition of the antediluvian world is appreciated. The record says "*and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" (Gen. 6.5.) It is difficult fully to comprehend the significance of that statement. This was not just a hasty or prejudiced generalisa-

tion such as, from time to time, is issued by some social or ecclesiastical authority. This was a considered and dispassionate statement of the situation. Humanity had degenerated to a level far below that which exists in the worst of our decaying civilisations of to-day. The unanimous verdict of antiquity was that the world had never at any other time known a wickedness so great as that which existed just before the Flood. The Bible, rightly understood, reveals the prime cause of that wickedness. It is left to the apocryphal books, notably the "*Book of Enoch*" to dwell in detail upon the conditions of that dying age and the manner in which judgment came, but the Bible does, in two verses, indicate quite positively that the incidence of sin upon the earth was tremendously accelerated and intensified by a rebellion among the angels.

The plain implication of Gen. 6.1 is so strange to the thought of modern times that theologians and scholars have resorted to all kinds of expedients to find alternative explanations. This is not the place to go into this particular matter in detail, but it may be said in order to present a picture of the world as it was before the Flood that the "sons of God" of Gen. 6.1 can be no other than the angels. That was the fixed belief of the Jews throughout their history and remained the belief in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Some of the angels, rebelling against God, left their own high estate, materialised as human beings, thus quitting the spiritual world for the material, and in this condition took the daughters of men as wives. The offspring of these unnatural unions, only half-human, were pictured in later legend as brutish monsters that roamed the earth ravaging, killing and devouring, until men went in terror of them. What kind of creatures they were we do not certainly know; the implication in Genesis is that they were wiped out by the Flood, and the New Testament rounds off the story by declaring that their angelic-become-demonic fathers were thereafter restrained, as St. Jude puts it "*in everlasting chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*" (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2.4; I Pet. 1.19-20.)

So ended the first great Age of human history. It opened in the serene loveliness of Eden, without a whisper or shadow of sin to mar the happiness of the first human beings to walk this earth. It closed, something like two thousand years later, a dark, noisome cesspit of all iniquity, an order of society fit only for destruction. Men had been given every power to make of the primitive earth a beautiful and luxuriant habitation in which they could live endless lives given over to continued

progress in the knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. Instead, they chose, and willingly chose, the way of sin, even to the extent of allying themselves with those who in the heavens had also rebelled against God. Too late, they discovered the unnameable horrors to which that alliance had subjected them, and, in the picturesque language of the author of the First Book of Enoch, "*the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones . . . and as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven.*"

But the consequences of evil are not so lightly to be mitigated. God in His mercy heard that cry and sent deliverance—but the deliverance was

what we in our day would call "long-term". The wisdom of God declared that the mere removal of that fearful oppression would not of itself effect complete reformation. Men groaned under the tyranny but they themselves were still wedded to sin. Only the supreme experience of death, coupled later on with the coming of that day when all men are to stand before the Great White Throne to hear the conditions of eternal life or eternal death rehearsed in their ears, would or will effect that. The rot had gone too far; there had to be a clean sweep and a fresh start.

So God sent the Flood.

To be continued.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part 6.—CHASTENED OF GOD

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed". (vs. 5).

This is the second verse affirming the substitutionary character of our Lord's sufferings. He suffered these things by the hand of man and he endured them on behalf of man. Zechariah, more than two centuries later, must have remembered this passage when he cried "They shall look upon the one whom they pierced and shall mourn for him". The word here rendered "wounded" means "pierced" and has the significance of being thrust through with a weapon in a manner that inevitably causes death. Psa. 22. 16 uses the same word when in that noble lament that has so often been taken as prophetic of Jesus' sufferings—it certainly does at least refer to the sufferings of Israel as a nation—the Psalmist sings "*the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet*". That prophecy was of course fulfilled literally in the case of Jesus on the Cross, as were so many of the other prophetic declarations of the 22nd Psalm. It is by no means unreasonable therefore to conclude that Isaiah, inspired as he was by the Holy Spirit of God, did have that Psalm in his mind as he uttered, and perhaps wrote, the splendid words of his 53rd chapter. The Lord's servant of Isa. 53, despised and rejected, is the same as the one who cries his solemn lament in Psa. 22. And just as in Psa. 22 the lament changes at the end into a joyful expression of faith in the eventual outcome, a confidence that at the end God will deliver and vindicate

His loyal one, so in Isa. 53 the well-nigh hopeless strain turns at the end into a song of praise to God who has set the insignia of royalty upon the despised and rejected one, and vindicated and exalted Him at last in the sight of all people. There is a correspondency between Psa. 22 and Isa. 53 that is well worth studying.

When Zechariah spoke of the great mourning that is to sweep regathered Israel in the last days (Zech. 12) consequent upon their looking upon the One Whom they had pierced, it is this final vindication which he sees. Isaiah and the writer of Psalm 22 saw this final glorious outcome from the standpoint of God in heaven; the faithful servant who had endured unto death, innocently, willingly taking the place of the sons of men who themselves had merited this judgment, exalted at last to the right hand of the majesty on high, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it. Zechariah, on the other hand, is standing on the earth at the Last Day. He sees the regathered and resurrected Israelites of all nations gathered around their King, the once rejected and crucified Saviour, and now they are weeping tears of contrition and repentance. Through that mourning will come cleansing, and ultimately reconciliation with God and a lifting of the burden of all their transgressions and all their sins. It is in that sense that He was pierced for their transgressions and for those of the whole world.

"Bruised for our iniquities". The Hebrew is far more forceful. "*He was crushed.*"! It is the strongest word the Hebrew language has to denote severity of suffering unto death. Isaiah uses

the word elsewhere. In 3. 15 he says "What mean ye that ye *beat* my people to *pieces* . . . saith the Lord." That was a question addressed directly to those who were oppressing the people of the Lord and destroying them by their rapacity. Again, in describing the coming doom of the Egyptians, he says in 19. 10 "they shall be broken in the purposes thereof". Pierced to death for our transgressions; crushed into lifelessness for our iniquities; that was the destiny to which His great love for the world of men which God had made led Him, that He might eventually save that world. To say that He died for our sins is a simple truth but a tremendous understatement of the facts. It was in conditions of well-nigh inconceivable suffering that our Lord gave His life in our behalf. He did not merely die for us; He also suffered for us.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed". Here we begin to enter a new realm, the consequences of these things to us. This word, the chastisement of our peace, means literally the chastisement by which our peace is effected. The word does mean to chastise as with whips and is so used in the memorable passage where Rehoboam promised his subjects that where his father Solomon had chastised them with whips he would do so with scorpions. The expression really does refer therefore to a scourging inflicted if not by way of punishment at least in order to coerce into submission. But the word is derived from a root which means "to instruct"; the dividing line between chastening and instruction is very thin in the Bible. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is a maxim that has support in the Old Testament. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth". We might therefore, without wresting the meaning of this verse, take it to give some indication at least that the chastisement laid upon our Lord was in some sense a means of chastening or instructing the sons of men in the way that leads to peace. That brings us very near again to the doctrine of the Sin-Offering. "He hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering, this word means) for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". (2. Cor. 5. 21.) Once again we have to remember that it is by means of the "Ransom for All", our Lord's actual death on the Cross, that all men without exception are released from the death imposed on them through Adamic transgression, and restored to conscious life in the resurrection to receive the opportunity of reconciliation and lasting life guaranteed them by that Ransom; but it is by the Sin-Offering, pictured in the Levitical sacrifice and fulfilled in our Lord's conscious pouring

out of His life unto death (Isa. 53. 12) that men will receive the power and inspiration necessary to reap the benefit of the Ransom and walk up the Highway of Holiness to perfection of life. That is why, here in verse 5, Isaiah tells us that both the suffering and the discipline which alike are included in the word "chastisement" is laid upon Him that we might eventually attain peace. In those stripes which fell upon Him we shall at the end be healed. The Book of Hebrews declares this same thing. "It became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings". "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him". (Heb. 2. 10; 5. 8-9.) There is much in the mystic power for righteousness set free by the Sin-Offering that we do not as yet understand, but one of its most obvious aspects is the moral appeal to men's better nature engendered by the realisation that He did indeed willingly bear our griefs and carry our sorrows and accept our chastisement. It is that more than anything else which will lead men to cry out rapturously "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation". (Isa. 24. 9.)

There is a cryptic word in the Book of Proverbs which has some connection with this theme. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise". (Prov. 15. 31.) That word "reproof" is the same that is here rendered "chastisement", and it has the same underlying meaning. The "reproof of life" is that stern discipline, chastening, amounting when necessary to chastisement, which leads the subject of the "reproof" to life. The following verse declares that the one who refuses instruction is a despiser of his own soul. The one who willingly becomes subject to the reproof of life, the discipline, chastening, which is necessary to eternal life, shall abide among the wise—a clear reference to those who at the consummation of the Divine Plan in the end of the Millennial Age will be adjudged worthy to be never-dying citizens of the everlasting earth. So we can look upon our Lord as one Who willingly took upon Himself the obligations and duties, the humiliation and suffering, of those who must receive chastening at God's hand that they be reconciled to Him and fitted for their eternal inheritance. He stooped down to us and became as one of us, that we might be lifted up to Him and become like Him, sons of the living God.

To be continued.

INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he". (Matt. 11. 11).

This was a most difficult text to understand until in these closing days of the Age the Scriptural teaching regarding the "two salvations" began to be recovered from the oblivion into which it had fallen for over a thousand years. The repute of John the Baptist, in his own day as well as in ours, was such that it seemed most unreasonable to class him as inferior to the least in the kingdom of heaven. It is realised now that Jesus was speaking of the spiritual phase of His Kingdom, that phase which He was even then about to open but into which John the Baptist could never enter because he died before the death of his Master, and it is laid down that none of those who eventually become members of the Church, the Body of Christ, who are to reign with Him in the heavens, shall precede Him into glory. He is to be "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8. 29.) The Divine Plan provides that in the Millennial Age there shall be earthly rulers as well as heavenly rulers. The earthly rulers will be those heroes of faith of Old Testament times who "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness . . . out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight—were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword . . . of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11. 33-38.) All of these lived before the Lord Jesus Christ consummated His sacrifice but they were of exactly the same calibre as those who in after days have been faithful unto death in discharge of their Christian mission. John the Baptist was admittedly the greatest of those ancient heroes and will assuredly occupy an honoured place in the administration of the earthly Kingdom when it is established; but because the spiritual is immeasurably higher than the earthly it must be true, as Jesus said, that the least in that spiritual Kingdom occupies a more exalted plane of being than the greatest and noblest of God's earthly children.

There is no injustice here. In the providence of God each of His creatures is supreme in its own sphere. Perfect man, living his life upon the restored and transformed earth, will feel no jealousy of the higher angelic creation and have no longing to change places. God in His wisdom will have

seen to it that each one is perfectly satisfied and happy with the place in creation to which God has assigned him. "He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing".

* * *

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment". (Heb. 9.7.)

Sometimes quoted as though it referred to the inevitability of final judgment immediately after death, this text really has no connection with human death and the future life at all. The ninth chapter of Hebrews is contrasting the old Levitical sacrifices conducted in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later in the Temple of Solomon, with the reality, Christ and His sacrifice on man's behalf, toward which they pointed. The chapter shows that every detail of that ancient sacrificial ritual had its corresponding reality. The only difference was that in the type, the High Priest had to offer the sacrifice every year, year by year continually, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself once for all. It is clear from the ritual narrative in Lev. 9 and 16 that the High Priest in laying his hands on the sacrificial bullock was declaring in effect that its death on the altar represented his own death; after the blood of the sacrifice had been sprinkled on the Propitiatory in the Most Holy he came forth to the people, arrayed in his splendid priestly vestments, lifted up his hand and blessed the people. Verse 7 draws the analogy between all this and the reality in Christ. "As it is appointed unto men (the High Priests, successively in their generations) once to die (in the sacrifice of the animals offered), but after this the judgment: (Divine decree as to acceptance of the sacrifice and consequent freedom of the people from sin, manifested in the fire coming down from heaven to consume the burnt-offering). So Christ was once offered (like the bullock of sin-offering) and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time (like the High Priest coming out of the Tabernacle to bless the waiting people) without sin unto salvation". This "appearing the second time" is of course fulfilled in reality by the long-awaited Second Advent of Christ, for the blessing and salvation of the world.

The old Lollards were called "Holdfasts," not only because of their firmness under persecution, but of their strong grasp of the truth.

The Sadducees and the Resurrection

A consideration of Luke 20. 27-40

"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife". (Luke 20, 33).

The Sadducees, who were the materialist philosophers of Jesus' day, did not believe in a resurrection to a future life and had no use for Jesus' teaching of a coming Messianic Kingdom in which "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth". (John 5. 28.) They despised the simple faith of women like Martha who knew that her dead brother Lazarus would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day". (John 11. 24.) And they thought they had found a weak point in the argument, to put Jesus in a quandary. So they came to Him with their question.

The question was based on the old Mosaic law which sought to prevent any family inheritance passing to another line in consequence of there being no male heir in the particular family. Moses had provided that in the event of a man dying without leaving a son to inherit his estate, his widow was not free to re-marry whom she pleased, neither was she at liberty to remain single. It was the obligation and duty of the dead man's nearest brother to take the widow as his wife. The first-born son of that union was then to be accounted, from the legal standpoint, not the son of his father, but the son of the dead man, and that first-born became heir to the dead man's property, taking his family name and behaving in all ways as if he were in reality his son. By means of this custom it was hoped to keep every family inheritance in the line of the family to which it had originally belonged. Whether the custom was ever carried out in its fulness or whether it was even really practicable in later times when Israel grew into a great nation is not material to the point now at issue. Suffice it, thought these Sadducees, that here is something which cannot possibly fit into this fantastic teaching about men and women being resurrected from the dead to live on earth again.

Thus it was that Jesus listened patiently whilst they unfolded their story. There were seven brothers, good Israelites all and zealous for the laws of their fathers. The eldest was married but unfortunately he died without leaving an heir. The second son, obedient to the Law, married the widow with the intention of raising up seed to his brother. Most regrettably, he died also, without

having achieved his object. The third brother was no less zealous in his devotion to the Law, and without delay he married the already twice widowed woman. His good intentions were cut short by his own untimely demise and the unfortunate wife was passed on in turn to brothers four, five, six and seven, all of whom died in turn without son or heir. It is perhaps not surprising to learn that after this series of matrimonial disasters, the woman died also, leaving seven inheritances without owners.

Incidentally the story as framed by these Sadducees is a bitter commentary on the contempt in which women were held in the days of the First Advent. These men saw nothing unusual or distasteful in the idea of this unfortunate wife being passed on from man to man seven times repeated. The point of their question would have been equally well made had there been only two husbands involved, but they had to make it seven. The woman in the story was viewed merely as a means of producing the desired heir to the inheritance and apart from that received no consideration at all. It is important to bear that fact in mind when considering this incident.

With sly malice therefore the fateful question was brought into the open. The seven men and the woman have all been raised from the dead and stand upon earth again, alive and virile. *"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife!"*

It is only when one considers for a moment the nature of the Mosaic laws regarding marriage that one realises just how diabolically clever was that question. It was not merely a matter of deciding which of the seven was the legal husband of the woman. The laws of Deut. 25 forbade any woman to return to her first husband after having been married to a second; to do so was "an abomination to the Lord". On that showing it would be necessary in the resurrection for this woman to remain the wife of the seventh husband. But the laws of Lev. 18 branded as criminal any man who stood in husbandly relationship to his brother's wife, during, of course, the brother's lifetime; and with the first brother now alive again and present before them there could be no doubt that his was the first legal marriage and therefore all the other six brothers were lawbreakers and also "abomination to the Lord". To whichever brother the Lord awarded the wife, therefore, He

would be recommending the breaking of one or another of the Mosaic laws on the subject and making one or more of the persons in the story into transgressors. To those legalistic minds there was no way out of the impasse; there could be no such thing as a resurrection without compelling someone or other to break the laws of Moses.

In addition to that already sufficiently condemning fact, there was also the question of the inheritances. With the seven brothers all back on earth, to whom would each property belong? The wife would have become the legal custodian of all seven estates after the death of the seventh brother, and until the birth of her first son—the son which was never born, for the Sadducees took care that in the story she died childless. But suppose in this new resurrected life she did bear a son to whichever husband secured the award of her as wife? Under the Law that son would become heir of all seven inheritances, whilst the seven original owners were standing by, morally if not legally each still entitled to his own property. There must have been a certain amount of rubbing of hands together as these learned men waited for Jesus to unravel this legal tangle.

His was a simple answer, and for all its unexpectedness it was incontrovertible. "Those deemed worthy to obtain that age, and that resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they can die no more, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection". (Luke 20, 35-36 Diaglott.) There was a world of meaning in those few simple words of Jesus, and most of it does not occur to our Western minds until we relate the answer to the question, and the background of the question.

Jesus was not referring to the world generally in His reply, and He was not referring to the institution of marriage as such. He was talking about the specific problem raised by these Sadducees, the relation of the Mosaic Law on remarriage of widows to the resurrection and mankind's future in the Millennial Age. The word "marry" in this text is one that refers to the action of a man taking a woman to be his wife, and is not used in this form to describe a woman entering into marriage. Likewise the word rendered "given in marriage" is one that refers to the giving of a woman to a man, as by a relative who thus formally hands her over much as a modern bride's father will "give away" his daughter at the ceremony, or as Ruth the Moabitess was given to Boaz to be his wife that he might raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. Both terms are consistent with the conclusion that Jesus was telling the Sadducees that in the future age

men would not take women in marriage for the purpose laid down in the Mosaic Law, neither would women be given in marriage for that purpose, *because men will die no more*, like the angels. Quite obviously in a world where there is no death the question of raising up an heir to a dead man's inheritance will never arise. Likewise the puzzle of deciding who will be the rightful heir to the inheritances is very simply resolved when it is realised, as Jesus made those men realise, that all men in the Millennial Age are sons or children of God, being children no longer of Adam by lineal descent, but children of God by virtue of the resurrection. Rights to inheritances which are dependent on lineal descent will no longer have any validity in a world where there is no such thing as lineal descent, and so here again the Sadducees' unspoken question fell to the ground.

In few words, Jesus answered the question, not by setting aside the law of Moses nor yet by nullifying its prohibitions, but by showing that the conditions which brought the Mosaic Law into being will no longer apply. The remarriage of widows to their brothers-in-law for the preservation of inheritances was an arrangement that owed its existence to the fact that death was in the world. Jesus showed that since in the next Age there will be no death the problem will never arise.

The expression applied to those who have been "deemed worthy to obtain that Age" to the effect that "neither *can* they die any more" is liable to provoke queries when it is remembered that if any man should give himself over to deliberate and incorrigible sin, in that day, he can and will assuredly die. It seems evident that Jesus is referring to the completed work of the Age and the fulness of resurrected life which is the portion of those who are adjudged righteous at the end of the Age when He uses the phrase "deemed worthy to obtain that Age and that resurrection". There is no question of worthiness in the first awakening from the sleep of death at the beginning of the Millennial Age. "All that are in their graves" said Jesus, and *all* it must be without reference to worthiness or to unworthiness. And in such case it is literally true that those who pass into the Ages of Glory, perfect and righteous, *cannot* die. It will be no more possible for a righteous man to die than for an unrighteous man to live. That is the Divine decree. God made man to live, and all the time that any man in those ages of eternity lives in harmony with righteousness he can do nothing else but live. Eternal life is as much a concomitant of righteousness as is eternal death of sin.

The A.V. text says that such are "equal to the

angels" which is manifestly incorrect. Man, even perfect man, is inferior to, and not equal to, the angels. Says the Psalmist "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him . . . Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels . . . thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thine hands*". (Psa. 8, 4-6.) The correct rendering of the text is as in the Diaglott—they can die no more because they are *like* angels, in the fact that they are perfect and sinless.

Jesus left quite untouched the wider question of the relationship of the sexes in the future Age. This text is sometimes taken as basis for the assertion that *human beings will be sexless in that Age*, neither man nor woman, but combining the qualities of both. There is really no evidence that Jesus intended to convey any such idea. The indications are in fact to the contrary. It is hardly likely that so revolutionary and unnatural a teaching would have won from some of the listening scribes the admiring admission "Master, thou hast well said". The question which inspired this glimpse of the future was not answered by saying there would no longer be men and women, but that there would no longer be death, and that disposed of the matter for good. There is also the fact that Jesus told them they ought to have known the answer to their question from the Scriptures: "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God*". Behind all the complicated legislation of Moses, which in the future Age is to be swept away, there lay the original Divine institution of marriage inherent in the original Divine ideal for mankind, and that is certainly not going to be swept away. The first chapter of Genesis gives us the culminating point to which Divine creation had attained prior to the entry of sin. God created man "*in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him; male and female*

created he them . . . and God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good". In the expanded account of man's creation which we have before us in the second chapter of Genesis the statement is plainly made that it was not good for man to be alone and therefore God ordained a companion for him. That was before sin entered, when there was at the very least the possibility that man might develop his inheritance as God had instructed him without ever yielding to sin. There is no reason for thinking that the dual principle which pervades nearly all Nature and certainly the whole of the higher orders of life, and was extended to man at his creation, is going to be changed, or that perfect humanity at the end of God's creative work is fundamentally any different to perfect humanity at the beginning of that work. The Scripture does not discourse in detail on the conditions of human existence after the consummation of the Divine Plan and the final defeat of evil; we can only reason from the general principles of God's creation, but so far as this particular aspect of the subject is concerned we are on fundamentally more secure ground in the first two chapters of Genesis than we would be by taking the incident of Luke 20 out of its context and applying it to something which was not in question and was not being discussed.

This incident is a striking example of the folly, so often manifested in the Gospels, of men who thought they could prove the fundamental unsoundness of Jesus' teaching. "*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures*". How often is the same thing repeated in our day! Men criticise and deride the message of the Kingdom because it contains principles which are not in operation to-day. Happy we if, like Jesus, we can base our message and our faith upon the unassailable Word of God, which "*liveth and abideth for ever*".

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The following eulogy was written many years ago by a Christian minister as depicting the aspect from which the typical thinking citizen of Pagan Rome regarded the Christians of that day. Although that assumption may or may not be justified, surely we would in our day ask for nothing better than that we should be regarded in the fashion expressed in these words.

"Mysterious people", might the perplexed and pensive heathen say within himself. "Mysterious people. Moving amongst us, and yet not seeming to be of us. Passing through the world without seeming to be deeply concerned in its forms or

fashions, its prizes or blanks; tranquil amidst its contentions, humble amidst its pomp, silent amidst its uproar, passive amidst its struggles, free amidst its bondage. Wrapped up, it should appear, in thoughts of your own, which work in you pursuits of your own; happy in yourselves, and never so happy as when shedding quiet blessings on all around you. How have your ways won on me, durst I but say so. How has your simple character told its tale on me, more touchingly than all the arguments of philosophy, more convincingly than all the logic of the schools. How have you almost persuaded me to be a Christian".

SOWING

A word of exhortation

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap".

(Ecc. 11. 4.) These words may be summed up as unnecessary caution. It describes the position of one who fears to act lest . . . ; something is holding him back; he notes the wind and postpones the sowing until a more favourable day; he beholds the clouds and defers the reaping. Several ways of applying the teaching come readily to the mind. We may think of one who knows somewhat of the purposes of God; he realises his great debt to God and Christ for the work of salvation unmerited and free. He feels that his gratitude for all should show itself in more than verbal thanks. He has come to that point which we refer to as Rom. 12. 1. He knows that the Christian way is no easy road; and he hesitates. Observing the winds, he fails to sow. In such a position of mind the winds may well increase and storm clouds gather. He may think within himself: "I must think this over more"; but in reality he fears to "touch things which involve so much". Maybe he believes he is counting the cost; but in fact he is merely counting the debits and omitting the credits. He feels the winds and sees the gathering clouds, but has forgotten the sunshine. He is thinking of the risks, and the result of his supposed counting-the-cost is only miscalculation. (We cannot, in fact, count the cost, for much more is involved in the life of consecration than ever we supposed as we commenced the pathway. All will now agree that the cost as it works out in our lives is far different from what we supposed or expected.) He is forgetting the important fact that whereas there will be storms, the providences of God are greater than the storms. God has not promised that there will be no storm or wind, but He has promised abundant blessing. Whatever he thinks within his heart he should yield himself to God and get on with the sowing. He will meet winds he never thought of; he will receive providences he would not have dreamed of when first he knew the Lord; and he will reap more than he anticipated. We recall that to Israel God promised fruitful fields so that they could safely sow and reap. He did not promise no storm or wind, but He promised bountiful crops, and the providences of God provided the increase.

One of our Lord's best known parables com-

mences: "A sower went forth to sow". Had our Lord observed the winds He would not have scattered the seed which was to yield one hundred and forty-four thousand. No sower of the word encountered more storms than He. Had He hesitated or counted the cost we should not be where we are to-day. Nor did He reason in the words of His own parable that some of the seed would fall by the wayside, and some among thorns. Nor did He regard that a cloud may prevent reaping. He got on with the sowing, no storms or clouds hindering him, and God gave the increase, for some fell on good ground and yielded a hundred-fold. He believed that the onus was on him to sow. Likewise the apostle Paul. What a great loss to the Church had he been deterred by the clouds of trouble! But what a crop because he sowed in all weathers and fields!

Recall Acts 20, 21-25. He observed the clouds with only a passing glance. He did not deceive himself into saying there would be no clouds, for he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him. But no storms could prevent him testifying the gospel of the grace of God. Surely he was following the advice of Ecc. 11, 6. He went on sowing; he knew not "whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good". He did not suppose that both might be alike bad, for he knew God would give the increase. Is it morning now? Some say so; then sow thy seed. If you think it eventide, still sow.

We might ask: Is any sowing being done now, or are the labourers regarding the winds of contrary doctrine? Or are they regarding the clouds of trouble and neglecting the reaping? We have all heard the winds of doctrine that hold the sowers back. One wind says: "It is reaping time; do not sow". Another says: "It is sowing time; reaping is over". And still another says: "It is reaping time, and sowing is to be deferred until the plough-share of trouble has prepared the ground afresh". The labourer is disturbed in mind, and fails to sow. Like our Lord, like Paul, we must get on with the sowing. We do not know which will prosper, or whether both will alike be good, but we do believe that God will give the increase. And we are reaping crops of truth due to the faithful labourers of the past. Others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.

There is another sowing to be done—not the scattering of good news, but sowing within the hearts of ourselves. It is called in the Bible sowing to the Spirit, and those disturbed by the winds which deny character-development will not sow. (Gal. 6, 7-9.) What is sowing to the Spirit? Sowing to the flesh is following those practices which the flesh encourages; and “the works of the flesh are manifest”. One sows in the mind and reaps in the actions; and if the flesh continues to practise thus, another harvest results—“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”. And so, sowing to the Spirit means sowing those graces which the Spirit prompts. Again the sowing is in the mind, and again there are two crops—fruitage in this life and then life everlasting. Keep on this sowing; “be not weary in (this) well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not”. Remember, there are two crops from this sowing—the fruit of the Spirit now, and in the resurrection life everlasting. There was every encouragement to the Galatian brethren to be not weary in well-doing and disregard the winds and clouds. Similar reasoning is made by the apostle in Rom. 6. 19-23—the yielding of oneself to uncleanness leads to still further iniquity with death as result, and the yielding of our members to righteousness leads to holiness and the end everlasting life.

But in this sowing to the Spirit, what must we sow? The obvious answer (that we sow seed) must be stressed. Something with life in it! And seed is useless unless it be sowed. The seed is clearly the words of life which the Holy Spirit has given to us. Sow the word in hearts and heads—there will be fruitage. Don't leave the seed in the packet! Millions have Bibles, but leave the words unopened and unsown. In another way of reasoning we must sow that which we hope to reap. If we want a crop of turnips we sow turnip seed—no other seed will do. And so, if we desire the fruitage of love, joy, peace, etc., we must sow these graces, or no crop will result. Some may say: “We need more brotherly love”—and to them the answer is, *sow it*. But if we observe the clouds (irrespective of who caused the clouds) no sowing will be done, and we shall still be expecting more brotherly love from others, but have done nothing to encourage it. Sow these graces in our own hearts and scatter where we can—there will be a crop even now, and life everlasting awaits us.

Some have been to meetings where the subject for discussion was not to their liking; few joined in, and the meeting lacked warmth. Feeling uncomfortable, they have not sown the truth, and therefore have not reaped its fruitage. But un-

consciously the seeds of discontent have been sown in their hearts, and no one has profited. Some have said: “I went to the meeting and did not get a crumb”. To them the answer is: “If you had brought some bread all would have had a crumb”.

Let us sow the seed of truth, for this seed is alive, and must therefore reach fruition. Sow it in our own hearts and sow it in the meeting. The onus is on us to sow. It must yield because it is alive. And then we shall be able to speak as did Paul: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase”. Speak the words of truth in the meeting, another will add further comments, and God will give the increase; and so will be found that true unity—“He that planteth and he that watereth are one”.

We may pick grains of sand which look like seed, yet they will give no crop; but from life-bearing seed as small as mustard large plants will grow. And we are amazed that so much results from such small seed, and we realise that God has given the increase. The growth from seed to plant is ever a mystery to man, as our Lord said in Mark 4. 26-28. So, if we sow the seeds of truth in our own hearts it cannot fail to grow, though we know not how. Then let us sow. (In the parable of the sower the grain was broadcast, not sown in selected ground. From which it may be reasoned that in the broadcasting of the gospel there is more hope of crop than in ground of our own choosing.) Do not expect fruition immediately. “We cannot eat the fruit while the tree is in flower”, said Disraeli. Patience will be needed, but there will be a crop, for it will follow the Divine rule—“first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear”. It will need no super-gardening to make it grow, for the seed has life in it. The main act of character-development is seed-sowing—God will give the increase. Does not the Bible speak to us of growth, rather than building, as its picture of character-development? Building is the assembling of stones and wood ready cut; and differing buildings may be built with the very same material. No such difference results from growth of the same seed. If we each sow to the Spirit, we shall each reap the same crop, for character will grow, we know not how, and each will reap the same crop in the resurrection—life everlasting.

By the gift to each of the Church of the Holy Spirit, God Himself begins the sowing. It is given to every man to profit withal. This gift we could not obtain by any other means; and it is the means by which we become members of the Body of Christ, for God sets the members every-

one of them in the Body as it has pleased Him. He then starts the life of character growth by His gift. *Let it grow!* "Be filled with the Spirit; pray for the Spirit; quench not the Spirit"; and act so that the prayer will be answered. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth; and thus it follows that we must go and dwell in those conditions where the sown seed may prosper. We must go where the words of life are to be found, for that is the seed. We must seek the fellowship of those who also have the seeds of truth; there, as it were, to exchange seeds or grains of truth; there to follow up the sown seed by watering. And, acting on the Bible paradox "that he who would save his life shall lose it", we shall sow in our own hearts by giving away the seed to our fellows. He who gives it away keeps it, for, by dispensing, it becomes impressed upon his own heart, and so he keeps it. Do not hoard it; do not leave the seed in the packet; give it away! Plant it; someone else will water it, and God will give the increase. We sow in fellowship; but some, regarding the winds, will think it cosier by the fire side, and will stay at home. Not sowing, they will not reap. Except that by isolating themselves they sow dissatisfaction in their own hearts and will reap its crop. And some cautious ones may say: "I am not sure that if I sow there will be fruitage", or, "I will sow a little, and if it flourishes I will sow more". To such the words of 2 Cor. 9. 6 seem appropriate. We shall reap as we sow—if sparingly, so we shall reap; and if bountifully, so

shall we reap. The onus is on us to sow; God will give the increase.

We sometimes regard the winds even in fellowship, saying to ourselves: "I will not bring up such and such a topic", but someone is the loser, for fellowship includes the free discussion of all Bible questions. And, on the basis that the best meetings are those where all contribute, remember the words of Paul: "That which every joint supplieth", for this will make increase of the body.

Recall the error of the Galatian brethren. According to Paul, they started to sow to the Spirit, but reverted to the bondage of the flesh. After receiving the gospel of grace, they were returning to "another" gospel. "*Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" Paul was disturbed by their change for their groundwork of justification was leaving them, and they were thinking of returning to the Law from which they had been freed in Christ. And how could they reap the fruitage of love, joy, etc., if they were sowing to the flesh? A little leaven was leavening the whole lump, for they were sowing the wrong seed. May it not be said of us: "Ye did run well, who did hinder". Hence the exhortation of Gal. 6, 7-9. "In due season we shall reap" does not mean that sometime, somehow, we shall reap; for the principle of growth is that fruition comes at its due season. In due season means the season when it is due. And in the season of God's appointing, "that day", we shall reap the eternal crop—if we faint not—if we regard not the winds.

THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

"O Saviour, was it not enough for thee to be manifested in flesh? Did not that elementary composition carry in it abasement enough, without any further addition; since for thee to become man was more than for all things to be returned to nothing; but that, in the rank of miserable manhood, thou wouldst humble thyself to the lowest of humanity, and become a servant? O Saviour, in how despicable a condition do I find thee exhibited to the world! lodged in a stable, cradled in a manger, visited by poor shepherds, employed in a homely trade, attended by fishermen, tempted by presumptuous devils, persecuted by the malice of envious men, exposed to hunger, thirst, nakedness, weariness, contumely. How many slaves, under the vassalage of an enemy, fare better than thou didst from ungrateful man, whom thou

camest to save! Oh, let me not see only, but feel, this thy great mystery of godliness effectually working in me to all hearty thankfulness for so inestimable a mercy. And now, O Saviour, what a superabundant amends is made to thy glorified humanity for all thy bitter sufferings on earth! Thine agony was extreme, but thy glory is infinite; thy cross was heavy, but thy crown transcendently glorious; thy pains were inconceivably grievous, but short; thy glory is everlasting. Thou that stoodest before the judgment seat of a Pilate, shalt come in all heavenly magnificence to judge both the quick and the dead; thou that wouldst stoop to be a servant on earth, rulest and reignest for ever in heaven, as the King of eternal glory".

(Bishop Hall).

WARRINGTON ASSEMBLY OF WITNESS, 1953

The Assembly marked the close of another year's activity in bearing witness to the purpose of our God and Father, a year which has been blessed by Him.

By way of welcome the friends were given some interesting facts concerning these activities of the past few years. There followed an address on "Inheritance", reminding the hearers of their inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven" for them. Abraham, called by God to leave his native country for one that God would show him, anticipated an inheritance based on a promise. The promise made him a pilgrim, stranger and sojourner. Our inheritance is based on a promise; we await realisation but have the seal of the Holy Spirit, our guarantee. In the meantime God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; let us not be weary in well-doing.

"To finish His work" was the theme on Sunday afternoon. Jesus ever had in mind the purpose of His coming to earth—"to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work". God's servants must be active, watchful, alert. "He that reapeth receiveth wages", not concerned at seeming lack of results; ever mindful of the glorious vision of His coming again.

The address in the evening was on "*Days of crisis-our hope-our work*". We have a privileged relationship to God and a place in the Divine purpose. We study the word that we may be equipped for every good work. Supreme love for our Lord must be the motive for all our activity, which falls under two heads, service on behalf of each other and witness to the purpose of God.

A feature of the Assembly was the Sunday morning Question Meeting, ably led and a profitable session.

The public meeting on Saturday evening was on the text "*In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom*". When God created the earth He pronounced it "very good". That cannot be said now! Earth's conditions are appalling. But no matter how far men and nations have departed from God, He has a plan to bring them back. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord". The Lord Jesus Christ is to reign from the heavens to give the human family a full and fair opportunity to accept the terms of eternal life. Those whose hope now is to be with the Lord, to be used by Him for the blessing of mankind, will before the end of this Age be taken to be with Him. If this is our hope we must be watchful and prayerful, study His Word and tell others the Good News.

Considerable interest was shown in the message and further public meetings have been arranged for the benefit of those interested.

So the Assembly ended with every evidence of the Master's blessing and encouragement to all concerned to "press on".

SWANSEA HOME-GATHERING, 1953

We in Swansea experienced great pleasure in the gathering together of members of the One Happy Family Circle, and we enjoyed the Divine fellowship as we recognised our relationship to our Heavenly Father and dear Lord and Saviour.

Friends gathered together from near and far. The Y.M.C.A. authorities exercised a kindly Christian influence over the assembly and did everything possible to help with the catering.

The meeting on Saturday evening clearly defined the reality of sonship, the state of individual responsibility which exists between the Father and the child. The evidence of the Divine Plan which embraces the salvation of all the willing and obedient was shown to be the eventual goal to which mankind will attain by the aid of the Christ, enthroned in power and glory.

The address on Sunday morning, on the "*Mystery of Divine Revelation*", culminated in those wonderful words "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed". The "bringing of many sons to glory" was a mystery. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man . . . but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit".

In the afternoon the subject was "*Steadfastness*". Conditions prevailing to-day confirm our faith; the kingdom is very near, when the world will realise that Christ is the supreme Ruler and His righteous government will prevail.

The evening speaker appealed to his hearers for a closer walk with God. We are called to partake of God's holiness. We could not of ourselves attain the good life; it is the power of God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

By now there were signs that the gathering, which had assembled with such joyful anticipation, must needs come to an end. To the strains of "*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love*" and "*God be with you till we meet again*" the assembly dispersed. It was a momentous occasion. Rarely has the spirit of unity and concord so clearly dominated the fellowship. Surely it was a foretaste of the real joys which are to be the inheritance of the saints in light!

In the Land of Beginning Again

A PEN PICTURE OF THE COMING KINGDOM.

No. 1.—“Thy children shall come again.” (Jer. 31, 17)

“Coo, that’s a big one!”

The great wave tipped gently over, rolled forward, a smooth cascade of shining green water and raced foaming up to the feet of the two small boys. They jumped back instinctively.

“Wish Bob was here with us” said the elder one, rubbing his hands down his dripping swimming suit.

“D’you think he’s come back yet, Peter?” asked the other, hopping about for sheer exuberance in the brisk wind.

“I asked teacher and he didn’t know. But he said he would sure come back sooner or later. *Everybody’s* coming back. ‘All that are in their graves’ Jesus said, and He knows”.

“He was drowned same time as us and he ought to come back same time as us” asserted the other.

“Maybe, but he hadn’t got any father or mother to ask God to send him back like we had. He was an orphan, no brothers or sisters or anything”.

“Then how will he ever get back?”

Two youthful minds grappled with the problem, serious faces looking out to sea as though seeking inspiration.

“I don’t suppose he’s got anyone to remember him now he’s dead” hazarded Peter doubtfully.

“’cept us”.

“That’s right”.

“But we’re only kids, Peter. What can we do?”

“Teacher says that God is always ready to listen to anyone who prays to Him. And in lessons yesterday we learned about the time when Jesus said ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven’”.

“This *is* the Kingdom of Heaven where we’re living, isn’t it, Peter?”

The elder boy’s eyes roamed over the vast playground behind the sandy beach, filled with children of all ages disporting themselves in joyous abandon. The sound of their shouting rose high now and then above the splashing of the waves.

“Sure it is, Fred. This is the Kingdom of God on earth. Teacher calls it the Millennial Age”.

“Perhaps God is waiting for *us* to pray for Bob to come back”, suggested the other. “After all, he’s got no one else to do it, ’cept us”.

“’cept us”. The elder lad was thinking hard. “We’ll do it, Fred. God brought us back, and if He thinks we’re worth bringing back He must think Bob is, as well”.

Two small heads were bent reverently and a faltering voice sounded faintly against the noise of the sea.

“Please God, bring Bob back to us. He was a good pal and didn’t get into mischief over much and he would so enjoy this new earth you’ve made for us. We promise to look after him and tell him all the things he ought to do. For Jesus’ sake. Amen”.

Two boyish hearts sought relief from the emotion of the moment.

“Race you to that rock out in the water!”

“Right, Fred. I’ll give you ten yards start”.

The younger, about to plunge into the sea, checked himself suddenly.

“I say, Peter”.

“What?”

“Shouldn’t we do something to show we believe God will answer our prayer and send Bob back?”

“What shall we do?”

The younger lad pondered. “Suppose we take my other swim suit with us, just to have it ready for Bob, then God will know we really believe he’s coming back?”

“That’ll do. Bring it along”.

Fred ran up the beach, and returned knotting the swimsuit loosely around his left arm. The two lads ran into the water and were soon swimming side by side toward their goal. The wind blew keenly but in their robust health they felt no discomfort, and forged their way easily through the waves.

“There’s a big swell coming, Fred. Look at the gulls settling on it!”

“Wonder what they’re doing”.

The insistent screech of the seabirds was dying down. From a long line riding the oncoming swell they were rapidly forming a great circle on the surface of the water, rising and dipping easily as the heaving billows passed under them. The two boys were now within that circle, and it seemed as if the gaze of all the birds was fixed upon them. The big swell was very near them now.

“Let’s dive right under it, Fred”.

"Right".

They went down as the great mound of water passed over them. There was a violent tug on Fred's left arm; he grappled strongly to retain his hold of the spare swim-suit, which was slipping from his grasp. He turned towards the surface. The gulls rose into the heavens with a great flapping of wings.

Three heads appeared upon the top of the water.

"Thought I was a goner that time, lads" came Bob's familiar voice. "Swallowed nearly all the ocean, I should think". He glanced at the athletic forms of his two companions, ploughing through the water, one on each side. "What's the matter with you fellows? You look different, somehow".

They had reached the rock and were drawing themselves on to its shelving sides. "You tell him, Peter" urged the smaller lad.

Peter fumbled for words, the while Bob looked around him with a puzzled air.

"This is a funny go. My swim suit was blue just now. Now it's red. And that cliff over there wasn't there. And the beach wasn't like that with all that sand—and we were caught in the current and the boatman was shouting—and he's gone now . . . What's happened, kids?". He began to look alarmed.

For the second time that morning Peter prayed, silently, for heavenly counsel, and inspiration came. "D'you remember Kingsley's story of the water babies, about the little chimney sweep boy who went into the river and got drowned and went right down to the bottom and found himself in a new kind of world where he was all clean and white and everything was good?"

"That's kid's stuff, Peter. What's that got to do with it?"

"Well": Peter was choosing his words carefully. "That's what's happened to us. We got really drowned when the tide caught us, and we've come out into a new kind of world".

"You mean I've been dead and come alive again, like they used to tell us in Sunday school?"

"Yes". Three youthful faces took on an ex-

pression of awe as they considered the immensity of this tremendous thing.

"And what happens to us now?"

"We shall grow up to be men but we shall never get old and we shall never die".

"Never die?"

"Never again at all. This is Heaven on earth, and Jesus is King, and—"

"I never much liked learning about Jesus".

"You will now. We go to a smashing school where we learn all kinds of things about Jesus and about God and all the good things He is doing for us. When Jesus was on earth He used to laugh and play with the children and mend the little ones' toys for them. What d'you think of that?"

"They never told me that at Sunday school".

"Well, He did. We learn all about that at our school".

"I think I'd like to learn about that kind of Jesus. I think I shall like this new kind of world. Would they take me in your school, d'you think?"

"Come and see", said Peter.

* * *

This is a story of the resurrection; possibly this is how it will happen. Death is an enemy, and brings sadness and grief to those who are left behind; but God has promised that there shall be life after death, and that eventually "there shall be no more death". (Rev. 21. 4.) That promised life can only come about through a resurrection from the dead. God plans to replace the present unsatisfactory order of things by a new world in which everything that is sinful and imperfect will be eliminated so that at last the earth itself will be perfect and glorious, humanity fully in harmony with God, leading undying lives upon earth. These are the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people" of which the angels sang at the birth of Jesus, and if, as so many think, we are in the "last days", the coming of the new world and the resurrection of the dead cannot be long delayed. See John 5. 28, Matt. 19. 14, Zech. 8. 5, Jas. 5. 15, Rev. 20. 13, Isa. 40. 11.

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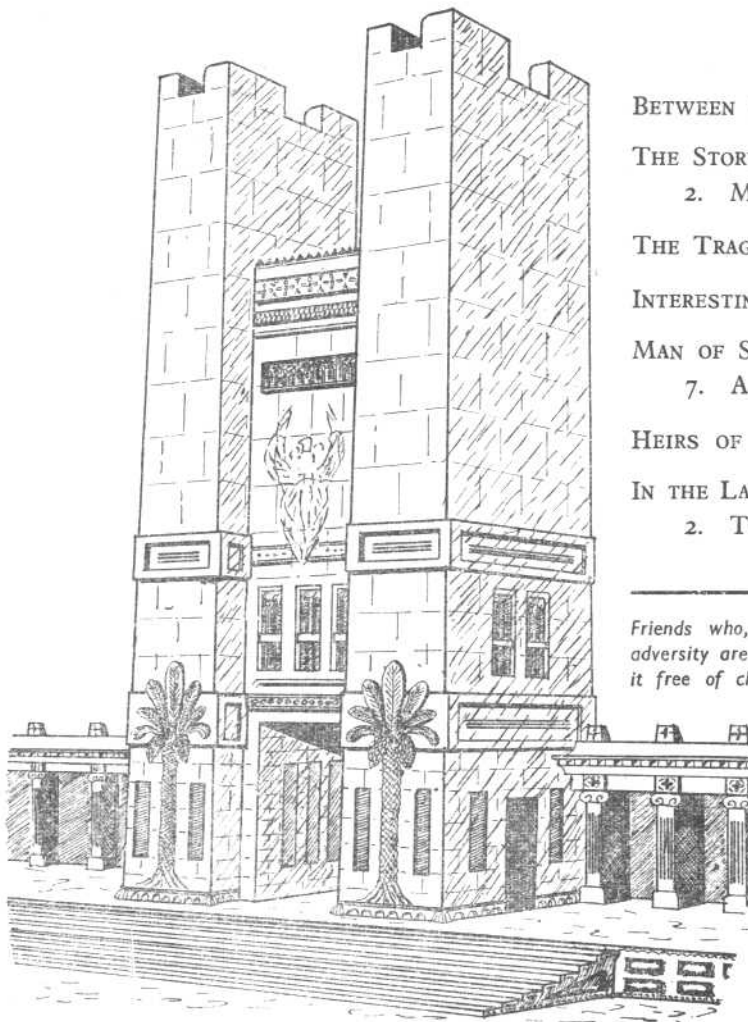
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FEBRUARY, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	18
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD			
2. Man of Shuruppak	...		19
THE TRAGEDY OF JUDAS	...	...	21
INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED	...		25
MAN OF SORROWS			
7. A Lost Sheep	...	...	26
HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM	28
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN			
2. Thy dead shall live	...		31

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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Warrington announce that plans are in hand for the usual Easter Convention in that city. Further details will appear in due course and programmes will be circulated through the medium of the "Monthly".

* * *

Arrangements are being made for the usual London Convention at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, during the August Bank Holiday season next. Details will be available later and programmes will be circulated through the medium of the "Monthly".

* * *

The leaflet (No. 151) "World Conversion—When?" which was recently published and almost immediately went out of print, has been reprinted and is now available in stock at 1/9 for 25 and 12/6 per 100 (25c. and \$1.75 respectively in Canada and U.S.A.). This has proved a very much sought after leaflet and we are glad therefore to be able to continue the supply.

* * *

The book "Plan of God in Brief", in the Hebrew language, so generously furnished by our American friends, the "Bible Harmony Truth Associates" is available, on request, to Rabbis of the Jewish faith, free of charge, and to other

readers at 5/3 post free. It is of course of use only to readers of Hebrew. We will be happy to send a copy to any Rabbi whose name and address is furnished us by any of our readers or other friends. The book is excellent practice for anyone studying the Hebrew language.

* * * * *

Brother H. Nadal received, during December, an anonymous donation of £5 "for the German work", and would like to acknowledge, through these columns, its receipt and to express sincere appreciation. This work, conducted for the benefit of those who in certain parts of Germany and elsewhere on the Continent are heavily hit by the present situation, still continues and there is evidence that it is being used to bring some comfort and blessing into lives that for years have known little but hardship.

Gone From Us

—*—

Bro. J. Lord (*Prestwich*).

Bro. Barrett Senr. (*Forest Gate*).

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

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THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 2. Man of S uruppak

"Man of Shuruppak, O son of Ubara-tutu, build thou a vessel and finish it quickly, for by a deluge I will destroy all substance and life." (Epic of Gilgamesh).

In these fateful words did Ea, supreme among all the Sumerian gods, reveal to his faithful worshipper Khasis-atra, of the city of Shuruppak on the Euphrates, tidings of the coming disaster. The Book of Genesis preserves the more accurate record thus *"And God said unto Noah . . . make thee an ark of gopher wood . . . and behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die"*. (Gen. 6. 13-17.)

The Flood story in the Book of Genesis comes down to us virtually unchanged since the days of Abraham. The early chapters of Genesis contain internal evidence which shows that they were originally written in the Sumerian cuneiform language and script at a time at least three centuries before the time of Abraham. It can be allowed that Moses "edited" the accounts when compiling the Book of Genesis in the wilderness during the Exodus several centuries later but it is tolerably certain that he took the original cuneiform writings brought from Ur of the Chaldees by Abraham, preserved through the generations until Moses, and translated them on parchment of goatskins. Such changes as might have been made by Moses would therefore be those made desirable by the translation and would not vitally affect the story.

The Sumerian account comes down to us from the same time also. It is generally concluded that the *"Epic of Gilgamesh"*, which contains the Flood story, was written about 2300 B.C., or three centuries before Abraham. The oldest copy now in existence—so far discovered—dates from 2100 B.C. and other copies are also in the possession of scholars and museums belonging to various times up to 650 B.C., the latter copies written, not in Sumerian, which by then was a dead language, but in Babylonian or Assyrian. These various copies differ a great deal in detail; it is evident that the same care to preserve the original text was not taken as with the Bible account. But the main outline

remains the same and it is clear that the accounts retain the main features of the original story.

The Bible tells us very little about the antediluvian world of Noah's day. We know that the patriarch himself was descended from Seth the third son of Adam, but in what part of the world he lived, and what was the state of the arts and sciences, they do not say. One geographical clue is given in the story of the Flood, but that clue is very useful. We are told in Genesis 8. 4 that *"the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat"*. Ararat was the ancient name of the mountainous district lying north and east of Nineveh, known in modern times as Kurdistan, and at present coming within the north-eastern part of the political kingdom of Iraq, with a small strip on the south-east of Turkey. If it was in this district that the Ark came to rest, it is tolerably certain that it had drifted from the wide plains, south of the mountains, which afterward became Assyria and Babylonia. It would then be the natural thing for the survivors from the Ark to travel back to those plains, following the course of the rivers, and so they would naturally come to the site of Babylon where they built the Tower of Babel, as Gen. 11 says they did so do.

It is therefore highly probable that the old Sumerian traditions, to the effect that Noah was a dweller in the south country near the Persian Gulf, and built his Ark there, rest on a basis of fact. The city of Shuruppak, said to be his native city, was in fact one of the twenty or so Sumerian cities which were built four or five centuries before Abraham and destroyed at the fall of the Sumerian empire about the same time that Jacob went down into Egypt. All of these cities were built by the descendants of Ham when they entered this land after the Flood, as is described in Gen. 11. 2. It was then completely uninhabited but there is every reason to believe that under the alluvial deposits of earth and clay left by the Flood there now lie the ruins of the antediluvian cities.

In any discussion as to the historical truth of the Flood there arises sooner or later the question of the extent to which the earth had become populated and whether all mankind over the earth did in fact perish in the catastrophe. The older com-

mentators used to picture the earth completely drowned in water standing to a depth of fifteen cubits above the peaks of the highest mountains—which attain an elevation of over five miles. The fact that if such was the case there would be nowhere for the waters to drain away was overlooked or glossed over. The modern attitude tends to the view that the Flood was limited in extent to the narrator's own district, and mankind in general elsewhere were unaffected and knew nothing about it. Without entering at the moment into the question of the extent to which this planet was flooded, a question that will be considered later on, it is suggested here and now that the Bible assertion that all mankind, with the exception of Noah's family, perished, is a perfectly reasonable one, and that this would need only a small portion of the earth's surface being affected by the Flood.

It is perhaps natural to think of the antediluvian world as being populated more or less to the extent that is true of the world to-day. There is every reason to believe that the contrary was the case. It is much more likely that the human community was relatively small and that none had migrated very far from the original centre at Eden. Such evidence as the Old Testament gives us seems to indicate that human increase was extremely slow—fantastically slow—in the early days of the world compared with later times. In the space of one hundred and thirty years (according to the Hebrew; two hundred and thirty according to the Septuagint) Adam had only three sons. Perhaps he had as many daughters. Abraham and his two brothers were born over a period of sixty years. The families of the post diluvian patriarchs who lived four or five hundred years were no larger than average families of two generations ago. Taking all that is known or can be inferred into consideration, it is unlikely that world population in Noah's day amounted to more than a few millions.

The inference to be drawn from the description of Eden in the second chapter of Genesis, written by a dweller on the Euphrates about twenty-three centuries before Christ, is that the first home of man was not far from that famous river. It is to be expected that the Flood made many changes to the configuration of the land but even so Gen. 2 demands that the site of Eden was somewhere between the Armenian mountains and the Indian Ocean. It is practically certain, therefore, since the Indian Ocean itself has existed from long before mankind's entrance upon earth and hence constituted an impassable barrier southward, and the Arabian highlands and Persian mountains made

migration difficult west and east, that successive generations before the Flood tended to migrate northward, following the courses of the great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. Throughout all history migratory peoples have followed the river valleys.

In such case the principal centre of the antediluvian world, the territory which was most thickly populated and would have attained the highest degree of civilisation, would be this land of the two rivers, the land which afterwards became Babylonia and Assyria, and owned Abraham as its noblest son. Colonists may have gone out into Syria and down into Egypt, thence settling in the Nile valley and along the north coast of Africa. They may have struck eastward, round the southern shores of the Caspian Sea and so into western China. They might, less likely, have penetrated into southern Europe and Spain. But in any case, as will be seen when later on the probable causes of the Flood are discussed, there is nothing in the problem to render the complete destruction of all men living an improbable or impossible thing. And theologically it is necessary to believe that all human beings, with the exception of those in the Ark, were destroyed. The nature of the case demands that. The whole point of commanding Noah to build an Ark to preserve life upon the earth is lost if it is concluded that others, besides him, survived without having to enter the Ark.

Geographically then, we can take the Sumerian legends as affording a very suitable background to the Bible story. We do not need to concern ourselves unduly as to whether the Flood overspread the whole earth or not. We have but to picture it as it affected the land of Mesopotamia. Then, as now, the land was a wide, flat plain, the size of England, bounded on the north and east by lofty and tortuous ranges of mountains. Through the plain flowed the four rivers of Gen. 2 ultimately joining at a point below which lay the lost Eden. Dotted over that plain must have been the luxurious cities of the antediluvians and on those broad rivers they must have taken their pleasures. Somewhere here must have lived Enoch, who served God and was translated and not seen again. Here, on this ground, walked the materialised angels who had sinned against God and now were sinning against humanity; this was the land that more than any other must have fulfilled the words of Gen. 6. 11 in being filled with violence. Here the "giants" of Gen. 6. 4 roamed abroad preying on helpless mankind; perhaps the skeletons of those monstrous creatures lie buried there now, deep below the silt and gravel of the Deluge, amidst relics of the magnificence of those early days,

deeper down than any of our archeologists have as yet penetrated. Here must have been the land where Noah was born, and lived five hundred years, and preached righteousness, and heard the voice of God, warning him of things not seen as yet, and so "prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb.

11. 7). To the north of that land still stands the mountain, venerated by Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian for three thousand years thereafter as the "mountain of the gods in the sides of the north" where the Ark at length came to rest, and from which Noah and his family came forth to make all things new.

(to be continued)

THE TRAGEDY OF JUDAS

*Thoughts on the story
of the great betrayal*

The name of Judas is emblazoned on the pages of history as that of the greatest traitor of all time. His crime had been held to be the greatest of all crimes, and the old-time theology had no doubt that the fiercest flames of Hell were reserved for the man who sank so low that he betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss.

The common impression is that Judas betrayed his Master for sordid gain—that for the paltry inducement of thirty pieces of silver he was prepared to forswear his allegiance, relinquish his prospective place in the Messianic kingdom, and deliver to certain death *One* whom he knew to be innocent. That impression comes from a superficial reading of the narrative; a closer examination of the story soon shows that there was much more involved.

Judas was not a Galilean. Alone of the twelve he was a southerner, a Judean. "Judas Iscariot" is the Greek form of his Hebrew name "Judah of Kerioth" in south-east Judea. As a Judean he probably rather despised his Galilean comrades and perhaps cherished the belief that by birth and breeding he was the one best fitted to be the immediate confidant and lieutenant of the Son of David. In joining the band of disciples he must have been perfectly sincere; we cannot imagine Jesus choosing him otherwise. It was afterwards that he conceived and followed the course of conduct which had such terrible results.

Of the life of Judas as a disciple little or nothing is known. On only one occasion does he occupy the central position and in that instance it is to his discredit. When the repentant woman broke her alabaster vase of perfume in the house of Simon (John 12. 1-8) it seems that Judas protested at the apparent waste, suggesting that it were better that its value be given to the poor. John declares that he said this only because he was a thief and stole what had been contributed to the needs of the disciples. In this connection it should be noted that Mark and Matthew credit the same remark to

"his disciples" and to "some" at the feast. (Mk. 14. 3-9; Matt. 26. 6-13.) It might well be that several of the disciples were disposed to criticise Mary's action and that Judas merely uttered the thoughts that were in several minds.

But this statement, that Judas was a thief, cannot be dismissed without further examination. Why was he a thief? Why should this man, living in communal fellowship with the disciples and their Master, purloin any portion of what must at best have been extremely slender financial resources? They were men whose needs were few and simple; they lived plainly and austere; if the motive was to "get rich" surely he would not continue to waste his time with this band of pilgrims when there were plenty of roads to financial prosperity for a quick-witted man like Judas. Is it possible that Judas, who was the treasurer anyway, was setting aside money, secretly as he thought, to build up a fund to be used for the advancement of the interests of Jesus when the time should come? That hypothesis may seem more feasible after we have turned our attention to the story of the betrayal, and in particular Judas' motive for acting as he did.

Was that motive greed for money? The price paid was "thirty pieces of silver" coins known as the "tetradrachm of Antioch" worth intrinsically about two shillings each, but having regard to the difference in purchasing value of money between the First Century and to-day, representing a much greater value by our standards. Judas received what would be the equivalent of about £60 or 180 dollars to us at the present time. It is said that this was the price customary in Israel for the purchase of a slave, and it certainly was the compensation fixed by the Mosaic Law for the death of a slave or servant (Exod. 21. 32). Is it likely that if Judas was driven by purely monetary considerations he would have bartered so valuable a "prize" for the traditional price of an ordinary servant? Knowing of the priests' anxiety to secure

Jesus, one would have expected Judas to stand out for a considerably higher figure before setting his seal to the arrangement. That his ideas in matters financial were of an exalted nature we know from the incident in Simon's house where he assessed the value of the perfume at three hundred denarii, equivalent to a purchasing power to-day of £200 or 600 dollars.

All this talk of the theft, trafficking, bargaining, does reveal one fact. Judas was not of the same mental calibre as the others. Although slow of heart to grasp the meaning of Christ's life and death, they were nevertheless men devoted to a purpose, the following of their Master where He would lead them, away from earthly things and toward the world of the spirit. Judas, on the other hand, saw nothing beyond earthly things. He was evidently obsessed with the idea of a purely earthly Messianic kingdom and utterly failed to comprehend anything beyond that. His mind was saturated with the vivid stories of Old Testament history, when the power of God was displayed against His enemies in spectacular manner; his whole idea of the Messiah coloured with the popular belief in a mighty King who would relentlessly crush all resistance; his Jewish patriotism stirred as he pictured Israel supreme in the world with Jesus at the head of affairs and he himself a leading statesman in that kingdom. He must have hoped and lived for one thing, the day when Jesus would drop the mask of humility and gentleness, and reveal Himself as the "King, travelling in the greatness of his strength". (Isa. 63. 1).

For three years Judas had waited for this climax. He endured the hardships of the ministry and the persecution of Pharisees and priests, solacing himself doubtless with the thought that the tables would soon be turned and he would then crush these proud rulers into the dust. Whilst the other disciples were taking in, however imperfectly, the teachings of their Lord, and being prepared for the great change in outlook and understanding which was to come at Pentecost, Judas was wrapped up in his dreams of future power and glory. The others went forward to loftier heights of understanding; Judas stood still.

Nevertheless, he did believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He had seen Him work miracles, even to the raising of the dead. He had seen Him feed the thousands with food miraculously brought into being. He knew—none better—the powers that Jesus had at His command, and when this fact is realised the impossibility of Judas having intended to sell Jesus into death for the sake of the money is manifest—for he knew that Jesus possessed the power both to avoid arrest and to deliver Himself

should He be arrested. Judas must have seen that power exercised on occasions when men sought to take Jesus, and could not. We must therefore accept the evident fact that Judas never expected the betrayal to result in the death of his Master.

Picture his state of mind as the months went by. From the beginning of his ministry our Lord had pursued his mission without effective interference by the authorities. When the people of Nazareth tried to throw him over the cliff he passed through them. (Luke 4. 23-30.) When the officers tried to arrest him they could not. When He expelled the traders from the Temple none could stop him. Although He certainly had not assumed the privileges of a king in Israel, He had continued His work despite the authorities' attempts to suppress it. When He rode into Jerusalem five days before His crucifixion the heart of Judas must have beat fast—was this, at last, to be the moment of declaration? Was He now to declare war on Rome and lead the jubilant crowds in a great crusade to recover Jewish sovereignty? It is easy to imagine the eagerness with which Judas watched every action of Jesus at that time!

The moment passed, and the expected declaration was not made. What was even worse to Judas was the fact that Jesus now began to talk of imminent death. Perhaps for the first time, Judas began to be seriously alarmed respecting the materialisation of his hopes.

It might have been then that Judas decided to precipitate the crisis. If Jesus would not assert his kingship voluntarily, his hand must be forced. In ordinary times, knowing his Master's power, he would not have contemplated such a thing, but with Jesus in this strange mood, talking of suffering and death, desperate measures were necessary.

So the temptation came to Judas to contrive the arrest of Jesus now that he was in a frame of mind that would permit arrest, in the sure belief that, faced with the crisis, Jesus would assert his power to overthrow his adversaries. The standard of rebellion having thus been raised, Jesus would be compelled to continue to the destruction of all His enemies and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

It must have been with such thoughts in mind that Judas sought audience with the priests. Several considerations support this conclusion. In the first place it might well be asked why the priests should pay good money to Judas for pointing out a man whom they knew perfectly well already. Secondly, why choose the Passover, a most inconvenient time, when a week or so later Jerusalem would be quieter and the trial could proceed at leisure without the elaborate arrangements which did have to be made

to avoid interference with the feast. Thirdly, that strange—perhaps ironical—remark of Judas “When ye have him, *hold him fast*”. The most reasonable explanation of these factors is that the priests, knowing Jesus’ power, were by no means sure that they would be able to arrest him at all. They had to rely on Judas to tell them when the psychological moment had come; and when on the evening of the Last Supper he came with his news that now was the time; Jesus was in no mood to resist arrest, they got together a heavily armed band of men and set out to make the attempt.

Wherein lay the necessity of the kiss? It was, of course, a customary greeting between friends, but Judas had been with Jesus only a few hours before. Was there some idea in his mind that by this display of affection Jesus might understand his motive in betraying him, and realise that the purpose behind it was the furthering of the cause of the Kingdom? Did he hope that Jesus would look upon his action as one of mis-directed zeal, and when all had ended happily, perhaps reprove him mildly for taking the direction of things into his own hands, but grant him nevertheless a high place in that Kingdom which he had thus helped to establish?

So far the scheme had proceeded according to plan. Jesus was in the hands of his enemies, on trial for life, and it remained only for that assertion of his power by means of which He would extricate himself and inaugurate a new era. And it must have been at some time during the long hours of that night and the following morning, when Jesus was being taken back and forth between the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, that Judas received that terrible shock which unhinged his brain and drove him to suicide in a frenzy of remorse.

Jesus was not going to save himself! Too late, Judas realised that something had gone terribly wrong with his plans, and that Jesus had no intention of using the powers He possessed in order to escape His enemies. He intended to accept, unresistingly, the sentence they passed upon Him. Perhaps, at last, some dim understanding of words so far ignored penetrated the dark recesses of Judas’ mind. It might be that he recalled other writings of the prophets, speaking, not of power and glory, but of a despised and rejected One who would be led as a lamb to the slaughter. Demented at the enormity of his crime, he rushed to the priests with his frantic cry “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood”. His pathetic action in returning the money, as though that could undo the fell work of the past few hours, is an index to his state of mind. A vivid contrast between the awful remorse of Judas and the callous dis-

regard of the priests is revealed by their reply “What is that to us? See thou to that!”

So he “cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself”. It may be true, as Origen suggests, that in his fearful stress of mind he may have had some idea of meeting the Lord in the world of the dead and confessing his guilt to Him. What is more likely is that in his unreasoning despair he saw no escape from Divine wrath, inevitably to be visited upon the man who had killed the Messiah. Israel had waited long centuries for their promised Deliverer, and now by his own precipitateness he had encompassed Messiah’s death and frustrated the purposes of God. How could he expect mercy or forgiveness for so great a sin?

Paradoxical as it may appear, Judas was probably the only one of the twelve who never lost his faith that Jesus was the Messiah of prophecy. The others all abandoned their belief when the crisis came. Judas never lost his, but he failed because his belief was a purely intellectual one, and never entered the heart. It was built upon the glowing prophecies of the Old Testament and he never saw the light of the new revelation which Jesus manifested.

The seeming discrepancies between the various narratives relating to the use of the money for the purchase of the “potter’s field” must form the subject of a later examination; that part of the subject requires more lengthy treatment than can be given here. Suffice to say that the best harmony between the accounts is attained by concluding that the priests used the money some time after the Crucifixion to purchase a field already unhallowed by having been the scene of Judas’ suicide, and that this was known to Peter and the others before the Day of Pentecost.

What is the ultimate fate of the betrayer? When Judas’ tortured spirit found quietness at last in the death inflicted by his own hand, did he go down into the “blackness of darkness for ever”, or will he yet have opportunity to demonstrate just how sincere was the remorse of that fearful night? St. Peter, in the only reference made to Judas after Pentecost, said “It is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and his bishopric (oversight, charge) let another take”. (Acts 1. 20.) Peter was not quoting accurately, and he seems to have been using the text in an illustrative manner rather than claiming the fulfilment of a prophecy. His quotation was taken from two different Psalms (109. 8 and 69. 25) which refer primarily to those who persecute the Lord’s servant.

There is also the statement in John 17. 12

"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition." This has been interpreted to mean that Judas is irrevocably condemned, but in fact the expression is intended to be taken in relation to the Kingdom glory which Judas had lost. It is not that he was cut off from all hope of life but he was cut off from the Kingdom. The primary meaning behind the word "perdition" is that loss of life or destiny and the same Greek root word is used in those instances where Jesus refers to his disciples losing life for His sake and of finding a new heavenly life. Literally, Jesus said that none of His disciples were lost to their High Calling save the "son of loss" or "son of destruction", the one who by his action had shown that he must of necessity lose and be cut off from his prospective place in the spiritual kingdom of our Lord.

There is a more definite word in Matt. 26. 24 where Jesus said "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born". Now as those words stand in the A.V. they involve something of an absurdity, for if Judas had never been born, never known conscious existence, it is clear that nothing could ever have been either good or bad for him. Wilson's "*Diaglott*" suggests a reasonable interpretation in its rendering "Good were it for that man if he were not born", i.e., *not born yet*. Better had it been personally for Judas if his birth had been delayed for decades or centuries after the First Advent than for him, born as he was contemporary with Jesus, to have stooped to

so vile a deed and earned the censure of all succeeding generations.

But this question of the ultimate fate of Judas must be determined, not by the somewhat tortuous exposition of somewhat ambiguous texts, but by reference to first principles. It is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture that Jesus gave Himself a Ransom for All, that every member of Adam's race may experience the reversal of the Adamic sentence and enjoy a full and fair opportunity under Millennial conditions, with the Devil restrained, to come to a full knowledge of the truth of God in Christ and on that basis make his own deliberate choice for Christ or Satan, good or evil. The denial of that opportunity even to one only of men is a denial of an essential feature of the Divine Plan for every man. No matter how heinous the sin of Judas, he must stand before the Great White Throne with all other sinners and hear the terms upon which he can, if he will, achieve reconciliation with God.

It may be—we know not—but it may be, in that day, that there will be a man, rather quiet, rather humbled, bearing visible evidence of a great chastening, whose voice may be more than usually low as he speaks of the life that was his upon earth before. It may be that such a man—we cannot say—will be brought before the Father of all as one who has walked the Highway of Holiness and hears, with full heart, the tender accents of One whom he so ignorantly and treacherously betrayed saying "Father, forgive him; he knew not what he did".

THE ETERNITY OF GOD

God is an eternal Being. Then a thousand years with him are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. That is to say, a thousand years and one day are such inconsiderable measures of duration, that whatever disproportion they may have to each other, they appear to have none when compared to the duration of eternity. There is a great difference between one drop of water and the twenty thousand baths which were contained in that famous vessel in Solomon's temple, which, on account of its matter and capacity, was called a sea of brass; but this vessel itself, in comparison with the sea properly so called, was so small that when we compare all that it could contain, with the sea—one drop of water with the sea is as twenty thousand baths, and twenty thousand baths is as one drop of water. There is a great difference between the light of a taper and that of a flambeau; but expose both to the light of the sun, and their difference will be imperceptible. The light of the

taper before the sun is as the light of a flambeau, and the light of a flambeau as the light of a taper. In like manner, eternal duration is so great an object, that it causeth everything to disappear that can be compared with it: a thousand years are no more before it than one day. We minute creatures consider a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour, as a very little space in the course of our lives; we lose, without scruple, a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour; but we are very much to blame; for this day, this hour, this quarter of an hour, should we even live a whole age, would be a considerable portion of our lives. But God revolves, if I may venture to say so, in the immense space of eternity. Heap millions of ages upon millions of ages; add new millions to new millions: all this is nothing in comparison with the duration of an eternal Being. In this sense, a thousand years are but as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

(Selected.)

INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38. 7.)

This is said of the time when the creation of earth was proceeding, before mankind existed and indeed before this planet could support life of any kind. The 38th chapter of Job reaches back to that mysterious time when the great Architect of the Universe was fashioning His material in the mighty crucible of Nature. If the verse is to be understood literally it is evident that the "sons of God" who "shouted for joy" were the angels, the citizens of that spiritual sphere which is the place of the Divine Throne. It is a reasonable conclusion from what is said about the subject in the Scriptures that the spiritual world existed before the material and therefore the "shouting for joy" could well describe the interest the angelic creation must necessarily have displayed in this new development of the Divine purposes.

The "morning stars" are not so easy to define. The entire chapter is a straightforward description of the operation of natural forces and although poetic to a high degree it is not metaphorical or symbolic; and literal stars do not "sing". It would seem that in harmony with the well-known parallelisms of Hebrew poetry the morning stars which "sing" are complementary to the sons of God who "shout for joy", and therefore must refer to some in the spiritual world who, like the angels, can look on and rejoice at this new departure in God's creation. In all probability the allusion is intended to direct our thoughts toward the references in Scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ, the "bright and morning star" of Rev. 22. 16, who before His coming to earth did preside over its creation (John 1.3). It could also include the one-time holy celestial being who afterwards rebelled against God and is commonly known as Satan, the Adversary, but who is named by Isaiah as Lucifer, the Morning Star. (Isa. 14. 12 margin.) It can be supposed that this verse then pictures the entire hierarchy of Heaven, from highest to lowest, rejoicing in harmony together at the creation of this earth with all the possibilities that it held.

"Again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." (Matt. 19. 24.)

To Western minds unacquainted with Eastern allusions, this is a most discouraging statement, especially if the reader happens to be possessed of a liberal share of this world's goods. It is said that in Palestinian walled towns there was usually a small door beside the main entrance gate through which a man could enter after the main gate had been closed at nightfall. A camel, however, could only enter after it had been divested of all its lading and must then get down to its knees and squeeze through. This door, because of its smallness, was popularly called the "needle's eye".

Jesus passed this remark following the regretful refusal of the rich young ruler who wanted to become a disciple but found that he loved his possessions more. The whole point is, not that a rich man cannot hope to enter the Kingdom just because he happens to be a rich man, but that he cannot take his riches with him. As St. Paul remarked in his practical, common-sense way "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can take nothing out" (I. Tim. 6. 7; that last "nothing" is emphatic in the Greek; it means "not even anything"). So that Jesus' words were intended to stress the fact that unless a man loosed his grasp of his earthly riches, used them in life to the glory of God, laid up treasure in heaven instead of on earth, he would find the "Narrow Way" too narrow to accommodate both himself and his riches, and fail to gain entry in consequence.

Fear is a gesticulating bogey which gibbers in front of the mental vision of every Christian who has not sufficient confidence in his Calling to press forward in implicit belief that even his mistakes and errors of judgment will be used in the Divine economy to effect good works in his character or in those of fellow-members in due course.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part 6.—A LOST SHEEP

"All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (vs. 6).

Irresistibly we are reminded here of the good Shepherd, the One who gave His life for the sheep. It is because they have strayed, strayed away from the safety of the fold, and strayed into danger, that He is called upon to give His life in their defence and for their recovery. One of the most revealing discourses of Jesus, penetrating into the very centre of fundamental doctrinal truth, is that which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. The reclaiming power and love of God, manifested in Christ, toward unregenerate man is shown forth in three illustrations of everyday. The one hundred sheep, of which one was lost—and found; the ten pieces of silver, of which one was lost—and found; the two sons, of which one was lost—and found; these three witness to the one great and indisputable truth; that none will be lost for want of the selfless love of God, reaching out into the dark recesses of sin to draw the wanderer back to Himself. The old orthodox theology made it a hard thing to evade the stern barrier of Divine Justice and enter at last through the golden door into the bliss of heaven; the plain teaching of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels is that it will be, on the contrary, a very hard thing to escape from the encirclement of Divine Love and fail to inherit the green fields and sparkling streams of Paradise. The Son of Man, like the Good Shepherd of Luke 15, has come forth into the world to seek and save that which was lost, and resolute indeed must be the man who wills so to steep his heart in sin and steel himself against every form of righteousness that the love of the Redeemer has no effect upon him. We must hold very rigidly to the Divine declaration that nothing unclean or defiled by sin shall ever enter the Kingdom of God; none save those reconciled to God by faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of Him as Saviour shall ever be admitted to the glory of God's favour and attain everlasting life. Nevertheless we do not have to conclude that on this account the number of the redeemed is to be few. The "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" has to be reckoned with. He has decreed that the whole earth shall one day be full of His glory. He has declared that His word does not return to

Him void, but prospers in the thing whereto it is sent. It is when we ponder Scriptures like these that we realise what tremendous force and power for good is let loose in the world when God sets Himself to recover His lost creatures, and how hard it is going to be for any man to remain wilfully and incorrigibly obdurate in the face of that out-reaching love.

That some will be thus wedded to their sin, despite all the efforts made on their behalf and opportunities put in their path, seems fairly certain from the general tenor of the Scriptures. Some there will be, it would appear, who will fulfil the dark words of Rev. 21. 8 and meet their end in the utter destruction which is the reality behind the lurid symbol of the fiery lake. We can only hope, and we have good reason to believe, that the number will be small compared with the vast numbers of redeemed and reconciled mankind. The parable of the sheep and goats related in Matt. 25 gives no hint as to the relative numbers of the two classes, the ultimately saved and the ultimately destroyed but we are on reasonably safe ground when we conclude that there will be a great number of sheep and relatively few goats.

But meanwhile the sheep are lost; they wander still in this world, waiting for the shepherd to find them and lead them home, and not even conscious, for the most part, that they are lost and need a Shepherd. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way."* How like the bitter words of Rom. 1. 28 *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things . . ."* and so it goes on until the dreadful climax in 3. 23 *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*. There are the lost sheep, far from the warmth and light of the Father's home, and here is the Shepherd, making His way through this dark world to find the wandering ones and bring them safely back.

But it is not just a question of picking up the straying sheep and carrying it back and putting it down in the sheepfold just as if nothing had happened. Sin and the effects of sin are not dealt with so easily and casually as that. Lest anyone, reading without considering, should think that is all that there is in the Luke 15 story, the Lord adds an epilogue. The sheep has been restored, safe and

sound, and there is rejoicing. "Likewise" said Jesus, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth". Of little use is it bringing home the straying sheep if next day it is going to get lost again; or finding the lost piece of silver only to mislay it again; or greeting the returning prodigal if a week later, refreshed and re-vitalised, he sets out once more on a fresh career of dissipation and debauchery. There has to be repentance for past sin and there has to be atonement for past sin. The insult to God's holiness is not lightly to be set aside, and the damage to the sinner's character is not easily rectified. So the Saviour not only carries the exhausted frame of the sinner back to God; He also bears the burden of his sin. That is what this verse says. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The literal meaning of the Hebrew phrase is that "the Lord hath caused to meet him, the iniquity". Iniquity has met him in the road and blocks his way. The word really refers to such things as the old-time avenger of blood meeting the man for whom he is searching and whom he means to slay in satisfaction for the murder of a kinsman. The custom is alluded to in Num. 35. 19. "The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him." That word "meeteth him" is the same as "laid on him" in Isa. 53. And in Isa. 53, the implication behind the expression is very clear. The One who goes forth to seek and save the sinner is met in the way by the sinner's own sin, and that sin overcomes and slays him. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3. 18.) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree . . . by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop (*episkopos*—guardian or overseer) of your souls." (1 Pet. 2. 24-25.)

Sin met Him in the way—and He went forth, calm and resolute, to meet it. He knew that it would encompass His death, but He knew also that only thus could He defeat sin and break its power. We think too often of Jesus the bearer of sin in the sense that Divine Justice demands a sin-bearer before the sentence on a guilty race can be lifted. We think not often enough of the fact that Jesus must bear the sin of the world in order to break the power of sin over the individual. Divine forgiveness of sins is ineffective until the sinner repents; and after repentance Divine Justice has no further claim. There is no reopening old scores once the repentant one has entered into a condition of reconciliation with God, only inevitable working out of retribution for the deeds done in the body,

which none can escape. So it is of the more importance that we consider the bearing of sin by Jesus as it affects the repentant sinners rather than as it affects God. We want to know just how it is that this amazing manifestation of Jesus' love for mankind can result in the reconciliation of man to God and the renunciation by man of all evil.

There is a story, said to be true, of a missionary some century or more ago who devoted his life to teaching a primitive tribe of head-hunters in Eastern Asia. Slowly he weaned them from their savage practices and by his love and kindness endeared himself to all their hearts. Suspicious of strangers they remained, but for their pastor and shepherd they had nothing but the tenderest feelings of love, and they listened patiently and attentively as he talked to them of the love of Christ and attended their ailments and helped them in their troubles.

Before his coming the tribe had an annual ceremony at which a human victim was sacrificed, in the belief that by this means the weather would be propitious and the crops successful. The missionary had persuaded them to abandon that savage practice, not without considerable reluctance on their part, for they could not be sure that the orderly succession of sowing and reaping would go on uninterruptedly without the customary offering to the powers of Nature. When the harvests were good, all was well, but in years of drought and failing crops the men of the tribe were restive and it took all their teacher's influence to keep them from a relapse into the old bad ways.

Years passed by, and then one day a deputation waited on the missionary. The old urge was back, and they insisted that they must be permitted to hold their ceremony and sacrifice a victim. In their reverence and respect for the one who had devoted his whole life to their welfare they had come to him for permission, but his permission they must have and they would not be gainsaid. The old man realised that this time he would not be able to resist them and turn them from their purpose; their hearts were set upon sacrifice and a sacrifice they must have. He bent his head in silent prayer, and turned then to face the waiting deputation. "You shall have your request," he told them sadly, "but on condition that you follow my instructions to the letter." Overjoyed at having achieved their purpose, they assented gladly. "Tomorrow," said the old man, "you will go at the appointed time to your usual place of sacrifice. There you will see a man standing clothed in a scarlet cloak and his head covered with a scarlet hood. Do not attempt to look upon his features, but without delay do you accomplish your design. Now go, my children."

At the set time next day the tribesmen went up to the place of sacrifice. There stood the victim, just as the missionary had told them. With shouts and cries of exultation they surged forward. The man appointed for the purpose swung his great sword, and with one stroke cut off the head of the motionless figure before him . . . the scarlet hood rolled off and the horror-stricken natives looked upon the features of their beloved pastor.

It is said that never after that day did the people crave after sacrifice and idolatrous ceremonies. Through all their generations they cherished the memory of a man who, when he could save them from themselves in no other way, did it by laying down his life, a willing sacrifice.

In all our philosophising about the Atonement and the meaning of our Lord's death for man, it may be that we are never so near the truth as we are when we read that little story. Had there been another way of saving mankind, surely God would have taken it. Maybe it was because there was no other way, because only by giving His life as the supreme sacrifice, that Jesus came out into the world to find lost mankind, and, coming out, met sin in the way, and gave Himself to be overcome by sin and return to His Father's house bringing the lost ones with Him. All we, like sheep, have gone astray—but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

(to be continued)

Heirs of the Kingdom

David in the Cave
of Adullam

The Heavenly Father has provided many pictures in the Old Testament to illustrate truths mentioned in the New; we find the particular truth of James 2: 5: "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?*" illustrated by the life and experiences of David and his men in the cave of Adullam. When David was forced to leave Saul's house he went into the wilderness and selected a very large cave in which to dwell. Then he gathered a faithful company from all the tribes of Israel who shared his trials and experiences as an outcast, a fugitive while in the cave of Adullam, and later they shared with him his glory when he became king. These experiences of David between his rejection by Saul and the time when he became king lasted seven years, and represent the entire Gospel Age, the period during which our Lord has been gathering out a little band, not only from all the tribes of Israel, but from every kindred, tongue and nation. They are called to follow Him through difficult experiences now; later, when He is the recognised King over all the world, they are promised a place on His throne.

Who were the men who were drawn to David, and what were their characteristics? 1 Sam. 22: 1-2 says that his brethren and all his father's house went thither to him, also every one that was discontented, and he became captain over them. Some were drawn by ties of relationship, others by admiration of David himself and his character, but the majority

were drawn by personal trouble. Some were in distress, some in debt, and came to David to escape from their oppressors and creditors. Others came under Saul's wrath, as had David himself, and came to David by way of escape, while some were discontented on account of the tyranny and oppression of Saul, and so came to David. From some viewpoints they were not at all a desirable band. This turns our minds to the company the Lord is selecting and reminds us of the Apostle's words: "Not many wise, not many noble are called. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" Some have, indeed, been drawn to Him because of their great love for Him, others by an appreciation of His great sacrifice, but the majority by personal affliction and trouble. Worn out by the trials and troubles of the world, we sought rest; discontented with the oppression and tyranny of the god of this world, we came to the Lord and can now say: "*Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine.*" Perhaps on account of mental difficulties or the loss of loved ones, we sought rest, and were drawn to the Lord.

When these men came to David they found no very hard conditions laid down before they could enter into the company. Any might come to him; he set no age limit, no standard of fitness. Some were indeed strong, mighty men; others were men of weakness, so weak that on some occasions they had to be left behind as unfit to stand the fatigues with the rest of the band. David did not pry into their past life; some had been noble, fine characters, others ignoble, but David was willing to let by-

goners be bygoners; only two simple conditions were laid down, viz.: Do you accept David as your deliverer, do you believe he can deliver you from your oppressors and Saul? Do you accept David as your leader, are you willing to follow just wherever he leads? It will cost you something; you will need to be, as David is, an outcast, a fugitive. You will come under the scorn of Israel. Are you willing to share his outcast experiences? These two conditions were accepted by David's followers, as is shown by their exclamation, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse."

During this Age those who would follow the Lord find no hard conditions laid down; He places no age limit. Some come and give their entire life to Him in their youth, but others come after having spent the largest portion of their life in the pursuit of worldly hopes, pleasures and aims; yet the Lord accepts both. He also places no standard of fitness. Some have many talents to bring, while others feel they have nothing whatever. Jesus does not pry into the past life of those who would become His disciples. Some have spent their lives in the service of others, others have been ignoble and selfish but the Lord is willing to let bygoners be bygoners, and says, "the past is under the blood". There are just two conditions laid down, namely: Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour, do you believe He can deliver you? Do you accept Him as your leader; are you willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? Sit down and count the cost, for it will cost you something; it will mean standing for unpopular truth and going unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

When these men came to David they entered into entirely new experiences. Old things passed away and all things became new. All would not run smoothly in the caves; they would have many trials to meet. They had come to David to escape trials, but they found trials right there in the cave. There were men from all the tribes of Israel, varying in habits and temperament. They were all men of grit, or they dare not have joined themselves with David. They were all forced to live together in a cave. How apparent to each other their weaknesses would become; how often their ideas would clash. There would certainly be many difficulties in that cave; they would often rub one another the wrong way. One thing, however, would tend to bind them together, the desire of their leader that they should live together as one family, and gradually that desire of David began to soften their disagreements.

We have similar experiences, for the Lord has drawn His people from every kingdom, nation and tongue. He knew full well that there would be

little differences cropping up and we would be inclined to view things from different standpoints, and there would be differences of opinion, but the desire of our Leader is that we should endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It will take some effort, but we remember our Lord's prayer. "*Father, I pray that they whom Thou hast given me may be one as we are one.*" We know that our love for the Lord will be measured by our love for the brethren, and we must endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. We cannot countenance revolution in the cave. The Lord will measure our love for Him by our desire to live in peace, but what can we do to keep this spirit of peace? When the children of Israel murmured on account of the report brought back by the spies sent to view the land of Canaan, Caleb was able to "still the people before Moses" (Num. 13. 30), and the secret of Caleb's power is given in Num. 14. 24: "But my servant Caleb, *because he has another spirit with him*, and hath followed me fully." He had the spirit, not of strife, but of peace, and the secret of his great influence lay in the fact that he followed God fully. If we would preserve the spirit of unity we must not have the spirit of strife and agitation, and we must follow God fully.

The experiences of David's followers, however, would not all be trying; they also had blessings. They came under the influence of David's life, and his life was one of devotion. He was a godly man, a man of prayer, very often pouring out his soul in prayer to God; and he was a man of praise. Oft-times he would take up his harp in tuneful praise. How this would soften their harshness. David was so skilful on the harp that when, prior to his Adullam experiences, he played before Saul, the evil spirits that possessed Saul left him. He delighted to meditate on the law given to Israel through Moses, and probably would often call his followers and read to them from the law (see Psalm 34. 11). On two occasions he could have killed Saul, but he refused to lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed, for he had implicit trust in God. His influence must have worked wonders on the hearts of his rough followers, as is shown by the testimony paid them by Nabal. They had been tending Nabal's sheep, and the record is: "*The men were very good unto us and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything as long as we were conversant with them. They were a wall unto us both by day and by night*" (1 Sam. 25. 15-16). What a splendid tribute to pay to this company, who, before they had come under David's influence, would have robbed and plundered whenever possible.

As with these men, so with the followers of the Lord. We come under entirely new influences, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, under the influence of the mind of the Master. Jesus gathers us to Him to instruct us. "*Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.*" The scripture does not read "Where two or three are *come* together," but "are *gathered* together"; neither does it read "there will I come". No, Jesus is already there, and we are gathered unto Him. We do not come together to learn some new truth, nor to be refreshed by some old truths, nor yet to meet with the brethren, but we meet to hold communion with Jesus.

*Where two or three in sweet accord,
Meet in Thy name, oh blessed Lord,
Meet to recount Thine acts of grace,
Oh how Thy presence fills the place.*

These men also entered into a new security. The name Adullam means resting place. The cave was situated six miles south-west of Bethlehem, and to reach it one had to pass along a narrow way along the side of a precipice. On one side was a rocky gorge, and on the other high, towering rocks. Then one entered a crevice, leading sheer into the face of the rock, which was so low that it was impossible to stand in an upright position; one must enter in a crouched attitude. Against David and his men in the cave Saul was powerless, no matter how large an army he brought against them. They had to pass in single file along the narrow path leading along the mountain side, and enter one at a time what appeared to be a pitch dark hole in the rock; but David and his men had the advantage of looking towards the light and could see each one as he entered. They were quite secure; only in the daytime dare Saul attack them, and at night they went down into the neighbouring villages for supplies.

This represents another blessing in our Adullam life. We entered into a new security; "Our life is hid with Christ in God", and no power in the universe can hurt the spiritual life of a Christian; none can pluck us out of His hand (1 Pet. 3, 13). If our faith were as strong as our security is good we should never be afraid (Psa. 27. 1).

Another phase of the life of David and his followers is given in 1 Chron. 11, 3. David is now anointed king over Israel, no longer an outcast with but six hundred men, but thousands flock to his side. It is now popular to be one of David's followers (1 Chron. 12. 23 and 40). What now becomes of the faithful six hundred? Are they forgotten now that David has so many? No, the

time has now come for them to be specially remembered. They shared in David's trials, now they are to share in his honour. 1 Chron. 11, from verse 11, and chapter 12, 1-24, tell of his faithful Adullam band. We know that we are about to enter the greatest change the world has ever experienced; soon it is to become popular to be on the Lord's side. All will then want to give themselves in full consecration, but the opportunity of becoming heirs of the Kingdom will be for ever gone. Only those who share with Jesus in His Adullam experiences can hope to have a place on the honours list of the Kingdom. Those who would share with Him in His Kingdom must go with Him, without the camp, bearing his reproach. "*No cross, no crown*" (Matt. 19. 28-29). The honours list is already partially written, and it is interesting to see the names written here, and the great deeds that have won them distinction. There is Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. When his persecutors came against him he said "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God". He also prayed "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge". Col. 4 records a number of faithful saints who have found a place on the honours list; verse 12 mentions Epaphras an invalid who laboured "fervently for you in prayers". Rom. 16. 3 mentions "Priscilla and Aquila, who have laid down their own necks for my sake", and among others mentioned in this chapter is "Rufus and his mother and mine". Rufus' mother had apparently a very warm place in the Apostle's heart, as he referred to her as his own mother. Afterwards this honours list will be published to the world. They will learn that such and such a one is born in Zion, and the Highest Himself has established them. Just at the foot of the honours list there are yet some vacant places; will our names be there? Are we following in His Adullam footsteps? If so, the Lord will certainly record our names there. "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*". The matter now rests with ourselves. We must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, remembering that God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, *which He hath promised to them that love Him.*

If all the consecrated were busily engaged putting on the armour of God, and in proving it by actual use in zealous endeavours to herald the truth and to help others to stand, there would indeed be no time left for disputings.

* * *

The secret of every happy, successful life is to do the will of God, and have no desire apart from that.

In the Land of Beginning Again

A PEN PICTURE OF THE COMING KINGDOM.

No. 2—"Thy dead shall live." (Isa. 26. 19)

"I have finished Sheila's awakening robe!"

Absorbed in his painting, he did not reply immediately. As his brush completed the last few deft strokes his eyes left the canvas and looked out across the trim lawn with its borders of gay flowers. His lips framed a question.

"How shall we explain her mother's absence to her?"

His companion had risen and was draping the beautifully embroidered blue robe over her deck chair. It lay there, shimmering in the afternoon sun as though waiting for its destined wearer to slip straight into it.

"I do not know, John. This is a new experience for us, to await the awakening of one whose mother has gone to be with the Lord in the heavens. We ourselves have not been back long enough to know just how her mother will commune with her. But I am sure of one thing."

"And that is . . . ?"

She picked up a basket of coloured silks and turned to go into the house. "It is written 'He openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.' Sheila's happiness will not be complete if she fails to be re-united with her mother. Others whose loved ones have been translated to reign with the Lord Jesus tell us they have talked with them although we have not been able to understand their explanations. Perhaps when Sheila awakens we shall see for ourselves and understand what we now see only as through a glass, darkly. She was twenty-five when she died, John, thin, and wasted by disease. Now she will take up life where she left it, healthy in body and mind, ready to hear the message of the Gospel and make her decision for Jesus."

John followed his sister into the house, carrying his easel and canvas. Two kittens gambolled happily on the lawn. Inside, the two knelt in prayer. The man's deep voice came faintly through the open window.

"O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, look down from thy habitation on high and behold the preparation we have made for one whose friendship was dear to us in days gone by. We believe and art sure that thou canst bring her back, that the young life so soon cut short in all the bloom of

youth can be revived and rejoice in this thy wonderful earth, and that with gladness she will come into harmony with the laws of thy righteous kingdom. Bring her back to us, that we may tend her as one of thy little ones, we beseech Thee, in the holy Name of our Master and our King, Jesus."

Two voices united in a softly reverent "Amen."

The kittens had ceased their play and were lying still, as though waiting. The hum of bees and insects took on a lower note, waned and died away altogether. The singing of the birds in the trees faded into quietness. A strange peace seemed to have closed in upon that sheltered garden. The sun slid behind a fleecy cloud, a solitary cricket chirped once, and then all was still . . .

A soft whisper in the tree-tops . . . a gentle breeze sweeping down, stirring the quiet air, billowing through that blue robe lying in the deck chair, giving it almost the appearance of a human form, a form that took on the appearance of reality, a graceful reality that moved slightly, rhythmically, as though breathing . . . the sun shone out warmly and birds and insects burst out together in triumphant chorus . . .

The girl in the deck chair lay, dreamy eyes half open, puzzled wonderment slowly dawning as she sought to take in the details of the scene before her. She turned her head slightly and followed the course of a butterfly over the flower tops. Her gaze fell upon one slender hand and she raised it hesitatingly, almost as though she expected the movement to be accompanied by pain. The blue sleeve slid back, revealing a delicately moulded arm without flaw or blemish. A little frown of perplexity puckered her forehead and she closed her eyes as memory began to return.

The thin, wasted arm; the white bedclothes; the grave-faced doctor just over there; the tearful face of her mother; the fast-gathering greyness coming down before her eyes and blotting out everything from sight; the slow fading of sound into silence, and now, this! She opened her eyes and looked at the golden mass of mimosa blooming where the doctor had been standing only a moment ago.

Realisation came, swift and sudden. "Oh mother, you were right, after all. This is the Kingdom you used to tell me about, and I have

been dead and have come back. Mother, where are you?" Her arms were outstretched, beseeching.

A soft voice spoke behind her.

"I am here, Sheila."

There was something in the timbre of that voice which checked the girl's first impulse to turn round toward the speaker. "It is true then? I have come back, fit and well, and never to suffer again?"

"Never again, my child. The tears are all over now."

"And you? Did you attain . . . your hope, mother?"

"Yes, dear. It was hard to let you go, but I knew my Lord had you in His safe keeping. And in His own due time He took me also, and brought me into the glorious assembly of the Church of the First-born in Heaven."

"It sounds like old times to hear you talk like that." The girl's eyes were shining. "I want to turn round and see if you are really there, and yet I feel quite content to lay here and listen to your voice. I don't understand it at all; it is all wonderful to me."

"You will come to understand, Sheila. We shall be able to meet and talk with each other often, even although the old relationship has passed away. We have each entered into a greater family, I in heaven and you on earth, and in those families we shall find new companionships and friendships, and spheres of service for the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. And you will learn in time to talk with me even when we are not together, for distance will no longer be a barrier to our communion with each other."

Sheila's eyes were serious. "Your life will be spent in the heavens, and mine on the earth, and yet I can always have you to myself when I want you?"

"That is so, dear."

She sighed happily. "Then there is nothing more I want. I shall try and remember everything

you ever told me about the Kingdom and give my life to serve the Lord Jesus and do my best to progress along the—what do you call it?—the Highway of Holiness, just as fast as ever I can."

The soft voice seemed to be coming from a great distance now. "Remember the words we used to read together, Sheila. '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 sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' You are one of those ransomed, and life, rich, glorious, never-ending life lies before you. Your old childhood's friends, John and Mary, are in the house. Go to them and they will tell you much more about this wonderful world into which you have come. I go now—but I shall come again and come to you often."

Sheila stood up and looked around, quivering with eagerness. A puzzled look came into her eyes, and then a dawning understanding. For a long minute she stood, and then, "Come soon, my dear," she breathed softly.

Thoughtfully she turned again and went into the house.

* * *

This is the kind of incident that will be common in the Millennial Age. Devoted Christians who have loved and served the Lord Jesus in full consecration of life to His service will without doubt experience the change to heavenly conditions of which St. Paul speaks in I Cor. 15, so that they may "reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20, 4). The remainder of humanity will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom on earth during which the Father makes His final plea for repentance and allegiance. It is to that new world the dead will return, in the resurrection, restored to conscious life by the power of God, in the new bodies which He gives to them "as it hath pleased Him."

See Psa. 145, 16, Matt. 25, 40, Isa. 33, 24, Rev. 21, 4, Heb. 12, 22-23, I Cor. 15, 50-53, Psa 87, 5-6, I Cor. 15, 38-40, Isa. 35, 8-10.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

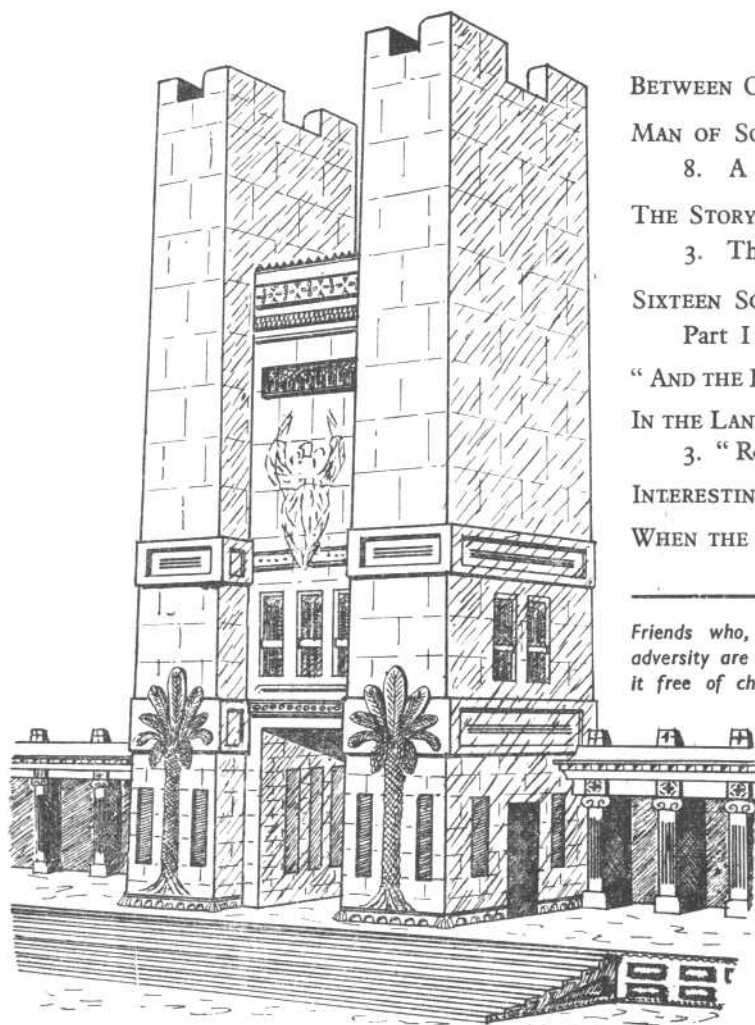
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.

Vol. 31, No. 3

MARCH, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	...	34
MAN OF SORROWS		
8. A Lamb to the Slaughter	...	35
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD		
3. The Building of the Ark	...	36
SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS		
Part I	...	40
"AND THE PRISONERS HEARD THEM"		42
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN		
3. "Resurrection by Judgment"		44
INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED	...	45
WHEN THE CLOUD TARRIED LONG	...	46



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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.

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1923)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported partly by the fixed subscription, and for the rest, by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

These columns stress two important Scriptural truths, namely:

That God will not eternally condemn any one of His creatures until there has been a full and fair opportunity to learn and appreciate the difference between good and evil and the reason for God's decree that evil and evil-doers must ultimately perish.

That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Arrangements are being made for the usual London Convention at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, during the August Bank Holiday season next. Details will be available later and programmes will be circulated through the medium of the "Monthly".

* * *

Advice is to hand from America to the effect that the annual Unity Convention is to be held this year between August 1st and 7th at Depauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, and although it is not likely that many from this country will be able to attend we feel that there will be many here whose prayers will ascend for the well-being and profit of the gathering. Any who would like further details may have same on application to Convention Committee, Box 124, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

* * *

Under the heading of "Sixteen Scripture Truths" a series commences this month, and will run for four months, outlining the salient teachings of the Word of God as understood by many who read this journal. To some these little treatises will come as new, to others who have known them from of old they will come perhaps with new force, to all, we hope, they will be of interest. It is

hoped to publish the entire series in booklet form at the end of their appearance in the "Monthly," for use in the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

* * *

Attention is drawn to the fact that we now have only three copies of the "Englishman's Greek Concordance" in stock and when these are gone shall not have any more. To the student of Greek this book is very useful. Consisting of 1,100 pages and measuring 10 inches by 6½ inches by 2 inches thick, it has, first, a vocabulary giving every Greek word and its English meaning; second, a concordance giving every Greek word in alphabetical order with all places where it occurs; third, an index giving every English word with its Greek equivalent; fourth, an index giving the various English words by which each Greek word is translated; fifth, an appendix of grammatical items, and sixth, a concordance giving "various readings" of the chief scholars of the Greek text and differences between these readings and the text of Stephens of 1550 and that of the Authorised of 1611. Altogether a bulky compendium of information on the Greek New Testament which the more studious among our number would rejoice to possess. Price is 42/6d. or six dollars fifty, post paid.

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	106 The Bible Hell.	
	107 The Son of God.	
	108 The Holy Spirit.	

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part 8.—A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (vs. 7.)

In all His sufferings there was never a word of complaint that passed the Saviour's lips. That is the thought behind this declaration that although he was oppressed and afflicted he "opened not his mouth." Jesus said so often and emphatically that He had come to do the will of His Father, and in the carrying out of that will He found no cause for remonstrance or unwillingness with the Father, no shadow of impatience or reluctance, no whisper of complaint or question. His meat was to do the will of the One who had sent Him, and to finish His work. Nothing else mattered. That is a lesson we do well to take to ourselves. All too often we accept with gladness and thanksgiving the sunshine and flowers of the Christian way but directly the shadow of adversity falls athwart our pathway we commence to grumble and complain. We do need so to prepare ourselves in the sunny days that if in His providence darker and stormier times are to come upon us we take those seasons of adversity in just the same thankful and loyal spirit in which we formerly received the good things. It is not often—in our own country at any rate—that oppression and affliction comes upon the child of God in consequence of his faith; not real, intense oppression and affliction, anyway. We have not been called upon to suffer for His sake as some of our forbears were called upon, or even as some of our own brethren at this present day in certain other lands. And it behoves us therefore, while being humbly thankful that our Master has seen fit to withhold such experiences from us, so to school ourselves that we shall bear them without complaint, without opening our mouths, if such things should come. In the meantime we do well to remember that in many of the experiences of every-day we do tend to become impatient and quarrelsome, with each other if not with our Lord, and it were good for all of us that we learn well how to endure the harder things of the Christian life without the opening of the mouth.

This prophetic picture of the being brought as a lamb to the slaughter is the basis upon which the entire later picture of Jesus as the "Lamb of God," the Lamb slain from the foundation of the

world" is built. Isaiah's words here are in turn taken from the Passover sacrifice, the lamb that was slain to become the symbol of deliverance from Egypt. Grammatically the phrase should properly be translated "He is brought as *the* lamb to the slaughter," and the reference is not to any casual lamb, taken to a slaughter house in every-day life, but to the Passover lamb itself, ready on the fourteenth day to be slaughtered so that Israel could be delivered. Without the blood of that slain lamb on the portals and lintels of their houses there could be no salvation. Without the Divine acceptance of that proffered sacrifice there could be no call to come out of Egypt and meet with God before the holy mount. Without the outward evidence that the Lamb had indeed been slain the destroying angel had no mandate to withdraw his sword. It was supremely important for every Israelite that he not only trusted in the blood of the slain lamb but that he made a public exhibition of the fact on the doorposts and lintels of his house in such fashion that the angel could see it. It was not so important at this moment that the Egyptians see it as that the Divine Messenger see it. And so it is with us; important though it is that we heed well the exhortation to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth and so confess Jesus before men, it is even more important that in the privacy and sanctity of our homes we confess Jesus before God. Our knowledge of the Divine plan will not save us; our many and wonderful and mighty works will avail us not; our profession of consecration before God will not be accounted of any worth, if we have not accepted and confessed Jesus the Son of God and the Saviour of us all.

That confession needs to be of Jesus the despised and rejected, the oppressed and afflicted, too. It is not sufficient to own Him only when He appears as the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, or when He is seen a King, mighty to save, travelling in the greatness of His strength. These things are true of Jesus, but they belong to an Age yet future, and for the present we have to remember that He is still despised and rejected of men, and the servant is not to be greater than his lord. There is a tendency to-day in some quarters to represent Christianity as something vigorous and militant in the physical, worldly sense, something that is very much akin to this

world as it is with its soldiering and its prize-fights and its hail-fellow-well-met, and to put aside the sacrificial and suffering aspect as a regrettable lapse into effeminacy and weakness not to be tolerated in this modern age. Evangelical campaigns publicize their champions in photographs which represent them something of a cross between a gymnasium instructor off-duty and an advertisement for somebody's toothpaste. We know that a Christian should be healthy and vigorous, self-reliant and upstanding. We have an Apostolic admonition to rejoice continually and quite obviously that rejoicing should find outward expression in our features. We should be pleasant and cheerful in our dealings with all men. An expression which used to be common amongst us, "the Dawn smile," was not coined without reason. But these are not the things which necessarily denote the true followers of the Master. There is sorrow and sadness for the sin and misery of mankind which must find its place in the Christian life, and become an evidence of the "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ"

(Col. 1. 24), as well as the brightness and cheer which at the right time and in the right place evidences that inward joy in the Gospel which is the possession of us all. There are the shoulders bowed down with other men's burdens, health and vitality freely given in the service of one's fellow-men, evidence of those who are walking "as He walked" and are pouring out their lives unto death as He did. This modern world takes little heed of such and it is a tragedy that the modern professedly Christian world is becoming infected with the same spirit and in the effort to show that Christianity is not the sombre, jaundiced, sanctimonious thing that was so often represented as such a century or more ago, has gone to the other extreme and rejected the inner life for the purely superficial. In our happiest and most cheerful moments we do well to remember that we are followers of the One who went quietly, silently but resolutely, as the lamb to the slaughter.

To be continued.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 3.—The Building of the Ark

Of course, the man was crazy; it was easy to see that. His enthusiasm for preaching and his passion for righteousness had turned his head. Those long-continued exhortations to flee from the judgment to come were in themselves sufficient to stamp him mentally deficient, but this latest development proved that he was definitely unbalanced. Here he is, building a huge ship in which to take refuge together with a liberal selection of animals and a plentiful supply of food, because God is going to drown us all for our wickedness and destroy our cities in a flood of waters of unimaginable magnitude. This, surely, is the greatest joke of the Age!

So must the citizens of Noah's country reasoned as they watched the purposeful activity in progress on some level piece of ground in what is now southern Iraq. The leading figure in that activity, Noah the son of Lamech, they knew well. He was a man who had never made any secret of his loyalty to God. The New Testament three thousand years later declared him a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2. 5.) That he proclaimed the standards of God's righteousness and exhorted the people of his day to turn from their evil ways there can be no doubt. That his preaching was

completely ignored and his appeals rejected is equally certain. The opportunity of escape from the coming judgment of destruction was open to all, but none save Noah's own family availed themselves of it. The whole world went on in its accustomed course, heedless and disregarding, until . . .

So Noah got on with the building of the Ark. The word itself is a strange and an archaic one. It is, in fact, "a word so archaic that scholars neither know its derivation nor even to what language it belongs." (*Ellicott*.) It is used in the Bible only twice—here and in reference to the "ark" of bulrushes in which the babe Moses was set adrift on the Nile. (*Ex. 2 3-5*.) It is an older word than the "ship" or "vessel" of the Babylonian and Sumerian legends, and that is just one of many indications that the Genesis account as we have it is of immense antiquity. So far as can be ascertained, the word denotes a box or enclosed structure—certainly not a boat or ship, which were defined by well-understood terms of their own. The refuge in which Noah and his family found protection while the waters wasted the earth was nothing at all like the orthodox ship's hull sur-

mounted by a kind of gable-roofed dwelling-house which is so often pictured, and is caricatured in the well-known children's toys.

A moderately detailed specification for the construction of the Ark is given in the Book of Genesis. It must be remembered that the vessel was not intended to proceed by any kind of motive power nor to steer a course. It had but to float on the surface until the flood had abated; its construction had to be of a type that would withstand turbulent water but it required neither sails, oars or rudder. It is true that the Babylonian legends included a steersman to manipulate the steering-oars characteristic of Babylonian ships, and even recorded his name, Puzur-Amurri, but to steer a ship the size of the Ark by the primitive methods known to the Babylonians would have demanded a veritable army of steersmen, and this part of the ancient legends is certainly an embellishment.

Students of the Genesis account decided many years ago that the Ark was a three-floored structure having a flat base and two sides which sloped toward each other and met at an angle at the top. It was, so to speak, triangular in cross-section, the ground floor being the widest. The length was very great in relation to the width and height so that it presented the general appearance of a long three-sided box. With the two ends rounded to withstand the force of the waves, such a structure would float partially submerged and be, to a great extent, unaffected by the violence of the waves and currents.

Fifty years ago an experimental vessel was built in Denmark to the same proportions as the Ark—but very much smaller—and of the same constructional style. This boat was thirty feet long, five feet wide, and three feet high from the flat base to the angle formed by the meeting of the two sloping sides. Tests carried out in the Baltic sea by the designer, a naval architect named Vogt, showed that the proportions of the vessel were ideal for maximum resistance to stresses set up by the force of the sea. The Copenhagen newspaper "*Dagbladet*" of 31st August, 1904, reporting these experiments, quoted the engineer as saying that after thousands of years of experience in shipbuilding, it had to be confessed that the proportions of the Ark were still the ideal for the construction of a large ship, although modern ships, with their high perpendicular sides, do not attain this ideal and often suffer severe strains in consequence. According to another Copenhagen newspaper "*Dannebrog*," the vessel "*drifted sideways with the tide, creating a belt of calm water to leeward, and the test proved conclusively that a vessel of this primitive make might be perfectly seaworthy for a long voyage.*"

Three hundred years earlier, in 1609, Peter Jansen, of Noorn, Holland, had embarked upon a much more ambitious project. He is said to have built a vessel to the proportions of the Ark, one hundred and twenty feet long, twenty wide and twelve high. It was found to behave so steadily in the sea and to have such ample stowage in relation to its weight that a number of similar boats were built. They fell into disuse only because of the difficulty of arranging for motive power and steering, and the impossibility of carrying heavy objects such as cannon on the top deck.

We come then to the Divine instructions to Noah relative to the building of this celebrated vessel. It is not necessary to suppose that God gave all the details in the form of a kind of celestial blue print and that all Noah had to do was blindly to follow them. Much more likely is it that the knowledge necessary to build this amazing structure came to Noah over a long period of perhaps many years and that a great deal of study and research was necessary on his part before he could pick up his tools and commence.

It is probably true that no one who has not had the benefit of an engineering training can properly appreciate the tremendous mechanical problems with which Noah was confronted. It was not just a question of nailing a few planks together and making them water-tight. If our understanding of the length measures of the ancients is well founded, the Ark was some 540 feet long, 90 feet wide and 54 feet high. Lest it be thought that such an enormous timber structure could never be built, and even if it were built, would never float, it can be pointed out that the Egyptians in the third century before Christ were building ships 400 feet long by sixty wide, propelled by four thousand rowers. The British warship "*Victoria*", in the early nineteenth century, one of the last wooden warships to be built, was nearly 300 feet in length. Since the advent of iron the sizes of ships have exceeded that of the Ark. The famous steamship "*Great Eastern*," built in 1854, was 680 feet long by 82 feet wide. There is nothing unreasonable therefore in the apparent size of the Ark, but Noah must have been an engineer of considerable technical qualifications even to design on paper—or the then equivalent of paper—the structure which became the means of saving those who were to start life afresh on the earth.

"*This is the fashion which thou shalt make it of*" says the account "*the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.*" (Gen. 6. 15.) There were many "cubits" in the ancient world, for each nation had its own system of length

measures, and cubit lengths in one historical period were not necessarily the same as in another. As Babylonian, Assyrian, Jew, Egyptian, Greek, met and mingled so their length measures were modified to suit each other. To trace out all the ramifications of these systems of measures would be tedious; suffice it to say that a careful comparison of Genesis 6 with the length measures given in the Assyrian account of the Flood, written about 800 B.C., and the account of Berosus the Babylonian historian who wrote in Greek about 250 B.C., seems to indicate that Moses had "edited" the Genesis account in terms of the Egyptian cubit of 21.6 inches which gives the Ark a length of 542 feet, width 90 feet, and height to apex of 54 feet. The Assyrian account is quite independent of the Bible narrative, was written in a different language, at a different time, and employs a different "cubit," but this when rendered into English measure gives precisely the same length and height—although the width differs—which is strong presumptive evidence of an ancient fact preserved in these two accounts, which must have diverged from each other when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees many centuries before.

This tremendous structure had three floors. "With lower, second and third stories shalt thou make it." (Gen. 6. 16.) The word "stories" is, in the Hebrew, left to be understood but it is a correct presumption to add it in the Authorised Version. "Lower" is "tachtî" as in Deut. 32. 22 "a fire shall burn unto the lowest hell," and Psa. 139. 15 "When I was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." This was what we would call the ground floor, the flat bottom of the vessel, ninety feet wide and about sixteen high from floor to ceiling. This great space, amounting to nearly 50,000 square feet, was almost certainly used for storage, for the Ark had to carry a great deal of cargo.

It is perhaps not readily appreciated that in all probability Noah and his family carried much more than a collection of animals and a store of food in the Ark. According to the narrative he had been plainly told that the world he knew was to be completely destroyed with all its works. Only his own family would survive the Deluge to start a new world. It is in the highest degree unlikely that a man possessing the faith to believe such a Divine intimation and the intelligence to build such a vessel would fail to take with him as much in the way of useful materials as he could with which to commence his great task when the Flood was over. The antediluvians must have attained a high degree of proficiency in the arts and sciences and it is very probable—almost a certainty—that the vast lower

floor of the Ark was crammed with materials, tools, useful articles, and perhaps objects of art and beauty too, saved from the old world wherewith to facilitate the commencement of life in the new.

The middle floor, sixty feet wide, was perhaps devoted to the storage of food and "articles wanted on voyage". When the Ark was afloat, fully loaded, it would be anything from half to two-thirds submerged, so that both this and the lower floor would be below the water line. Only the top floor could receive air and light directly from outside.

The top floor, thirty feet wide and more than five hundred long, would afford ample living accommodation for the family and the animals that had been taken on board. Here were the "rooms" or "nests" of vs. 14—compartments, pens and stalls for the various classes of creatures. This would be a strange-looking place, like a long corridor with its two walls sloping steadily above until they met at an angle about sixteen or eighteen feet overhead. This is probably the meaning of the rather obscure phrase in vs. 16 "in a cubit shalt thou finish it above." The basic length measure of the Babylonians—*ammatu*, usually rendered "cubit"—was derived from the average distance between the elbow and the tip of the little finger. Hence "ammatu" in Babylonian and its equivalent "ammah" in Hebrew meant either a length measure or the forearm. This expression "finished in a cubit (or elbow) above" might well denote what we call the "apex", the angle at the top of the Ark formed by the meeting of the two sloping sides.

How did the navigators fare for light and air? Flood or no flood, they could not exist without either. There were apparently two kinds of windows in the Ark, both on the upper floor only. "A window shalt thou make to the ark" is the Lord's instruction in vs. 16. The word "window" here is "tsohar" which is a technical term meaning an opening for sky light and air. The same word is used about twenty times in the Old Testament for "noon", "noontide", and "midday". In its structural sense it denotes a long and narrow aperture running along the tops of buildings near the roof to admit air. All Egyptian temples had such an aperture, usually about six inches high, broken up by supporting columns every few feet. It would seem that such a narrow opening ran along the entire length of the Ark, on both sides, just below the top, and this served for the entry and egress of air and sufficient light, in the brilliant sunshine of Mesopotamia, for the inmates.

The "window" of chap. 8. 6 through which Noah put the birds who went out to explore the drying earth, is "challon" which is the regular

Old Testament word for windows of the orthodox type. We may reasonably conclude that the "tsohar" was high up along the "eaves" of the Ark and gave fresh air and light at all times. Lower down in the sides of the upper floor, and perhaps only in the living quarters of the family, were other windows, probably not made of transparent material, which could only be opened when the water was calm.

Chap. 8. 13 tells how Noah, after the abating of the waters, "*removed the covering of the ark, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.*" This allusion to a "covering" is interesting. The word is "*mikseh*" which is used elsewhere for the covering of ram's skins and "badger" (seal) skins which covered the Tabernacle in the wilderness as described in the Book of Exodus, and is allied with words meaning to cover as with garments. It will be shown later on that at the first onset of the Flood the Ark must have been completely submerged for a few minutes and must therefore have been made completely watertight from the outside world. Evidently the "tsohar" or window which normally gave light and air to the vessel was fitted with some kind of watertight covering which could be locked in position at will to exclude all possibility of ingress of water, and opened again once the Ark was safely afloat in calm water. This may have been the "covering" which Noah removed apparently for the last time, fifty-seven days before leaving the Ark. In the meantime it probably served as protection against spray, rain and wind in stormy weather.

"*The door of the Ark shalt thou set in the side thereof.*" (6. 16.) Somewhere along the upper floor existed the only means of entry and exit—a door capable of giving admission to the largest creature or article intended to be taken in, and made completely watertight when closed, as it was for the whole of the time the Ark was afloat. The lower floors would of course be reached from the upper floor by means of stairways or sloping ramps.

Nearly everybody knows that the Ark was built of "gopher wood" (6. 14) but nobody knows just what particular species of the vegetable kingdom is thus indicated. Commentators of the nineteenth century used to assume an air of oracular wisdom and discourse learnedly of "cypress or other resinous wood, capable of withstanding immersion in water" which was a pretty safe guess having in mind the purpose of the Ark's building. Gesenius connected the word with "*kopher*" which was used for pitch and from that obtained the idea of "resinous wood". It has been left to Dr. Yahuda,

the linguistic expert, some twenty years ago, to find the truth. "*Gopher*" is the Hebrew transliteration of the Babylonian "*gipparu*" which means timber of any kind. Noah was merely told to build the Ark of timber well covered with pitch (bitumen) to make it watertight. Some later copyist or translator, not recognising the meaning of "*gopher*", took it as a proper name and added "wood" after it.

It is of interest to note that to this day there is a special kind of boat used on the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and found nowhere else, called by the Arabs and Iraqis a "*gufa*." It consists of a round bowl-shaped structure of reeds or light wood made watertight with bitumen, and is used for carrying goods or passengers. The *gufa* is usually about ten feet across and four feet high, although some have been made large enough to carry a hundred people. This term "*gufa*" is so like the old Hebrew word "*gopher*" that one suspects we have a name here that has survived the centuries and that the "*gufa*" of to-day is the lineal descendant of Noah's Ark. Certain it is that these boats are of immense antiquity; vessels exactly like them are pictured on the sculptures of the Assyrian kings of nearly three thousand years ago.

Those who like figures may be interested in the result of a simple engineering calculation which shows that the Ark may well have absorbed something like 6,000 tons of timber in its building, requiring the felling and dressing of a veritable forest of giant trees. Thus built, it would be capable of carrying some 25,000 tons of cargo without danger of foundering. But an apparently casual remark in Gen. 7. 20 may enable us to approximate its lading a little more accurately. "*Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered.*" That apparently implies that at no point in the Ark's course was the water less than fifteen cubits deep; that fact could only have been observed if the Ark itself "drew" just that depth of water. It seems a logical conclusion that the vessel floated submerged to a depth of fifteen cubits, just half its height, when loaded, and this in turn means that it displaced three-quarters its own volume of water, some 27,000 tons. It follows that if the structure itself did weigh about 6,000 tons, then Father Noah must have stowed away animals and goods to an aggregate weight of 21,000 tons!

How long was this gigantic craft in building? It is not possible to say, for no hint is given. The cryptic reference in Gen. 6. 3 to a period of one hundred and twenty years has sometimes been suggested to denote a "period of grace" during which the antediluvians had the opportunity of repentance

while the Ark, taking visible shape before their eyes, gave additional point to the preaching and warnings of Noah. We do not know. The work must have taken a good many years and it must have employed hundreds of workers. There cannot be much doubt about that. Noah must have been a man of wealth and power to have had the material means to plan and execute so stupendous a project. The ancient legends depict him as King of his country and there is nothing impossible about that. Suffice it that he was a man of faith and he believed

God and acted out that belief in carrying out a command that must have seemed utterly fantastic to all who heard of it. And the greatest test of faith must have been at the moment when, with all his twenty thousand tons of stores and goods and animals safely inside, Noah and his family climbed into the giant vessel which they had built, saw the door close heavily upon them and shut them away completely from the outside world, and sat down in the darkness, to wait . . .

To be continued.

SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS

Part I

Times of Restitution—The Call of the Church—The Day of Judgment—Where are the Dead ?

1. Times of Restitution

"TIMES OF RESTITUTION" was the expression used by the Apostle Peter in his first sermon, preached at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, to describe the coming Age during which Jesus Christ will reign in righteousness over the earth. Peter called it by that name because during that Age all that has been lost to man in consequence of the fall into sin will be restored, with the added benefit of a knowledge of the effects of sin that will guarantee against repetition of that fall. Jesus called it the "re-generation" because during this period the dead are to be restored to earth, and together with the living are to enjoy a full, fair opportunity to accept Him as their Saviour, and progress to human perfection, mental, moral and physical, in the power of that acceptance. The teachings of Jesus regarding the "Kingdom of Heaven" have reference, not only to the heavenly spiritual phase of that Kingdom, the ultimate portion of consecrated Christians, but also to this earthly Kingdom in which all evil and sin will be gradually eliminated from the hearts and lives of men, so that at the end only the wilfully sinful will be demonstrated unworthy of life, and will suffer sin's penalty, death. It is this Kingdom of God upon earth to which the ancient prophets of Israel turned their thoughts when they spoke of the time when swords would be turned into ploughshares and nations go to war no more; when men would sit in safety beneath their own vine and fig tree in peace and security; when the lion would lie down with the lamb, and all creation be at peace. It was this same period that John the Revelator saw in vision when he beheld the triumphant Church of Christ reigning

with Him over the nations "a thousand years"—from which fact comes the name "Millennium", often applied to that Age—and the New Jerusalem established upon earth, with its River of Life and Trees of Life for the healing of the nations.

Sin, disease, pain, death; all are to pass away when the Times of Restitution commence, and God's Will is done on earth as in Heaven, in fulfilment of the prayer of Jesus. All people then living, as well as those now dead, will share in that Kingdom, and have opportunity to come into harmony with God's Will for mankind.

This, man's hope, will soon be realised; for the signs of the times indicate that the dawn of the "Times of Restitution" is at hand.

See Acts 3. 19-21; Gen. 22. 18; Isa. 35. 8-10; Luke 2. 10; Rev. 20. 1-3; Jer. 31. 33-34; Num. 14. 21; Zeph. 3. 9; Psa. 30. 5; Mal. 4. 2; Acts 17. 31; Matt. 19. 28; John 5. 28-29; Jer. 31. 29-30; Acts 3. 23; Isa. 2. 2-4; Isa. 66. 21-25; Rev. 21. 1-4.

2. The Call of the Church

THERE are two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly. Although God's provision for the main body of mankind is everlasting life upon earth, His purpose with Christian believers of this Age is for a heavenly salvation in association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christendom in general has lost sight of this dual aspect of the Divine Plan, but it is plainly shown in the Bible. When the Apostles held their first great conference, recorded in Acts 15, they agreed upon their understanding that during this Age, between the First and Second Advents, God is "visiting" the nations to take out of them

a "people for His Name." This people is the body of devoted and consecrated believers in Christ, men and women who have come to Him by means of repentance, conversion, justification by faith, and complete dedication of life. These constitute the "Church," the "Body" or "Bride" of Christ, to use New Testament terms, and after a lifetime spent in faithful service for their Lord, they are exalted to be with Him in spiritual glory.

The present hope of the Church is for the return of the Lord and the setting up of His Kingdom upon earth. The Christian commission in the meantime is to seek out those who will give themselves to God in consecration of life and thus become fellow disciples, to manifest the spirit and teaching of Christ in daily life, to follow His example in doing good to all men wherever opportunity offers, to announce the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom, and to call men to repentance and reconciliation with God.

The future work of the Church is with her Lord for the conversion of the world during the Millennial Age. The training for that work will have been acquired during this present Age, and after the Lord's return at His Second Advent and the change of His faithful followers to spiritual conditions this work will proceed in power. The experiences of this present life, under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, will have made such disciples fitly qualified to administer the earthly Kingdom of God.

With the close of the Millennium the work of the Lord and His Church with the earth will be complete, for mankind will have attained perfection, sin will be no more, the willfully wicked will have perished, and humanity will remain righteous for ever. Beyond that time the Scripture is measurably silent, but it does hint at further activities for the Church in as yet unrevealed spheres, continuing to the glory of God throughout eternity.

See I Cor. 15. 41-53; Heb. 3. 1; Rom. 8. 14; Acts 15. 13-17; Matt. 3. 2; Acts 3. 19; Luke 15. 7; Acts 17. 30; Rom. 3. 26; Rom. 5. 1; 2 Cor. 6. 1; I Thess. 4. 3; Rom. 12. 1; Rom. 6. 3-5; Luke 12. 36-39; Phil. 3. 20; 2 Tim. 4. 8; Matt. 24. 14; Acts 1. 8; I Cor. 6. 2-3; Rev. 20. 4; Gal. 3. 27-29; I Cor. 15. 24-25; Matt. 25. 33-34; Rev. 22. 1-6

* * *

3. The Day of Judgment

OLD ideas die hard, and the popular belief that the Day of Judgment is a period of twenty-four hours, at the dawn of which Christ will suddenly

appear in the air, the "Last Trump" will sound, mountains and rocks quake and rend, the graves open and the dead stand before the Throne, sinners be condemned to everlasting torment and the few righteous taken to heavenly bliss, lingers still among Christians although not many talk about it. That grim picture is a survival of the Dark Ages and has no foundation in the Bible. According to the Scriptures the Day of Judgment is a long period of time during which all humanity will be placed on trial for life, with every incentive offered them to renounce sin and become reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time of joy and gladness, not one of fear and terror.

The Day of Judgment commences at the close of this present Age in which the "kingdoms of this world" hold sway. With the passing of these kingdoms in a "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" there occurs the Second Advent of Christ in the glory of His Messianic Kingdom, His saints, the faithful Christian disciples of this present Age, being with Him in glory. This is the first event of that Day. Next in order is a proclamation to all the world, requiring obedience to the laws of the Kingdom, for "nothing shall hurt or destroy" and the power to inflict evil upon others will be taken from men. Then comes the Resurrection, during which "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth". The glorified Church will be active among the people, turning men and women to righteousness, and as the "Day of Judgment" proceeds, so humanity will line up on one side or the other, for Christ and His righteousness, or for the Devil and sin. In the meantime the earth itself will be made fruitful and productive, the desert blossoming as the rose, a fitting home for the sinless beings that are to inhabit it to all eternity.

At the end comes the test, a "little season" during which those who are incorrigibly set for sin will be manifested in their true colours and will die in their sin. That closes the Day of Judgment, for all sin and all sinners will have perished from the earth, and all men everywhere will be fully in harmony with the laws of righteousness.

See Acts 17. 31; 2 Pet. 3. 7-8; I Cor. 15. 25-28; Matt. 24. 21-22; Dan. 12. 1-3; Dan. 7. 1-28; 2 Thess. 1. 7-9; I John 3. 2; Matt. 13. 43; Rev. 19. 11-14; Jude 14-15; Micah 4. 2; Isa. 11. 9; Isa. 32. 17-18; Rev. 20. 1-3; John 5. 28-29; Matt. 25. 31-46; Isa. 35. 1-6; Isa. 55. 9-13; Rev. 20. 7-10; Ezek. 18. 4; Matt. 11. 23-24; Psa. 98. 9; I Chron. 16. 31-34; Rev. 21. 7-8; Acts. 3. 23.

4. Where are the Dead ?

DEATH came into the world with sin, and because of sin. When God created man, He told him that obedience to His law would give him everlasting life upon earth, but that disobedience would bring death. Since the Fall, death has come to all human beings without exception, for the entire human race has become involved in the consequences of the entry of sin into the world.

The evil effects of sin will be undone. In the progress of the Divine Plan all the dead are to be raised to conscious life, the "Church" of this Age to a spiritual resurrection with Christ, and mankind generally to human life in the earthly Kingdom of God, there to enjoy full and fair opportunity of accepting the Lord Jesus and attaining human perfection and everlasting life. Where then are the dead in the meantime ?

They are not in Heaven, for Jesus declared in His own day that none had as yet ascended into Heaven, and Peter, in his first sermon, said that King David was not ascended into Heaven, but was in the grave, the Bible "Hell". Thus the Bible teaches that death is a sleep, broken by the resurrection, and that in the death state there is "no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave". "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, *in that very day his thoughts perish*" says the Psalmist. The New Testament also refers to

death as a sleep, speaking of some who "sleep in Jesus", and that those of the Church who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord will not precede these others who are asleep. It should be clear, therefore, that death is a sleep, and the resurrection is the awakening.

It may seem a hard thing to some that their departed loved ones should be thus unconscious of what is still going on in the world, but let us pause to consider how much of disappointment and concern is saved those loved ones. To be forced to look on at this world and its distresses, and the hardships and sorrows that befall nearly all people, and be impotent to do anything to help, would not be a happy experience for them. How much more loving it is for the Father to "give His beloved sleep" until the day that all shall rise together in the glory of a new Kingdom in which pain, disease and death shall be driven away.

The righteous and the wicked alike "go to one place" says the Scripture, and one day the power of God's Holy Spirit will be exerted to re-create each individual. The sleep of death will be ended.

See Gen. 2. 16-17; Isa. 43. 27; Gen. 3. 17-19; Rom. 3. 23; Psa. 49. 7; John 3. 13; Acts 2. 34; Eccl. 9. 10; Psa. 146. 4; I Cor. 15. 13-20; I Thess. 4. 14-17; John 11. 11-14; Eccl. 3. 19-20; Dan. 12. 2; Job 7. 21.

To be continued.

"And the prisoners heard them" An incident in the life of St. Paul

What an artlessly simple statement Luke makes in these few words, and yet how full of significance. Of course, all the prisoners would know what had happened earlier in the day, when the two special prisoners in the inner ward had been brought into custody. Every one of them would know that when the Roman lictors had done their work the two prisoners' backs would be a complete mass of bleeding wounds and discoloured bruises. And if any articulate sounds did pass the sufferers' lips, they would expect only groans and curses. Most men the world over, when every movement caused pain, would give vent to their resentment with such groans, even if it did not constrain them to call down imprecations of woe upon their torturers. And then, added to the physical injuries, and swollen sores, they were thrust into the stocks, so

that little or no movement of the extremities was possible to them.

Thus, cramp and rigidity of muscles would supervene, and make a bad condition worse, and if the stocks confined the upper limbs as well as the legs—even if not also the neck—unnatural posture would make the body ache from head to toe, without any slightest means of alleviating the distress. One can well imagine them to be in pain within and without, and from end to end of their tortured frame. Even if (as seems probable from the text), only their feet were fast, and hands and necks were somewhat free, the actual degree of free movement would be small. A special charge concerning the prisoners had been made by the magistrates, and in view of that the jailor would not be over-lenient to them, so that though only their feet were in

the stocks, it is very probable their hands were in chains.

At the very best, their position was as undesirable as could well be. Added to this physical distress would be the dankness and the darkness of their cell. Scarce a breath of air and not one single ray of light would tend to lighten the damp musty odour of the cell. Such places were often vermin-infected, even if not tainted with pestilential stench. When the two prisoners' position is summarised thus, it would seem that this wicked old earth had only one penalty more severe it could inflict. Short of depriving them of life, the passions and inhumanity of man had heaped upon them an avalanche of sorrows and woes. To the spite of foes had been added the injury of an unjust trial, against which most men would have severely chafed. Thus, to the physical distress must be added the possible sufferings of the mind.

What a conquest of mind over matter, of the spirit over the body, of faith over actual reality occurred in that inner prison cell that night! Like others of the same little band, they counted it a privilege to suffer for the Name of the Lord, for they knew that in this suffering they were "filling up the measure" of suffering allotted to the Christ of God. As every cup may be filled by adding drop to drop, so Christ's "Cup" will be filled by every spasm of anguish and suffering nobly borne for His sake. There is indeed the "filling" of a cup, as there is also the "drinking" of a cup; and in the Way of God they who drink from the one, contribute a little quota to the filling of the other.

Hence, there was no room for vain regrets or groans or maledictions in that little cell. "Paul and Silas prayed", then, when the voice of prayer came to an end, the accents of praise to God swept through the confines of the cell, and out into the larger outer ward. "And the prisoners heard them." What would they think of such men? Perhaps first feelings would be of annoyance if the singing had roused them from their slumbers, but soon they had reason enough to listen and hear.

The prison itself began to shake; the doors were flung widely ajar, and even their own chains fell off! What a night that was, as Heaven answered both prayer and praise! The fortitude of two stout hearts, rising up above dismal circumstances set in motion the wheels of Providence, and great things ensued.

From this episode sprang the nucleus of the Philippiian Church—perhaps the dearest church of

all to one of our prisoners in the stocks! Truly it was a mysterious way in which Divine Providence that night performed its wonderful work. It planted its footsteps in the quaking earth, and rode upon the repentant attitudes of men, because two valiant followers of the Lamb had risen up superior to their woeful circumstances.

What lesson can we learn from this episode?

First, let us be reminded that the God of Paul and Silas is our God too. He knew full well, even though midnight darkness lay around, where His faithful children were confined. No darkness could hide them from His sight. In our nights of sorrow or alarm, that is a great thought to take to heart. No curtain of night can intrude and hide God's child from God's watchful eye. The darkness is as the light to Him, and cannot intercept His view of those on whom He has set His Love.

Then let us note that prayer is better than recrimination, even at the midnight hour. Paul and Silas might have talked only of their bleeding backs and aching limbs, and have spent their time wondering how long they might have to endure their lot; or they could have allowed fear to chill their hearts about future prospects.

When terror stalks the night sky or dangers multiply, it would be far more to the glory of God if the neighbours hear of our peace of heart and our trust in God, than if we moan and grumble and lament. The difference between the two sets of prisoners that night lay in this: Paul and Silas knew the way of God, the others did not!

That knowledge was a strong controlling power which conquered human fear and fancy, and helped to transmute suffering into Christ-like fortitude. It helped the followers of the Lord to take the episode in the curriculum of the school of Christ, and to make the members of the body the servant (or slave) of the new mind. This is the fibre martyrs are made of, when it has been sublimated by fire and ordeal. And it is in the little hole-in-the-corner episodes of life where it is done—in the darkness of our prison cells.

The best commentary upon the power of God in the heart is a calm, cool deportment in face of danger, which rises from the assurance that God is our Father, and that we are His children and that we are being kept in the hollow of His hand. We may not all be able to sing praises in the dead of night, but we can all pray, and let the knowledge thus go forth that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Other prisoners will then also hear.

In the Land of Beginning Again

A PEN PICTURE OF THE COMING KINGDOM.

No. 3—Resurrection by judgment (Jno. 5. 20)

He came striding along the road, a fine figure of a man, vigorous and healthy, but with eyes betraying a haunting sadness. The other, seated by a wayside pool embowered in brilliant flowers, held up his hand in that gesture of greeting and invitation so familiar in this strange new world. The newcomer halted, hesitated and came across, voicing an easy greeting as he sat down on the grassy bank.

For a moment neither spoke. A lark soared up into the azure sky, the throbbing sweetness of its song holding the two listeners enthralled. The fields and trees shimmered in the heat of an afternoon sun, and all creation seemed at peace.

"You are on a mission?" queried the one by the pool.

"A mission which spurs me ever onward without rest" returned the other, "and until it is accomplished I may not know happiness."

"It needs the help of your friends, perhaps?" ventured his questioner, but the traveller shook his head.

"My sorrow is of my own making. I once defied the powers of Heaven and thought to outwit God. Now the hand of God is outstretched to me in blessing but I cannot enjoy His munificence until I have made amends for the evil which I have done."

"I have read in the sayings of Jesus that there are those who in this day come forth to a resurrection by judgments" observed Gerhard, his eyes on two goldfish sporting themselves in the pool.

The newcomer nodded. "Those words are true. There was a time when a man of God, crying his message to a heedless people, declared, 'Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.' 'What a man soweth' said Paul, 'that shall he also reap.' I knew of those Divine laws, but in my folly believed that I, a king, could flout them with impunity."

"You were a king then?" returned the other with interest. His companion did not answer at once. A party of children racing along the road in joyous abandon, perceived him as he sat, and in a minute had surrounded him with every evidence of recognition and affection. "Elder Brother, elder brother" they cried. "Here is Michael. Tell him the story of Jesus." Michael came forward shyly—a chubby golden curled toddler of three. He looked up into the friendly face above him and climbed

confidently upon his knee. A strong arm held him safely but the man's eyes were misty with tears.

"Yes, I was a king," he said at last, almost reluctantly. His eyes looked away across the quiet countryside as though they saw other and far different scenes. His thoughts came back to the present and he turned to Gerhard. "You are a resident here? You have offered the help of a friend. Perhaps you can indeed assist me."

"That I will gladly do" came the ready answer.

"I seek a woman named Miriam, who in the Days that Were lived in the land of Judea. Her home was in the village of El-Ramallah near the royal city of Bethlehem. I am told she lives in this district and I must have converse with her."

"Then I can help you; for Miriam of El-Ramallah lives yonder on the slopes of the hill." Gerhard pointed, and following his outstretched arm, the other perceived a cluster of red-roofed cottages surrounded by trees. "You see the house beside the rhododendrons? Miriam lives there, praying daily for the raising to life of her first born child, slain by Herod, the King of Judea, in the days when Jesus was born."

"Then I must haste there to-day" said the stranger, rising to his feet and gently putting Michael upon the ground, "for my prayers must be joined with hers for the restoration of that life which was so ruthlessly cut off by my fear and cruelty."

"Then," said Gerhard quickly, "You are . . ."

"My name is Herod. I was King of Judea in the Days that Were. To-day I serve the Lord Christ whom I sought so blindly to destroy. But I have learned that 'by mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.' There are words which ring in my ears day and night, written in letters of fire before my eyes, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.' Until I have sought out every mother whom I made desolate—until I have prayed with her and witnessed her joy as her loved one is restored to her arms, I may not rest. Then, and then only, shall I be free from that age-lasting reproach spoken of by the prophet Daniel when he told of this blessed day."

With the shouting children running at his side and baby Michael nestled comfortably in the crook of his arm, Herod, slayer of the Innocents, strode up the hill to the place where a woman of faith waited for her heart's petition to be fulfilled in glorious reality.

* * *

Time has yet to prove whether King Herod will indeed repent in the manner imagined in this story;

but the Scriptures are definite that he, with all men, no matter how depraved, are to have the opportunity in the day of the resurrection. It may be that some will choose to remain in their sin, and so will incur the penalty of sin, eternal death; but without doubt many will turn from their evil ways, and accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and live. See John 5. 20; Jer. 31. 30; Gal. 6. 7; Prov. 16. 6; Matt. 2. 18; Dan. 12. 2.

INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4. 7.)

The "treasure" which is here spoken of is the ministry of the Gospel (vs. 1) which is committed to each one of the Lord's followers in harmony with His own parting admonition "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16. 15). We are bidden remember that it is God's Gospel we proclaim, not our own, and that the power that inspires us to go forth with it, and sustains us whilst we proclaim it, is the power of the Holy Spirit and not something having its source in our own physical or mental strength. It would have been so easy for God to have committed His work to the wise and noble and influential of this world; He could easily have wrought some miracle in their characters, thus transforming them into efficient servants and missionaries. He did not. He chose instead the weak and the poor and ignoble of this world, those who may or may not have possessed earthly advantages but were at any rate rich in faith and love and devotion toward God, requiring no miracles working on their behalf to ensure *that*. So it was that it pleased God in His wisdom, by the simplicity of preaching to refute the wisdom of the world and save those that believe. That is why we have this inestimable treasure of the ministry in the earthen vessels of our weak and imperfect human frames. The fact reminds us that the power we have is that of God and that His grace can be made perfect in our weakness.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14. 2.)

The English translators adopted the word "Mansion" which to-day denotes a stately house appropriate only to the wealthy, but originally had a very different meaning. "Mansion" is the English form of a Latin word which was used to describe the rest-houses which the Romans of the

First Century built at regular intervals along the great Roman roads to provide refreshment and a night's lodging for official and other travellers. It is well known that in our Lord's day the Roman roads ran in all directions throughout Europe and into Asia, diverging outwards from Rome. One such road connected Rome with London, and the famous Watling Street between Dover and London Bridge, thence onward through the Midlands to Chester, was the extremity of that road. In every part of the Empire, therefore, were these rest-houses or "mansiones". No matter how wild and inhospitable the country around, inside there was light and rest and security. So our Lord, endeavouring to comfort his despairing disciples, assured them that there were other "homes" in the Father's wide domain beside this earth, and that in leaving them He was only going to another "mansione" where He was to prepare a place for them, that where He was they might be also.

It has been discovered in recent years that two stars well known to astronomers are—like our own sun—possessed of planets circling round them. It is estimated by astronomers that a real likelihood exists of the starry heavens containing at this moment more than half a million planets similar to the earth and equally capable of supporting life. It would not require a great stretch of imagination to think that our Lord, with His knowledge of this wonderful material universe, which He created as the Father's "right hand", could have had these potential homes for intelligent beings in mind when He spoke of "many mansions" in His Father's house. But if our understanding of spiritual things is well founded, none of these planets, glorious and beautiful as they might be, can be the future home of Christ's disciples, of we who have left all to follow Him. He has gone to prepare a place for us that is not only higher than all earthly, material things, but is in the highest of all heavens, that we might behold the Father's face in righteousness, and be satisfied, when we awake, with His likeness.

When the Cloud Tarried Long

A story of
Israel

(Numbers 9. 19.)

The tribes of Israel, journeying from Egypt to the promised land, provide a fitting picture of the Church on her pilgrimage to her heavenly home. Throughout their journey the Israelites were tent-dwellers, and their meeting place with God was a tent. This arrangement, necessitated by their journeyings, gave way to a permanent disposition when they reached their goal.

The Apostle Peter uses this picture of a tent-dweller to portray his condition as a pilgrim when, in 2 Pet. 1. 13-14 he writes "*Yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me*". The word translated "tabernacle" means simply "a tent" and Moffatt puts it "so long as I am in this tent I deem it proper . . . since I know that my tent must be folded up very soon". The Apostle Paul also uses this picture when in 2 Cor. 5. 1-4 he writes, "I know that if this earthly tent of mine is taken down I get a home from God, made by no human hands, eternal in the heavens. I do sigh within this tent of mine with heavy anxiety, not that I want to be stripped—no, but be under cover of the other, to have my mortal element absorbed by life". (Moffatt.) We, living in the overlapping of the ages, and viewing from Pisgah's mountain the home we hope soon to reach, can surely echo these sentiments.

This longing, however, was tempered with a contentment which we, in these last days, do well to emulate. The Apostle Paul tells us that he had **LEARNED**, in whatsoever state he found himself, to be content. We would suggest that, to the Apostle Paul, this was a lesson not easily learned. Fiery, impetuous and fanatical as he was, he would not take kindly to anything savouring of passive acquiescence, yet the fact remains that he **DID** learn to be content.

This contentment should not, however, be confused with satisfaction, for although the two words are used synonymously there is an important difference. At the time when the Authorised Version was written, the word "content" was limited to earthly or mundane things, whereas satisfaction was raised to a much higher level. To be content meant to have the desires limited by present enjoyment, having a quiet mind, accepting one's

surroundings. Secular writings demonstrated the value of this quality, for Thomas Decker wrote

*"Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers,
Oh, sweet content.*

*Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed
Oh, punishment."*

Shakespeare, who wrote during the same literary period, puts it,

"Poor and content is rich, and rich enough."

Two hundred years later Shelley wrote,

*"Alas I have not hope or health,
Nor peace within or calm around,
Nor that CONTENT, SURPASSING
WEALTH
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned."*

The difference between contentment and satisfaction is seen in the words of Thackeray "which of us is happy in this world, which of us has his desire, or, having it is satisfied"; and is concisely summed up in these words of Mackintosh, "It is right to be content with what we have, never with what we are". It is somewhat unusual to quote from secular writings, but our sole purpose is to emphasise the subtle difference between contentment and satisfaction.

Let us consider "what we have", noting first what the children of Israel had on their pilgrimage. They had dwelling places which provided simple yet adequate shelter, yet which could be easily moved. They were provided with food sufficient for their needs, but above all they had a place wherein their leader could meet their God—the tabernacle, or "tent of meeting". This too was a portable structure which could be taken down and transported when they were on the move. This "tent of meeting" contained, among other things, the Ark of the Covenant, or "ark of the presence" and the Shekinah glory, representing God's presence in their midst, shone from between the cherubim. This representation of God's presence penetrated, as it were, the fabric of the tent and was manifested as a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. This sign of the Presence moved from above the tent as an indication that they were to move on, and came to rest when they were to remain encamped.

We as travellers to a heavenly realm have all these things in antitype. These bodies of ours, weak and frail though they may be, are adequate as temporary coverings, but if at any time they seem woefully insufficient to stand up to the storms and tempests of life, we can and should strike our tents and move them into the shadow of the Rock of ages, where our feeble frames can borrow strength, as it were, from that great crag which was cleft that we might find a refuge. We, too, have a "tent of meeting" with its "Ark of the Presence"—a sanctuary into which we may, nay must, withdraw, that we may have fellowship with those of like precious faith, and hold communion with our Father and Lord. The benefits and blessings (and the responsibilities) provided by this temporary tent of meeting are too many and varied to be discussed here and are well known to us all, but we should like to consider briefly that cloud that sometimes "tarried long". (Num. 9. 19.)

When it moved it indicated that it was God's will that they (the Israelites) should continue on their pilgrimage, and when it tarried long it just as effectively indicated that it was God's will that they should be content to remain and await God's time. How often do we feel, as pilgrims and strangers, that it is time we moved on, and just as often do we allow earthborn clouds to obscure that pillar of fire, which assures us not only of God's abiding presence but also of His infallible guidance. Nevertheless that abiding cloud continues to hover over all who are making their way to a heavenly reward, and will indicate to each one of us how and when we are to move nearer to that desired haven. This picture can only be applied very loosely, for whereas in the type the children of Israel moved on in a body and entered Canaan as a nation, in the antitype each individual member down the Age has been led by that pillar of cloud to the gates of the New Jerusalem, there to await the call to enter in. It may well be that at this late hour the cloud that has tarried long (many of our number will recall the expectancy of 1914) will soon rise from about the "tent of meeting" and lead the remaining members of the Church into eternal fellowship with the Lord and all the saints—who knows! There are some who believe that this year will bring great events both for the Church and the world; time alone will prove whether or not this will be so, but whatever our views may be, our attitude should surely be that as the Apostle Paul as he "longed to be under cover of his home from God". He said "I am prepared for this change by God, Who has given me the Spirit as its pledge and instalment. Come what may, then, I am confident; I know that while

I reside in the body I am away from the Lord, and in this confidence fain would I get away from the body and reside with the Lord. Hence also I am eager to satisfy him, whether in the body or away from it". (2 Cor. 5. 5-10 *Moffatt*.) The Apostle was "eager to satisfy Him" and here indeed is the crux of the matter.

We have very briefly considered "what we have" with which we should be content, and as tent-dwellers we should indeed be content to wait with patience until the cloud that has tarried long lifts and bids us enter in, but as was suggested earlier we must never be content with what we are.

If we would be "satisfied" with a heavenly home, we must first satisfy Him Who is to be Judge of all. It is a sobering thought that "what we shall be" depends entirely upon "what we are". This may seem a sweeping statement but it is based upon the Apostle's words in 2 Cor. 5. 10. Rotherham's translation reads "For we all must needs be made manifest before the Judgment seat of Christ, that each may GET BACK the things done by means of the body, according to the things practised, good or corrupt". *Moffatt*'s translation reads "For we all have to appear, without disguise, before the tribunal of Christ, each to be requited (paid back) for what he has done with his body, good or ill". The term "body" in this text is synonymous with the term "tent" as used by both Peter and Paul, so whilst we have to be content with this body of ours, we must never be content with what we are doing with it. As we sojourn here below we have to mingle with all sorts and conditions; with neighbours, tradesmen, colleagues or workmates, as well as being privileged to meet from time to time with those of like precious faith, and we do find that every contact we make, every book we read, every meeting we attend, in fact that every experience which comes our way, leaves some impression upon these "tents" of ours. These impressions may be erased or retained according to the standards of behaviour which govern our conduct. They may be shallow or deep according to the intensity of the experience, so some are much more difficult to erase than others; but even as we can only keep our physical senses keen and alert by keeping our bodies clean, so we must keep our minds clean that our perceptive faculties may remain unimpaired. In this connection our Lord's words in Mark 7. 15 are very much to the point "Nothing outside a man can defile him, it is what comes out defiles him". So while we remain here as tent-dwellers, waiting for the cloud that tarries to lift and guide us to our heavenly home, our lives should be a blending of quiet contentment and

sanctified activity, our attitude should be one of acquiescence to the revealed will of God, at the same time we should seek that growth in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Even as contentment is limited to earthly and mundane matters, and satisfaction raised to a higher level of living, so, if we are content with our lot now, shall we be satisfied with our heavenly reward. Satisfaction is not a mere acceptance of what is there, but a fulfilled desire for something else. With what shall we be satisfied? "I shall be satisfied when I can break the fetters of flesh and be free. When the arms of my Father encircle his child, O, I shall be satisfied then." The height of all spiritual aspiration is reached in the words of the Psalmist, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness". Rotherham translates this "In righteousness shall I behold thy face, shall be satisfied when awakened by a vision of thee". Leeser puts it "As for me, in righteousness shall I behold thy face, I shall be satisfied when I awake with contemplating thy likeness". Would you wish to be awakened by a vision of the Lord? Would you be satisfied to be awakened contemplating his likeness? If so you must first satisfy Him. We are all waiting for, longing for, praying for this glorious change. So, whilst thus waiting for this the greatest of all blessings, let us be content but not complacent, let us work as well as watch, let us fight and not faint, let us be content with what we have, but let us stretch every nerve, pressing on to attain, by God's abounding grace, the victory which belongs to all overcomers, so that "at the bidding of the upgoings of the cloud from off the tent" we may be ready to move forward and enter into the Heavenly Canaan.

As pointed out at the beginning, the temporary dwellings of the wilderness gave way to more permanent dwellings which Israel settled in the promised land; likewise when each member of the

Church reaches the end of the way, their tent will be folded up, but what will take its place?

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions", and even as the tent, which is the meanest of dwellings is a fit picture of our earthly body, so the mansion, which may be considered the ideal dwelling, is a fitting picture of our 'home from heaven'. Now we dwell in a tent, but when the cloud that has tarried long ascends finally into heaven, we shall be admitted into heavenly mansions. Shall we be satisfied with these celestial dwelling-places? Shall we not forget the tarrying of the cloud when, lost in wonder, we view with rapture our eternal home? Now we see as through a dim window, then we shall see face to face. Now, we are limited, frustrated by the frailty of our earthly tents. Now we are hampered by the imperfections of our finite minds. Now we become tired, faint and weary—then we shall enjoy unfailing and eternal energy—then, untrammelled by inherent weakness, we shall be gloriously endued with inherent life. Now we must needs spend our days in earth's defiling atmosphere, now we must rub shoulders with evil and degraded men—then we shall spend eternity in the pure atmosphere of heaven in the presence of our God, our beloved Lord, and all the heavenly hosts. So we might continue, endeavouring to grasp the wonder, the beauty, the grandeur of our heavenly abode, but alas, these finite minds of ours cannot begin to comprehend the superlative dwelling places which await all who successfully pass the Judgment seat of Christ.

So, whilst we wait with patience for the final upgoing of the fiery cloud, let us, whilst there is yet time, seek to attain that perfect character-likeness to our Lord which will enable us to take our place in the sanctified assembly which will be ushered into heaven, there to dwell through all eternity in one of our Father's many mansions.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 31, No. 4

APRIL, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	50
RISEN WITH CHRIST	51
MAN OF SORROWS	
9. Prison and Judgment	53
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD	
4. The Rain was upon the Earth	55
SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS	
Part II	57
YOUTH FOR TRUTH CONFERENCE	59
MELCHIZEDEK, KING OF SALEM	60
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN	
4. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened"	63

*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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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported partly by the fixed subscription, and for the rest, by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

These columns stress two important Scriptural truths, namely:

That God will not eternally condemn any one of His creatures until there has been a full and fair opportunity to learn and appreciate the difference between good and evil and the reason for God's decree that evil and evil-doers must ultimately perish.

That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Convention has again been arranged at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, W.C.1, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, July 31, August 1 and 2, 1954. Accommodation arrangements are in the care of Bro. V. Scott, St. Brannocks, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex. In this connection special attention is drawn to the following notice. In view of the high cost of hotel accommodation in London the brethren have arranged, as far as funds permit, to assist visiting brethren in this respect. Reservations will be made for all brethren to be treated as guests of the London classes. Any desiring to contribute to meet the expenses entailed may do so by making a freewill offering to the Hospitality Fund. Please address all enquiries to Brother Scott.

In America the Unity Convention Committee is happy to announce the date of the 1954 Convention, August 1 to 7. The place, De Pauw University at Greencastle, Indiana. These beautiful grounds and the new modern auditorium are available for use of the brethren. Because of the much lower rates a larger attendance is expected this year. For further information write to Berean Bible Students, P.O. Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

By the time this appears in print the Junior Convention arranged by the Y.B.S.C. at Lymm, Cheshire, will be a thing of the past. The younger brethren planned this event to take place on 20-21 March, to open with an open-air meeting at Lymm Cross, following a forty-minute prayer meeting, after which there was to be an evening film service showing the Fact and Faith film "God of Creation"

and Dawn Trust film "Jairus' Daughter". This meeting, which was intended for the public, was to conclude with a short address by Bro. Kenneth Guard. The Sunday sessions were to be devoted to Bible readings and addresses. All who wish our younger brethren well will join in the hope and prayer that their efforts may be blessed.

The Council of Activity for the North-West announces a full programme of public meetings for 1954, commencing in March and including meetings at Lymm in May, Burnley in August and Pendleton in October, the 2nd and 3rd October being devoted to the usual autumn "Assembly of Witness". Brethren desiring to have fuller details of any of these events may have same on application to Bro. F. Musk, 14 South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

Brother H. Nadal would like to acknowledge, through these columns, an anonymous donation of £10 towards the German work, and to express the very sincere appreciation that is felt for the kindness that has prompted this gift, a gift that will be the means of rendering blessing to some who need it.

With this issue we come to the end, for the time being, of the little stories entitled "In the Land of Beginning Again". From correspondence received it would seem that there is a greater proportion of friends who appreciate these pen pictures and think they can be put to good use in the message of the Truth than appeared to be the case some years ago. One disapproval was received. It said: "I was shocked at the flippancy and slang

of the back page addition of January issue". Without labouring the point it can perhaps be suggested the Lord Jesus is honoured in any language and mode of speech provided it comes from an innocent and sincere heart. One would hardly expect small boys from city streets to talk like Oxford professors—and the Kingdom of Heaven is designed for "all who will", not only for lucid exponents of the Queen's English. Every story, of course, must

reflect its own background, otherwise there can be no reality in the story. We hope that our correspondent is alone in this particular criticism.

Gone From Us

Sis. M. Stockwell (Oxford).

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

Risen with Christ

A Memorial
Meditation

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." (Col. 1. 3-17).

First of all, we must believe that Jesus was risen, if we would exercise faith to the extent of believing that we could be risen with Christ.

Those who do not believe that Jesus has been risen certainly could not exercise faith to believe that they were risen with Him.

Then to believe that Christ was risen it would be necessary to believe that He had died, for if Christ had not died it could not be expected that He would be risen from the dead. Therefore those who would exercise faith enough to believe that they were risen with Christ would have to first believe that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man"; and next they would have to believe, as expressed in I Cor. 15-20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept".

What did Jesus die for? Did He die to set a good example?

Not so; He died that we might live. The whole human race was condemned in Adam and either Adam and the whole human family are to bear the penalty themselves and to die and stay dead and never live again or, in God's management, there would by necessity be one provided to take the sinner's place, one to become a ransom—a corresponding price—one upon whom was to be laid the iniquity of us all. This is a statement of the simple fact of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus.

The philosophy of the Ransom was understood by the Apostles and early Church, see Rom. 5th chapter. The clear conception of the philosophy of the Ransom was lost sight of following the death of the Apostles. After men (the Apostles) slept (in death) the enemy sowed tares (errors). The Lord has not made the philosophy of the Ransom a test, as valuable as it was in the days of the

Apostles and as precious and valuable as it is to us who have this knowledge through our Present Lord, who has brought us things "New and Old", things which were lost sight of and are now newly brought to light. We value these truths, we do not make a test of fellowship on them but we are not to be silent when they are opposed. We fellowship others on the fact of the Ransom but we fellowship with others about both the fact and the philosophy of the Ransom and other subjects.

Even before the "Harvest Truth" came, those who accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour, and who consecrated to do the Will of God even unto death, as long as God would continue their being, were recognised by God in the highest sense of the term.

It is our duty to accept all whom God accepts and all whom Jesus accepts as members of His Body.

While we should endeavour to see all the beauties of the Truth ourselves, and assist others to be blessed by the same, we are not to disown them if they pass the properly required tests of accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour and of a full consecration to do God's Will and a life in harmony with this.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2. 14). The natural man can understand the knowledge about the Truth but cannot understand the things of the Spirit. They can see in books or on charts that some are in the "Court" and "Holy" and finally in the "Most Holy" but they do not see themselves as represented in those conditions. They see the facts—the knowledge—and they may have some ability in presenting this to others. They call themselves as "in the Truth", and are often given responsible positions in the Ecclesias, even though they may have only a knowledge of the doctrines of the

Truth, and not that they have themselves become justified by the proper application of their knowledge. Only those who take the steps in harmony with this knowledge are in line to understand the "deep things" of God, or the *things* of the Spirit.

It is one thing to receive the knowledge—it is another thing to receive the *things* of the Spirit—that "peace that passeth all human understanding", that understanding as to WHY it is necessary that they endure trials and testings and add to their faith, virtue, etc.

We are to see ourselves as represented in the crucified Jesus and are to recognise His merit as imputed to cover all our *unwilling* imperfections. We are invited to be dead with Christ, to be baptised into His body. If He had our imperfect body He would do as perfectly as would be possible under that limitation. We think the mind of Christ would operate in our bodies in a quickening sense, though not as perfectly as in perfect flesh, if we would allow it to operate to its fullest extent. We think it would operate *fully* upon the mind and upon the conscience and fully work in us the *resurrected life which we see in Christ as our life*, "Risen with Christ", but we do not expect this *New Life to do in our imperfect flesh what the Blood of Christ Jesus was provided to do—to cover all our unwilling blemishes*. The New Mind has not had the *burden* laid upon it to do away with or to change the imperfect flesh so that it would not have those disabilities. It is to do one hundred per cent. what is possible to do in this direction and is never to make allowance for any imperfection but perfect *endeavour* is to be closely related to perfect *trust* in the *already provided* blood of Christ, our covering of unwilling blemishes. Have you ever looked at a red piece of cloth in the sunlight? Have you ever looked through a red piece of glass? Have you ever looked through a red glass at a red piece of cloth in the sunlight? What takes place? The red of the glass counteracts the red of the cloth, so that looking through the red glass the red cloth *looks* white. Take the red glass away and the cloth is as red as it was before. Was the cloth *really* white, had it been bleached or changed? Not at all. This would illustrate that "Though your sins be as scarlet," God, looking at you through the red of Jesus' blood, does not see the red of your sins of *unintentional weaknesses* but sees you as white, clean through the blood of Christ. But if at any time the blood of Jesus is not acknowledged, if at any time we get from under the red blood, there is danger, for God not seeing us through the blood will see us in all our hideousness which we will still have in His sight—regardless of our best endeavours against the weaknesses of our flesh.

Some of the Lord's people had poor memories when they were young and needed the blood of Christ to cover this but now they find that they have even poorer memories and that the body is less capable of doing what is desired. Their hope is not in what they have wrought in the body but what has been wrought in the new mind *in spite of* the unwilling defects which are covered by the blood. Limitations as to bodily perfection and to mental grasp of philosophies of certain Truths are graciously taken care of by the Lord. But we should not trespass against this grace. We should strive to bring every thought, word and deed into full accord with the Mind of Christ, aiming high and still recognising our inabilities. So also should we desire to understand and have fellowship with others concerning even the details of precious Truths because they are *for* this class to be blessed by, but not to make tests of fellowship with.

After the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, don't you think it was proper that they understood the Truth in their purity, beauty and harmony? Certainly! So we have been endeavouring to help the *consecrated* to become properly educated along the lines of the doctrine, as well as to show them that *limitations in one's capacity to grasp* these things will be made up for through God's provision.

If we keep such Truths in our hearts as we can grasp, desiring to grasp all that the Lord has for us; if we live as though the body of sin had been done away with and that we are justified by faith and have entered into a contract to do God's Will, being dead with Christ, we can then reckon ourselves as God reckons us, as though the sacrifice was finished and the new mind fully resurrected. The body serves the mind, and, to the extent of our ability, we should make it serve the new mind and the cause of righteousness. When you are all tired out physically and it seems you cannot do another thing and the Lord shows you an opportunity to serve Him or His cause, your desire to do God's Will permits the Spirit of God to quicken your mortal body for the glory of the Lord. After the service is performed the body is weary but you are SO HAPPY because you are living after the Spirit. You are living as though it were a resurrected life. There is a *victory of faith in believing* that the blood of Jesus that was once imputed is *continually imputed*. The Apostle says "These things write I unto you, that you sin not" (John 2. 1), that you try never to come short, that you live as though you were actually "Risen with Christ". The thought is that we should try never to come short; *perfectly* try to do *perfectly*. And right in the same connection the Apostle John says "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous". I under-

stand that the Christian life is a life of *Victory*, but it is oft-times *Victory of Faith*, through failure of performance. It is often right here that the Adversary says: "You should have arrived at the point where you do not come short." If we acknowledge the weakness and claim the precious blood through which we are viewed by our Heavenly Father, we *have a victory of Faith*. Jesus said to Peter: "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not". He did not pray that Peter would not come short but that his *faith* would carry him to Jesus in spite of his present weakness. Peter gained a *Victory of Faith* that was through his weakness but not because of his weakness. I would recommend that anyone who has an inclination toward God consecrate through Jesus Christ to do the Will of God. Take every step just as God's children have done in the past and live as unto the Lord. We are to love the privilege of serving Him and of living the risen life with Christ and we should also love to pass on to others the message of God's gracious character and glorious Plan.

The Lord accepts us in His Body as individuals, not as classes, but each class will be as spiritual as the majority of its individual attendance is spiritual. May we each add to our individual part in both spirituality and loving service, done from the heart, and not to be seen of others, as we assemble among the Lord's people.

We are to set our affection on things which are above. Circumstances and our own frailty may as it were cause us to *continually* set our affection on things above. We may possibly, close to the end of our earthly course, find it necessary to pray the Lord to strengthen us and help us to set or place our affection, we being too weak to in mind or body to do much more than just rest by Faith and Hope in Him and in Christ's finished work. The Lord will look at that determination of our hearts and we will be accounted worthy of a complete resurrection with Christ in the glorious future because we were faithful in living the present life of Faith "Risen with Christ".

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part 9.—PRISON AND JUDGMENT

"He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken." Vs. 8.

As we come to this eighth verse it begins to be impressed on our minds that we are now reading a description of the trial, death and burial of Christ, written some seven hundred years before the event. It is impossible to read verse 7 to 9 without noting how accurately the prophecy was fulfilled in history. His passive acceptance of arrest and being brought before the judges; His silence before them; the injustice of His so-called trial, they are all here. The sentence of death and its execution, innocent though He was of any crime, and the burial of His body in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea; all is faithfully forthshown in this remarkable prophecy. No wonder the agnostics and the critics have been hard put to it to explain this chapter away. There is no way of accounting for its existence but by admitting that the words were framed by one who has the power to see into the future—and only the Most High can do that.

This eighth verse pictures the trial and death of Jesus. The first phrase is more correctly trans-

lated "He was taken through oppression and judgment". The word "judgment" here has the meaning of a judicial sentence, as when a Judge of the High Court "delivers judgment" at the end of the case he has been hearing. This verse tells us that Jesus, having been taken by His enemies "as a lamb for the slaughter" was led through the remainder of the bitter proceeding, still unresisting, still silent, through the oppression of the mock trials before the Sanhedrin, before Herod, before Pilate, and finally through the last scene of all, when Pilate "gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23. 24). He was taken through the oppression of the trials, the mocking, the scourging; hostility of the priests and the clamour of the crowd, but it was His Father Who was taking Him by sure and safe guidance through all the pain and shame of His death into the glory beyond. He was taken through the unjust sentence that was passed on Him by the Roman governor, a judgment that was dictated not by Roman law nor even by Roman policy, but purely and simply because of the craven fear of Pilate, confronted by a raging mob and ready to do anything to allay the tumult. But it was the Father who was leading Him through that, and when Pilate asked "knowest thou not that I have power to

crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" and He replied, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19. 10) Jesus spoke a true word. The powers of Heaven were in control of all that was being done, and guardian angels led Jesus from scene to scene of the sad story until all that was written had been fulfilled.

This is where the prophet cries out in his own deep distress "Who shall declare his generation?". The question remains unanswered until later in the chapter—but the answer is in verse 10. In the meantime there is a certain amount of divergence in the meaning claimed to lie in the question. The phrase itself can be interpreted in several ways. Did Isaiah mean that no man could declare the details of His birth and origin, wrapped as it was in mystery? This word "generation" could legitimately bear that meaning; "Who shall declare his birth?" It is not likely that many in Israel remembered the events of thirty-three years before, when certain shepherds claimed to have seen a vision of angels and gone in consequence to worship the newly-born Messiah in a manger, and wise men from the East had appeared in Jerusalem enquiring for the one born King of the Jews. And even though a few, getting on now in years, could be found to tell of those days, still the mystery of His ultimate origin remained unsolved. Israel had been familiar for centuries with the idea of Divine Wisdom personified into the Logos, a kind of abstract power operating in the world and the affairs of men on behalf of the Deity, who Himself could not be conceived as having any possible contact with this world. But even though John declared that this One Who had appeared amongst them was the Logos made flesh, the Wisdom of God identified with a human personality and standing before them a visible expression of the glory of God, it was all too much for them and they could not understand it. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" said John, where "comprehendeth" has the sense of receiving into one's self or absorbing and encircling the subject. It was not only that the darkness failed to understand Jesus in a purely intellectual sense; the darkness failed to receive the light in any sense whatever, because the light was of another world and had no point of contact or sympathy with the darkness. So it is very true that no one in the day of Christ could "declare His generation", His origin, or understand anything about it at all. He came from God, but how and in what way they knew not.

Another way of considering the question is to take it as referring to His death without leaving

descendants. That, to a Jew, would be a strange and inexplicable thing in regard to one claiming to enjoy the favour of God. This One was cut off in the flower of His age and left none of His own behind Him. That, to those whose eyes were never opened to the spiritual calling and the new understanding of God's purposes which Jesus came to bring to light, must have constituted a serious barrier to belief. The more reflective would read the 10th verse of Isaiah's 53rd chapter with its promise "he shall see his seed" and realise in a new light the immensity of the Divine Plan, but for the vast majority it always remained true that in this sense also they could not "declare his generation".

The third and probably correct application of this text is that which sees here a condemnation of the generation that crucified Jesus. Nothing like it had been seen before; no crime had ever been so heinous as this, no people so guilty. "The men of his age who shall describe?" is how one translator renders the question, and there is much to recommend this view. Jesus Himself condemned that generation and wept over the doomed city and its heedless citizens. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" lamented Israel in the sorrowful dirge known as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1. 12). Those words were first spoken by Israel, rejected and done to death by the ruthless nations who were her neighbours. In later years the words became true of Christ, and Jewry herself became the persecutor and murderer. Through all ages since, the generation which crucified Christ has been held up to despite and contumely. He was unjustly tried and unjustly put to death; who can put into fitting words the contempt and condemnation all future ages shall manifest toward that guilty generation. That seems to be the intention of the words.

So the tragedy proceeded to its ordained climax. "He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken". So far as man was concerned this was the end. So far as man could tell there was no further hope after one had been cut off out of the land of the living. "A living dog is better than a dead lion" was their proverb (Eccl. 9. 4). The gates of the land of the shadow of death had closed upon Him and there was an end of all the golden promises and hopes of future deliverance. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24. 21). Even the disciples lost faith in that dark, bitter hour. He was cut off out of the land of the living; he had been alive but now he was dead. True, it was for the transgression of the people that he had

been stricken, but He was dead now and of what avail had it all been?

Perhaps a few among them, reflective, remembered that after the sacrifices had been all burned on the altar in the yearly ritual, one appeared from the unseen place beyond the Vail of the Tabernacle, arrayed, no longer in linen garments of sacrifice, but in new and dazzling robes of glory and beauty, and brought blessing to the people. Some there might have been who remembered that beside the dying priesthood of Aaron there was also the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek, a royal priest, one who ever liveth. Perhaps here and there a loyal heart, grappling with the problem

of this tragedy which had shattered all their hopes, began to wonder if, after all, the story was indeed finished—whether the last three verses of Isaiah 53 yet remained to be fulfilled in some wonderful manner that would reverse the entire position and turn their sorrow into joy.

Whether or no there were such, there remained now only one last prophecy of dark things to be fulfilled before the tide was to turn and the meaning of all things be made plain. He was yet to make his grave with the wicked; but after that the world was to see the salvation of God.

(To be continued)

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 4.—The Rain was upon the Earth

Vivid as is the description of the Flood in the Bible, supplemented and amplified greatly by the legends and traditions which have survived in the folklore of many peoples, it is still impossible to be dogmatic as to the cause of the catastrophe. A score or more theories have been advanced, each having its advocates, but the cautious student will hesitate before wedding himself irrevocably to any one of them. The materials are altogether too scanty to justify the formation of firm conclusions. All the same, consideration of the principal and better-founded suggestions is a worthwhile exercise of the mind, if only for the sake of having a reasonable answer ready for those who decry the historical truth of the story.

Before examining any of these explanations it is good to have the Genesis account well in mind. The first thing to notice is the length of time the Flood persisted. Noah was in the Ark for a year and ten days. From the commencement of the Deluge to the time that "the face of the ground was dry" there elapsed a period of ten and a half months. The disaster was of astronomical proportions, and it is perhaps not surprising that many of the suggested explanations call upon astronomical phenomena to account for the magnitude of the cataclysm.

It seems that after the initial onset of the Flood the waters continued to increase in height for forty days, at which time it is said that "the mountains were covered". (Gen. 7. 20).

A further period of one hundred and ten days—nearly four months—elapsed during which, although the waters no longer increased, they certainly did not decrease perceptibly; then the Ark grounded

on land which, though still below water level, and invisible, later proved to be high up on mountainous country. It was another two and a half months before any mountain peaks were seen (Gen. 8. 3) and since the Ark drew only about thirty feet of water, it would seem that it took these two and a half months for the water level to sink thirty feet. Another three months passed before what is called "the face of the ground" was clear of water and still two more months before the family could leave the Ark. It seems then that the waters which took forty days to rise to their maximum level remained there four months and then required seven months to drain away.

There is nothing extraordinary in this long duration of the Flood. Several parts of the world are subject to occasional gigantic floods persisting for months at a time. This very land of Noah is to this day especially subject to them. Every spring, when the snow melts on the Armenian mountains, the rivers Euphrates and Tigris bring down large quantities of water which speedily turns much of lower Iraq into a vast lake. What is more difficult to understand is the statement that the mountains were covered and this will be considered later on.

Where did the water come from? Evidently not altogether from the heavens. Gen. 7. 11 says, with an exactitude which makes it almost certain that the words were written by an eye-witness: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights". Ferrar Fenton renders

this: "All the depths of the great ocean were heaved up and the belts in the heavens were broken". The Septuagint refers to the "fountains of the abyss" and the "cataracts of heaven". Strangely enough, this intimation that the waters of the Flood derived from two sources—the ocean as well as the skies—is supported by the Babylonian version, which describes a terrific storm approaching from the horizon and deluging the earth with rain, and a great waterspout rising up to the sky from the abyss and spreading destruction over the earth. "Six days and six nights passed; the wind, the waterspouts and the diluvian rain were in all their strength. At the dawn of the seventh day the diluvian rain grew weaker, the terrible waterspout, which had assailed after the fashion of an earthquake, grew calm; the sea inclined to dry up, and the wind and the waterspout came to an end". The Sumerian account, which is much older, says: "Six days and seven nights the hurricane, deluge and tempest continued sweeping the land. When the seventh day came the strife was quelled, the tempest and deluge which was fighting like an army. The sea was lulled, spent was the tempest, assuaged was the deluge". The general impression given by all these accounts is that much of the devastation was due to the invasion of the land by the sea, in addition to the torrential downpour of water from above.

There is also a mass of tradition to the effect that the earth opened and water gushed out to drown men living on its surface. The Koran gives this impression, although where the prophet Mahomet got his information from no one knows—probably from Arabic folklore and traditions. "The people of Noah accused that prophet . . . saying, He is a madman; and he was rejected with reproach . . . So we opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring down, and we caused the earth to break forth into springs so that the waters of heaven and earth met . . ." (Koran, chap. 54.) The 11th chapter of the Koran has an allusion to the Flood, saying that the waters of the Flood came out of a "tannar" which is an Arabic word meaning either an oven or a crevice of the earth. Although in English translations of the Koran "oven" has been adopted it is evident that the other meaning is the more reasonable, and this idea that the earth was cloven to allow the waters to emerge has a parallel in the Babylonian account which speaks of earthquakes associated with the Flood.

Throughout the ages local legend has had it that the water of the Flood drained away underground at Urfa, a picturesque town in southern Turkey. An ancient citadel—probably Roman—outside the town contains two tall stone columns, part of a

ruined temple. Wigram, in "The Cradle of Mankind" tells how for untold generations past the story has been that one of those columns is packed full with gold and silver treasure. No one has ever dared to break open the columns to acquire the treasure, because the other column is a kind of plug which stops up the hole where the Flood waters have gone, and since no one knows which column is which, there has never yet been found a man rash enough to risk opening the wrong column and letting the Flood loose upon the earth again!

Another Arab tradition (related in "By Tigris and Euphrates") tells how that in the town of Kufah (near the ruins of Babylon) there is a large well from which, say the local populace, the waters of the Flood issued at God's command to destroy all mankind. Such traditions are of interest as showing with what tenacity the story of the great catastrophe has taken hold of even modern descendants of the ancient peoples of the land of the Flood.

The general picture we have to draw, then, is that of a torrential deluge of water descending suddenly from the skies simultaneously with some great oceanic disturbance which sent the sea racing over the land in, probably, a series of giant tidal waves. That of itself would produce deformations of the earth's surface and earthquakes by reason of the tremendous pressure and weight of water involved, so that there is no reason to doubt that most of the elements preserved in legend and tradition, beside the sober history of the Bible, had their place in the actual occurrence.

Forty days later the tops of the mountains were covered by the rising waters. Even though we restrict the fact to the ranges surrounding the Mesopotamian plain it remains a well-nigh incredible thing to believe. The mountains of Kurdistan—where the Ark came to rest—and of Western Persia rise steadily from the Tigris plain to an average height of 10,000 feet above sea level. The highest mountain, Algurd, lying due east of ancient Nineveh, is 12,248 feet high. According to the account, these mountains were submerged for more than six months. And seven months later the water was all gone. There is only one possible physical explanation if the story is to be accepted as true. The whole of the Mesopotamian plain, mountains and all, must have been subject to a tremendous earth movement which lowered its level relative to the rest of the world by many thousands of feet, so that the Indian Ocean invaded the land and submerged it. After six months the sinking movement was reversed and the land ascended again—whether to its former elevation or not we have no means of knowing, but at least sufficient to drain

the land and render human habitation possible again.

Such earth movements are always going on in the world—not always so rapidly as must have been the case in this instance, but there are enough on record to show what could have happened at the time of the Flood. In the year 1822, for example, an area between the Andes and Pacific Ocean as large as Great Britain rose seven feet, and the coast of India dropped at the same time. There is, twelve thousand feet above sea level in the high table-lands of South America, the shore line of an ancient sea which can be traced for over eight hundred miles. That shore-line was at sea level at some time since man came upon earth, for it is studded with ruins of buildings, roadways, canals and wharves, showing that a seafaring people once lived there. At twelve thousand feet the air is rarefied and the climate always cold—but these ruined temples contain carvings of tropical fish and animals, evidence that when those buildings were erected the whole area was at approximately the present sea level now twelve thousand feet below. It has been pointed out (Hugh Miller in "*Testimony of the Rocks*") that a land the size of England could be depressed by as much as five thousand feet in forty days without anyone suspecting the fact; the amount of "sinkage" per mile would be so slight that the contour of hills and valleys would still look the same, and the only difference would be the invading sea, sweeping over the sinking land until, as in the days of the Flood, "the mountains were covered".

It is not really necessary to suppose that the highest mountains were literally covered with water, however. From the point of view of the one who wrote the narrative the reference need only apply to those heights which were visible from the Ark. If it was indeed floating above the Mesopotamian plain, then the heights first encountered would be the low foothills to the north and west, which rise no more than fifteen hundred feet above the level of the plain, which at its northern end is now about three hundred feet above sea level. There is one fact in the Genesis account which appears to support this view. Forty-seven days after "the tops of the mountains were seen" the dove, released from the Ark, returned bearing in her mouth an olive leaf plucked off. (Gen. 8. 11). Olives grow only in the plains or in the lower reaches of mountains, and the leaves would not survive prolonged immersion in water, from which it appears that the dove must have found a tree which had been submerged either for a very short time or not at all. The whole story is consistent with the Ark having drifted into the tangle of mountains and gorges to the north-west of Mesopotamia and there grounded on rising ground which, if submerged at all, had been so only for a short while.

With this preliminary sketch of the physical realities behind the brief Bible narrative, it is possible to give some short consideration to the various suppositions which have been advanced to explain what was the actual cause of the Flood.

(to be continued)

SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS

What is the Soul? — The Bible Hell — The Son of God — The Holy Spirit

5. What is the Soul?

God created man by implanting the spirit of life, which only He can give, into a specially prepared human body, "and", says the Genesis account, "man became a living soul". It was the influence of Greek philosophy that persuaded, first the Jews and afterwards the Christians, that the soul is a kind of immortal being which resides in the body and is set free at death, and although this view is still held by many orthodox Christian circles it is quite contrary to Bible teaching. The root idea behind the word "soul" both in the Hebrew and Greek languages, is that of a living, breathing creature. When the creature dies there is no longer a "living soul". This does not mean that the individual who dies is dead forever, like the brute beasts that perish. The Bible says that

the spirit of man at death returns to the One Who gave it, and that in the Resurrection He will restore that "living soul" to conscious existence again—having a new material body, certainly, for the old one will have long since vanished into its constituent atoms—with the same identity, memory and disposition as before. Jesus said that God is able to destroy the soul as well as the body, and the Scripture confirms this by declaring "the soul that sinneth, it shall die". A soul that can die and be destroyed is clearly not immortal, and in fact many prominent Christian thinkers through the centuries have stated that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has no foundation in the Bible.

The error lies in supposing that the human body is but a temporary abiding place for the real man, who is thought to ascend to his real home in Heaven

at death. Contrary to this, the Bible teaching is that man was made for the earth, to inhabit it to eternity under sinless and undying conditions. It is true that there are exceptions to this rule in the case of those who are "spiritually minded in Christ Jesus" and walk in His footsteps, "seeking those things which are above". These will achieve a heavenly and not an earthly salvation. But their entry into Heaven is effected by a change of nature from human to spiritual, and not by the setting free of a "soul".

Hope for a future life therefore rests in God, Who has promised life for all through the resurrection of the dead, a re-creation of identity in a body that is appropriate to the individual's destiny; for the Church, spiritual bodies adapted to the spiritual world, and for men in general, human bodies adapted to this earth.

See Gen. 2.7; Job 33.4; Gen. 46.18; Exod. 31.14; Lev. 17.12; Eccl. 12.7; I Cor. 15.37-42; Matt. 10.28; Jas. 5.20; Ezek. 18.4; Prov. 6.32; 2 Pet. 3.13; Isa. 65.17-25; Isa. 45.18; John II, 24-25.

* * *

6. The Bible Hell

Although in practice only a few sects now hold to the doctrine of eternal torment, there is still a widespread belief amongst Christians that God does intend to punish sinners everlastingly, and that to all eternity they will remain in a state of conscious misery. Believing that this is the Bible teaching, many hold to this dogma whilst knowing that it is quite irreconcilable with the character of a God of love.

In point of fact, the Bible does not teach that the penalty for sin is eternal conscious misery of any kind. It does teach that the penalty for sin is death and that death is the extinction of life.

"Hell" in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word *sheol*, the death state. There are certain symbolic passages where *sheol* is depicted as a state of consciousness, but the metaphorical character of these texts is easily appreciated upon examination. *Sheol*, translated "hell," "grave," and "pit," is in reality the unconscious condition of the dead, knowing nothing and feeling nothing.

New Testament teaching is the same. "Hell" is translated from *hades* and *gehenna*. *Hades* was the death state, and although in New Testament days the infiltration of Greek thought had made general belief in *hades* as a conscious state much more common, its usage in the New Testament, especially as the word for *sheol* in quotations from the Old Testament, show that Jesus and the apostles looked upon it as did their ancestors. "Gehenna" was the name of a valley to the south of Jerusalem where perpetual fires were kept burning to destroy

the refuse of the city, and in the New Testament is used to describe that ultimate death, the "Second Death," which overtakes those who refuse to come into harmony with God after all the opportunities of the coming Age, the "Millennial Age," have been offered.

Job prayed to be hidden in *sheol*. David was left in *hades*. Our Lord Himself descended into *hades* and on the third day "rose again from the dead." All such references can only be understood by realising that the Bible Hell is the death state; that when men die they go into the death state, *hades* or *sheol*, awaiting the resurrection, and that when the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is set up and all return from death to be offered the way of everlasting life, the wilfully wicked will again go into the death state, *gehenna*, from which there is no resurrection. Thus seen, there is a real penalty for sin, but it is not torment. It is the withdrawal of that life which God gave, but of which the recipient will not make rightful use.

See Jer. 19. 5; Rom. 6. 23; Prov. 8. 36; Ezek. 33. 11; Psa. 146. 4; Psa. 9. 17; Prov. 27. 20; Num. 16. 33; Gen. 37. 35; Eccl. 9. 10; Isa. 38. 18; Rev. 20. 14; Rev. 21. 8; Job 14. 13; Acts 2. 25-34; Isa. 66. 14.

* * *

7. The Son of God.

The earthly life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ constitutes the foundation of the Christian faith. He came from above, was born of a virgin, lived as a man, and after His Resurrection returned whence He came. He said of Himself "I and My Father are one"; that this did not forbid distinction of personality is evident from His words on other occasions. He referred to God as His Father and declared Himself to be the Son of God.

John refers to Him as the "Word" Who, from being with the Father, was made flesh and dwelt amongst men. The "Word" (Greek *Logos*) had been with the Father from before the beginning of creation, the Father's agent in all that was subsequently made. He laid aside that glory which He had with the Father "before the world was" and became man—perfect and sinless but nevertheless man—"for the suffering of death." Thus He became "God manifest in the flesh," the only manner in which God, invisible to human sight, could be discerned by the natural senses. This was how Jesus could say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Having thus taken hold of human nature, Jesus fulfilled His purpose in coming to earth, that of dying for man's salvation. The Apostle Paul says "the man Christ Jesus . . . gave himself a ransom (*antitutron*—corresponding price) for all." The precise manner in which the death of Jesus

constituted man's ransom has been the subject of theological debates for centuries, but the Scriptures should be sufficient when they say "As by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It was Adam who sinned, and the human race was condemned in him. It was Christ Who gave His humanity a corresponding price for Adam, and the human race are delivered in Him.

He lay in the grave for three days and on the third day God raised Him from the dead, not in the form of man, for His humanity had been given on the cross, a ransom, but to the glory of spiritual being which He had possessed before coming to earth. He appeared a few times to His disciples, under different forms, such as that of a gardener to Mary, but after the fortieth day He appeared no more. He was set down at the Father's right hand, from whence He comes, at His Second Advent, not as man, but in the spiritual glory of His Divinity, to establish His Kingdom upon earth.

See I Cor. 3. 11; John 16. 28; Luke 1. 34-35; I Tim. 2. 5; John 10. 30; John 1. 14; Prov. 8. 22-31; John 17. 5; Heb. 2. 9; I Tim. 3. 16; John 14. 9; I Tim. 2. 6; I Cor. 15. 21-22; I Pet. 3. 18; Heb. 10. 12-13; Heb. 9. 28.

* * *

8. The Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the medium through which God makes contact with His creation. From Genesis, where "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" to Revelation, in which "the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'" the pages of the Bible tell how God's Holy Spirit is ceaselessly active in the world, steadily working to effect the full accomplishment of the Divine Plan.

There are many instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon men of God to inspire them to great things. The Spirit came upon Gideon, for example, and he delivered Israel. Moses prayed that the Lord would

put His Spirit on all His people, that they might be prophets. We have New Testament warranty for the fact that the prophets of old were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to speak and write the visions they saw, foreviews of events yet to come, revealed for the guidance of believers through the ages.

The office of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is of even deeper significance. Jesus promised His disciples that after His departure He would send them another means of guidance, and His promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in the coming of the Holy Spirit, a Divine power and influence resting upon each one and enabling them to do things that in their own unaided strength they could not have done. Every believer who now comes "into Christ" by consecration of life to Him is "begotten of the Spirit" to a new life, and thenceforth is under a transforming influence which opens his eyes to spiritual things and ultimately makes him ready for the spiritual salvation which is the hope of the Church.

The old expression "Holy Ghost" is out of date to-day. When the Bible was translated into English the word "Ghost" had the sense of a spiritual power or influence, but to-day has the thought of personality added. The words "*pneuma*" in Greek and "*ruach*" in Hebrew, which are used for the Holy Spirit of God, are both the equivalent of the Latin "*spiritus*" meaning breath, breath of life, soul, mind, and in recognition of this fact the term "Holy Spirit" is used to-day more and more in preference to "Holy Ghost."

The Holy Spirit must not be thought of then as a third "God" or as distinct from the Father, having a personality of its own. It is the influence and power of God in active operation that is called the Holy Spirit, and it is this power that creates and sustains all things and is effective in the individual life.

See Gen. 1. 2; Rev. 22. 17; Isa. 55. 11; Jud. 6. 34; Num. 11. 29; 2 Pet. 1. 21; John 14. 15-18; Acts 2. 1-4; 2 Cor. 5. 17; I Pet. 1. 3.

YOUTH FOR TRUTH CONFERENCE

The following letter from some of our younger brethren in America is reproduced just as received because it speaks for itself so clearly. Those of our readers who have watched with sympathetic interest the activities of our own younger brethren will be equally interested in this evidence of similar feelings and impulses on the other side of the ocean. The announcement will of course be of immediate interest to our younger readers in the United States,

and particularly for their benefit is the letter reproduced in full.

Bible Fellowship Union—England.

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The enclosed sheet is an announcement of the "Youth for Truth Bible Conference" to be held on April 17 and 18 (Easter Sunday) in Cicero, Illinois.

The Conference is being planned by a group of young brethren located throughout the United States and Canada, their central committee being in Cicero. The Conference is open to all young people between the approximate ages of 13 and 30, who profess faith in Christ as their hope of salvation.

The programme will consist of discourses and Bible studies for young Bible students, song services, and ample time for fellowship. We feel that it will meet the needs of young people who desire and are hungry for spiritual food and enlightenment.

The object of this letter is to request you to kindly announce this forthcoming "Youth for Truth Conference" for young Bible students, if you feel that it warrants it, in your Christian publication. You may, if you wish, use the enclosed announcement, or you may write as the Holy Spirit

directs. If you want further information, please direct your requests to Youth for Truth, Post Office Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

We would fully appreciate your co-operation and your prayers, that we may carry out the will of God to the best of our ability.

Yours in Christ,

DENNIS L. THORFELDT,

Youth for Truth Conference Committee.

The announcement more or less repeats the above, with the added intimation that any young brethren in U.S.A. or Canada who wish to be kept in touch with these activities are requested to send their names and addresses to the address given above.

Conference opens at 2.30 p.m. C.S.J. on 17th at C.S.A. Olympic Auditorium, 2136 61st Court, Cicero, Ill.

Melchizedek King of Salem

Light on an ancient story

The identity of Melchizedek, King of Salem (Gen. 14. 18-24), has been for long a subject of casual speculation, and the very brevity of Scriptural allusion to this personage has afforded opportunity for more than one flight of fancy. The statement in Hebrews 7. 3 that he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," has led some Christian writers to identify him with Jesus Christ before He became man. The Jews declared that he was Shem, the son of Noah, whilst various of the "Early Fathers"—and some later writers too—believed that Shem, Ham or Enoch was the mysterious priest-king to whom Abraham paid tithes after the defeat of Chedorlaomer.

All these speculations have been dissolved by the research which in recent years has so illuminated the Old Testament that the mystery has been stripped from the personality of this man, so wonderfully honoured in being made a type of that everlasting priesthood which is characteristic of our Lord's Millennial glory. Were it not for this inspired usage of the little scrap of history recorded in Genesis 14, Melchizedek would have been as unknown to Christians as is another occupant of the same exalted office half a millennium afterwards. How many can recall, without recourse to Bible or Concordance, what the Scripture has to say about Adonizedek, King of Jerusalem? Yet there is much more said about this latter king than Melchizedek himself.

It is at the time when the armies of the east invade Canaan, taking Lot among their prisoners,

and Abraham, following and defeating them, has returned in triumph, that the story opens. Returning from Northern Palestine along the Jordan valley on his way back to Hebron, Abraham came near to the city of Salem, known in after years as Jerusalem. The word Jerusalem is itself but the modern form of *Uru-Salim*—the city of the god of peace. No one knows just how old is the Holy City of our faith—it is already in existence when recorded history begins.

"And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he (Abraham) gave him tithes of all" (Gen. 14. 18-20).

That is all; all the Scriptures tell us about this mystic personage; yet how full of detail the brief statement. It is worthy of note that this verse is the first place in the Bible where the word "priest" is mentioned. In all the history of the days before Abraham there is no mention of a priest; here is presented a kingly priest—a priest upon his throne. Note also that Abraham acknowledged the authority of this man as superior to himself, for he rendered him tithes of his spoils of war. Thirdly, this man, although not of the chosen family which had been called out of Ur of the Chaldees to become a great nation, the people of God, nevertheless acknowledged the same God as did Abraham. This is the more noteworthy when, upon reflection, it

is realised that Melchizedek reigned as king over a land which was about to be promised to Abraham himself, and the kingship of Melchizedek must perforce one day come to an end.

Abraham, having rendered his obeisance and his tithes, went on his way to his home at Hebron, and thereafter Melchizedek disappears from history—except for one solitary allusion in Psalm 110. 4: "*The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek!*" This Psalm is a Messianic one and it speaks of Christ; but not of a suffering Christ; not of the Man of Sorrows, one acquainted with grief, and Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53. 7). This hundred and tenth Psalm speaks of a victorious King, a triumphant Priest, one ruling in the midst of His enemies, and bringing all into subjection to His sway that He might become to them a dispenser of Divine favour; a Royal Priest having all power both to rule men and to heal them, and so to accomplish all God's good purposes for them. That is why the Psalmist's mind went back like a flash to a royal priesthood which existed centuries before that of Aaron, one that served not with "offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin" (Heb. 10. 8), picturing only sacrifice and reconciliation begun; but a priesthood that dispensed bread and wine, ruling in kingly majesty and symbolising blessing to men and reconciliation completed. That is why the Psalmist, with rare inspiration, declared in rapturous words: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." How appropriate the name! "*Melchi*"—a king. "*Zedek*"—righteousness. A king of righteousness ruling over the City of Peace; an apt picture of our King and His earthly Kingdom!

Until quite recent years nothing whatever was known about this mysterious Royal Priesthood of Abraham's day, apart from the scanty references in the Scriptures. Christian teachers believed that Abraham lived as an alien in a totally strange and idolatrous heathen land. That the worship of our God could exist anywhere apart from Abraham and the chosen seed was hardly suspected, much less believed; and the incident of Chedorlaomer and Melchizedek was even regarded by some as a fable, having no basis of fact in genuine history.

To-day all that is changed. Discoveries made within the last twenty-five years have definitely established that in the times of Abraham, of Jacob and of Joshua there was a system of belief and worship in Canaan which acknowledged and served the "Most High God"—a system corrupted with crudities of belief with which Abraham and his children were never encumbered, but nevertheless constituting an intelligent worship of One God as

distinct from the idolatrous superstitions of the peoples around. It seems reasonable to believe that others beside Abram had some understanding of the primitive faith of Noah and Shem, and, whilst Abram was a child in Ur of the Chaldees, there must have been other men in other lands, sprung from the common stock, who carried with them some tolerably clear knowledge of the God of Shem, of Noah, of Enoch, and the faith of past times. Abraham was selected to advance the true knowledge of God in orderly development through that nation which should spring from his loins; but when he came into Canaan he found already a holy city, a priesthood, and a worship which he would readily recognise as being in honour of God Most High, and to the High Priest of that faith he made due acknowledgment.

From the day of Abraham a veil is drawn across the Holy City and its affairs, and Jerusalem is mentioned no more until, many centuries later, Joshua led the hosts of Israel across Jordan into the promised land. As the warriors swarmed up the roads from Jericho they found a king in Jerusalem—and it came to pass when Adonizedek, King of Jerusalem, had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (Joshua 10. 1), that Adonizedek sent the other kings of Southern Canaan a summons to combine for united defence. Here was a man of evident authority among the petty kings of Canaan. His name—reminiscent of his illustrious predecessor—*Adoni-zedek*, "Lord of righteousness." He comes on the stage only to disappear as quickly, for after the historic encounter related at length in Joshua 10 he was captured with his confederates and put to death.

From the Bible alone there would be little beyond the similarity of name to justify the thought that here in the days of Joshua the priest-kings were still ruling and exercising the duties of their exalted office, but the voice of the monuments has in these days made itself heard, and shown that in the days of Joshua, as in those of Abraham, the Most High God was still worshipped in Jerusalem. In the year 1929 a notable discovery was made at Ras Shamra, on the sea-coast of Northern Palestine, the full import of which is even yet hardly realised. A large number of inscribed tablets came to light, proving, by various evidences, to have been written about the time of the Exodus, and throwing an entirely new light upon the religious beliefs and ceremonials of Canaan at that time. A vast amount of information has been obtained from these tablets, all tending to show that whilst the Children of Israel were marching through the wilderness of Sinai on the way to the land of promise, the worship of the "Most High God" was widely prevalent in Canaan, with a distinctive ceremonial, one that

contained many features reminiscent of the later Tabernacle ritual. Side by side with that gross idolatry and worship of many gods against which Israel was warned by Moses, there existed also a form of worship which approached very near to that of the Israelites. It may well be that Melchizedek and Adoni-zedek were but two representatives of a long line of priestly kings who reigned in Jerusalem, and kept the faith of the Most High alive through all those years.

These "Ras Shamra tablets" also illumined and explained another archaeological enigma. It was in 1877 that a peasant woman at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt, stumbled upon one of the most important discoveries of the nineteenth century, a large number of tablets which were found to be the "Foreign Office" correspondence of the Egyptian government during the time when Joshua and the hosts of Israel were invading Canaan and subduing the Canaanites. These tablets, which were not completely and accurately deciphered until 1915, reveal that, during the period of the Exodus, Canaan was a land in nominal subjection to Egypt, each of its towns having a local ruler or an Egyptian governor, whose jurisdiction extended to the country around him, these governors rendering their allegiance to the Pharaoh of Egypt. In short, Canaan was an Egyptian province. Now among all these letters from the various petty kings of Canaan there are a great many written by one Abdi-Khiba, King of Jerusalem, who constantly claims that he holds his position not by permission of the Egyptian power, like the other kings about him, but by decree of the Most High. From these letters, and from the frequent mention of his name in documents written by other Canaanite dignitaries, it is known that Abdi-Khiba ruled Jerusalem in his own right in much the same fashion as did Melchizedek centuries previously. This king's constant lament to the Egyptian Pharaoh is that the "Khabiri" were threatening his city and country and that unless help soon came, the invaders would overrun the land. Who these "Khabiri" were was long a matter of mystery but in recent years it has been generally agreed that they were the invading Israelites under Joshua, in process of subduing the land. Abdi-Khiba's letters break off abruptly, still pleading for the help that never came, and the sequel to the story is recorded in another of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, a despatch from one Suyardata, an Egyptian official sent to Canaan to report upon the political condition of the province, in which he reported the news of the capture of Abdi-Khiba and the fall of his city at the hands of the "Khabiri"—the Israelites.

There seems little doubt that Abdi-Khiba was the last of the Melchizedek line of priest-kings. There

is a possibility that Adoni-zedek was the same individual mentioned in the tablets as Abdi-Khiba, the former being his Canaanite name and the latter his Egyptian title—although on the other hand it may be that when Adoni-zedek was slain by Joshua as recorded in Josh. 10. 22-27, Abdi-Khiba succeeded him as priest-king of Jerusalem, ruling whilst the Israelites were actually engaged in conquering the land and being finally captured by them and slain as recorded in the Tel-el-Amarna letters.

So ended the Melchizedek priesthood, a line of royal priests reigning in Jerusalem from the days of Abraham to the time of Joshua. For over half a millennium the faith and worship of God Most High was kept alive in a land where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in succession were strangers and pilgrims—and then in the fulness of time the developing Plan of God demanded a new revelation of His Will. A hardy and virile people, sons of the desert, came in with the enthusiasm and confidence engendered by their Covenant with God, and before them the old primitive Canaanitish worship waxed old and vanished away.

Quite evidently the fall of Jerusalem recorded by Su-yardata was not followed up by the Israelites, for in Joshua 18. 28, the city is mentioned by a new name, "Jebusi"—the city of the Jebusites. The old proud name—the city of peace—had vanished with the fall of its priest-kings, and not until the time of David, three or four centuries later, was its name restored. I Chron. 11. 4-7 tells of the final capture of the city and of David making it his capital, restoring to it the original name by which it has ever since been known. There is an appropriateness in all this, for David was a prototype of that greater Melchizedek who shall come in glory and power, and upon a greater throne than that of David, to rule as King and Priest in the New Jerusalem.

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually" says the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 7. 3). These are the words which have mystified so many. How could this man Melchizedek be without parents, having no beginning nor ending, unless he could be identified with God himself? The careful student will perceive, however, that the whole reference in Hebrews to this personage is symbolic or typical. The writer is calling to mind one little episode, that related in Genesis 14, and views it as an isolated picture upon which he can build his type. Melchizedek steps on to the stage, and steps off. Of what went before or of what came after, we are in ignorance; but while he stood there in the King's Dale, his holy city of Salem in the background, Abraham and his

followers before him rendering willing tribute, and as he ministered bread and wine and raised his hands in blessing, he typified One who, in the power of an endless life, abiding a priest continually, is abundantly able to save those who come unto God by Him. Abraham and his followers pictured all mankind, bowing the knee in glad and willing submission to their new king. The King's Dale; surely that foreshadows Paradise restored, the glorified earth where the willing and obedient shall rejoice in the glory of God's grace, Salem in the background picturing the New Jerusalem in its descent from heaven to earth; and that venerable figure bearing bread and wine, clad in garments betokening at once royal glory and priestly dignity, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, no longer a High Priest after the order of Aaron—that is all in the past, in His day of humiliation—but a Royal Priest whose

priesthood shall never end. "They truly," says the same writer again, speaking now of the Aaronic priests, "were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." The priesthood of Aaron was a dying priesthood, and it could picture only sacrifice and suffering, things which one day must pass away for ever. They could never rightfully picture the everlasting glory of Christ. "But this man," triumphantly now, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." The glory of this wonderful type will have been fully revealed when Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King, accompanied by His glorified Church, comes forth to meet mankind, bearing bread and wine; and in the beautiful surroundings of the King's Dale gives them His blessing—the blessing of the Most High God.

In the Land of Beginning Again

A PEN PICTURE OF THE COMING KINGDOM. No. 4. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened" (Isa. 35. 5).

He watched the girl making her way towards him across the grass. Her slender figure outlined against the greensward made a pretty enough picture as with lithe steps she came quickly up to him. The radiance of youth gave a touch of eagerness to a countenance aflame with missionary zeal as she approached.

"Well, Arthur, have you made up your mind yet?"

"I have not, Sindra."

The girl sat down on the low wall beside him, stretching out one hand to coax an inquisitive sparrow towards her. "Is the evidence still insufficient, then?"

The man leaned forward, hands together between his knees. "I don't know" he said slowly. "I don't want to be unreasonable but . . ."

"But you are sure there's a rational explanation of it all somewhere, if you can only have time to find it," replied Sindra, a mischievous smile lightening the gravity of her face.

Her companion flushed. "Now you're teasing again. Well, yes, there must be a rational explanation. Things like this just don't happen, that's all—it's absurd, incredible."

"But this one *has* happened," returned the girl gently.

Arthur looked out over the cliffs to the distant sea. "I know just what you are going to say. That I look thirty and feel it, sound in wind and limb and fitter than I ever remember feeling

before—and yet I know that I am over sixty years of age and not long ago fighting for my breath with two nurses and a doctor doing their best for me. You are going to tell me again that I didn't fall asleep at all, but that I died and was buried and have been raised from the dead, and I tell you it's incredible. I won't believe it."

"How do you account for your being here, then?" His hands moved restlessly. "I don't know. I remember the room beginning to go dark and the doctor's voice coming, as from a great distance, 'He's going,' and then everything seemed to swim before my eyes and things just faded out. When I opened my eyes again I was lying on the grass fully dressed and you were holding my hand." His eyes held a far-away look. "Just like *she* did on the day—"

"—you slid down Giles' gravel pit and knocked yourself silly at the bottom?" suggested the girl. Arthur sat bolt upright. "How do you know anything about that?" he demanded. "That happened years ago—you couldn't have been born then."

She laughed lightly. "Perhaps your mother told me."

"You're a queer girl, Sindra. I can't make you out at all. I'll wager you are not more than nineteen and you talk sometimes as if you've lived for years and years. How could you have known my mother? She died when I was sixteen." He was suddenly silent.

"Tell me about her," said the girl softly.

"There isn't much to tell. We were the best of pals—more like brother and sister. They brought her home one day from the river. She had tried to save a child from the water. The child was saved, but my mother was dead when they got her out." He paused for a moment. "I was sixteen and about to become a Sunday School teacher. That night something died in me. It was all so cruel, so senseless. If God exists, He would not have allowed it. I became a rationalist, and for forty years preached rationalism, until my illness."

"And now?"

"I shall go on preaching it, I suppose."

"Why 'I suppose'?"

"The people here don't seem as if they are likely subjects, somehow. They are so sure."

"Sure of what?"

"That God IS—and that they are living under a new and righteous system of government."

"Well, it is new, and it is righteous, isn't it?"

"I grant you that. Everything seems different somehow—and everyone seems happy, except—" He dropped his face into his hands.

"Poor laddie."

He looked up instantly.

"Sindra, you said that in exactly the way my mother used to say it when I was in trouble as a little chap. The same tone of voice, the same tricks of speech—yes, and the same fixed faith in your God. What does it mean? Who are you? I can't understand . . ."

Blue eyes looked into his own. A cool hand was laid on his. Incredulity and amazement fought for mastery on his face as realisation came to him. The words fell from his lips slowly, haltingly, as though he feared to speak them. "Sindra—you are my mother. Younger than I have ever known you.

Living, and I saw you dead. Talking to me here, and yet I saw them filling in . . . Then God be merciful to me a sinner."

He broke down, shoulders heaving. Strong young arms encircled him and an endearing voice he had thought was forever stilled spoke words of comfort in his ears. A woman's heart gave thanks to Heaven for answered prayer and the surrender of one more life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The evening mists began to gather. Youthful voices carried on the breeze to the two seated on the cliff top.

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,

The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,

And laden souls by thousands come for healing,

Great Shepherd, turning eager steps to Thee.

Angels of Jesus! Angels of light!

Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night."

Hand-in-hand, mother and son of the old world, brother and sister in the new, wandered together down the pathway into the village.

* * *

The coming Kingdom of Christ upon earth will give rise to many unexpected situations. The conditions of that time will differ so widely from life as we know it that there must of necessity be some surprises, and we now can visualise the everyday life of that Age only very imperfectly. Nevertheless, it is possible to illustrate those Millennial principles which are laid down in the Holy Scriptures. This short story can very easily become a true one when the resurrection has commenced and earth's millions are returning from the dead to find that Divine power has assumed control of the world. Be it remembered that the purpose of this resurrection is the reconciliation to God of "whosoever will" through the Mediatorial work of Christ, that they may enter into everlasting life.—Rev. 22. 17.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 31, No. 5

MAY, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	.....	66
THE RANSOM FOR ALL	.....	67
THE WORD OF TRUTH	.....	70
SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS Part III	.....	71
ENTERING INTO REST	73
DILIGENCE	74
"SEEING THAT YE LOOK FOR SUCH THINGS"	77
HEAVEN ON EARTH	80

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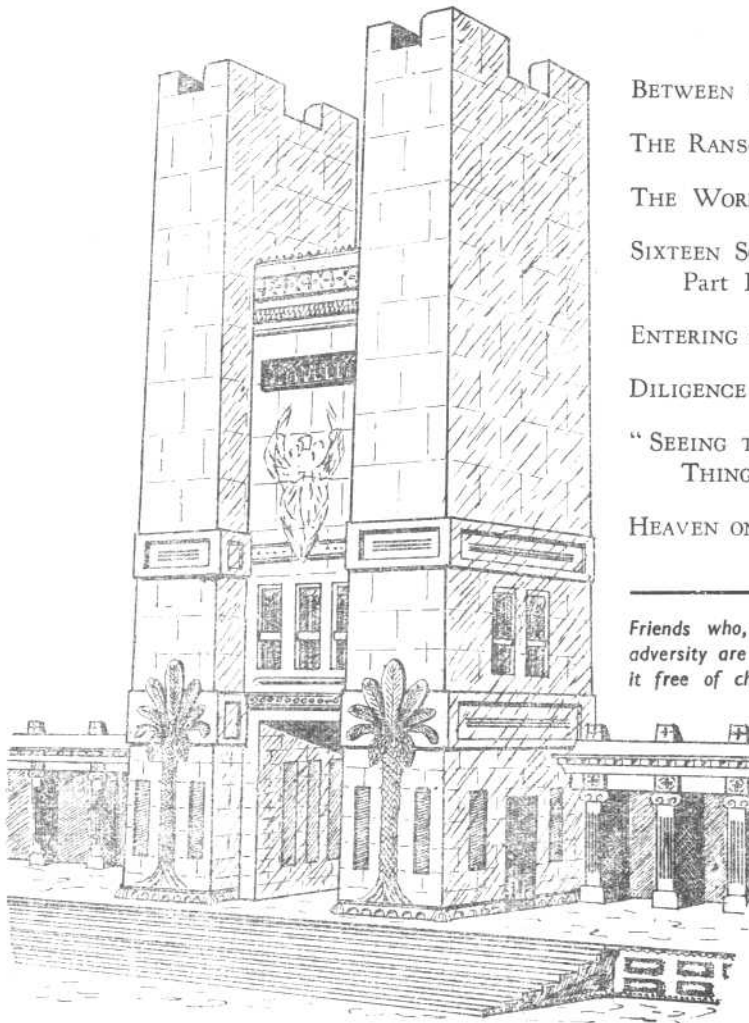
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported partly by the fixed subscription, and for the rest, by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

These columns stress two important Scriptural truths, namely:

That God will not eternally condemn any one of His creatures until there has been a full and fair opportunity to learn and appreciate the difference between good and evil and the reason for God's decree that evil and evil-doers must ultimately perish.

That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Convention has again been arranged at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, W.C.1, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, July 31, August 1 and 2, 1954. Accommodation arrangements are in the care of Bro. V. Scott, St. Brannocks, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex. In this connection special attention is drawn to the following notice. In view of the high cost of hotel accommodation in London the brethren have arranged, as far as funds permit, to assist visiting brethren in this respect. Reservations will be made for all brethren to be treated as guests of the London classes. Any desiring to contribute to meet the expenses entailed may do so by making a freewill offering to the Hospitality Fund. Please address all enquiries to Brother Scott.

* * *

In America the Unity Convention Committee is happy to announce the date of the 1954 Convention, August 1 to 7. The place, De Pauw University at Greencastle, Indiana. These beautiful grounds and the new modern auditorium are available for use of the brethren. Because of the much lower rates a larger attendance is expected this year. For further information write to Berean Bible Students, P.O. Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

* * *

The Council of Activity for the North-West announces a full programme of public meetings for 1954, commencing in March and including meetings at Lymm in May, Burnley in August and Pendleton in October, the 2nd and 3rd October being devoted to the usual autumn "Assembly of Witness." Brethren desiring to have fuller details of any of these events may have same on application to Bro.

F. Musk, 14 South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

Circumstances have forbidden the appearance of the instalments of "Man of Sorrows" and "The Story of the Flood" this month, but it is expected that they will be resumed next month.

* * *

A new style of treatise appears this month under the secondary caption "A Study Paper on Christian Doctrine." This particular one is an exposition of the doctrine of the "Ransom for All," and is cast in a style to make it suitable for class or group study. It will be seen to consist almost entirely of a selection of Scriptures with short connecting phrases, devised to lead the thoughts in an orderly course through the Biblical teaching on this vital subject. It will be appreciated if friends will let us know their opinion of this feature; if it proves to be helpful and useful we propose to feature similar articles on other important doctrines from time to time.

* * *

Hymn sheets suitable for public meetings are available, comprising folded four-page sheet with sixteen hymns specially chosen from the Hymnal, and space for name and address, price 8/6 or one dollar per 100 post free.

* * *

There is to be a Whitsun Home Gathering at Yeovil and the friends extend a warm invitation to all who can attend. The gathering will be at the Masonic Hall, Hendford, Yeovil, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and further information and programmes may be obtained from Bro. W. F. Fox, 34 St. Michael's Road, Yeovil, Somerset.

The Ransom For All

A Study Paper on
Christian Doctrine

The human race has been in bondage to sin and death since the Fall. No man has been able to escape. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written 'There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'." (Rom. 3. 9-23). Our first parents were created perfect and capable of everlasting life so long as they remained in harmony with Divine law (Gen. 1. 27-29; 2. 15-17), but in consequence of their lapse into sin the processes of death commenced to work in them. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground . . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 3. 19; 2. 17). All human beings subsequently born were born in a dying condition, of dying parents. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . therefore by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . . for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5. 12-19). No man was or is able to redeem any of his fellows from this unhappy condition. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." (Psa. 49. 7-9). But God promised our first parents, at the very time of their fall, that a way of deliverance would be found eventually. Speaking to the instigator of man's sin, He said "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head . . ." (Gen. 3. 15). This theme, that the seed of the woman would become the means of recovering man from the power of sin and evil, runs right through the Scriptures. Abraham, several thousands of years later, was told "I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12. 3), and later "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22. 18). The Apostle Paul explained the meaning of this when he said "Christ hath redeemed us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through faith. . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made . . . not to 'seeds' as of many; but as of

one 'and to thy seed' which is Christ." (Gal. 3. 13-17).

It will be noted that in the text just quoted there are two things necessary before the blessing can be conferred. One is faith and the other is redemption—and redemption comes first. A Redeemer is necessary to recover mankind from condemnation to death on account of sin. So Elihu the friend of Job says, speaking of man's plight, "His soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger (ambassador) with him, to shew unto man his uprightness, then he (God) is gracious unto him, and saith 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth." (Job 33. 22-25). That is a Millennial promise; it is paralleled by the declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." (Acts 3. 19-21). That time was spoken of by Isaiah when he cried "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 sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35. 10). That this is to include the abolition of death and mankind's entry into everlasting life is indicated by the emphatic declaration "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hos. 13. 14).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the ransom price which achieves this grand purpose. "The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2. 5-6). Jesus Himself said "The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10. 45). This word "ransom" means "a corresponding price" or more properly "a price to set against" and used in this connection it alludes to the process known in New Testament times as "manumission", by means of which Greek and Roman slaves could obtain their freedom. Someone had to pay into one of the pagan temple treasuries the price of the

slave's release. A friend of the slave, willing to make the financial sacrifice, could do this. Then the slave went to the temple and the price was paid over to his former master and the former slave became technically the property of the god. By virtue of that fact he became actually free, for whilst he continued the slave of the god no one could touch him. Adam had forfeited his life because of sin and had become the slave of sin. The price paid for his release was the perfect life which our Lord Jesus gave on the Cross, thereby providing the price which at one and the same time released man from the Adamic condemnation and at the same time made him the property of God. So Paul says "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived (lived) that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living." (Rom. 14. 9). "He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." (I Cor. 7. 22-23). "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6. 19-20). To the elders of the Asiatic churches Paul made exhortation "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20. 28) and to the Ephesian Christians he gave assurance that "the Holy Spirit . . . is the earnest (guarantee) of our inheritance until the deliverance of the purchased possession." (Eph. 1. 13-14). Peter, on the other hand, refers to some "false prophets" who "bring in heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." (2 Pet. 2. 1).

This fact of our having been "bought" by means of a "ransom-price" is therefore a very real thing, and we Christians are in consequence the servants, bond-slaves, of Christ; a servitude which is, paradoxically enough, perfect liberty. The price paid was the human life of Jesus, often referred to in the New Testament as the "blood" of Christ. The Jews had always been taught that "the life is in the blood" (Lev. 17. 14) and it was a perfectly natural thing therefore to be told that they had been "redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ." (I Pet. 2. 18-19). Drawing an analogy with the Tabernacle ceremonies of older times, the writer to the Hebrews says "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal deliverance for us." (Heb. 9. 12). "Thou wast slain" rings the heavenly chorus in the "Throne Scene" of the Book of Revelation "and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (Rev. 5. 9). John himself in his prologue to the same book declares of Christ that He "washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1. 5). Paul adds his testimony when, writing to the Ephesians, he says

of Christ "In whom we have deliverance through his blood" (Eph. 1. 7), and to the Colossians that he "made peace through the blood of his cross" and would in consequence be the means of reconciling all things to God (Col. 1. 20); finally to the Romans that "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Rom. 5. 9).

Justification by faith in Christ is granted by God on the basis of the ransom given by Christ and the faith of the believer in that ransom, but this is a different subject and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to notice that this justification constitutes a "redemption" or "deliverance" from the bondage of sin in this present time and results in actual deliverance from death when the due time has come for that deliverance. Hence the ransom given by Jesus is often referred to as the means of our redemption. (The words rendered "redemption" in the New Testament have the meaning of being set free, and are usually better translated by our English word "deliverance".) So Job was able to say with confidence "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19. 25), and the angel to Joseph "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1. 21). The Apostles, preaching at Pentecost, made it plain that "there is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4. 12). Paul, writing to the Galatian Christians, emphasised that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4. 4-5). The fact that Christ gave his own human life to effect this redemption is stressed in the preceding chapter: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (cutting-off) of the Law, being made a curse (being cut off) for us." (Gal. 3. 13). He came deliberately for that purpose, as He himself testified "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18. 11). "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." (John 12. 47). "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9. 56). To that is added the emphatic words of His greatest Apostle, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Tim. 1. 15) and his reminder to Titus "our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." (Titus 2. 14).

So far we have spoken only of the death of Jesus on the Cross as providing the ransom, but nothing of the outcome. In his instructions to the Christians at home, Paul says "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by

his life." (Rom. 5. 10) Something more than the death of the Saviour is involved; there is also His resurrection. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10. 9). Had Jesus been nothing more than a man of Adam's race, even though a perfect man, he must have remained in the grave, his life given for ever on behalf of mankind. But His was a life that came from above; before the world was created, He lived (John 6. 38, 51; 8. 58; Prov. 8. 22) and, on the third day after the human body had been taken down from the Cross and laid in the garden grave, he rose again in the power of an endless life and took again the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, the glory that he had laid aside for the suffering of death. "His mighty power" says Paul "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand." (Eph. 1. 20). The humanity of Jesus remains for ever given as the purchase price for the redeemed; Jesus Himself is forever in possession of His spiritual glory "far above all things in heaven and earth".

Wherein lay the necessity of the death of Jesus? Could not His example, His teaching and His influence do for man what was necessary? He gave the answer to that question Himself. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12. 24). In God's wisdom He saw that only by taking the sinner's place even unto death would Christ be able to win men from the other side of death. "I am the good shepherd" said Jesus "and I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." (John 10. 15-18). Perhaps Peter explains that cryptic utterance when he says "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) in the spirit." (I Pet. 3. 18). That at any rate introduces us to one of the deepest themes in the Bible, the redemptive power of suffering. We may not know just how it is that suffering borne on behalf of others creates a power that saves, but the Bible is clear that it is so. The 53rd Chapter of Isaiah is well known for its description of the sufferings of Christ Jesus; "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . . He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. . . . he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the

transgression of my people was he stricken. . . . he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isa. 53. 3-12). Explaining this very passage to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus told them "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24. 46), and again "O. . . slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory." (Luke 24. 25-26). Later on Peter recalled those words when he spoke of the Spirit in the prophets testifying beforehand "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Pet. 1. 11). The writer to the Hebrews had a clear vision of this matter; he says "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (i.e. made man) for the suffering of death. . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. . . . forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . . for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 2. 9-18). "In the days of his flesh. . . . though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5. 7-9). Peter again rejoins with confirming testimony "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example. . . . who in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (the Cross). . . . by whose stripes ye are healed." (I Pet. 2. 21-24). Paul, preaching to the Thessalonians, "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." (Acts 17. 3).

It is in consequence of this understanding, that the sufferings and death of Jesus constitute the power behind mankind's eventual reconciliation to God, that the Apostle John declares "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2. 2) and Paul, writing to the Romans "God hath set forth (Jesus) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." (Rom. 3. 25). This word "propitiation" has certain pagan associations which give it the meaning of sacrifice as upon a pagan altar, but the original word used means a covering, and is referred to the covering over of sins so that they no longer appear in the sight of God. There is no thought here of a kind of blood sacrifice demanded to appease an angry God; that

idea is quite inconsistent with the Scriptural presentation of the Father, the God of love, working in complete amity and harmony with the Son. The idea is rather that expressed in Psa. 32. 1 and quoted by Paul in Rom. 4. 7: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered" and Psa. 85. 2 "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah,

says "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and . . . thy sins." (Isa. 44. 22).

Jesus Christ came from above and assumed human form to give Himself a Ransom for All, because only through the avenue of suffering and death could the Divine purpose be effected. Jesus is Lord of all and in His resurrection life He has both authority and power, born of His experiences on earth, to lead whosoever will of all mankind back to reconciliation to God.

The Word of Truth

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-

edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord said "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it; For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry." Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day!

2 Tim. 3. 16-17; Psa. 19. 7-10; 2 Pet. 1. 19; Heb. 2. 1; Heb. 4. 12; Hab. 2. 2-3; Psa. 119.

Have you ever stood surrounded by the surging waves of unrest and doubt? Then listen to the echoes of that same voice speaking directly to you to-day His feet have left their mark, His finger points the way, and His presence goes with you on the journey. You call Him Master and Lord. Let Him be so fully. It is that obedience and adoration which He asks and longs for. It is the blessing which comes therefrom that alone can satisfy the hunger of your heart. A T. SCHOFIELD.

Life is too short to spend in bickering and strife; love is too sacred to be for ever lacerated and torn by the ugly briars of sharp temper. Surely we ought to be patient with others since God has to show every day such infinite patience towards us.

* * *

Daniel was a man of power, and because he was prayerful he was powerful. His radiant witness made its impression on all around. The threats of men terrified him not, for God was on his side. Neither could he be bribed, for God was his all in all. His humble heart soared above these things and he could speak with calm fearlessness to the kings of Babylon, because of the exceeding glory of Jehovah. ALFRED MATHIESON.

* * *

To be loyal to the Truth and yet faithfully to recognise the equal rights of all men to free thought and free speech is not always an easy task.

SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS

Creation of Man—Second Advent—Armageddon—Restoration of Israel

9. The Creation of Man

Man is the glory of earthly creation. Notwithstanding his present imperfect and dying condition, and the evil purposes to which all too often he bends his efforts, he stands pre-eminent amongst all created things. The Psalmist says of him "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, . . . to have dominion over the works of thy hands"—the earth and all that is on it. How did so wonderful a being come into existence?

There is no reconciliation between the Bible and the theory of evolution, so far as man is concerned. It is reasonable to think that the earth itself did take shape over a long period of time, and that successively higher forms of vegetable and animal life appeared on its surface as time went on. But the theories which profess to explain mankind's descent from the animal creation are altogether wide of the facts, and directly contrary to the philosophy of the Divine Plan. God made man a special creation, having qualities not possessed by any animal and incapable of being derived from any animal.

According to the narrative in Genesis God brought the earth to a point at which it became a suitable home for humanity, and then brought into existence two human beings, male and female, the first human pair. The account says "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." How those two human bodies were fashioned and framed we do not know, and to know is not necessary. What we do know is that at a certain time in history the first man and woman opened their eyes, consciousness dawned upon their minds, and they entered into the experiences of life.

There is nothing unreasonable in the fact of the human race being descended from one pair. Cases have occurred in much more recent history where an island or desert tract has been peopled by the progeny of two people originally cast away there. The marvellous vitality of that first pair, created perfect and without sin, enabled the human race to go on through many generations before the enfeebling effect of sin and its consequences began to shorten human life to the span with which we are familiar to-day.

The first pair sinned, and death came by sin. It was because one man alone was the progenitor of

all men, and all men shared in his condemnation, being yet unborn in him, that Jesus, dying a Ransom for that man, is able to reverse the condemnation, and release all.

Psa. 8. 4-7; Heb. 2. 7-8; Gen. 1 26-28; Gen. 2. 7; Rom. 5. 12.

10. The Second Advent

The Second Advent of Christ is for the completion of the work of His First Advent. He came then, to seek and to save that which was lost—fallen man, in bondage to sin and estranged from God. He died on the Cross, a Ransom for all, and by that death secured the power to recall every member of the human race from the death state, into which they pass of necessity in consequence of sin. The task of awakening those dead ones and bringing them back to perfection and everlasting life is reserved for His Second Advent.

When Jesus left His disciples He promised them that He would come again. On the Mount of Olives He had a long conversation with them in which He outlined the signs which would indicate the time of His return, and He exhorted them, and those that should follow after them, to be ever watchful and expectant. Throughout all ages since then there have always been the watchers, waiting and longing for His coming.

Although Jesus promised that He would be with His disciples in spirit throughout the Age ("Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world") it is clear that when He spoke of His return He referred to a personal coming, a departure from the Heavenly courts and the presence of His Father, and coming to this world which was the scene of His earthly life. It is equally clear that He does not return in the flesh, as a man, in the fashion of His First Advent, for He is a man no longer. He returns a spiritual being, the "express image of the Father's person," and hence at His return is normally invisible to human sight.

At His return He sets up His Kingdom on earth and assumes control of earth's affairs, having associated with Him the members of His Church, His devoted followers of this Age. His ruling power will be exercised through faithful men of God of old, the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, raised from the dead to be guides and counsellors to humanity. During the whole period of Christ's reign over the earth evil will be restrained, death, except as the penalty for wilful sin, will cease, and

men be encouraged to come to Jesus in full repentance and conversion, so receiving everlasting life.

Those signs which Jesus described are being seen to-day. A widespread conviction exists among many Christian believers that we are living in the time of which Jesus spoke and that His revelation to men is an imminent event. The present distress of nations is a herald of the Second Advent.

Luke 10. 10; Mark 10. 45; John 10. 15; Rom. 14. 9; I Cor. 15. 23; Matt. 24. 1-35; Matt. 28. 20; I Pet. 3. 18; Heb. 1. 3; I John 3. 1-3; John 14. 3; Luke 12. 36-39; 2 Tim. 4. 1; I Cor. 15. 25-26; Luke 13. 28; Luke 21. 25-26.

11. Armageddon

Armageddon is the name given, in the Book of Revelation, to that last great conflict in which the forces of evil in the world muster themselves to withstand the incoming Kingdom of God upon earth. They fail, and with their failure the present Age ends and the "Times of Restitution" begin. The name itself is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Hamegiddon*, mountain of Megiddo, referring to the district of that name in Galilee where most of the historic battles of Israel were fought.

It is to be expected that many forces will combine to oppose the establishment of the Kingdom of God. A world order which is going to suppress all forms of oppression and injustice, command wars to cease, restrain men from inflicting evil upon their fellows, establish righteousness and just dealing as the order of the day, is bound to have its enemies. Although there is no doubt that the majority of mankind will accept the new Kingdom with enthusiasm—for the majority are righteously and peaceably disposed—there will be grim opposition on the part of those whose selfish interests are threatened by the change of sovereignty.

We are already experiencing the preliminary stages of Armageddon in prevalent world distress. Since that memorable year 1914 the nations have been angry, and never free from war. A growing disregard of God is being reflected in an impatience of the restraints demanded by the moral laws which God has ordained, and on every hand now the cry is that man, with the aid of science, can work out his own salvation without Divine help. In consequence any suggestion that the kingdoms of this world are to pass away and give place to the Kingdom of our Lord provokes increasing resentment.

The principal impact of that resentment will come against the nation of Israel, regathered to its own land in fulfilment of Divine promise and prospering there whilst the rest of the world is floundering more and more helplessly in troubles of its own making. It is at about this time that the future

princes of Israel, the ancient stalwarts of Old Testament history, will be raised from the dead to guide the destinies of Israel, and it will be against them, as representing the incoming Kingdom, that the evil forces of this world will advance. In this time of crisis God will intervene and make of no avail the weapons in which the forces of evil have trusted, and in their crushing defeat the nations will see the hand of God and be ready to pay attention to the proclamation of the new Kingdom.

Rev. 16. 16; Rev. 19. 19-21; Acts 3. 19-23; 2 Pet. 3. 13; Psa. 24. 3-4; Isa. 2. 3; Isa. 25. 9; Rev. 11. 18; 2 Tim. 3. 5; I Thess. 5. 1-4; Rev. 11. 15; Ezek. 38. 8-23; Zech. 12. 3-6; Zech. 14. 1-9.

12. The Restoration of Israel

Fourteen centuries before Christ the people of Israel were constituted a missionary nation to manifest the standards and laws of God to the world. The fact that because of unbelief and hardness of heart they have so far failed to appreciate their calling does not alter the fact that God sees in them certain qualities which fit them peculiarly for this task. The covenant into which Moses, on their behalf, entered with God at Mount Sinai, provided for material prosperity upon the national observance of Divine law, and adversity upon rejection of that law. The subsequent history of Israel tells of alternate wellbeing and disaster as they served God or departed from Him, culminating in the terrible series of dispersions which started with the fall of Samaria in the 7th B.C. century and ended with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70, since when Israel has been a people scattered amongst the nations.

The Scripture says, however, that "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." The Bible promises that at the end of this world and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom God will re-gather Israel to its own land, that the nation thus re-constituted might become the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth, a people to whom the new "princes in all the earth," the resurrected patriarchs and prophets of old, shall come and assume control. The commencement of this gathering, now in progress, is a sign of the nearness of that Kingdom.

The nation thus gathered will be subjected to a crucial test, for the jealousy of evil forces in the world ("God and Magog") will be aroused at the spectacle of a prosperous people occupying the Holy Land, and there will be a determined attempt to wreck their growing nationhood. This onslaught will be the signal for God Himself to intervene, and that intervention will be the first world-wide outward sign that a new power, not of this world,

has taken a hand in human affairs. The scattering of those evil forces will be coincident with the revelation of Jesus Christ and His assumption of power as King; and this will commence the Messianic Kingdom.

Thus will be brought to an end the twenty-six-centuries-old division between the "Two Tribes" and the "Ten Tribes". Israel will be one nation,

firmly welded together as a people set to execute God's purpose. Under their leaders they will constitute a "servant nation" in the sense that Isaiah prophesied of them, to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Exod. 24. 1-8; Heb. 3. 7-11, 15-19; Rom. 11. 1-26; Isa. 40. 1-5; Isa. 58. 12; Isa. 1. 26; Dan. 12. 1-3; Isa. 49. 6.

Entering Into Rest

An Exhortation

How many of us, I wonder, have really entered into rest? How many of us have actually realised and put into operation the "rest that remaineth to the people of God"? For when we have entered into rest we have ceased from our own works, "as God did from His" (Heb. 4. 9-10).

Let us not fall into the erroneous belief that the rest which we have in Christ Jesus involves inactivity. It is rather a "rest in work." We go on labouring for the fruits of works which all of us as "trees of righteousness, of the Lord's planting" should be bringing forth, but we also have the 'rest' which enables us to cease from our own works of righteousness, because we know that the Lord alone is our righteousness. As we proceed further along the glorious pathway that has opened up to us, we shall come to see that He is our 'all in all,' the supplier of every need and of our every virtue, by His 'free gift' of grace. We have donned the Robe of Righteousness, and are 'covered' by this glorious symbol of the Redeeming Blood; we have come through much tribulation, many vicissitudes and temptations, aye and through many failures and disappointments, to depend entirely upon our Beloved Saviour. We come, then, to see, as David saw, that everything that we offer in our 'consecration' that is of true value or worth is His alone, and we can say, as did David, "Of thine own hath we given thee." (1 Chron. 29. 14).

This realisation keeps us very humble, and it is only through true humility that Christ can work in our hearts. Thus, when we realise how helpless we are to do anything of ourselves towards our salvation, and that we can only trust Him to do all for us, trusting in that mighty power that "worketh in us," we find that He can work unimpeded. Not that we do not co-operate with Him, for we go on trying to fight the battle against our spiritual enemies, but we know that He alone can conquer for us, and He alone is the victor.

Any self-righteousness that creeps in unawares our Captain of Salvation can speedily crush in us,

for were He to leave us to ourselves for but a fleeting second, how swiftly should we fall into the old sins and cry out "Lord help me," and we soon find what we are without Him. He is never far from us, however, and is gracious to the cry of His 'little ones' that trust in Him, and comes to us in our necessity and lifts us up once more as He did Peter, when He was too impetuous of His own strength, and the waves threatened to overwhelm him. "O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" was the gentle rebuke. Yes, He lets us try our strength often, but He knows that we cannot achieve anything without Him, for He Himself has said "Without me ye can do nothing." So by many falls and many upliftings we come to realise the Presence of the Divine Guest in our hearts, and, although we are often very ashamed that He should see and hear us as we are, and feel like saying, as Peter said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," yet we know that we cannot do without Him, and, as all that He is to us, all that He has done for us and is ever doing for us is borne upon our slow hearts more and more, we shall say

*"O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee."*

Then, as the preciousness and greatness of His 'free gift' to each and every one of us is more and more revealed to us, we shall never cease to praise and thank God "for His unspeakable gift."

How humbly, then, shall we offer Him our all, and say, with David, "Who am I and what is my people that I should be able to offer so willingly after this sort." So by leaning upon our Beloved Bridegroom and Head, we shall be brought safely to our desired haven. Meantime we have, as we see, already entered into rest. For we have now ceased from our own works and are 'resting' in the merits of the death and passion of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ—just trusting in His redeeming blood and trying His works to do.

Though we fall a thousand times, we shall still get up and go forward because we are 'under cover' and only thus shall we reach our goal.

"Under the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast." So David trusted, and he was not ashamed, and we may likewise trust and know that we shall not be ashamed.

Let us, therefore, as St. Paul says, "fear" lest any of us should come short of enjoying this rest that is promised to all who believe (Heb. 4. 1).

May we endeavour to bring every thought into captivity to Christ, and, above all, let us watch most anxiously lest any thoughts of self-righteousness creep in unawares, and pounce on them and cast them out, for we must ever remember that the 'free gift' came upon all men unto justification of life, and that, as Nature teaches us that the flowers, shrubs, trees, etc., have each their allotted time of blossoming and fruitage, so likewise shall God's children "blossom and bud and fill the face of the earth with fruit," but, each in their own due time. This will help us to be patient with those who may hinder and obstruct us, and we shall learn at last to 'love our enemies and pray for those who despitefully use us,' for at long last by God's grace

continually poured into our hearts as oil into empty vessels, His love will flow into us, and we shall be enabled to love Him and to love one another, as He has given us commandment to do, because we know that He loved us all so much that He gave His life for all the world, and that all are His brethren.

"For he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren"; and that as the first fruits are holy "so also is the lump holy."

We shall then be active in His service whilst we yet 'rest' in Him, for He is our righteousness and He is our peace.

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32. 1).

Yea, blessed indeed are we who have entered into rest. So let us do all we can to help other weary wanderers to find that 'Rest' which He is waiting to give to all who come to Him, as He has given to us, for He longs to bring to happiness and blessedness all His blood-bought children.

*Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."*

DILIGENCE

*A letter to the Household
of Faith in Christ*

Those of us who are striving to attain victory in the race set before us, realise the winning of a race means effort—enthusiastic effort, diligent effort, prompted by deeprooted heart convictions. Thus our diligence is to be exercised within ourselves if we would be used by the Lord in helping others. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4. 23). In this text Solomon uses the Hebrew word *Mishmar* which refers to a guard, a deposit, a usage, an example, watch, prison ward. Cook translates this: "Above all keeping, keep thine heart." Rotherham and Leeser translate it, "Above all that must be guarded, keep thine heart."

The outflowing of heart promptings may be likened to the flow of water from a spring. It is our desire to keep this overflow pure, healthful, refreshing. The springs of the East, like their water-wells, were jealously guarded. A stone was frequently rolled across the entrance and the opening closed. A closed spring was called a sealed

spring and thus became a type of all that must be most diligently guarded. The inner thoughts, the thoughts of the heart, are thus like a spring of water which must be kept pure to be effectively used by our Lord. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." (Col. 3. 5). "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." (Gal. 5. 24).

But keeping the heart implies more than physical action. It means the putting on the mind or will of Christ in our faithful performance of the will of the Father. The human will has a natural tendency downward. The mind of Christ lifts us to the better things we seek. The Scriptures admonish us, this human tendency must be mortified, deadened, killed. In proportion as we heed the teachings of our Lord, we grow nearer to God and His likeness. We become more meek, more gentle, ever increasing in the fruits of the Holy Spirit and in the character likeness of Jesus our Messiah and Example. As we apply the teachings of Divine love we find

our efforts assailed by weakness of the flesh and natural human desires which would thwart our holy and pure efforts, intentions and ambitions. Mental and spiritual vigilance, diligent, continuous effort is required if success is to be attained. The sooner we comprehend this great truth, the sooner we overcome our self-satisfied complacency, the better it will be for us. Complacency is entirely too common in these last days.

Perhaps this is because we wrestle not against flesh and blood alone, but against the Devil himself. (Eph. 6. 11, 12). "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5. 8). Therefore, "When thou goest with thine adversary before the magistrate—give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him." (Luke 15. 58). Satan is the accuser of the brethren. (Rev. 12. 10). This expression, "give diligence", is exceedingly old. It is not a Latinism, but is found in the Oxyrhyncus Papyri of the Second century before Christ. It means to work hard, to do your best. Rotherham translates this text, "Take pains to get a release from him." We know this can be done through the grace given us by our Lord.

Manifestly the Lord's people will occupy different places in the Body of Christ. We differ in opportunity, in ability, in understanding. But whether we are a Thomas, a Peter, a Paul or a John, in our ministry to others we are urged to exercise simplicity, diligence, cheerfulness. (Rom. 12. 8). The sixth to the tenth verses of the twelfth chapter of Romans are well worth our study in this connection. Even translators differ in their understanding of the Greek. Rotherham says, "He that ruleth with diligence," while the Syriac reads, "The presider (or the one standing at the head) with dexterity."

The word used for diligent in the Greek is *Ergasia*. The same word is used in 2 Cor. 8. 7 and is translated by Bullinger "In all diligence or in all carefulness." Rotherham gives us, "in all earnestness," but the Diaglott is still different, "But as you abound in everything, in faith, and in the Word, and in knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this free gift also." The gift of our all to the service of our God. All brothers and sisters in Christ are designated as leaders in some capacity. We are glad to observe so many of them are keeping their lamps trimmed and burning. (Mat. 25). Let us not bury our talent.

In Hebrews the Apostle Paul had been speaking to the Church as a whole, but in Heb. 6. 11 he urges each one individually to diligently seek the

full assurance of faith and hope that they should inherit the promises. The Syriac reads, "And we desire, that each one of you may show this same activity, for the completion of your hope." The warning is that after accepting Jesus as our Messiah, if we go back to the Mosaic Law and Judaism, we will cut ourselves off (Gal. 5. 4), as there is no more Messiah to be looked for. By rejecting our Lord we put Him to open shame; thus Paul's warning remains as a solemn admonition to all who profess to believe.

"Provide in your faith, honesty, virtue, purity." (2 Pet. 1. 5). If you have God's gifts, prove you have them by using them. "Yea, and for this reason", God began His good work in us. We must build on, "contributing all diligence". It is only a little we can do at best. It is only by diligent culture, Christian graces can grow. It is in this diligence we make our offering, while God works in us to both will and do His good pleasure. (Phil. 2. 13). Thus it is, God's gift of faith must be evidenced by our fruits of faith. Energy, diligence must be exhibited in the life of the consecrated. When this has the support of understanding we know we are not of the "sleepy virgin" class because our talents are wisely used. "In your faith exercise virtue and in your virtue knowledge."

"Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence" because, by the constant possession and increase of God's graces we become more fruitful. Our increase in diligent zeal may be attributed to our intelligent use of the graces God has already given. As we increase our knowledge and apply our hearts to God's beneficent plans and purposes, we will be able to produce greater fruitage. Our calling and election must be made sure. If we neglect the conditions we will lose the prize. The Diaglott rendering of 2 Pet. 1. 10 is, "more earnestly endeavour to make your calling and election sure"; while the Syriac reads, "be exceedingly diligent." Christians may STUMBLE, but Peter desires to keep them from FALLING.

Again we have admonition by the Apostle Jude. Dr. Cook translates Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you and exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In this case the word diligence is used to translate the Greek word *Spoude*, meaning dispatch, eagerness, earnestness, carefulness, diligence, instant haste. Diligence here indicates the writer's chief care was to warn the Church against false teachers. The Diaglott gives it, "making all haste", while the Syriac says, "I take all pains to write".

To earnestly contend for the faith conveys the

thought of enthusiastic diligence. Stress should be laid on our sincerity, our honesty in being instant in service, both in season and out of season to us. We are to serve those needing us, not only when it is convenient, but also at times when it puts us to a lot of trouble. At all times we are to diligently and earnestly defend the truth as given us by the Scriptures. Our contending is to be FOR the faith and not ABOUT the faith. The implication is that those who are contentious will never attain the high-calling because of their wrong activity. Their attitude indicates a conceited and selfish condition of heart. They think more of their own opinion than they do of the warnings of the Word of God. The diligent, earnest contention which our Father will approve is prompted by a desire to have whatever the Scriptures teach, irrespective of preconceived ideas of personal preference. In all of our activities for the truth we should diligently manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit of Christ—gentleness, brotherly kindness, spiritual understanding, godly love and affection for those who are struggling to master self and progress in the narrow way of righteousness.

Again we have the urge to prompt intense effort in 2 Tim. 4. 9. Paul was nearing the end of his earthly ministry. He needed the prompt assistance of Timothy. He wrote, "Do thy diligence to come unto me." How strange we should ever put off for some more convenient time, any service we can render to any of the Lord's people in assisting the efficiency of their ministry. The Concordant translation of this text reads, "Endeavour to come to me quickly." The Syriac gives us, "Exert thyself to come quickly". The Diaglott reads, "Do thy best to come to me soon".

All of this means constructive action, prompt action with the object of bringing praise to our God and a blessing to His people. The service of some is motivated by fear. With some it is superstition. The zeal of some is more or less ephemeral, while others are deceptive in presenting false teachings. The true servant of the Most High serves because of heart conviction and because of devout, loving loyalty. He serves in the sincere hope he may be pleasing to his Lord irrespective of reward. That there is a reward is beyond question, but we do not love Him because of reward. We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jno. 4. 19). We realise our Lord's work began first in ourselves, and He will finish that work.

Thus we follow our Lord's example in extending help to others. One of our most precious privileges in diligent helpfulness is that of extending a helping hand to those of like precious faith in their efforts

to be diligent in service. Faith, fortitude, and knowledge prepare God's people to have patience with every effort put forth by others, irrespective of how weak they may be. Diligent patience is required in dealing with the poor, blinded world. Diligent, tactful patience is required in helping "Babes in Christ", in the task of encouraging the slow and the stupid, the excitable and the blundering, the over-confident and the sceptical. The worldly minded and many of the Lord's consecrated are lacking in faith, fortitude and spiritual knowledge. They fall ready prey to unrest, fatigue and the wrong interpretation of the plain statements of Scripture.

All of this leads us back again to our own personal need. Let us be diligent in our devout service. Let us be diligent, constant, in controlling the use of our loving reverent service for our Father. Let us be diligent in bringing our all into cheerful, loving conformity to His will. Diligent fervour of spirit. Let us remember facts. No race, no battle will ever be won without diligent, enthusiastic effort. It costs something and the child of God must pay the price. If there is no cross there will be no crown. Piety and goodness spring from appreciative, grateful hearts who spontaneously delight in meditation upon God's precepts and promises. In secret communion with our God we offer our prayers and our praise for every opportunity to serve Him, to help our brethren, to let the light of our spiritual understanding shine forth in a world of perplexity and doubt.

At best we are but dust. When we have done all we can do, we find the only value in our effort is that supplied by our Lord. We do not dare trust our own righteousness. By faith we fold about us the ample robe of Christ's righteousness and, with constant diligence, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that holiness in service without which no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14). Let us be diligent.

As no man ever had a point of pride that was not injurious to him, so no man had ever a defect that was not somewhere made useful to him. The stag in the fable admired his horns and blamed his feet, but when the hunter came his feet saved him, and afterwards, caught in a thicket, his horns destroyed him. Every man in his lifetime finds occasion to thank his faults when he has profited therefrom.

EMERSON.

* * *

If we are to be filled with the power of God, our faith must grow. Whatever increases our faith will increase our capacity . . . and the power will flow in.

SEEING THAT YE LOOK FOR SUCH THINGS

A Dissertation on 2 Pet. 3, 14

When Peter wrote the words of our text (and its context) he and his brethren were passing through a period of intense strain and testing. His nation was at war with the mighty Roman Empire, having been goaded thereto by the harsh tyrannical measures of the Roman Governor. The clash of battle was slowly drawing nearer to the City and Temple, which once had been accounted "holy unto the Lord", and as the victorious troops advanced, desolation spread over the face of the land upon which, in earlier days, the eye of the Lord had lighted with holy pleasure. Many thousands of rebellious Jews had been slain, many thousands had been sold into slavery, or sent to the galleys—a fate worse than death. Some local successes had keyed up the Jewish spirit to a state of fanatical daring, and many deeds of heroism, as well as of cruelty, were wrought by the revenge-smitten bands of untrained and unseasoned men who ventured forth to contest the day with the disciplined armies of Rome.

For a while events at Rome, such as the death of Nero, and the accession to the throne of two or three usurpers, prevented intense prosecution of the war. This tardiness of military effort encouraged the Jews to fiercer resistance, many interpreting it as an omen of their own victory. The growth of this fanatical combative spirit made life much harder for the Christian believer. Naturally, on account of obeying their Master's teachings, no Christian could join the ranks of the Jewish armies, nor even lend support to the warlike spirit which swept over the nation. Consequently, they were stigmatised as shirkers—traitors against the national cause, and hated and persecuted the more on that account.

The Christian's lot in those days was a heavy one. Persecuted by Rome and its provincial governors, even to the lion, the sword and the flame; hated, harassed and hunted to the death of their own kinsmen, with the ravages of war and desolation daily growing sharper and more widespread, it is not to be wondered at that these despised followers of a hated cause came to think that the whole realm of Nature was closing in upon them, and that the end of the world was near. Peter himself, in a previous letter, had given vent to an almost identical expression, when he assured his scattered brethren that "the end of all things is at hand". (I Pet 4. 7). That this was a prevailing idea among the

brethren is evidenced also by the words of John (I John 2. 18), "*Little children, it is a last hour*" (not the last time, as A.V.), and also of James, "*. . . the coming of the Lord draweth nigh . . . behold, the Judge standeth at the door*". (Jas. 5. 8-9).

We are not concerned at this time with the precise meaning or application of these words of John and James, but quote them only to show that they held thoughts similar to Peter's, and that it was a current understanding among them all, Apostles and brethren alike. They were not at fault in drawing such conclusions from the events and signs of their day, for who among them could escape from the conviction that if Judah fell and was overtaken by destruction, the whole world must suffer destruction too. To their understanding the world was allowed to exist only because of Judah's position in it, and if Judah fell, which among the nations could stand? They lived and worked and wrote their letters, keenly alive to a sense of impending doom—of a world-order about to crash; of a visitation in terrible majesty of the retributive hand of God.

But they had a better side to the story as well. A new heaven and earth was destined to follow the fall of this present world, in which righteousness would dwell, and men should learn to live in peace and concord in harmony with the Will of God. A King (a glorious Sovereign) should reign in righteousness, and of His Kingdom there should be no end.

These things, too, were according to the common understanding of the Church—the Apostles and the brethren as well. But they had to look through the pall of darkness that everywhere lay around into the dim future to envisage that better day. How far the golden future lay ahead on the stream of time no one on earth then knew. As it was, the desirable day lay further on in the mists of to-morrow, while the pall of darkness and gloom, and the inhumanities of their kin filled the whole round of experience for to-day. Faith had to pierce the gloom that pressed close on every hand, and hope could only soar through the leaden clouds where love was hot and endurance strong.

The Apostles did not hide from the brethren the risks and dangers of their day—but spake out fully and with emphasis about the tragic events transpiring, and more fearful consequences impending

But they said, with Peter, "seeing that ye know these things", look forward hopefully, never doubting that the Kingdom of God will come, and that His Will shall be done in all the earth, even though to-day, the world is rocking and shaking to its destruction.

One kingdom only was destined to withstand the earthquake shocks, and that was the Kingdom of God—the kingdom of their own hopes and expectations, in whose honours and blessings they knew they would participate. Men can stand amid the rending convulsions which shatter nations and kingdoms only when they know that God reigns above the earthquake and the storm, and that His hand can direct and, at need, restrain the mad furies of the depraved human heart.

And so it was that these dear men of God could stand unshaken and undismayed even though the institutions of their fathers, which, having withstood the shocks of time almost unchanged for one and a half thousand years, were, at last, in dissolution before their eyes. What mattered though the heritage of centuries disappeared if only God, and the Word of God continues unchanged and unchangeable? A stalwart faith, deep-rooted and robustly grown, the product of the great Husbandman's prunings and attentions, could look out on the gathering storm, and face even the crashes of a fearful doom, without wincing, and without even the flicker of an eye. And with their own feet firmly planted on the Rock of Ages, the Apostles reached out to help their weaker floundering brethren also to plant their feet firm on the solid rock.

But even when men know these things, it is always very essential that remembrance should be stirred from time to time. Not only are we handicapped by faulty memories, but even courage and resolution tend to evaporate and wilt under the strain. This calls for the re-bracing of firm intention; the re-fortification of strong determination, and the quickening of faith, and trust in the power of God. Peter said: ". . . I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."

Peter thought it was "meet" to say, amid the gathering storm, "Take courage, my brethren, be strong in the Lord. Commit your way unto Him". And Peter was not debarred by a sense of too much originality from repeating himself again, and yet again, if only their pure minds could be stirred up thereby.

To-day another cycle of God's Times and Seasons is almost run. Another conjunction of the Ages has

come with all the stress and strain that these transition epochs bring. Another hour of destiny is about to strike, and tell a seething world that another day—man's day—is nearly done. Again, but this time on a larger scale, the hand of God is lying heavy on the race, and the whole world, not Jewry alone, is about to feel its chastening power. The institutions of men, built by human hands, and run according to human unwisdom, are reeling and tottering beneath its blows. Twice within one generation the nations have bathed their swords in each other's blood, and made ten thousand times ten thousand stricken hearts to mourn. Multitudes of widowed and fatherless outcasts have groaned and still groan out their sorrow to the skies—and not yet is the end of the shamble come. The inventive power of man has been harnessed to destruction's chariots, and a thousand dreadful weapons have been the result. The man of science, with all the skill and technique of the laboratory has forged a "great sword", and thereby the dread carnage of war has been increased manifold. Never before, since man began to fight has such terrible destruction been within his ruthless grasp. And amid all the din hymns of hate are rising to the skies—the hearts of men thus keeping step with their destructive implements. "Global war" and "total war" to-day crowns the follies of nineteen centuries, while scorched earth and total ruin mark the ebb and flow of the ungoverned tidal waves of war. From pole to pole the surging current engulfs all nations in its resistless sweep, from the meridian where the day is born in full circumference, to where the same day dies, every race and people are caught up in the swirl of the everflowing flood—and there is no escape!

Is it true that there is no escape from this universal deluge? For the nations, No! For the believing child of God, Yes! Colossal and widespread though this stranglehold of death appears to be, it is not the biggest thing in the affairs of men. The Plan of God, working onward in its resistless sweep towards its still far-off Divine Event, is greater far, and much more comprehensive in its grip upon the universal state of things. Just inasmuch as God is incomparably great above man, and heaven is immeasurably high above the earth, so is the Plan of God transcendent in its magnitude above all the works of men, be they bad or good. This is the bedrock of the Christian's comfort in these tumultuous days. If he (or she) can but rise to the height of his (or her) calling to become an associate of Christ Jesus in the honours and dignities He had so rightly won, then he (or she) can stand among the rending kingdoms, and, amid mad passion's tempest blast be at peace in God, and know that His way is best.

It will be the Christian's privilege to know that the voice of Scripture is speaking out again, not merely in that local, temporary and preliminary sense which Peter and his brethren heard when the prophecies were applied to old Jerusalem and to the ill-fated and cold-hearted people whose day of grace was at an end. The Christian may yet come to understand that that unparalleled visitation was the last item in the long series of types and patterns which brought to its climax the whole system of types and shadows of which the priesthood and its sacrifices had been the central core. The acquisition of that understanding, in all its bearings, may then enable the student to see that while the preliminary application of the Old Testament prophecies to Jerusalem and the Jew was strictly in keeping with that kindergarten stage of God's purposes (and was mostly definitely a fulfilment, in part), the greater, completer, and full-scale fulfilment belongs to these later days, and to a wider stage than the House of Judah alone.

The voice of the Living God will then begin to speak again through the words of the ancient prophecies, and make their accents of warning and encouragement become supercharged with living vital power—with the Spirit of Almighty God. Then they that wait on the Lord will be able to place the events of these tumultuous days into their right and precise relationship to all the long train of inter-related events which belong to this transitional period.

What can we say of these things to-day? The strain of life is heavier and more exacting, fears for the safety of home and loved ones creep into every heart, while the long-drawn unceasing tension frays the nerves and disturbs the mind. Even in the best places in the earth, humanity cannot suppress, at times, the sigh of boredom and weariness, nor check the unspoken wish that all these disturbing happenings were at an end. And when, above all which we ourselves experience, comes the heart-rending stories of those who have lost all they once possessed, and have neither food nor work nor comfort—unwilling victims of the world's dread spasm of inhumanity—then no longer can we suppress the pent-up cry, "How long, O Lord, how long ere Thy Kingdom come to terminate this night of sin and shame?"

The world talks in "millions" to-day—millions of soldiers, millions of money, and millions of sufferers—numbers which stagger and bembomb the brain. It is a day of big things, of concentrations, of forces too vast to calculate. The very bigness of it all overwhelms and crushes by its immensity, and we might come to feel that we are but as tiny grains of sand beneath the wheel-tracks of an armada of

colossal juggernauts, whose sole purpose was to crush humankind to formless pulp.

It is at such times that the child of God should call to mind Whose he is, and Whom he serves, and that the Hand that shapes his little life can rule the world. He should remember that this spell of madness is but a short interlude upon the stream of time, and that even the whole period of the reign of sin and death is but a small episode in its relation to that mighty Plan, which designs to make the earth (yea, and the things of heaven as well) into one brotherhood, submissive to the throne of Christ and God. Let him think that this brotherhood is the one really "big thing" of measured time, and of an unmeasured eternity to come. It will consist of "millions of millions" of souls, and things, and years. Every willing living soul of man, since the race began, and every radiant angel of God, with all the wealth of earth and sea and sky, for all the unending ages yet to be, will be the constituent elements of that great fraternity, into which neither sin, nor sorrow, nor death will ever intrude again.

To be in Christ is to be an associate in the "big thing", to be a child of God is to have a place in the universal family, and though these are but the introductory days, *the big thing is beginning to be*. The power of God is creating the foundation of the edifice—a foundation laid in heaven, in the person of His well-beloved Son, and they who know the Lord and share His sufferings are being built up and knit up into Him. No human war or conflict can thwart or retard that constructive work. It goes right on, in war or peace, without concurrence of king or parliament, year in, year out, till the body of Christ is complete. Then another stage will come, and reach its consummation too, and so, till the whole structure is complete.

One thing only can sully your prospects, brethren in the Lord, and deprive you of your inheritance in Christ. That one thing is your loss of grip or interest. To loose your hold upon the promises and prospects of the future "Day", and permit yourself to sink into the black pit of doubt or unbelief or neglect, is the only way to forfeit the inheritance you have been called to share.

When the long-drawn tedious days, or the overweight of strain, tends to stifle your love, or crush your hope, and deaden your faith, call to mind that the promise is sure to those that endure to the end. "We count them happy that endure". "He that endureth to the end shall be saved".

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight . . . beware lest . . . ye fall from your own steadfastness. . . . But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ".

HEAVEN ON EARTH

The following words were written by Dr. John Cumming (1807-1881)

"Some say, is not this an earthly heaven? My dear friends, earth is not essentially corrupt: there is nothing sinful in the clods of the valley—there is nothing sinful in a rose, nor in a tree, nor in a stone. I have seen spots upon the earth so beautiful, that if the clouds of winter would never overtake them, nor the sin of man blast them, I could wish to live amidst them for ever. Take sin from the earth—the fever that incessantly disturbs it—the cold freezing shadow that gathers round it—and let my Lord and Saviour have His throne upon earth, its consecration and its glory, and what lovelier spot could man desire to live on? What fairer heaven could man anticipate hereafter? To me it is heaven where Christ is, whether He be throned upon earth, or reigning amid the splendours of the sky—if I am with Him, I must enjoy unsullied and perpetual happiness.

Great and solemn crisis, I cannot but again exclaim! My dear friends, if you like, reject all

my views of Apocalyptic chronology, reject all my historical explanations, if you like; but do not reject this, that Christ, who died upon the cross, will come, and when ye think not, and reign, wearing His many crowns, and upon His glorious throne. Look for Him, and the same Christ will come again, the husband to the widow, the bridegroom to the bride: He has promised that He will come to us, and 'we shall be for ever with the Lord'.

And when I think of the time when He does come, I can scarcely realise that glorious Sabbath which will spread the earth! that noble song which will be heard when the saints shall sing together, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of Hosts! What a flood of beauty, magnificence, and glory, will roll over this now shattered orb, like the countless waves of an illuminated ocean; illuminated by Christ, the great central sun, around whom all systems revolve, and from whom all beauty comes."

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soldier of Jesus Christ.

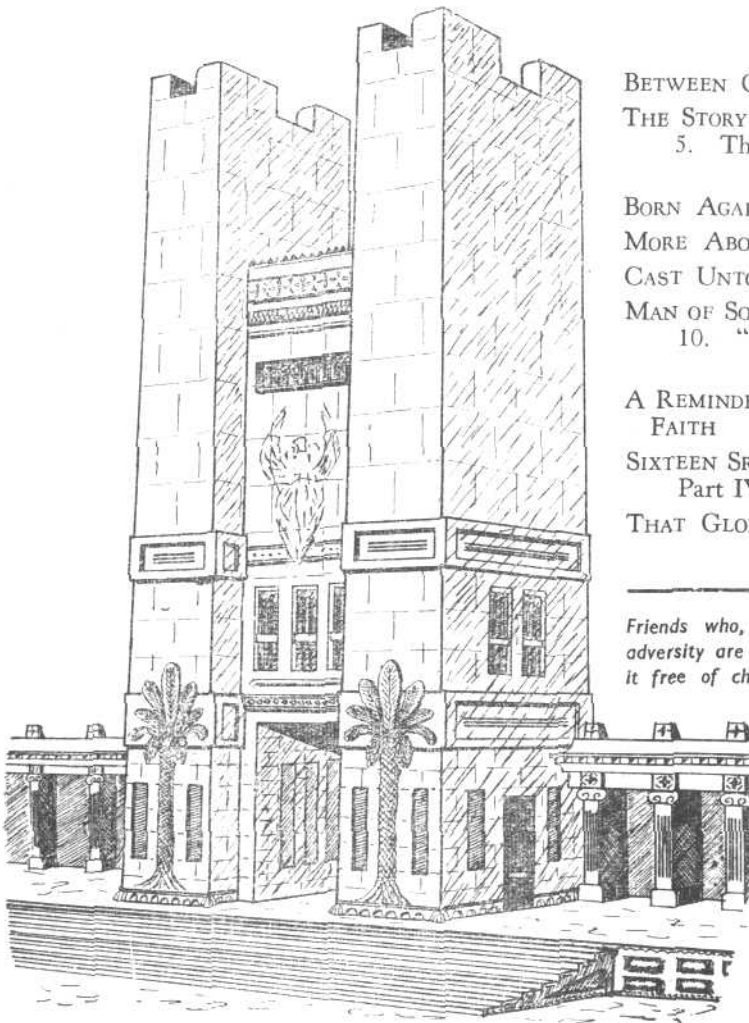
Vol. 31, No. 6

JUNE, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	82
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD	
5. The Fountains of the Great Deep	83
BORN AGAIN	85
MORE ABOUT JUDAS	87
CAST UNTO THE POTTER	88
MAN OF SORROWS	
10. "Was crucified, dead and buried"	90
A REMINDER TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH	91
SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS	
Part IV	93
THAT GLORIOUS HOPE	95

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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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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Convention has again been arranged at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, W.C.1, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, July 31, August 1 and 2, 1954. Accommodation arrangements are in the care of Bro. V. Scott, St. Brannocks, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex. In this connection special attention is drawn to the following notice. In view of the high cost of hotel accommodation in London the brethren have arranged, as far as funds permit, to assist visiting brethren in this respect. Reservations will be made for all brethren to be treated as guests of the London classes. Any desiring to contribute to meet the expenses entailed may do so by making a freewill offering to the Hospitality Fund. Please address all enquiries to Brother Scott.

* * *

In America the Unity Convention Committee is happy to announce the date of the 1954 Convention, August 1 to 7. The place, De Pauw University at Greencastle, Indiana. These beautiful grounds and the new modern auditorium are available for use of the brethren. Because of the much lower rates a larger attendance is expected this year. For further information write to Berean Bible Students, P.O. Box 125, Cicero 50, Ill., U.S.A.

* * *

The Council of Activity for the North-West announces a full programme of public meetings for 1954, commencing in March and including meetings at Lymm in May, Burnley in August and Pendleton in October, the 2nd and 3rd October being devoted to the usual autumn "Assembly of Witness." Brethren desiring to have fuller details of any of these events may have same on application to Bro.

F. Musk, 14 South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

The well-known "Two-minute Tracts" listed on back page of this issue are still available free on request, in packets of 100 assorted, and it will be a pleasure to send quantities to anyone who has use for them. Please state how many you can use and they will be sent by return.

* * *

The leaflet (No. 151) "World Conversion—When?" which was recently published and almost immediately went out of print, has been reprinted and is now available in stock at 1/9 for 25 and 12/6 per 100 (25c. and \$1.75 respectively in Canada and U.S.A.). This has proved a very much sought after leaflet and we are glad therefore to be able to continue the supply.

* * *

Hymn sheets suitable for public meetings are available, comprising folded four-page sheet with sixteen hymns specially chosen from the Hymnal, and space for name and address, price 8/6 or one dollar per 100 post free.

Gone From Us

Sis. A. Wilson (Belfast).

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

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 5—The Fountains of the Great Deep.

A great many theories, some well-founded and others not so well founded, have been advanced to explain what was the physical cause of the Deluge. They range from comparatively minor terrestrial floods in the flat plain of Mesopotamia to major catastrophes of astronomical dimensions originating from sources outside the earth itself. It would require a long and comprehensive treatise to explore the details of all these theories and the results would not be particularly profitable. The Bible tells us the important fact, that the world of Noah's day was destroyed by a deluge of water extensive enough for the purpose, and it really does not matter to us in our acceptance of the story to know where the water actually came from. Nevertheless it is worth giving bare mention to the leading theories if only to show that the Flood story is by no means so incredible as some critics would have us believe; there are so many ways in which it could have happened.

The simplest explanation is that an unusually heavy spring inundation flooded the Mesopotamian plain and drowned all its inhabitants. Every spring-time the rivers Tigris and Euphrates carry down vast quantities of floodwater from melting snow on the Armenian mountains, and since Mesopotamia is virtually flat for some five hundred miles the water floods over the land and remains so for some weeks before slowly draining away into the Persian Gulf. This theory suggests that a particularly heavy winter snowfall, followed by an unusually warm springtime, brought unprecedented quantities of water down at once, making a flood deep enough to cover all the cities and destroy all the works of man in the plain.

Floods of much lesser magnitude in America, India and elsewhere have caused widespread destruction and loss of life, so that this theory is at least a possible one although it does not tally with the Bible description of water coming from the "windows of heaven" and from the "great deep"—the sea.

A variant of this theory supposes that the waters of Lake Van in Armenia, near which the rivers Tigris and Euphrates have their sources, had been held up by a vast dam of ice which had formed in consequence of glacier action, and that the eventual breakdown of this dam released the pent-

up waters of the lake down both river valleys, causing an even greater flood than could have been the case with the former suggestion. There are raised "beach" lines along the shores of Lake Van which indicate to geologists that its waters once stood a hundred or so feet above the present level. It is calculated that the amount of water that would thus suddenly have swept down from the lake, which has an area of fifteen hundred square miles, could have flooded the entire plain to a depth of thirty or forty feet; it would of course be the impetuous onward rush of the waters that would do the damage rather than their depth. Many people now living will recall the Indian disaster of August 1929, when such an ice dam across the River Shyok, a tributary of the Indus, gave way and flooded the vast plain of north-west India, drowning thousands of the inhabitants. This suggestion though, like the last, does not really meet the terms of the Bible account.

The next class of theories attempts to conform to the Bible account by crediting the Deluge to a vast invasion of the sea. Here the physical and geological evidences are much more favourable. The whole of the extensive Mesopotamian plain, from the Armenian foothills to the Persian Gulf, some five hundred miles north-west to south-east, and from the Syrian desert to the Persian mountains, about two hundred miles in width, is to all intents and purposes a level stretch of light, stoneless, silty soil, just as if it had once been the bottom of a quiet inland sea. Towards the north, where the ruins of Nineveh now stand, there rise a succession of low rounded hillocks of soil all bearing evidence of having been deposited and moulded to shape by the action of water. The general theory is that this great flat plain has been formed by the action of the two rivers through countless ages, carrying fine earthy matter from the mountains and depositing it as mud; it is equally likely that the fine silt was laid down by a gigantic inrush of the sea.

The most obvious source of such an inundation would be from the Persian Gulf in the south. According to Sumerian legend, it was around the head of the Gulf that the antediluvian cities were built. It is likely that there the men who lived before the Flood had built their world and there that they were "eating and drinking, planting and

building, marrying and giving in marriage" until the Flood came, and took them all away. A giant tidal wave, of well-nigh unimaginable proportions, sweeping up the Gulf and submerging all those cities, going on then to devastate the entire plain right up to the Armenian mountains, would naturally carry the Ark with it and strand the Ark eventually in the very district where the Book of Genesis says it did come to rest—in the "mountains of Ararat". Moreover, interestingly enough, the course of the Ark from the place of its building to the place of its resting in Sumerian legend would also be consistent with the hypothesis of a flood from the south sweeping northwards.

Prof. G. F. Wright, in his "*Scientific confirmations of Old Testament history*" has advanced reasons, based on his geological researches in Western Asia, for thinking that at some time in the remote past a great part of Western Asia, including Mesopotamia, must have suffered a rapid sinkage of many thousands of feet, followed by an equally rapid re-elevation to its former level. He connects this with the time of the Flood and points out that such a sinkage would bring the sea over the land and cover even the mountains, as Genesis says they were covered. If such a thing did in fact happen in the days of Noah it could meet all the requirements of the case; there is of course no means of establishing that this great earth movement, even if it has thus occurred, did take place in the days of Noah. We can however be reasonably confident that the land has at some past time been submerged by a great invasion from the sea and we are reasonably justified in connecting this with the story as we have it in Genesis.

All kinds of things can cause tidal waves. The most common is an earthquake or volcanic eruption under the sea. The Japanese earthquake of 1896 started a tidal wave which travelled across the Pacific Ocean at a speed of 450 miles an hour and reached San Francisco ten and a half hours later. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 so disturbed the sea at Rotterdam, eleven hundred miles distant, that large ships moored there broke their cables. When the volcano Krakatoa, in the seabed between Java and Sumatra, blew up in 1883, throwing a cubic mile of rock twenty-five miles into the air and causing what is believed to have been the biggest bang ever heard on earth (exceeding even the H-bomb), a tidal wave three hundred feet high travelled in all directions at an initial speed of 400 miles an hour, eventually reaching South Africa, five thousand miles away. The effects were even felt in the English Channel, eleven thousand miles distant. These examples are sufficient to show that a tidal wave adequate to deluge a flat land like

Mesopotamia is by no means an incredible proposition.

William Whiston, in 1696, in his "*New Theory of the Earth*" propounded the view that the Flood was due to such a tidal wave, caused by the passage of a comet near to the earth. Whiston's scientific attainments qualified him to make the necessary calculations which resulted in his announcement that on Monday the 2nd of December in the year 2926 B.C., Halley's Comet passed close to the earth in the neighbourhood of China, where it appears Noah was living at the time, and not only caused huge tidal waves to sweep over the entire planet, destroying everything upon its surface, but also discharged a generous supply of vapours which descended to the earth, condensed into water, and covered it all over to a depth of six miles. Fissures in the earth opened and most of the water drained away to the inside, where, presumably, it still remains.

Whiston was a scientist and mathematician of repute in his own day, a co-worker with Sir Isaac Newton, besides being, like the latter, a convinced Christian. Much of his scientific work, however, has been superseded by later knowledge, and his "comet" theory need not be taken too seriously. The basic idea, that the Flood was caused by tidal waves set up by the near approach to the earth of some heavenly body, is however still sometimes elaborated. In our own century Bellamy (in "*Moons, Myths and Man*") is the chief protagonist of the "moon capture theory". According to this, the moon was originally a planet which got too near the earth and was drawn into the latter's gravitational system. The consequent disturbance caused mighty ocean tidal waves to rush from both poles to the Equator and drown out the extensive civilisations which Bellamy envisaged as then existing, according to his calculations, some eleven thousand years before Christ.

A somewhat different primary cause of the Flood is pictured in what is known as the "tilting earth" theory. It is well known that the earth turns on its own axis once every day on its journey round the sun. That makes the alternation between day and night. There is also another motion which can be crudely described as a "wobble", something like the behaviour of a boy's spinning top when it is almost at the end of its spin and about to fall over, which brings any given spot on the earth—say England—alternately more under the direct rays of the sun and away again, so giving us the succession of the seasons, summer and winter. The "tilting axis" theory supposes that before the Flood this "wobble" did not exist. The earth, it is claimed, turned steadily with the sun always shining directly

on the Equator and there were no seasons, the climate at any one point being constant. It further supposes that at the time of the Flood the earth's axis was suddenly tilted to its present position. Now the effect of such a happening would be to alter the speed of movement of any part of the earth's surface by something like 300 miles an hour, and that in turn would cause the oceans to move in a spiral direction around the earth at that speed as gigantic tidal waves, inevitably drowning out all the continents.

All this has been worked out in great detail and would constitute a satisfactory explanation of the cause of the Flood. But no geologist of standing has yet discovered any concrete evidence that such a shifting of the earth's axis has ever occurred. Such movement as there has been appears to be taking place over immense periods of time in such a fashion as not to disturb the oceans at all. This

therefore must remain a theory.

One more possible cause, involving the biggest tidal waves of all and incidentally explaining quite a number of other puzzling phenomena noted by geologists, is that known as the "Canopy theory", which, primarily advanced to explain the evolution of the earth from its original gaseous state, was first mooted by the German scientist Liebnitz about 1690, endorsed by the French naturalist Lamarck about 1788, and developed more fully by the American Professor Isaac N. Vail in 1874. This is the theory known to many of our readers from the volume "*The New Creation*", where it is alluded to as a possible explanation of conditions existing at the time of the Flood.

But mention of the details of this hypothesis must form the subject of next month's instalment.

(To be continued)

BORN AGAIN

*A consideration of
important doctrine*

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (John 3. 3.)

At first sight these seem strange words, and that is what the Jewish leader, Nicodemus, thought, to whom they were first addressed. But he has not been the only one to be puzzled by Jesus' curious expression, and many who have claimed to be Christians have not fully realised what is meant by being "born again". Yet leaders in the Early Church, like Peter and Paul, based much of their teaching upon this conversation which Christ had with the "master in Israel".

Other religions point men to a Creator and in this the Hebrew faith of Abraham was foremost. Its basic teachings were crystallised in the Law given through Moses. Further enlightenment came by Israel's prophets. The moral and spiritual commandments which God's ancient people were given did much to sanctify their lives and direct their religious worship toward God. So it has been with many people during the last two thousand years. To them Jesus has been a great moral and social reformer, and in as much as His precepts have been observed they have produced better men and women. He did much more than interpret Israel's religion into the life and needs of his own day. He set forth in clear and direct language a way of salvation from sin which was new and distinct from any other of which men had ever heard. Yet it

was not so different from Old Testament teaching that those who were familiar with it should have found it hard to understand Jesus. Unfortunately, their spiritual life had become stagnant and useless. The religious teachers of Jesus' day were more concerned with ritual and observance of their meaningless regulations to care about the important aspects of their faith. Hence the question from the lips of the leader of the people "How can these things be?"

Before anyone can undergo this experience of being "reborn", it is necessary to recognise that men are sinners. The very best efforts that anyone can make to live a good life must end in death because by our very nature we constantly transgress the law of God. Human life without God and obedience to His commandment given in His Word is purposeless. Of themselves, men are incapable of obtaining a release from evil. They have sought remedies by social and moral education, they have endeavoured to explain away sin by theory, they have suggested by scientific ideas that mankind is getting better and better and therefore less sinful. But these suggestions lead men further from God, and result in death, because the only solution to human problems is to be found in the way God has appointed.

And that way is found in the teachings of the New Testament, which begin with the words of

Jesus. This rebirth, as Jesus went on to show Nicodemus, is not birth in the natural or physical sense. It is a new life, spiritual life, which begins in the human heart. The seed is the Word of God, and as it germinates and develops it follows the same pattern as the life of Jesus. The new life, however, cannot grow alongside sin. They who wish to follow Jesus as His disciple must renounce sin, repent and realise that the only way to be saved from sin is through Jesus and his death on the cross. Only then can our old way of life come to an end and we are, in a sense, resurrected into a new life in Christ.

The flagrant sinner is not the only one who is in need of "rebirth". There are many good living folk, who may or may not claim to be Christians, who do not make a full and whole hearted confession of sin and a need to follow Christ in every aspect of life. They may be self sufficient, self righteous people. They may have a vague idea that when they die, if they've been good enough they'll go to heaven along with all other good people instead of going to that other place about which they don't like to think too much. Conditions for "being born again" are not likely to be popular since they conflict with natural pride. Old habits of thought, speech and manner of life will have to be more than reformed, for a fresh start is needed. Life in the home, in our place of work, and most important of all, in our place of worship, will assume an entirely new outlook. The driving force of life is no longer our own faulty ability, but as Paul wrote in Galatians 2, 20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me". Paul meant by "crucified with Christ" that his old life as Saul of Tarsus had ended for ever. He died as an ordinary man when he saw Christ on the Damascus road, and although there was no physical change, intellectual and spiritual transformation began at once. So with all who accept Jesus as their Saviour and become new men and women in Christ; they become dynamic personalities, full of the vitality of love which was so apparent in Jesus.

The outward appearance to other people may not seem such a dramatic change as occurred in Paul the apostle. He had wilfully committed the most violent and terrible sins against the Christian church. Then, completely reversing his former life, he became the greatest champion of Christ. Yet the "turning about" which Paul experienced was due to the radical change in his allegiance from Satan to Christ and this must be so for every believer. Ultimately the spiritual and intellectual revolution

within the heart will bear a rich fruitage in the life.

Our former life of selfishness and pride is like the deadness of Winter. The new life with which Christ inspires his followers is pictured in the Springtime, when everything is fresh and gives promise of blossom and fruit. Thus Jesus often referred to the Kingdom of Heaven in terms of the natural world. He spoke of growing crops and harvest time, the importance of sunshine and rain, and most of all of the complete dependence of all living things upon His loving Father in Heaven. The spiritual energy which is experienced by those who are "born again" is well illustrated by the remarkable power exhibited by plant life in its growth.

Being born again is not some difficult academic problem. It is only hard because human nature is stubborn and selfish, preferring outward pride and respectability rather than being broken and humbled, least of all at the foot of the cross of Christ. To the human heart the cross is nothing more than an obstacle to progress or something too debased to trifle with, yet to those who accept Jesus as their Saviour it is that which brings new light and joy into the life. It brings light because it releases men from their burdens of sin, and joy follows as new purpose and hope is discovered. What is sin? That is a wide and important question and not answerable in a few lines. It is anything which is not in harmony with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is anything that will not submit to the will of God and which hinders the new life in Christ from proper development. The uncertainties and doubts of the human mind must be swept away by the realities of Christ's love for mankind. Not just a general love, but a great, far reaching and sympathetic love for every individual sinner. May this new life begin in the lives of all who seek Jesus, and continue until the day dawn when it shall have found its fulness in resurrection glory and reach its ripened fruitage.

Just as a church is the shell which houses a congregation of worshippers and has no lasting value in itself, so also must the whole fabric of our earthly fellowship and service ever remain but an avenue by means of which we can feed and build up each other with the realities of Divine Truth.

* * *

The Way of the Cross is a little interlude in the purposes of God—between the spontaneous song of the Sons of God when Earth's foundations were laid, and the thrilling Hallelujah Chorus when the earthly Orchestra will join with the Heaven to sing His Praise.

MORE ABOUT JUDAS

Readers'
comments

Unusual interest was aroused by the article "The Tragedy of Judas" which appeared in our February issue. From the comments and letters received we have selected two for reproduction herewith as representing what appears to be the expressed opinion upon this subject. It does seem to be well understood in our day that the doctrine of the "Ransom for All" guarantees a full and fair opportunity to Judas as to all men, no matter how degraded, before the love of the Heavenly Father retires in face of the inflexible determination of the sinner to persist in his sinful way and so reap the inevitable result of that way, which is death.

* * *

Letter No. 1

That article on the "Tragedy of Judas" was very good; in fact it may be the author of that fine piece of literature is about right in his deduction of what really happened, for it is hard to believe our Lord would pick Judas unless at the time He knew Judas to be all right at heart; also the fact of Judas being the only disciple who never denied his Lord, and was the only one of them all who really believed the Lord to be the Messiah, lends weight to that thought. But the climax of the article to me was that in all probability at the judgment our wonderful Lord will plead "Father, forgive him, for he did not know what he did". What love! What forgiveness of heart! It brings the tears to my eyes, and words fail me to express what is in my heart to the writer of that article.

(C.H.)

* * *

Letter No. 2

I was greatly interested in the article "The Tragedy of Judas" in the current B.S. Monthly, and I feel constrained to write to you on this subject.

The words of this article have certainly found an echo in my own heart, for I, too, have felt that if ever true penitence was manifested by any man it surely was by Judas, a penitence that showed great and intense sorrow for the sin itself and not merely in consideration of the consequences to himself, when he said "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (cf Gen. 42. 21-22) and then went and hanged himself.

But the chief point I wanted to make was in the translation of Matt. 26. 24, for there are other

renderings of this verse which, whilst differing from the A.V. and the Diaglott, do seem to be more in keeping with the context. The following are some of these:

"Good were it for Him if that man had not been born" (*Englishman's Greek N.T., Revised Version (margin), Rotherham, Young.*)

"Ideal were it for Him if that man were not born" (*Concordant*).

The following is another writer's comment on this verse:

"Beyond all question, the original requires a wholly different rendering, 'Good were it for Him, i.e., Christ, if that man, i.e., Judas, had not been born. In the opening of the sentence CHRIST is designated by the pronoun *autos*, and JUDAS by the pronoun *ekeinós*. What our version does is, in violation of grammar, to turn round, and in the last clause of the same sentence, to invert this order, applying *autos* to JUDAS and *ekeinós* to CHRIST. Those who triumphantly quote this text against the larger hope are reminded that they do so at the expense of Greek syntax.'" (*Thomas Allen.*)

Regarding the inspired words of the Apostle Peter in Acts 1. 20, Andrew Jukes has something to say on this which I should like to bring to your notice.

"It is surely significant", he writes, "that one and the same awful prophecy is by the inspired writers of the New Testament applied to Judas and Israel. (Compare Psa. 69. 23-25 with Rom. 11. 16 and Acts 1. 19-20. The same passage is applied by St. Paul to Israel and by St. Peter to Judas.) If therefore the one is not a type or figure of the other, the two are in some way connected most intimately. And yet Israel, of whom it is said "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway" (words which in the Psalm immediately precede the passage which is quoted by St. Peter in reference to the traitor Judas) though hated for a while and as concerning the Gospel enemies for our sakes, are beloved for the fathers' sakes (Rom. 4. 28) and shall be restored one day and "brought up out of their graves" (Ezek. 37. 12) "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance". And so the betrayer here of whom the same passage is quoted "Let his habitation be desolate . . ." and whose fall, like Israel's has been the "riches of the world" may yet more show the Lord's riches. It is no unreasonable inference

that, as the same prophecy applies to both, their ends shall not be wholly dissimilar."

Then again the word "lost" in John 17. 12 and elsewhere where the same Greek word "apollumi" is used, and sometimes translated "perish", cannot, I think, refer to the final lot of any, as you will agree, I think, for the same word is used in Luke 15. 4 of the one sheep out of one hundred which was "lost" but later found by the Lord, or the "lost" Prodigal son. For the Son of Man came, and we believe will come again, to seek and to save that which was lost, and to "call not the righteous but sinners to repentance". So as you say, "it may be, we cannot tell" in that day Judas himself will come even as the tribes of Israel will come, with great contrition, and bow trembling before the One whom they sold (Gen. 45. 4; Phil. 2. 10) only to hear the gracious words out of his mouth "Be not grieved and angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me

before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45. 4-8).

I will close by saying how pleased I was to read other thoughts on the "problem of Judas" as they do provide a further link towards a better understanding of this subject and its place in the ultimate reconciliation of the whole human race under one head, the Second Adam, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It has often been said that "men make God's love too narrow, by false limits of their own, and magnify His vengeance, with a zeal He will not own" but I feel that if we allow the, at least, very great possibility of the eventual reconciliation of Judas (and perhaps many others of a similar kind) backed up by passages in the Word of God, we by no means detract from the righteousness and the greatness and the wonder of the love of God, but only magnify it to a far greater degree. Otherwise one might well ask "How else can God be All in All?" (J.S.)

Cast unto the Potter

An examination of a difficult text

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in." (Matt. 27. 3-7.)

This part of the story of our Lord's betrayal involves a reference to Old Testament prophecy and an apparent contradiction. The word for "temple" in this passage is "naos", the inner sanctuary, and the sense of the expression is that Judas hurled the money towards the Holy of Holies and rushed out of the Court. In this incident a lack of reverence and appreciation of the things of God is manifest in his character. The priests, true to their tradition, carefully gathered up the money, but with their scrupulous fidelity to the letter of the Law forbore to put it in the Temple treasury, "for", said they, "it is the price of blood", and so, taking counsel together, they decided to use it for the purchase of a piece of ground to be used as a cemetery for uncircumcised foreigners who for one reason or another came to

be buried at the public expense. It is not to be expected that this purchase took place that same day; the attention of priests and people was absorbed in the seven days' feast then beginning. It may have been weeks afterward that this transaction was completed, being recorded here by Matthew to furnish the sequel to the story.

Peter, in Acts 1. 18, gives a different version, saying that it was Judas himself who "purchased a field with the reward of iniquity". The word here rendered "purchased" means "to acquire". Probably what Peter meant to convey was that, since the money was rightfully the property of Judas, he could be said to have acquired the field which was purchased by its means; but it profited him nothing, for by that time he was dead. Matthew's account reads as though Judas hanged himself immediately after leaving the priests, and this is consistent with his crazed state of mind as revealed by the story. The place of his death is nowhere indicated except by the reference in Acts 1. 18, and it may be reasonably assumed that the place he selected was that same potter's field which was afterwards purchased by the priests as an unhallowed, unsanctified place, and therefore suitable for their purpose.

It is in connection with this incident that Matthew says (Matt. 27. 9): "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying: 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of

him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me". None of the recorded sayings of Jeremiah contain any such prophecy. The book of Zechariah, chap. 11, does record a passage very similar to the words of Matthew, and yet with essential differences, and it is generally conceded that this is the passage to which Matthew refers. It is thought that a very early transcriber, perhaps the one who first copied Matthew's original gospel, made the mistake in names when copying the manuscript.

It is clear that Matthew is quoting from memory. The passage in Zechariah reads (Zech. 11. 12-13): "And I said unto them, 'If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear'. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, 'Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prised at of them'. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord".

This needs thinking about. Judas cast his money on the floor of the Temple, and this money was afterwards used to purchase the "potter's field" somewhere outside Jerusalem. Zechariah's prophecy pictures the shepherd of Israel receiving his wages, thirty pieces of silver, and, considering this amount an insult, flinging it "to the potter in the House of the Lord". The discrepancy is sufficient to warrant further examination.

These two verses are part of a long passage in Zech. 11 describing the ingratitude of the people to whom God was a shepherd. The time came at last when the shepherd refused to lead them any longer; "that that dieth, let it die". And Zechariah took his staff named "Beauty", and cut it asunder in token of the breaking of the covenant with Israel. Now at this point he asks for his wages. "If ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear"; and the people gave him for his price—thirty pieces of silver! This was a studied insult. For the enduring watch care of the Shepherd of Israel they offered the price of a slave! Therefore, the Lord intervenes from heaven, taking this insult as unto Himself, "Cast it unto the potter—this magnificent price at which I was assessed by them". This is the literal meaning of the phrase; the Lord speaking ironically of the sum given by Israel to their shepherd. "And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord".

The expression "cast it to the potter" is a difficult one. The house of the Lord did not accommodate potters; and there is no apparent reason for casting the money to such a personage even if he existed. In an effort to explain the passage it has

been suggested that the reference is to the Temple treasure chest, which may well have been of earthenware or pottery; and alternatively that the reference may have been to a rubbish heap in the vicinity of the Temple which would be well strewn with broken pottery. Neither suggestion is convincing. The most reasonable explanation is that advanced by an old commentator, who says that this expression "cast it to the potter" was a customary expression of contempt for that which was worthless, much as we would say in our day that a man has "gone to the dogs", meaning that he has become a worthless fellow. In such case the expression becomes full of meaning. Israel had shown their contempt for the ministrations of their shepherd by offering him the traditional price of a slave; the Lord, in turn, orders Zechariah to show his contempt for this "magnificent price" by "casting it to the potter", and Zechariah heightens the force of the symbol by saying that he cast the money "to the potter" on the floor of the very house of God which Israel had so lightly esteemed.

Here is the point of contact between prophecy and history; for Judas also cast thirty pieces of silver on the floor of the house of the Lord. From this basis we may be able to trace the process of reasoning in Matthew's mind which led him to connect the vision of Zechariah with the events he was now recording.

Israel at the First Advent, like their forebears in Zechariah's day, had rejected the Good Shepherd, and contemptuously valued him, at the hands of their priests and of Judas, at thirty pieces of silver. That not only meant that they regarded Him as of no more consequence than a slave; it also meant that they were prepared to take the responsibility of the death of Christ, for that thirty pieces of silver represented the compensation demanded by the law for the killing of a slave. All of this was duly noted in the Courts of Heaven. Then, by the agency of Judas' remorse, that "magnificent price" was cast back at that people, flung on the Temple floor, a lasting witness against them that they had rejected the Prince of Life.

It was this similarity which led Matthew to claim the fulfilment of the prophecy in the events of that night. What was done with the money afterwards in the matter of the purchase of the "potter's field" had nothing to do with the words of Zechariah. So far as God was concerned the matter was at an end when Judas flung the money back at the guilty priests. Within a few more hours the veil of the Temple had been rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the nation which had rejected the only way of salvation found its city and its Temple left unto it desolate.

MAN OF SORROWS *A Study in Isaiah 53*

Part 10.—"WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED."

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (vs. 9.)

This word was literally fulfilled when Jesus was crucified in the company of two thieves and afterwards buried in the tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea. That is a surface interpretation which can be accepted as a very true one since so many of the Old Testament prophecies are declared by the Apostles to have been literally fulfilled in the experiences through which our Lord passed. But we should not be content with this merely surface explanation. The sublime words of Isa. 53 must surely unfold a deeper and more profound theme than the mere burial of the Lord's body in a particular tomb. The expression is really a continuation of the theme which pervades all the chapter from the first verse. It tells of the apparently inexplicable and yet undeniable fact that He, the Lord of all righteousness, spotless in His unblemished purity, became so identified with sin and sinners as in the end to suffer and die and be buried just like the grossest of sinners. No penalty that men could visit upon evil and evildoers was wanting in His case—Who knew no sin. The Old Testament abounds with assurances of Divine favour and watchcare exercised toward the righteous, but none of that was extended towards Him. He suffered as though He were the vilest of sinners and He died as though He were one not fit to live. So far as man was concerned He was as one not fit to live and He was cut off from the land of the living. One assigned, or appointed, him a grave with the wicked; that is the literal meaning of the first phrase of the verse. He was appointed to that destiny. In the sight of men He was as the evil king of Isa. 14 who is "cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch . . . thrust through with a sword, that go down to the sides of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet". That was the viewpoint from which the world looked upon Jesus and the people of his day were as little concerned about him after his death as they were over the bodies of criminals thrown into the fires of Gehenna, the burning valley.

The Father took a different view. "The wages of sin is death" says the Divine law and although in the sight of men this one had gone into death like the wicked and with the wicked, he did not

remain in death. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it" says the Apostle. His association with criminals was only apparent and not real, and the Father gave testimony to the righteousness of the Son by raising him from the dead. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but that grave did not hold him, because He himself is righteous. The people had treated him with the same contempt as did their ancestors with Urijah the prophet in the days of Jeremiah, they having "cast his dead body into the graves of the common people" (Jer. 26. 23) and thought by that to make an end of Jesus and his inconvenient teachings. So man proposed, and God disposed, and on the third day the stone was rolled back and the Lord of Glory came forth.

The expression "with the rich in his death" looks beyond the literal fact of Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and the costly spices and fine linen in which the Lord's body was enshrouded. That may very well have been the immediate fulfilment but there is something more fundamental. The Scriptures refer several times to the fact that even the rich man—in the riches of this world—must eventually leave everything behind and go down into the land of forgetfulness. "If his children be multiplied" says Job "it is for the sword; and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. . . . Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the day; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. The rich man shall lie down . . . he openeth his eyes, and he is not. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, for God shall cast upon him, and not spare." (Job 27. 14-22.) Despite his riches, he lies down in death and is forgotten. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." (Psa. 49. 6-9.) To the world it seemed that the death of Jesus was like that. True, he had not accumulated earthly riches, but it seemed equally true that all he had striven for during his lifetime had been wasted. He died without having achieved his purpose. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" said the two disciples sadly on the road to Emmaus. They had expected, but now all hope was gone and his life was as if it had never been spent. In that

sense He made his grave with the rich in his death—the fruits of his life's endeavour dissipated to the four winds and He himself, lying, like all men of all preceding generations, lifeless in the grave.

"*Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*" The word "because" in this verse is better translated "although". Notwithstanding the viewpoint from which men had looked upon this thing, it is true that in the final outworking of the Divine Plan only sinners—wilful and incorrigible sinners—meet this fate. Jesus was

righteous, and in fact should not have made his grave with the wicked and rich in this fashion. It was all a part of his taking the sinner's place and becoming identified with the burden of the world's sin. But it was an unjust fate; no law of God demanded this ignominious and humiliating end to his earthly life. He took it upon himself willingly, partaking of the same that, being made perfect through sufferings, he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(*To be continued*)

A Reminder to the Household of Faith

A word of exhortation

The Lord's people should not parade *their* difficulties or bemoan their lot, but like Paul should *learn how to be abased, as well as how to abound.* (Phil. 4. 11-12.) They have the Throne of Grace to which access has been given them by Jesus Christ, and He is ever ready for us to unload *all* our cares upon Him—and from thence cometh our help. We receive instructions from His Word, which is, under the guidance of His Holy Spirit, teaching us why conditions in the world are as they are, and what it indicates the final outcome is to be. We know from various indisputable signs that the end of all (evil) things is at hand, and that the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, by the sacrifice of Himself on Calvary's Cross, will soon come to restore peace, prosperity, and unalloyed happiness to all the willing and obedient of earth, by removing the effects of sin, and its concomitant—death.

We should therefore, whatever our earthly state, condition, or position, rejoice in the Lord *always*, and tell out the glad tidings, until the Saviour comes, praying without ceasing.

On Patience (Phil. 2. 14)

Let patience complete her work; do all things without murmuring; ye have need of more patience.

The trial of your faith worketh patience. (James 1. 3-4.)

There are times when even the most spiritually minded, and consequently the most perfectly "developed" among us, tend to feel sorry for ourselves, to repine at adverse circumstances, or difficult conditions, when personal relations with family, friends, or brethren, may not be all that we could desire, when the course of true (i.e. holy) love does not run smoothly, differences arise, often in the service of the Truth, which seem irreconcilable, and brotherly love is considerably taxed.

But we should expect these trials. Paul had to endure the same testings; Peter too, Jesus told him "*Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat*". Hence the "wheat class" experience these sifting processes. But beloved, Jesus added, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not". Can the wheat class doubt that He still cares about our faith, that He still prays the Father's oversight and watch-care on our behalf? I had many times "perished" did I not trust in the Lord with all my heart, and leaned not to my own understanding of *why* these things should be, but I know from our father's word, that an enemy hath done this to us. The love of God constraineth us—draws us together with cords of mutual love for Him and one another. Satan will seek to break that bond, and the more so as His "time" is shortening, but God is able to cause all things to work together for good; all permitted things are for your sakes.

On Cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9. 7)

The Lord loveth a cheerful giver; give of such things as ye have (Matt. 5. 42; Acts 3. 6; 1 Pet. 3. 15; Prov. 22. 20-21; Matt. 13. 14), not *merely* money—ye have faith, hope and charity, i.e. Christian love, therefore, freely ye have received of these good gifts, freely give, for with what measure ye mete to others, the same—whether liberal or niggardly, shall be re-measured to you again. So give good measure, pressed down and running over, even as our cup of joy runneth over. What the poor world needs is faith, a sound faith on which to base hope, we can give them a sound Scriptural reason for the basis of our own faith. We esteem it a privilege, we who love the Lord, to speak often one to another, but do we ever extend our sphere of influence by telling out the good things which the Lord has done for us already, and the many

good and precious promises He has left with us, to be fulfilled at His coming again? True it would not be wise to cast these pearls before swine, those who know not God, and show no desire to serve Him (Prov. 22. 9), but there are many who love the Lord in sincerity, and in a *limited* measure of truth, in the various sectarian systems, who have imbibed much error, as we once did. Have we done *all* that we could to help them to a better knowledge and understanding of our Father's Word, in the understanding of the outworking of His plan of redemption. If so, then the Lord will certainly reward so cheerful a giver, and abundantly bless. *On Purity* (Eph. 5. 11)

Purify yourselves, even as He is pure. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, by your life, as living epistles, written of God, that men may note that ye have been with Jesus, and learned of Him. (Matt. 9. 13 ; 2 Cor. 3. 2, 3.)

Let your light so shine *among* men that they may see the effect of your work for good, and thus be led to glorify your Heavenly Father who is the Father of all men, not only of those who *now* believe. *He*—our Heavenly Father, is the father of all mercies, *He* is the God of all grace, *He* giveth grace to the humble, therefore boast not *thyself*, but praise thee the Lord, and glorify *His* name. His glorious character, make *Him* known among men, that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven, and call upon His Name, thus we all reprove the works of darkness, and let our inward light shine forth in a dark world, dispensing something of the *comfort* of the Scriptures which we so richly enjoy. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that feeling of self-righteousness, thanking God in our hearts, if not openly, that we are not as others—outside the fellowship. *What hast thou* that thou has not freely received? Who makest thee to differ from others? (1 Cor. 4. 5-7.) Therefore let love be without dissimulation (Rom. 12. 9-10), so that as we approach the season of remembrance of Him, we might more clearly appreciate that we are *all joint participants* of that ONE LOAF, and *all sharers* in that ONE CUP of blessing. *All* that we have or hope for is by grace received, and to the pure in heart all things are pure.

On Faith

"Without Faith, it is impossible to be pleasing to God." (Heb. 11. 1-6. A.V.)

"Now Faith is the substance of *things hoped for*, the evidence of things not (yet) seen, for by *this* (kind of faith) the elders received a good report that they pleased God." (*Diaglott.*)

"But Faith is a *basis* of things hoped for, a *conviction* of things unseen" (of their reality). "For by *this* (faith) the ancients were attested."

(Weymouth.)

"Now Faith is a *well-grounded assurance* of that for which we hope, and (also) a conviction of the reality of things which we do not (yet) see." (2nd definition footnote.)

Faith is that principle, that exercise of mind and soul, which has for its object things *not seen*, but *hoped for*, and instead of sinking under them (by hopes deferred) as too ponderous (of attainment, whether from their difficulty (of accomplishment) or from their uncertainty (as to the *time* when the promises are to be fulfilled) yet stands *firm* and *sure* under them (in the belief of all promises made by God, who cannot lie, and by His Son Jesus Christ, in whose lips were found no guile, no deceit or falsehood). *This* Faith supports and sustains the pressure of trials and testings which Faith *must* suffer in order to be attested worthy. The one who has *this* faith is assured and confident of the validity of the PROMISES given, and of the faithfulness of Him who made such promises, to perform all that He hath declared, of His good pleasure, in His own due time. (Eccl. 3. 1.)

"Now FAITH means that we are *confident* of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see. It was for *this* (confident assurance) that men of old won their reward." (*Moffatt.*)

"Now FAITH is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (except by the eye of Faith). "For in the power of this (unquestioning Faith) the Elders have (already) obtained testimony that they pleased God" (that is, satisfied God's requirements of unquestioned *obedience*, the obedience of FAITH (Rom. 16. 24-27), for without *such* faith it is impossible either to please or to satisfy God. (*Darby.*)

"Now FAITH is the assurance of things hoped for, the *proving* of things (hereafter) not (now) seen." (R.V.)

"Now FAITH is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of (which) things appear not (yet). For by this (faith) the ancients obtained a testimony (that they pleased God). But *without* (such) faith it is impossible to please God, for He that cometh to God, *must* first believe that God is (that He *does* exist), and (also) must believe that God is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek Him.*" (*Donay.*)

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near"; the Lord is at hand. Draw nigh to God, and He *will* draw nigh to you. "If any man lack wisdom (concerning the life of faith) let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, but let him ask in FAITH, expecting a favourable reply, and he *shall* receive." (James 1. 5-6.)

SIXTEEN SCRIPTURE TRUTHS

The Three Worlds—Times of the Gentiles—Satan—Angels that sinned.

13. The Three Worlds

The Divine Plan extends over three periods of time, embracing the whole course of sin and death, from the creation of man to the final attainment of human perfection. Within these three periods the whole of human history and Bible prophecy find their places, and an understanding of them is essential to intelligent co-operation with God.

The first period is called by Peter "the world that was". It extended from Creation to the Flood, and that catastrophe marked the end of the first world. It witnessed God's fair earthly creation marred by the entrance of sin, and the continuing degeneration of the human race, until towards its close it seemed as if all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth. The second world is that called by the Apostle Paul "this present evil world" and extends from the Flood to the Second Advent of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Evil predominates in this world, and it is as surely doomed as was its predecessor. Human selfishness and violence will destroy this present order and leave the way clear for God to make a fresh start.

This second world is divided by Scripture into three spans of time. The first, from the Flood to the Exodus, was marked by God's dealings with a line of God-fearing men, the patriarchs, of whom Abraham is the most prominent. At the Exodus, Abraham's descendants through Isaac were organised into a nation, Israel, and from then to the Crucifixion there endured the second span, in which God dealt with that one nation, training them for their future work as world missionaries in the Kingdom. Then followed a third, from the First Advent to the Second Advent, in which God reaches out to all the nations to take out of them a spiritually minded people to be joined with Christ in the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God.

This "present evil world" comes to its end in a great time of trouble "such as was not since there was a nation" and in that trouble Jesus Christ returns, takes His power, and the third world commences.

The third world is called by Peter one "wherein dwelleth righteousness". It is the Golden Age of the poets, the time when evil will be restrained, men taught to live righteously, the dead restored, and death be no more. The outcome will be that all who are reclaimed for God will inherit everlasting life on the restored and perfect earth, whilst the

incorrigibly wicked will perish everlastingly. So will God's Plan be brought to a triumphant conclusion, and "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord".

See Eph. 3. 9-11; 2 Pet. 3. 6-7, 13; 2 Pet. 2:5; Gen. 6, 7 & 8; Gal. 1 4; 2 Tim. 4. 10; Titus 2. 12; Exod. 6. 3; Josh. 24. 3; Exod. 19. 5; Amos 3. 2; Isa. 49. 6; Acts 15. 14-18; 1 Pet. 2. 9; Dan. 12. 1; Matt. 24. 21, 22, 29, 30; Matt. 19. 28; Isa. 25. 6-9; Psa. 150. 6.

* * *

14. Times of the Gentiles

The "Times of the Gentiles" was the name given by Jesus to that period during which Israel was to be subject to the other nations of the world. From the time of Israel's organisation into a nation at the Exodus until its final captivities under Sennacherib of Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the 7th century B.C., it specially represented God in the world. Its national polity was a theocracy, i.e., God Himself was King and the ruling monarch was said to "sit upon the throne of the Lord". In this the nation pictured the rule of the future Millennial Age, when Christ reigns over the earth. This order of things came to an end with Zedekiah, the last Jewish king, and of him it was said "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it him". True to these words, the nation was scattered and has never regained control of its own land.

From that time to the present, a period of twenty-five hundred years, Gentile nations have held sway over Jerusalem. Babylon first, then Persia, Greece and finally Rome held the country in their grasp. These four powers were seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, in which the gold head, silver arms, copper lower parts and iron legs symbolised these four empires. Likewise the four wild beasts of Daniel's dream pictured these same four powers. In these symbolic prophecies this Gentile rule is seen to come to its end at the incoming of the Kingdom of God, in which the Son of Man, Christ, takes the power and the kingdom and reigns for ever and ever.

The time for that change has come. The great powers of earth have had their day and opportunity, and whilst some have endeavoured to rule justly and wisely, and have brought the blessings of ordered government to their subjects, none have been able to abolish the great curses of humanity,

sin, disease and death, nor can they. Only Christ's Kingdom can do that. Now the present world distress, the failure of statesmen to achieve world peace, the mutual jealousy of great Powers, the general perplexity of nations, are all signs that we live in the day when the "Times of the Gentiles" have come to their end, Jerusalem is to be set free, the age-long oppression of God's ancient people lifted, and the Kingdom of God, with all that it holds of life and blessing for every man, be ushered in.

See Luke 21. 24 ; Rev. 11. 1-2 ; Ezek. 21. 27 ; Rom. 11. 1-36 ; Dan. 2. 31-45 ; Dan. 7. 1-27 ; Isa. 60. 1-22.

* * *

15. Satan

There is a tendency in this modern age to regard belief in the personal Devil as an outworn idea. It is a mistake, and a dangerous mistake. The Apostle Paul said that there do exist evil spiritual intelligences, and if there indeed are such spiritual beings in a state of rebellion against God, there must obviously be one, a leading spirit amongst them, who is directing the assault against holiness and righteousness and at whose door must be laid the ultimate responsibility for the introduction of evil upon earth.

Bible teaching regarding Satan is clear. (The word itself is a Hebrew one meaning "adversary" or "opposing one".) He was originally a sinless, perfect spirit being, among the angels of God, before the earth was. At the time of man's creation it seems he was given some commission in connection with this new creation and was thus brought into contact with man. The Eden story shows that in those days of man's sinless state there was a facility of communication between the human and spiritual worlds which does not now exist in these days of human imperfection. Satan succeeded by means of his deception in enslaving the human race, and has been the acknowledged "God of this world" ever since.

The nature of Satan's sin and his ultimate fate is given in symbolic language in the 14th chapter of Isaiah and the 28th chapter of Ezekiel. Both these passages indicate that he aspired to equality with God. The New Testament is much more explicit concerning the nature and activities of Satan. His aim throughout the ages has been the destruction of the "seed of the woman", the promised means by which the evil that is in the world is to be overthrown and men restored to righteousness and harmony with God. It was thus that he encompassed the death of Jesus Christ. Since then he has been the implacable enemy of the Church, the consecrated followers of Christ in this Age.

Much of the world's trouble must be attributed to the direct influence and intervention of Satan, but despite his apparent liberty to afflict mankind, God is in full control of the situation and has permitted that liberty for a wise purpose. At the commencement of the Messianic Kingdom Satan will be restrained "that he should deceive the nations no more", thus allowing resurrected mankind to progress in the knowledge of God without fear or hindrance, and although it seems that Satan will be loosed for a "little season" at the end of that Age, it will only be for a final test of loyalty upon humanity, and then he himself, unrepentant, will perish forever.

See Eph. 6. 11-12 ; Ezek. 28. 13-15 ; Isa. 14. 12-20 ; Ezek. 28. 17-19 ; Matt. 4. 10 ; Zech. 3. 1-2 ; Rom. 16. 20 ; 1 Pet. 5. 8 ; Rev. 2. 10 ; 2 Cor. 4. 4 ; Rev. 20. 1-2, 7-10.

* * *

16. Angels that Sinned

The Book of Genesis tells of a time in world history, just before the Flood, when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose". These sons of God were angelic beings who left their first estate, assumed bodies of flesh, and in rebellion against God attempted by means of human wives to start a new race of beings upon earth. The attempt ended at the Flood and since then these "fallen angels" have been under a Divine restraint that forbids their repeating that course of action.

From the many Biblical allusions to these "evil spirits" it is evident that they have consistently sought to evade the Divine prohibition and to effect some kind of communication with men. For reasons which are still imperfectly understood, it would seem that such attempts must be made under cover of darkness. The history of witchcraft and necromancy in the past, and of modern Spiritualism to-day, is evidence of the activities of these evil spirits. Since the Scriptures teach that the dead are in a condition of unconsciousness, or sleep, awaiting the resurrection, it is evident that the claims of Spiritualists as to communication with the dead are false or mistaken ; in many cases the communications purporting to come from deceased friends and relatives are in reality from these evil spirits.

The Apostle Paul declares that we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual intelligences in the heavenly sphere. He knew that there do exist powerful superhuman beings, who seek the corruption and destruction of humanity just as they did in the days before the Flood ; but he also knew that such beings can have no power at all against men unless the mind and will be voluntarily sub-

mitted to them. This is the safeguard which God has provided. None can come under their power unwillingly.

Jesus healed men who had thus become "possessed" by evil spirits, and on more than one occasion the spirits acknowledged His authority. The same thing happened in the days of the apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Of the ultimate fate of these rebellious spirits we know little or nothing, save the inescapable fact that since the wages of sin is death, they will, unless

they repent, eventually meet that penalty. During the Millennial Age Satan will be bound and evil restrained, and consequently they too will be more completely restrained than is at present the case. But if there is true repentance on their part who can doubt that God will receive them back to Himself as He does all His erring sons who repent?

See Gen. 6. 1-4; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2. 4-5; 1 Pet. 3. 19-20; Lev. 20. 6; Deut. 18. 10-12; Isa. 8. 19-20; I Sam. 28. 3-20; Eph. 6. 12; Matt. 9. 33-34; Mark 1. 34; Luke 9. 1; Luke 10. 17; Acts 16. 16-18; I Cor. 6. 3.

That Glorious Hope

*An encouragement to
steadfastness*

These words were written by William Andrews a little over a century ago. They show how some Christian men at that time were already anticipating the clear knowledge of Truth that came with the later years of the century and demonstrate the truth of the Scripture which declares that the path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The understanding of the Christian's hope as seen by William Andrews could hardly be better expressed to-day, except that we now see the fulfilment of some of the things to which he then looked forward.

* * *

"And as the hope of the sleeping saints is the resurrection, so the hope of the living is to be clothed upon in the translation, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. . . . '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.' This is the hope of our calling—the living hope unto which we are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—the hope of life, not of death. And if the faithful who sleep in Jesus, sheltered from the storms, and freed from the pollutions of this evil world, think it long till their Lord appears. . . how earnestly should we stretch forth the head to catch the sound of His approaching footsteps—we, to whom the battle is fierce, and the burden heavy, and the strain of sin deep in the soul. Oh, how has the Church ceased to war against death, yielding herself in passive hopelessness to its usurped dominion, and accounting its rest her chief reward, instead of pressing forward to that 'manifestation of the sons of God', in the glory of the resurrection, for which even the earnest expectation of the creation waits!

"And not for our own sakes alone, nor for the sake alone of the sleeping saints should we long for the return of our Lord and Saviour; but that the earth, now groaning and travailing in pain, may be delivered from the curse. For the promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head includes in its large reach of blessings the redemption of man's inheritance by the casting out of him who usurped it, and the purging away of all the evil with which his slimy presence has defiled and infected it. The earth was made for the revealing of God's glory, through the possession and enjoyment of its manifold treasures, free from all curse, by man standing in his allegiance to his Maker; and though the purpose was frustrated by the fall of the first Adam, it shall be accomplished in the second, who will cause the Father's will to be done forevermore. He has already in His own Person triumphed over the seductions of the serpent, and proved Himself against all temptation the obedient Son, worthy to take up the forfeited sceptre of man's dominion, and rule in righteousness for God; and He now waits only for the completion of the company of joint heirs that shall rule with Him, to come forth to redeem and purify and bless His purchased inheritance. They are right who are looking for righteousness and peace to fill the earth, and make glad the obedient nations; but they are wrong who look for it before the Man who is the heir shall come forth to make it His own eternal dwelling place. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, to pay the price of the redemption; and then crowned with glory and honour and invested with the right of dominion over all the works of God's hand; 'but now we see not yet all things put under Him', and His next step shall be His actual and visible government of the creation. It is an idle

dream which now possesses so many that the Church is to bring in the Kingdom in the absence of the King. There is not one word for it in all the Scriptures. It contradicts the exhortations for continual watchfulness for Him—not for death, but for Him who is the conqueror of death—which imply the possibility of His coming in any generation, and therefore the certainty of His coming before the long, fixed period of the Millennium, which is the time for rest, not for watching. It is inconsistent with the foretold humiliation and sorrow of the Church during the whole of this dispensation, in which she is to walk in His footsteps, and be perfected by the fellowship of His sufferings; it robs her of the blessed hope by which alone she can be purified, and toward which the Apostles ever struggled to lead her—the hope of being like Him and seeing Him as He is; and it entangles her in world schemes and alliances, and so eats out all faith in the heavenly citizenship. The nations are to be blessed; and the earth, unto the uttermost parts of it, is to see the salvation of God, but it shall be when the times comes that the saints possess the kingdom (Dan. 7. 22); which is not during the Bridegroom's absence, for then the Church is the desolate widow called to fasting and mourning, and the word to her ever is, 'Be patient unto the coming of the Lord'. The last temptation by which Jesus was assailed when He was led up

into the wilderness is now spreading its cunning seductions all around us, and we are looking to gain the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, before the time that the Father shall give them to His Son.

"The one great hope for the whole creation, towards which, blindly and unconsciously, if not with intelligent desire, all are reaching forward, is the 'marriage of the Lamb'. It is the hope of the Bride who shall then be one with the Lord in all His glory, and power, and fulness of blessing. It is the hope of the nations, who shall then know the blessedness of righteous rule. It is the hope of the sore-burthened earth, which longs to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And it is the hope of the Lord Himself, whose heart yearns over His Church, purchased with His own blood, but still lying in the desolateness of death, or amidst the defilements of this evil world, and whose word of promise is, 'Surely I come quickly'. Let our response ever be, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus'. Let our hearts be broken through our sympathy with the burdens and sorrows of all, and let us utter in His ear continually the cry that shall hasten the common deliverance."

(William W. Andrews.)

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104	Where are the Dead?	112	Restoration of Israel.	108	The Holy Spirit.	116	Angels that Sinned.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 31, No. 7

JULY-AUGUST, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	98
THE FIVE-FOLD VISION OF JESUS Part I	99
MILLENNIAL STORIES — READERS' IMPRESSIONS	103
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD 6. The Waters above the Firmament	104
MAN OF SORROWS 11. Faith in the Crucible	106
THE FIRST FRUITS	108
YOUTH FOR TRUTH CONFERENCE	110
THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT	111

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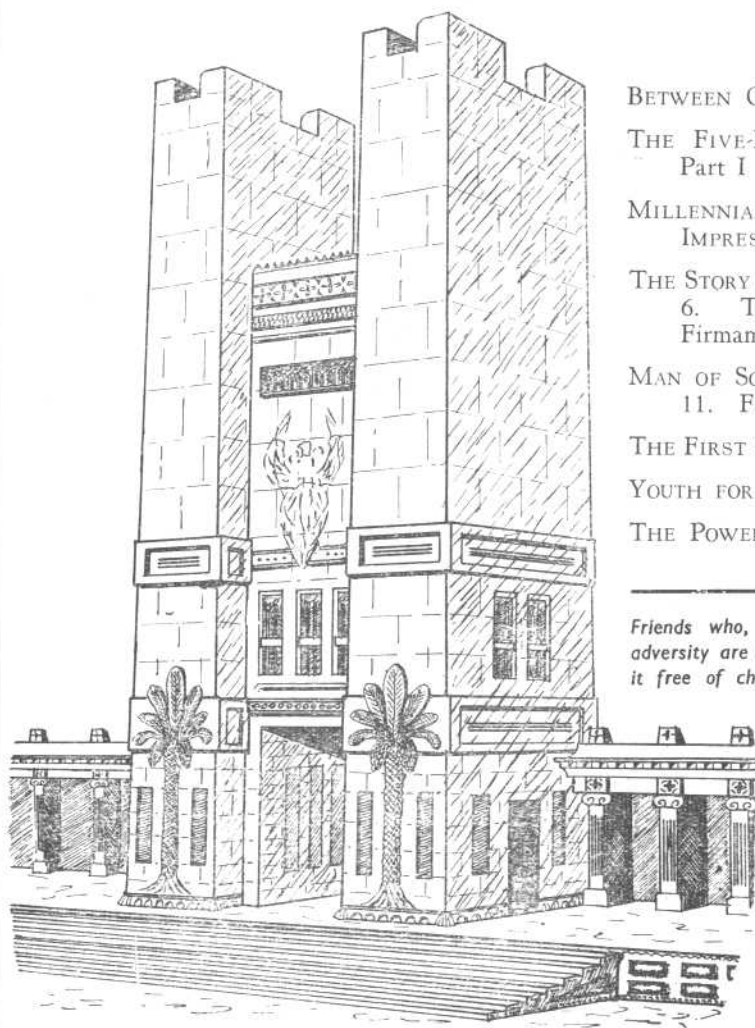
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported partly by the fixed subscription, and for the rest, by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

These columns stress two important Scriptural truths, namely:

That God will not eternally condemn any one of His creatures until there has been a full and fair opportunity to learn and appreciate the difference between good and evil and the reason for God's decree that *evil and evil-doers must ultimately perish.*

That God has provided an Age of Divine rule on earth to succeed the present Age, in which such opportunity will be extended to all humanity, and that the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of establishing and conducting that Divine Kingdom, at the end of which sin and evil will have been eliminated and all who have become fully reconciled to God will inherit everlasting life.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

This issue of the "Monthly" is to do duty for both July and August, the interposition of the holiday period making it difficult to get out two issues on time. We feel the friends will realise this and accept the best that can be done. The next issue of the "Monthly" will be dated September and published at the beginning of that month.

* * *

Brethren who would like to bring gifts of flowers for the platform decoration at the August Convention in Conway Hall this year may do so with full confidence that their offerings will be very appreciatively received and used. The floral display this year will consist entirely of the gifts of the brethren.

* * *

The series "Sixteen Scripture Truths" will shortly be available as a 32-page booklet at 4/6 (70c.) per doz. or 32/- (\$4.50) per 100 post free. Single copies 6d. (7c.). This booklet covers all the principal features of our beliefs in concise form, each of the sixteen subjects being followed by a number of "proof texts". Thus arranged, the booklet will make an admirable class study for those

who feel that a "refresher course" in the fundamental features of the Truth would be helpful. Orders may be sent in now and the booklets will be despatched as soon as ready; they will probably be in stock by the time that this notice appears in print. The booklet is primarily intended for public work and in parcels of 1,000 the cost is £12 (\$33.00).

* * *

The four little stories of the Resurrection which appeared early this year under the title "The Land of Beginning Again" have been combined in the compass of a 24-page booklet which is now available at 4/6 (70c.) per dozen or 32/- (\$4.50) per 100. Single copies 6d. (7c.). The object of this publication is for use in public witness work and although not all our brethren will want to use this type of literature in their work we know that some feel it can be very acceptable and it is for the sake of such that it has been published. Another possible use for this booklet is for enclosing in correspondence to friends and acquaintances; it may very often be read where the more usual type of Truth literature is passed over, and so may serve as an introduction where other more customary means fail.

FREE TRACTS

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101 Times of Restitution.	109 Creation of Man.
102 Call of the Church.	110 The Second Advent.
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107 The Son of God.	115 Satan.
108 The Holy Spirit.	116 Angels that Sinned.

The Five-Fold Vision of Jesus

Part I—THE FIRST THREE VISIONS

"We see Jesus" (Heb. 2.9).

Philip it was, going to Nathaniel, who said "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth . . ." (John 1.45.) Nathaniel's first doubts as to any good thing coming out of Nazareth were speedily dispelled when he saw Jesus. So it is with us. Directly we get to know Jesus we have no doubts. He is the One Who will be our guide even unto death. Consequently, in order that we may enter fully into the appreciation of what Jesus is to us and what He does for us, the Scripture gives us thought-pictures, visions, of the various aspects in which He appears to us and ministers to our needs. We have always to realise that in this present Gospel Age the work of Jesus is not so much that of a great Deliverer and Saviour to the world—that will come later—as it is that of a great High Priest and Shepherd to His Church. The visions of Scripture which reveal to us our Lord's activities are to do with the Church and not the world.

The five-fold vision of Jesus is found in the Book of Revelation, and the curtains are drawn aside that we may view the vision, by the effect of certain words in the second chapter of Hebrews. The Book of Revelation contains five symbolic pictures of the Second Advent and five of the First Advent; more correctly it should be said, five of the Second Advent and the Millennial Age, and five of the First Advent and the Gospel Age. The train of thought which is pursued in the second chapter of Hebrews points in turn to each of the five pictures of the First Advent.

Says the writer to the Hebrews (2.9) "We see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . .". That is all that we need to read, in that verse. Jesus came to earth, and died, and rose again. That short statement of fact is the fundamental basis of the Christian faith. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures". That is as far as many Christian folk go. "Jesus died for me!" But the Bible reveals much more than that. We are told what happened

in the unseen world after Christ rose again and ascended into the presence of the Father, there to wait until it should be time for His return to earth to finish His work. It is true that on Olivet the disciples, after His entry into the cloud, saw Him no more. That was the physical aspect. Spiritually we must continue to see Him and know what He is doing, that we may become true co-workers with God, and to gain that knowledge we must, for one thing at least, accustom our eyes and minds to the vivid pictures and symbolic teaching of the Book of Revelation.

The curtain rises upon Vision One and shows us a woman, standing resplendent in the full glory of the sun behind and around her, her feet resting upon the moon, and twelve stars of heaven woven together to form a scintillating crown set upon her head. "There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12. 1.) Here is fulfilment of prophecy and a clear exposition of Scripture doctrine; the primal promise in Eden was that the seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head. Here in Revelation 12 we have the opening scene of the great drama that is to end with the consummation of that promise. Here are the Woman, the Seed, and the Serpent.

This twelfth chapter is set at the time of the First Advent. The Woman is Israel; not the unbelieving, apostate generation which happened to be inhabiting Judea and Galilee when Jesus was born, but the ideal Israel of whom the prophets had spoken, the faithful "remnant" which God had promised to preserve throughout the generations until Christ should come. That remnant was represented in Jesus' day by all those "that looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2. 38) and it was of this "remnant," the true Israel, that the Seed which is Christ (Gal. 3. 16) the Messiah, came. So in Rev. 12 the Woman gives birth to the Man-child Who is destined, in His Millennial reign, to rule all nations with a rod of iron. In the fulness of time the faithful, true Israel brought forth Christ.

But the Serpent was waiting. The great red dragon stood before the woman to devour her child

as soon as it should be born. The power of Satan at that time was being manifested through the forces of paganism, for Rome ruled the world and Rome was wedded to paganism, the worship of false gods. All the enemies of the man-child were pagans—Pilate, the priests, King Herod—for they all served Cæsar and Cæsar was the embodiment and representative of paganism. It was this pagan power which brought about the death of the "man Christ Jesus."

But the Seed was not destroyed! The man-child was "caught up unto God, and to His throne". How many Scriptures there are which tell us that great truth! Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost, boldly declared "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2, 36). "When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive" (Eph. 4. 8). This first vision of Jesus tells us that He was the Seed of the Woman according to Edenic promise, that He overcame the Serpent and thereafter is forever beyond the Serpent's reach, and that He ascended to the right hand of God. From that point the vision of Rev. 12 goes on to speak of other things but it does leave us here with assurance that the fundamental requirement of God's redemptive Plan has been satisfied—the Seed has appeared, has bruised the Serpent, and has been exalted to God's right hand awaiting the time to proceed to the blessing of all the families of the earth.

The second vision shows us something of what happened after the man-child had been caught up unto the throne of God. It reveals the scene in Heaven itself when the triumphant Redeemer returned to the heavenly sphere after His sojourn and suffering on earth. "It became Him", says the writer to the Hebrews in 2. 10, "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings". That is the basis of the heavenly acclamation which greeted the Lord of glory on His entry to His spiritual home, as described in Rev. 5. 6-13. "The lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed . . . and lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain . . . and he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne".

That book was the prophetic record of the Gospel Age, then about to open, an advance-written history of events which had not yet taken place. Herein was depicted all those things—wars, famines, pestilences; evangelism, martyrdom and finally world judgment—which the Lord had mercifully hidden from the minds of His disciples during that memorable conversation on the Mount of Olives when they had asked Him for the signs of His return. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of

wars," He had said, "and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes, but the end is not yet" (Matt. 24. 6-7). Long years afterward when John, sitting on the rocky shore of Patmos, beheld this vision, he may have understood more clearly what those words portended. Here in Rev. 5, at any rate, we have a clear picture of the triumphant Lamb taking the book and breaking the seals in succession, revealing the hidden pictures inside, from the white horse of primitive evangelism, when the infant Church went out in the power of its commission to teach all nations, and conquered paganism, to the final dread scenes of the end of the Age when every institution of man collapses in utter ruin and men seek frantically for the shelter that does not exist, "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21. 26).

What does this vision teach us? Does it not make plain that the events of this Gospel Age are under the control of the Son of Man himself? "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son". "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The work of the Lord is with the development of his Church during this Age. We know that. The Age is set aside for the calling out and the perfecting of this "people for God's Name" and until that work is finished there can be no work for the world. We know that also; and since all this is in the hands of the Son, and He is our High Priest and our Shepherd, it would seem from this chapter that He has control over the course of the Age and the events of the Age and all that has to do with the Age, that He might bend all things in this Age and in this world to serve the one great purpose of this Age—the development and perfecting of the Church. That seems to be the spiritual meaning behind this vision of the sealed book. The Lord controls the sending out of the white horse of evangelism, the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the ghastly horse of pestilence. He watches over the souls of the martyrs and holds them safely in the sleep of death until the time for their resurrection, and He so over-rules earth's political and social affairs that the time of judgment that is to conclude the Age comes to its climax neither too soon nor too late, but just at the time fore-ordained by God. No wonder the angels sang "Worthy is the Lamb . . . to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5. 12).

This then is the scene in heaven, enduring throughout the Gospel Age as the Lamb breaks one seal after another, revealing to angels and men alike what is to come next. But what is happening on earth and what vision is vouchsafed the Church, as

generation after generation moves into its place on the chart of history?

That is the theme of the third vision, one that is of such surpassing interest—and importance—to the Church on earth that it is given the honour of first place in the Book of Revelation. The presence of the Church's High Priest in the midst of the successive generations of His Church ("Lo, I am with you *always, even unto the end of the age*" (Matt. 28. 20)) is the most inspiring of all New Testament truths, and the manner in which so many different symbols are assembled together to drive home the lesson of our Lord's constant watchcare over the members of His Body has been a comfort and strength to the brethren in all ages.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one". That is the keyword in Heb. 2. 11 and that word points us to the first, second and third chapters of Revelation in which is presented the vision of Christ, glorified but still bearing the indications of past humiliation and suffering, ministering now to the needs of His disciples. "And being turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands one like unto the Son of Man". This Son of Man is in the act of ministering as a Priest; that is evident, for He stands within a circle of lampstands, symbol of Temple or Tabernacle light, away from the world. He promises Divine favour and blessing to those who overcome, and it is the function of a Priest and a Priest alone so to dispense the blessings of God. But He is no Priest of the Aaronic order, for the garments in which He is arrayed are not the garments with which we are familiar in connection with Aaron, and the characteristics of glory, power and wisdom which are evident are not characteristics of the sacrificing and dying priesthood of Aaron. The clue is given us by the writer to the Hebrews, "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. 7. 23-24). The Priest we see in the first chapters of Revelation is a Priest of the Melchisedec order, a Royal Priest, a Priest upon his throne, and because of that He is able to minister in power to His faithful ones and execute judgment upon the unfaithful. So therefore the one "that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" has the white head of maturity, the flaming eyes of penetrating insight, the voice of many waters in its oversweeping gentleness reaching into the recesses of every heart. His feet, like brilliant white-hot metal in the smelting furnace, are burning with zeal to set out in the great work for which He suffered and died; the two-edged sword from His mouth is one of swift and unerring judgment upon His adversaries; all these things are charac-

teristic of "the king", speaking in righteousness, mighty to save (Isa. 63. 1).

This great High Priest is our shepherd. In all the affairs of daily life He is at our side, ministering and helping, sustaining and strengthening, exhorting and encouraging, yea, and when it is necessary, reproving and chastening. That is one of the great lessons of these messages to the seven churches in Asia. Without disputing the chronological application of each message to some particular period in the history of the Church, it is undeniable that they contain valuable instruction applicable to the believers in any and every generation from Pentecost to the end. Every word of these messages is for each one of us and has invaluable counsel and encouragement, coming to us from the Lord Himself.

Take note of the theme in the first message, that to Ephesus. "*Repent, and do the first works*". That is the first stage in our onward way to God. It is a continuing demand, too. We must first repent and come to God in humble submission, accepting Jesus the Saviour in our hearts and lives, being justified by faith in Him and in His redemptive work, before we can take the further step of consecration of life to God. Appropriately enough, therefore, repentance is the first exhortation addressed to us. But here in Revelation 2 the Ephesians were already disciples and had already passed that first stage. The repentance to which they were exhorted was a repentance of shortcomings and failures in their Christian lives. That is necessary for us, too. The fact that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2. 1) does not remove from us the necessity of sincere repentance for failings and shortcomings once our eyes have been opened to them. This Ephesian message is intended for all of us.

The second message is equally certainly the second step of the Christian life, that of consecration. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . .*" (Rom. 12. 1-2). So then to Smyrna comes the message: "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer . . . be thou faithful unto death . . . he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*" (Rev. 2. 10-11). That may not be a doctrinal or philosophical exposition of the meaning of consecration; it is certainly something in the highest degree vital. It is an encouragement to consecration, and a promise of the outcome of consecration faithfully maintained throughout life until the end. As such, it is a message to all of us at any time in the Church's history.

Logically we would expect the third message to dwell upon the conditions of the consecrated life—our sanctification. The word to Pergamos was one of reproof to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, who minded earthly things, and were not completely separated and cleansed from the things of the world. Again comes the call to repent of these things, or judgment—the two-edged sword—would come. *But some there were who held fast and had not denied His name, and those few were approved.* It is a solemn thought that the preference for things of the world over the things of God is a denial of Christ's name, but so it is. If we take his name then it is that "as he was, so are we in this world" and we must needs pursue the same course and live the same life and be devoted to the same ends. Jesus was no ascetic but He was completely and utterly devoted to the Will of his Father. Whatsoever He did, was done to the glory of God. If we assume the name of Christ we must lead the same life and manifest the same standards and if on the contrary we hold to the standards and interests of the world then we have denied the Name we profess. There is no logical argument against that assertion.

So to the fourth message, a warning against false teachers. Thyatira was not the only church to suffer from that scourge. We suffer from it still, in our own day. It has always been true that grievous wolves enter in among the Lord's sheep, not sparing the flock. The pity of it is that all too often the position is tolerated. One would have thought that if the splendour of this vision of the Lord in the midst of the lampstands ministering to His Church, was properly appreciated, false teachers would quickly be recognised and rejected. It is not so; perhaps it is because we see the spiritual things dimly at best and the earthly and carnal things are seen so much more easily and plainly by contrast. It is always difficult to divorce Christian standards from everyday worldly ethics, as witness the difficulty so many sincere Christians have in accepting Jesus' teaching on war and loving ones' enemies, or the enthusiasm with which a converted military officer or film star or noted athlete is hailed and prominently featured just because of the outward appeal of the military rank or the screen and sporting world fame. These things have to be faced as facts and we all do well to learn that erroneous doctrinal teaching is not the only kind of false teaching abroad in our midst and may not even be the most dangerous.

By way of contrast, the word to Sardis is one that looks more to the future. "I will come on thee as a thief". That could be an oblique refer-

ence to the coming Second Advent but is also quite likely to be a turning of the erring disciples' minds to the fact that the Lord must needs come to each one of us in judgment at the end of life. "*For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*" (Rom. 14. 10). The message of Sardis is one that calls us to be watchful and hold fast that which we have. The life of sanctification, of setting apart to the purposes of God, is one that demands continual watchfulness lest at any time we let slip the things we have seen and heard.

One of the most important aspects of our fellowship is stressed in the next message, that to Philadelphia. *It is that we are members one of another, and all members of Christ.* The word Philadelphia itself means "brotherly love" and it is significant that it was the church in this city to whom the Lord gave His highest word of commendation. "*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation*" (Rev. 3. 10). Is it not because we learn well this lesson, our fellow-membership of the Divine family, that we are immune in the hour of trial? Not because God interposes in some miraculous kind of manner, but simply because those who have lived their lives in the fellowship and love of their brethren have thereby developed a character and an outlook that is proof against the destroying influences of time and disappointment. "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*". That is no empty phrase. Our entrance into the family relationship infuses into us a vitality that has power to withstand much that would otherwise corrupt and destroy. The sure knowledge that we love the brethren and are loved by them gives a grace and strength that is of inestimable value in our lives, leading to breadth of vision and tolerance of others' weaknesses, making us more, much more, children of our Father in heaven and more fitted for our future work of service for all mankind.

So we come to the final word, that to Laodicea, and just as we might expect, this is a personal word to each one. The hallmark of Christian experience is close communion with the Saviour. All the long progress from repentance through consecration into the sanctification of Christian life, all the experiences with false teachers and holding fast to the faith, leading into the depths of brotherly love with those who also are the true-hearted disciples of Jesus, bring us at the end to the position where we recognise the knocking of Jesus at the doors of our hearts and with rejoicing we open the door and let Him in. Like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, we must learn to walk with Jesus and then to sup with Him. "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,*

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3. 20). The climax of our understanding of this vision of the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands is reached when we appreciate that in this Age He is working within our hearts. He wants to come in, and make of us a new creation,

all glorious and perfect within, that He may at the end present us faultless before the glory of the Father's presence with exceeding joy.

* * *

These are three of the five visions. Two remain; next month our thoughts will turn to those in conclusion of this meditation.

Millennial Stories Readers' Impressions

From the various letters and comments on the recent series "*In the Land of Beginning Again*" which have been received, two have been selected for publication. The first is from a brother in U.S.A. who has for many years been an appreciative reader of the *Monthly*. Lest others should share our brother's regret that the series has been discontinued we would say that it is hoped to resume the series from time to time, when it seems good so to do. He says:

"It is with considerable regret that we note the discontinuance of the little stories in the *Bible Study Monthly* entitled "*In the Land of Beginning Again*." These pen pictures enable many of us to explain how things may be in the Kingdom soon to be inaugurated. I was talking with some friends from Milwaukee recently who have used these stories to good advantage with the newly interested. Unfortunately there are a few who are always ready to criticise any work regardless of its merits, often perhaps from jealousy because they are unable to produce anything like it. So far I have found none in this country who have criticised these stories. We hope you will publish some more of these stories later."

The second comment is in the form of a short article from a sister in Britain, who was impelled, after reading the stories, to put some thoughts on paper under the title

"ALL LOVE EXCELLING"

"The brother who showed forth his impression of God's great love, in the story of King Herod (B.S.M., March) no doubt caused many brethren to meditate once again upon the Divine love. A human imagination entertains the probability of the heathen King Herod responding to Jesus in the light of the kingdom. Does it not bring us nearer to an estimation of the infinite love and patience which the King of Love will employ—who would have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth?

"His rule 'with a rod of iron' will be very necessary, in the interests of perfect justice. There will have to be complete spiritual control, to prevent violence and active unrighteousness among men. "*That the forlorn and down-trodden may have justice, and mortal man no more may be a terror*" (Ps. 10. 18).

"This brings another thought to mind. Those who rally to Satan at the end of the Millennium—after experiencing the exceeding loving-kindness of the Lord—they will be committing the deadly sin—the sin against the Holy Spirit.

"How careful we should be, in view of this, to avoid passing judgments ourselves. Only human judgments, even from the best of us. We are all runners in the race, for the prize of the High Calling, and one of the conditions is—that we love one another. This love of the brethren is supremely necessary. We need each other. Sometimes, perhaps, our variations on the theme of the truth may tend to create the illusion that the Church is going to be a very odd shape!—but it is only illusion. The framework is there, the spirit is there—the work is in God's hands. He will dispel all the variations in due time.

"Perhaps we are 'not all of the "church" class'?—no time for conjectures of this nature. If we 'work out our own salvation'—then it follows that we shall be doing our best for the brethren. '*We know that we have passed from death unto life—because we love the brethren*'—it is something we can do most directly. Quite a different thing—most blessedly different—from 'loving our enemies'—which is in a general way, a more impersonal thing.

"Bible students need each other. We need as much fellowship as we can get, we need the variety of exposition, the praise, the testimony. We need the fruits of each others' minds and experiences. How else can we come to be 'fitly framed together for an holy habitation unto the Lord?'"

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 6—The Waters above the Firmament.

It is very generally known that this earth existed at the first in a gaseous condition. That is, the whole of the elements of which it is composed were at such extreme heat that they floated in space, a vast mass of vapour. Slowly that vapour cooled until the heavier materials, such as iron and nickel and granite and gold, solidified into a central core which was the nucleus of the earth we now know. As the ages slowly succeeded one another, more and more of the surrounding vapours cooled and passed into the liquid state, descending then in storms of fiery rain upon the heated planet below, often being vapourised again and ascending once more into the skies. But as the tremendous heat of the primitive earth radiated away into space, the central globe began to retain the material which fell upon it from the heavens, and so there emerged the beginnings of the world we know today.

This long process is known to geologists as the Igneous Age—the Age of Fire—a time when there could be no life of any kind on earth and when the light of the sun was quite incapable of penetrating the surrounding masses of heavy vapours to the earth's surface. It was the time noted in Genesis 1. 2. "*The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep*". It was the time when God began actively to prepare this planet for the habitation of man. Something like a thousand million years had to elapse before sufficient of the heavy envelopes circling the earth had subsided to its surface to allow some faint glimmer of light to pierce through, but at long length the command of God, "*Let there be light*" was fulfilled, and "*the evening and the morning were the first day*".

Another thousand millions of years had to pass before the sun would shine through the mists in recognisable fashion and the fourth creative day come to the full. In the meantime life had come to the earth—there were grasses and trees, and teeming multitudes of creatures swarming in the seas and beginning to invade the land, anticipatory of the time God would command the fishes and birds and animals to come forth in their order, and the fifth and sixth days run their course. But time after time these early uprisings of life were blotted out by great deluges of condensed vapours from above, and time after time Nature made a fresh start.

The vast amount of water which forms part of the economy of the earth made it inevitable that

long after the heavier metallic and earthly materials had condensed and gravitated to the earth's surface, a large quantity of water vapour remained circling around the earth. Sooner or later this, too, condensed and fell to the earth in a succession of deluges probably reaching the earth at the poles and sweeping over mountains and plains toward the Equator.

So far back as the year 1690 this process was understood and accepted as a true explanation of geologic findings, the German scientist Leibnitz becoming one of its leading exponents. Something like half a century later several men of note, such as Imanuel Kant in Germany, George Cuvier and Jean Lamarck in France were declaring their belief, on the evidence of natural remains, that the deluge of Noah was in fact caused by the falling to earth of the last of these great avalanches of water. Lamarck's researches showed that the ancients believed the primeval ocean to have invested the earth long after it became the abode of living beings. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Prof. Isaac N. Vail, an American, published a book called "*The Earth's Annular System*", in which the entire subject was exhaustively reviewed. Without necessarily accepting all of Vail's conclusions, it may be taken as reasonably certain that such deluges have occurred in pre-historic times and it is at least possible that the Noachic Deluge was in fact the last of such deluges.

Says Vail: "*During the Igneous age the oceans went to the skies, along with a measureless fund of mineral and metallic vapours; and if we concede these vapours formed into an annular system, and returned during the ages in grand instalments, some of them lingering even down to the age of man, we may explain many things that are dark and perplexing today*".

Since Prof. Vail's time it has been established that the four giant planets of the solar system, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, are all surrounded by similiar circling rings of matter; it is evident that these four planets are in the condition that our earth was in during the first and second "creative days".

There are evidences today of some such catastrophe as would be caused by the descent of these "deluge-waters". The most convincing as well as the best known is probably the existence along the entire northern coast of Siberia of mammoths, rhinoceri and other animals of a past age preserved complete in the permanently frozen earth of that

region. It is clear that Siberia was once a luxuriant and fertile country with a much more genial climate than at present, and that it supported vast herds of mammoths and other animals. The cold weather came suddenly and the great beasts were frozen solid in mud and ice in, at the most, a few minutes. One mammoth excavated on the banks of the River Beresvoka in 1901 by Dr. Herz had food in its mouth, undigested. Says Dr. Pfizenmayer, a member of the expedition, in his book "Siberian Man and Mammoth", "its death must have occurred very quickly after its fall, for we found half-chewed food still in its mouth, between the back teeth and on its tongue, which was in good preservation. The food consisted of leaves and grasses, some of the latter carrying seeds. We could tell from these that the mammoth must have come to its miserable end in the autumn". That last sentence is very significant when we recall that in the Genesis story it was the "seventeenth day of the second month", i.e. about the middle of November, when the Flood came upon the earth.

All over northern Siberia, since the sixth century of this era at least, men have been finding, not only frozen mammoths, but also bison, now only found in North America, musk ox, now only in Greenland, Cape rhinoceros, now only in South Africa, wild horse, woolly rhinoceros, and elasmotherium (a kind of giant rhinoceros with a head like a horse), these latter being now extinct. The frozen flesh is so perfectly preserved that in the most remote regions it has been often used for food by the natives, and the tusks have been employed by the Chinese for centuries in the manufacture of ivory articles. There are islands in the Arctic Ocean which are composed in almost equal quantities of frozen earth and animals' bones and tusks. It is said that the supply of ivory from these islands appears to be virtually inexhaustible. The suddenness of the catastrophe that overwhelmed these great beasts is demonstrated by another line of evidence revealed by this expedition and confirmed by investigations in other parts of Siberia. The Beresvoka mammoth was found in close proximity to a sheet of solid ice between 16 and 26 feet thick, seven feet below the present surface of the land. This ice-sheet was full of air-bubbles in a peculiar formation which showed that it must have formed by a rapid flood of water which froze instantly, trapping a great deal of air in the ground beneath. The seven feet of earth above the ice has formed during the years since the ice was deposited.

These and other indications show that at some remote period in history the whole of Siberia was suddenly deluged with a mighty flood of water which came from the north, drowning out a continent which existed in the present Arctic Ocean,

sweeping over Siberia, leaving a vast ice-sheet over the whole of the northern portion and creating a great inland sea in the south stretching from the Gobi Desert in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west. (Today the Caspian and Aral seas and Lake Baikal are the only remains of that "Sarmatian Ocean" as it has been called, but much of it remained so late as the seventh century of the Christian Era.)

Lesser evidences of a similar flood exist in Canada, South Africa, the extremity of South America, and in the south-west Pacific. If the waters of the firmament did indeed descend from the heavens they would of necessity reach the earth at the North and South Poles where centrifugal force falls to zero, and would then rush over the surface of the planet towards the Equator, which is just what the evidences recorded above would indicate. If such a flood did occur in Noah's day, then the land of Mesopotamia, lying not far from the Equator, would escape the wholesale destruction which must have been the lot of the extreme northern and southern latitudes and receive the flood waters only after much of their fury had abated.

This then may have been the cause of the Flood. It is impossible to be dogmatic. Evidences from ancient times, conclusions to be drawn from ancient remains, from relics found in the earth and so on, are almost always capable of several interpretations. The most that can be said is that this explanation accords perhaps better than any other with Scripture. That there were "waters above the firmament" in ancient times we know from Gen. 1. 7., and we also know it from the geological record. The Bible says those waters went up above the firmament in the second creative day and that also is confirmed by the geological record. More than one ancient tradition attests the fact that people of ages long past knew more about this business of there being waters above the heavens than we usually realise. St. Peter's words in II Peter 3. 5-7 (R.V.) refer to the same thing, when speaking of the antediluvian world he says "There were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished". The Psalmist also seems to have known something about this in Psa. 104. 5-9. "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they

may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth". If that passage is not a description of the waters of the Flood, it is difficult to say to what it does refer.

So, after so long a consideration of the theories and interpretations of men, we come back to Noah and his family, sitting inside the Ark, counting seven slow days from the tenth day of the second month until the seventeenth day, waiting for the fulfilment of God's word and the coming of Divine Judgment. It really does not matter to us how the Flood came or what was its actual cause; we are really concerned with understanding as accurately as we can, from the brief record we have, exactly what did happen in those far-off days when the

"world that was" came to its catastrophic end.

So our thoughts come back to those eight persons of faith, the only ones in all the world who believed God, shut up inside the only haven of refuge from the wrath to come, surrounded by a heedless and scornful world which went on with its daily interests, unbelieving, ignorant. And far away to the south of that land with its shining cities, away at the other side of the Southern Ocean which they had probably never even explored, there rushed towards them at frightful speed the Angel of Vengeance which was to sweep their land with the besom of destruction and leave God's world ready for a fresh start.

To be continued.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part I.—FAITH IN THE CRUCIBLE

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (vs. 10).

Here is a prophecy of the dying sufferings of the Messiah. At the very last the Father takes upon himself the ultimate responsibility for all that has happened. "Thou couldst have no power at all against me" said Jesus to Pilate, "except it were given thee from above". The Father, Who is the Creator and sustainer of all things, declares His acceptance of full responsibility for everything that happens in His creation. God is not the author of sin, and those who claim that He is, and because of that is morally obligated to recover every one of His creatures from the thralldom and power of sin irrespective of their own wishes in the matter, do greatly err. But God takes responsibility for the fact that sin is allowed to remain in the world and evil men are permitted to practise evil deeds. He could end all that in a moment by the exercise of His will, and because He does not do so He accepts responsibility, knowing that the eventual outcome will justify the wisdom of the course He has taken. So it is true to say that it pleased the Lord to bruise him in the sense that the Father deliberately allowed that "bruising" to take place, and did not lift a finger to stop it. None would claim that God took pleasure in the harrowing scenes of the trial and crucifixion, but we ought to realise very clearly that God did look upon the whole trans-

action with the serenity of infinite wisdom, knowing that the end of the story would be glory. And in the meantime He gave strength and comfort to the Son as he drank to the bitter end the cup which the Father had poured for him. Father and Son were in complete harmony and full understanding the one with the other during the whole of that dark time.

This is the time when Jesus uttered the sad words "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matt. 26. 38). It is so easy to assume that Jesus was troubled in mind at the thought of the physical sufferings he was so shortly to endure; one wonders if our thinking has not been altogether along wrong lines, unduly influenced by what would undoubtedly have been our own reaction under similar circumstances. Jesus was more than man and he had a wider mental horizon than has been the possession of any man. He lived before the world was; the whole wide creation of God had been his sphere of action. Even in the bitter moments of the betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion, that fact must have made an inestimable difference. Men who enter into what they know is to be suffering ended by death cannot visualise, because they do not know what lies beyond death. Jesus did know, and his knowledge of the other world must have been a wonderful stay and strength in the midst of his physical suffering. But there was another suffering to be endured, one that perhaps was much more crucial to him. How would his disciples behave after he was gone? Would

they show themselves men of stamina and courage to continue the work he had begun? He must of necessity leave them to plant the seed of his word in the world after his death, and in the power of his Spirit lay the foundations of the Church, without which the Divine Plan for all mankind could not go into effect. Were they capable of discharging the commission he must now of necessity leave to them? Had the short time he had been with them been sufficient for the responsibilities now to be thrust upon them? Were these the thoughts which caused Jesus' soul to be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?" The men he had chosen were so little conscious of the position in which their Master was placed that they could sleep soundly while He endured his Gethsemane agonies; in a few hours' time one of them was going to deny him in public and they all were going to forsake him and flee for their lives. Was this the cup he had to drink and from which he desired to be saved if it were the Father's will? If so, the expression "he hath put him to grief" takes on a new and a terrible significance. That grief was caused, not by the Master's enemies, not by wicked men, but by his own disciples and companions. He might reasonably have expected to yield up his human life on the Cross fortified and comforted by the presence of the twelve who had in the past continued with him in his temptations, his trials and difficulties. He might have hoped that the last sight his human eyes would behold as the shades of death came down would be the stalwart company of men who were to proclaim and establish his message in the world. But it was not to be. A few women, and the faithful John. That was all. It cannot be held that Jesus lost faith, even for one moment, during that climax to all his sufferings; but that he must have suffered intense grief at the defection of those who should have been his comforters during that time is undeniable.

It was at this moment that Jesus uttered the oft-misunderstood cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which H. G. Wells once referred to as "that eternal enigma to the faithful". Granted that many earnest Christians have been puzzled by that cry, it is still true that had H. G. Wells' knowledge of the Bible been anywhere on a par with his undoubted literary abilities, he would not have made that scathing remark. The explanation sometimes offered, that in order fully to take the sinner's place Jesus must experience, if only for a moment, the withdrawal of the Father's favour, and feel himself disowned and deserted by God, is quite untenable and, to a degree, irreverent. It implies that for a moment our Lord's faith failed. It implies that Christian men who have suffered martyrdom for their faith without having any sign of deliverance by God, and yet have remained firm

in faith and confident of the Father's smile right up to their dying breath, were superior to our Lord in faith, which is an absurd and impossible conclusion. Whatever Jesus meant by the words, he could not have meant that he harboured any doubt as to his Father's continued favour and strength. To his last moment he knew that God was with him.

The right answer is that Jesus uttered the words, not as an indication of lost faith, but as an affirmation in the sight of all spectators that his faith still held. It is well known that the words Jesus uttered are the opening words of the twenty-second Psalm. Jesus deliberately quoted the opening verse of that psalm. Now that fact is of tremendous significance, for the twenty-second psalm is a very special psalm. It is the traditional psalm which was sung or quoted by the children of Israel when hard pressed by their enemies, when escape seemed hopeless and death stared them in the face. The first eighteen verses of the psalm are eloquent of despair, as though God had deserted His people and left them to their fate. Then verses nineteen to twenty-two express the continued faith of Israel that despite the apparent indifference of God, yet God does care and is mindful of His people's plight, and will eventually deliver. Finally verses twenty-three to thirty-one tell of deliverance accomplished, the enemies of Israel scattered, and the people of God triumphantly exalted. It thus follows that the crying out of the first verse of Psalm 22 at a time of extremity was tantamount to an avowal of faith that, despite the apparent hopelessness of the case, God would surely deliver at the end.

We have the authority of the New Testament for saying that Psalm 22 is also intended to be prophetic of Christ. So when Jesus cried the words, they conveyed to the ears of the listeners his own implicit faith that although he was at that very moment going down into the darkness of death, he knew that the Father would raise him from the dead and exalt him to His own right hand. Like Israel in their battles, his enemies had for the moment gained the upper hand and there was no immediate salvation from their murderous designs; he must inevitably perish at their hands. But that was not the end; the promise of God would surely be fulfilled, and as a witness to that sure fact he cried the words which told all Israel of his faith that "*the third day he shall rise again*".

To be continued.

The overshadowing and oversight of a surrendered human life, by the Almighty God is one of the most amazing things in all Creation. It is the latest phase of Creation—for therein the Omnipotent Architect of the Universe, is engaged upon the absolute Masterpiece of all His varied work.

THE FIRSTFRUITS *An exhortation*

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 2. 18).

The Word of God clearly reveals that those who are "in Christ"—members of His Mystical Body—His Temple, are "the firstfruits" of His Redemption, or, as St. Paul describes it, they are "the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven".

Jesus Christ is Himself "the firstfruits of them that slept" and "the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1. 15). The grave could not hold the Light of the World, the Prince of Glory, "the image of the invisible God". His footstep followers, therefore, those true disciples who keep His Word and seek to do His Will, are the members of the Body, of which Christ is the Head. How essential is it to remember that Christ is the Head of the Body and Christ alone. "For one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" were His own words.

St. Paul had to remind his followers of this, for they were beginning to think too much of other men than they should. He, therefore, had to chide them about causing divisions and setting up one man against another, even telling them that whilst they did such things they were "carnal, and walk as men", and exhorted them "not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another". Let us, therefore, take heed that we look to Christ and Him alone as our Lord and Master, and our Head.

St. Paul also showed that there would be some who would endeavour to discourage others from keeping so close to Jesus Himself, and not following the traditions of men, but being guided solely by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, which Jesus promised would lead them into all truth. He, therefore, gives these footstep followers the following admonition and encouragement:—

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

And not holding the Head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2. 18).

As we know, God's messengers are the angels, and all who bear His messages to others are angels, and St. John was told, when "he fell at the feet of

the angel to worship him" "see that thou do it not" and he then told him "worship God".

In a very powerful and revealing symbolism St. Paul also warns his followers to be wary lest they give not God the honour due to Him alone, from whom all wisdom alone comes. In his epistle to Timothy he showed that there would be many "striving for the mastery" who might forget that they could only conquer "in the strength of Jesus Christ" and he warned them that a man would not be crowned "except he strive lawfully" (II Tim. 2. 5-7).

*"Stand in His strength alone,
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own"*.

So the old hymn warns us similarly.

St. Paul then shows to whom the victory and the glory and the honour alone belong, saying:—

"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits".

Jesus said "I am the Vine and my Father is the husbandman", and as in Israel of old the firstfruits were all brought to the Lord, so we, too, who have the "firstfruits of the Spirit" must bring the glory and the honour to Him Who alone gives the increase of that which He Himself has given, for as we well know

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning".

"Consider what I say" advises St. Paul, "and the Lord give thee understanding in all things".

All, therefore, who are members of His Body—His true Church—are to look to Him to bring them to victory "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ" (Eph. 1. 12).

"My glory will I not give to another" said our Lord and God, and Jeremiah also gives us the following wise admonition:—

"Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer. 9, 24).

Having taken heed, therefore, to this most essential warning, we have many gracious and glorious promises to these members of "the Church of the First born", most gracious of all, surely, being that in the resurrection St. Paul shows that every man shall rise "in his own order". He then proceeds

to show that this order is firstly, "Christ the firstfruits *afterward they that are Christ's at his coming*" (I Cor. 15. 33).

They are His elect, His own Body Members, whose names are written in heaven. They have believed His Word and claimed His promises, and He has brought them safely to victory and, "passed from death unto life, they shall not come into 'condemnation' or 'judgment' with the judgment of the world—

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has (even here in this "earthly tabernacle") freed them from the law of sin and death, and when Christ Jesus returns "with all his saints" (I Thess. 3. 13) they will be "caught up" with Him, and with those who have been sleeping in Jesus will be ever with Him—His Body members—His Bride and true Church.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first" St. Paul again assures us. (I Thess. 4. 16.)

All who love the Lord and, obey His one great commandment to "love one another" will immediately think "What, then, of the rest of mankind, for whom Christ died?" and what of the rest of God's own people who yet have not accepted the Gentle Saviour? Let us ever remember that His mercy is over all His works, and we have the gracious promise that "*if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy*" (Rom. 11. 16).

His power is limitless and as His Body members are those of whom it is said "His servants shall serve Him" we may be sure that this "service" will be the joyful one of helping their fellow men who had "stumbled at that stumblingstone" for St. Paul assures us that "all Israel shall be saved". His Body-members are His statesmen in His Kingdom, of higher or lesser degree according to their position in the Body of which they form part, and to them (oh joyful and blessed work), will be assigned the power and wisdom of Christ in helping to bring the whole of "the ransomed race" to

Christ Jesus, the King of Kings the Lord of Lords. For "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (I Tim. 4. 10).

Meantime, as St. Paul shows, even we who "have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body".

These who have the "firstfruits of the Spirit" are they "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". They have been "born of the Spirit" and St. Paul in his revealing epistle to the Romans shows that these "which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit", are passed from "death unto life" as Jesus Himself promised. (John 5. 24)

St. John also saw these Members of the Body of Christ in his vision, and writing of them he says:—

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb".

And when the "redemption" of their bodies shall have come, when "He shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself", then will their work be a true "rest", a "rest in work" for it will be unhindered, unhampered by the limitations of the flesh, and they shall have then entered "into the joy of their Lord".

When, too, at length the "lump" shall have been made holy, there is the glorious promise that "Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the earth with fruit", until the day arrives when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him".

*Angels! sing on: your faithful watches keeping,
Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above,
Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,
And life's long shadows break in endless love"*.

Youth for Truth Conference

As was announced in an earlier issue of the "Monthly", a conference of young brethren in U.S.A. was arranged at Cicero, Chicago, for April 17-18 last, and the following account of the proceedings has been sent us by Brother Dennis Thorfeldt, who is the Secretary of the "Youth for Truth" in U.S.A. We trust that the report will be read with interest by all on both sides of the

ocean who are concerned to see evidences of the Truth being passed on from generation to generation. Other men laboured and we entered into their labours. In due time those who come later must in turn enter into our labours. Are we taking steps to pass on that which we once received?

"The conference was a wonderful success in both the large attendance and in the blessings

received by all those present, as we expected it would be. For the Lord never fails to answer the prayers of His children for spiritual blessings, if they abide in Him (John 15.7), and there were many offered to that end.

The conference commenced with the singing of the theme song "Serve the Lord in Youth". This hymn was sung many times throughout the conference, and the tune remained on our lips and the words in our hearts for some time afterward. Our prayer now is that the conference helped in making it the theme in our young lives to "serve the Lord in the days of youth."

Following the welcome address, Brother Laurence Iannaccone of Buffalo, New York, gave the first discourse, entitled "Search the Scriptures", pointing out the importance of studying not only the New, but also the Old, Testament. It is not composed, as some maintain, of a group of childrens' stories, but is filled with countless prophecies and testimonies which point to Christ Himself.

The second discourse of the day was presented by a young brother, Jim Bews, from Toronto, Canada. His subject was "Hallowed be Thy Name", a line taken from our Lord's Prayer. He explained how, many times in the Old Testament, God did certain things—delivering His people from bondage, from their enemies, avenging idolaters, pouring His wrath upon the wicked—for His Name's sake. Many of the ideas involved were subsequently worked out during Jesus' lifetime in vindicating God's Name.

After supper and a time for fellowship, a Praise, Prayer and Testimony Meeting was led by Brother John Fiorello, in which many of the young people lifted their voices in praise to the Lord. Perhaps the general spirit of the conference could be best described by one of the brethren's testimonies. "The thing that I like best about this conference is that so far nobody has approached me and tried to force their interpretations of Bible prophecies on me or has offered any arguments on controversial subjects, but they have told me how much they love the Lord."

Immediately following, an inspiring pageant called the "Conquering Christ", was presented by the Cicero Youth for Truth. It featured a narrative of the life of Christ with emphasis on His death and resurrection, using hymns, poems, and flannelgraph illustrations.

At 8.00 in the evening a 91 minute colour film of the Life of Christ was shown, to which the public was invited. The attendance at this service

was estimated at close to 350 people. It was a most impressive portrayal of our Master and very appropriate for the Easter season.

That night, those friends who came from out of town stayed in the homes of the local brethren. The joy that this meeting together with those of like precious faith meant to the young people was evident from the fact that most of them didn't get to bed until early in the morning as they had fellowship and discussed the Word of God. They had to rise early, however, to be in time for the Song Service at 9.30 in the morning.

The first speaker of the day was Brother Alex Uhlving who spoke on "A Few Incidents in the Life of Peter" taken from Matthew 14. Relating to us some of his own personal experiences with older brethren, Brother Uhlving struck one of the keynotes of the conference as he exhorted us to have proper respect for them and to remain in unity with them.

After intermission all of the young people were asked to sit in the centre and up in front, so that they could take active part in the Bible Study which was next on the programme. The study, conducted by Brother Iannaccone was taken from the 22nd Psalm with references to the New Testament to show the fulfilment of the prophecy of our Lord's crucifixion.

Lunch was then served by the Cicero class and at 2.00 an Easter programme was given by the young people from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Included on the programme were selected readings and musical offerings of all types.

Brother William Siekman of Batavia, Illinois was the next speaker of the day and he spoke on "Truth". He pointed out how the majority of the people in the world have turned a deaf ear on the truth as found in the Bible, and the vital part that truth plays in the life of young Christians.

The last discourse of the conference was given by Brother Tony Vastola of Rochester, New York. His subject "Power from on High", dealt with the role that the Holy Spirit plays in a Christian's striving to do the Lord's will. He explained the Holy Spirit, how one goes about receiving it, and how it is made manifest.

After the closing remarks by Brother Bews, the young people, though sad at parting with one another, rejoiced at the thought of the next young peoples' gathering which will be held as a part of the Unity Convention on August 1—7, in Greencastle, Indiana. Many of the young people met at some of the homes for an evening of fellowship".

POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Is it possible for the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit to be realised in actual experience. To test the question let us go back, for a few moments, some eighteen hundred years, and speak with Paul upon the subject. You see him yonder, as he sits resting for an hour. He sits there in his chains, by the side of the soldier who keeps him. Let us approach him. How pale, and wan, and weary he looks, and yet what a halo of deep and abiding joy beams from his countenance and encircles his brow. Permit me to address him in your behalf. "Paul, we have heard much of that wonderful life and experience of yours and have come to converse personally with you upon the subject. Will you impart to us the information we desire"? "With all my heart. But where shall I begin"? "Tell us first about your sufferings". "Well, I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and unto men. *Even* unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the scourging of all things unto this day. But among the many who, in common with our Divine Lord, have been made perfect through suffering, I have been in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily—the care of all the Churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not"? "But, Paul, what has been your state of mind in the midst of these sufferings"? "As sorrowful, yet *always* rejoicing; as poor, yet making *many* rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know

both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me".

"But when you see that 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests', and in common with your Divine Master, you 'have not where to lay your head', when you see other men dwelling in princely mansions, clad in costly array, and faring sumptuously every day; do you not *sometimes*, to say the least, envy their better lot, and feel dissatisfied with your own"? "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel". "But when you go abroad with the distinct apprehension 'that bonds and afflictions abide you', does not your sensitive nature *sometimes* shrink from the vision of the sufferings in prospect"? "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God".

Please answer this question also: "How do you now regard suffering for Christ's sake"? "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for 'when I am weak then am I strong'". "How did you attain to this blessed state"? "By simple faith in God. 'We believe, and therefore speak'". "'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me'".

Tell us this also, Paul. "May we thus attain"? "Most assuredly. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him". "Paul you appear very weak and exhausted; would to God we could come to you, and let you rest your weary head upon our bosom"! "I have just had a season of deep repose upon the bosom of Christ. As I sat here a few hours ago, He came to me in spirit, and said, 'You are weary, very weary. Lay your head upon My bosom, and rest there'. That season of deep intercommunion and fellowship 'with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ', has left me in a strait betwixt two; and what I shall choose, I wot not, 'having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far

better, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for my brethren. And having this confidence, I know I shall abide and continue with them all for their furtherance and joy of faith. I am refreshed now, and must attend to the multitude of converts and inquirers whom you see

yonder coming to me for instruction. Farewell".

This, reader, is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. This is what the Gospel did for Paul, what it has done for me, and what it is able to do for you. "*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*". (Asa Mahan)

BURDEN BEARERS

As the years pass, and our relations with men multiply, and we look more searchingly behind the fair outsides of life, as our faith grows more settled and calm, trials are apt to accumulate upon us. Of those whom we love, some pass away from us, and some fall into lingering sicknesses; some disappoint the fond hopes we had cherished of them, and others suffer much that is good and admirable in them to be blighted by a secret vice, or propensity, which threatens to be their ruin; cares of business and domestic cares throng in upon us; our health declines, perhaps, or we grow conscious that the spring and elasticity of earlier days are gone, and that all tasks are harder to us, and all burdens heavier to be borne. There are times when one feels as though his heart were turned into a kind of hospital, with a sick-bed for this friend, and another for that, until the whole night is taken up with cares and solitudes and the strain becomes well-nigh intolerable. If this be our experience—as at times it is the experience of most kindly and Christian men and women—yet why should we complain? This, like every other trial, is Christ's gift to us; it is part of the reward He bestows on them that are His. We have served Him in easier tasks;

and now He honours us by asking us to serve Him in a task that is harder. We have met the common tests; and now He applies a still severer test, *that, being tried to the full, we may also be blessed to the full*. When we thank Him for having called us into His service, and say that for aught we have done for Him we will ask no reward save that we may serve Him still and better, do we mean what we say? Very well, then; in giving us harder tasks, and trials more severe and searching, He is but taking us at our word, and giving us the very reward we have asked. Rather than complain, therefore, that life grows heavier to us, we will remember Him who had room in His heart for every man that breathed, and grace for as many as were sick, and strength for as many as were weak, and comfort for all who mourned. We crave to be like Him, do we not? And we can become like Him who learned obedience and was made perfect by the things which He suffered, only by partaking of similar experiences, by bearing our trials, and whatever they may be, with a patient and cheerful heart.

(The "Herald of Christ's Kingdom")

WORD FROM THE PAST

Seeing, then, that all these things — present political, social, religious and financial arrangements — are to be dissolved, and that so soon, and also how apart from these things are the real interests of the saints, how comparatively unimportant should the things of this present order seem to us; they are not worthy our time or words, which should go to the things which alone will survive. And, having such hopes as are set before us, and so clear a knowledge of the grand outcome, as well as of the minutiae of the divine plan, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? And yet with what carefulness we

need to guard against being overcharged with the petty cares of this present time, and against imbibing the spirit of the world, which is all about us, and mixed with every question of the hour.

Only by constant watchfulness and prayer can we keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We need to keep a vigilant watch over our general character to see that it bears the divine likeness; that meekness, sincerity, moderation, temperance and truth are always manifest in us. And then we should see that all our conversation is such as becometh saints.

(C. T. Russell)



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

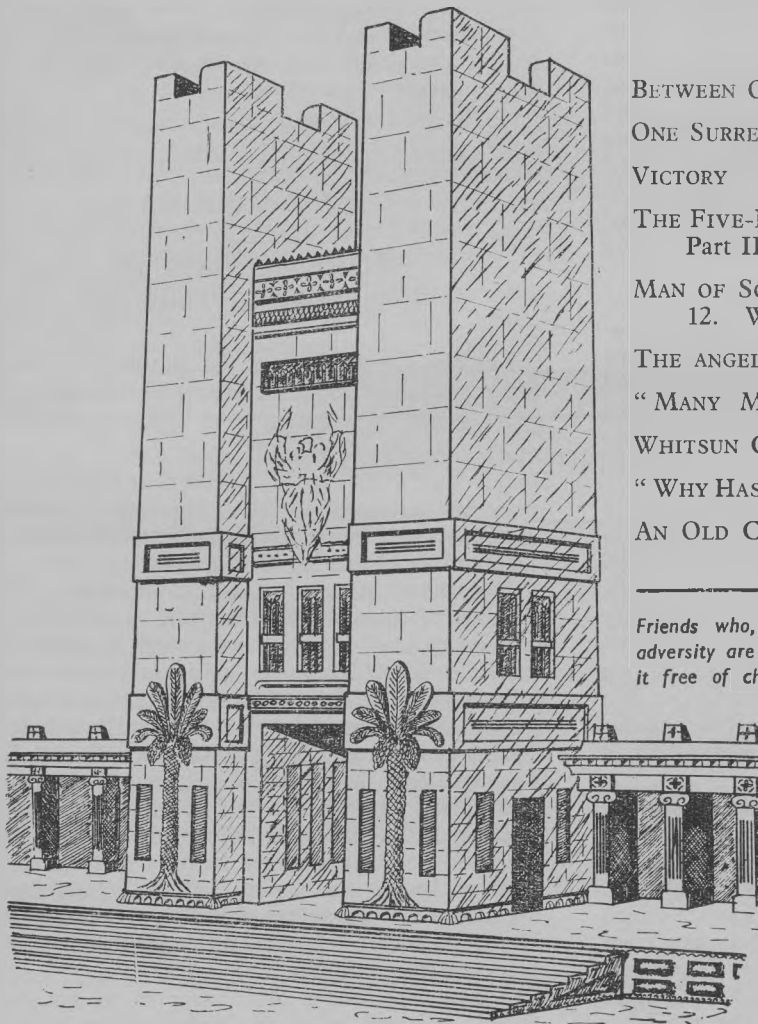
Vol. 31, No. 8

SEPTEMBER, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	114
ONE SURRENDERED HEART	114
VICTORY	115
THE FIVE-FOLD VISION OF JESUS Part II	118
MAN OF SORROWS 12. Worthy is the Lamb	120
THE ANGEL OF THE PRESENCE	123
"MANY MANSIONS"—A Comment	125
WHITSUN CONVENTION, 1954	126
"WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"	127
AN OLD CLOCK SPEAKS	128

*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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Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Our friends of the Christian Fellowship Mission at Ossett (Yorks) announce a special gathering for September 18 and 19 next, the Saturday afternoon meeting being in their own hall, 6 p.m. onwards in the Central Baptist Church, and all day Sunday in the Ossett Community Centre. Programmes and particulars from Miss E. L. Robinson, Laburnum Cottage, Dewsbury Road, Ossett, Yorks.

* * *

It is regretted that this month's instalment of "The Story of the Flood" is crowded out. We hope to resume the series next month.

* * *

The leaflet (No. 151) "World Conversion—When?" which was recently published and almost immediately went out of print, has been reprinted

and is now available in stock at 1/9 for 25 and 12/6 per 100 (25c. and \$1.75 respectively in Canada and U.S.A.). This has proved a very much sought after leaflet and we are glad therefore to be able to continue the supply.

* * *

Gone from us

Sis. N. Wilson (*Ulverston*)

Sis. E. Drinkwater (*Birmingham*)

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

ONE SURRENDERED HEART

She had come from America—from somewhere in one of the Southern States—warm with zeal to serve the Lord she had so recently come to love. Still in her early twenties, she had left parents, friends, home, ambition, for medical missionary work in South Africa. "Feed my lambs" had been the Master's injunction to Peter. She was setting out to do that very thing; to preach the Gospel and minister physical healing to a needy native population in a strange land, for very love of what God had done for her.

Here in England for a few days, waiting for the boat which was to take her to South Africa, she talked simply of the things which lay so near to her heart. A few yards from our three deckchairs there splashed over the yellow sand the restless sea which already separated her by three thousand miles from the home she had left, and would to that shortly add another six thousand. But there was no faltering in her voice, only gratitude; "To think that the Lord should do all this for me". She had accounted it a privilege to give up what this life has to offer for His sake, answering the call to arduous service in a distant land, among unfamiliar people, speaking an

unknown language, having strange customs; then to say softly as if in awed thankfulness "To think that the Lord should do all this for me".

She quoted Rom. 12. 1 before either of us could do so; "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service". The care-free and careless holiday-makers on the beach around little realised how the Father of all was looking down upon this child of His with love and care, solicitous for that young heart given whole-heartedly to Him. And who can doubt that the consecrated life freely yielded at such cost will be used mightily in days to come in the work of healing the nations? Who would dare to say that God has no use for such an offering, that He would ignore that glad surrender to Him for the service of the suffering.

A few days later a little party of her new-found friends gathered at the station to see her off. She stood at the window; there were tears in her eyes, but a smile on her lips . . . the train drew out of the station, bearing her into the unknown . . . where God waited to guide.

VICTORY

A word of exhortation

"But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".

The context of this verse leaves no room for doubt as to the victory indicated, it refers to the final overcoming of man's arch enemy, death.

There are, however, other victories mentioned in the Word; for instance, John speaks of the "victory that overcometh the world, even our faith", and in the messages to the seven Churches in the Revelation, it is to the "overcomers" that the promises are made. Victory is gained only after battle, and a battle is but one phase of a larger campaign. Even men of the world are aware of the great struggle between good and evil, that open war which was declared in the early dawn of history (Gen. 3. 15) and which continues even to the present day.

This great struggle has passed through many phases; there have been great victories and ignominious defeats, but we are assured of the outcome, for it is foretold in the Word of God. Among many of the Old Testament prophecies foretelling this, Joel 2. 7-32 and Zeph. 3. 8, 9 describe both the final battle and its outcome. Turning to the New Testament we find in Rev. 6 2-17 and 10. 11-21 graphic pictures of this same event which give us the assurance that however dark the outlook, righteousness and truth will prevail against evil and error. We might spend much time and space reviewing the ebb and flow of this great combat through the Ages, but whilst it would be of great interest from an historical point of view, it would not help us over-much at this juncture, for we believe that we are in the time of the final battle which will bring to an end, for all time, the long antagonism between the two great forces of good and evil. Rather would we ask ourselves, how are we involved in this great struggle, what is our part or share, and what will be the outcome, both for ourselves and all mankind. Before answering these questions we must dwell for a while upon that great battle in which the two protagonists met face to face.

This clash is described in Matt. 4 where we read that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. In these days, the progress of a battle is presented to the public by the press, who send eyewitnesses into the battle area from which vantage point they can give first-hand details of the contest. Although the battle waged

between Jesus and the Devil in the wilderness was the most decisive in the world's history, we are almost without any real insight into its severity and intensity, for there were no human eyewitnesses to give a detailed account of the tremendous struggle which must have taken place as the Devil sought to destroy him who was to "bruise his head". Whilst much has been written concerning this critical period, it is necessarily conjecture on the part of the writers; what we do know is that at the conclusion of the conflict "angels came and ministered unto Him".

In these six words we have an eloquent comment upon both the physical and spiritual condition in which our beloved Lord was found as a result of this great battle. How very much he must have needed the ministrations of the angels.

We read in Luke 4. 13 that "when the Devil had ended all the temptations he departed from him for a season". This expression "for a season" leaves much to conjecture, but it is suggested that this would be more correctly translated "till a new opportunity occurred", and Moffatt's translation reads "till a fit opportunity arrived". Opinions differ as to just how much or how often our Lord was troubled by further attacks from his arch-enemy, and indeed the Gospel records give us very little insight into this aspect of our Lord's earthly life, but we can reasonably assume that the Devil would make and take every opportunity of seeking to destroy his foe.

On the other hand we realise that the majority of our Lord's temptations and struggles would have been locked up in His own heart, being known only to His Heavenly Father and possibly to the angels (on both sides) who were witnesses. There is, however, an incident recorded in Matt. 27. 39-43 which may be construed as an account of the final engagement of the conflict. It took place when our Lord was actually hanging on the cruel cross and reads "Those who passed by scoffed at him, nodding at him in derision and crying 'You were to destroy the temple and build it in three days! save yourself if you are God's Son! Come down from the Cross!'" So, too, the high priests made fun of Him, with the scribes and the elders of the people. "He saved others" they said, "but He cannot save Himself! He, the 'King of Israel! Let Him come down from the Cross, then we will believe Him! His trust is in God? Let Him deliver Him

now, if He cares for Him! He said He was the Son of God". How would these words affect our Lord as He hung there, not only racked with pain, but physically worn out with three-and-a-half years of selfless ministry, spiritually weakened by all the sorrows which for us He bore? Of course He was God's Son. How better could he demonstrate this than by coming down from the Cross! Of course He trusted in God, of course God cared for Him; how better could this be demonstrated than by a miraculous deliverance, unharmed by the cruelty of feeble men! What a stratagem! But our Lord was beyond all such artifice, He stayed upon the Cross thus proving himself to be an *OBEDIENT* Son, worthy to be seated at God's right hand. So ended the greatest battle of all time, not in the death of Jesus, but in His glorious resurrection, as a triumphant and victorious conqueror.

However, the great conflict between good and evil, between light and darkness, between truth and error, continues, and as footstep followers of Jesus we find ourselves involved. We have become so involved as a result of our consecration vows, for when we offer ourselves, and are accepted, as living sacrifices (to use another picture) we are also enlisting under the Captain of our Salvation. Does this mean that we, too, are to be subjected to similar attacks by the Adversary? The Apostle Paul had no doubts about the matter for he says in Eph. 6. 10-12 (Moffatt) "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might; put on God's armour, so as to be able to stand against the stratagems of the Devil. For we have to struggle, not with blood and flesh but with angelic rulers, the angelic authorities, the potentates of the dark present, the spirit-forces of evil in the heavenly sphere". In Ephesians chapter six we find a description of the whole armour of God, together with an insight into the nature of our enemies, and at least one of the weapons used against us. It is not our purpose to discuss the armour and the weapons with which we are equipped, but rather the weapons arrayed against us, the tactics adopted by our enemies, and, not the least important, the power and numerical strength of those who seek to gain victory over us. We would stress the last point, for one of the fatal mistakes in any warfare is to underrate the enemy.

We often think of Satan as our enemy, as indeed he is, but we should never lose sight of the fact he is the commander of a great force of evil spirits, all enlisted in his army with the express purpose of the rule of darkness, evil and error. Let us not think that the great Adversary is personally concerned with us individually; we believe he was so concerned with our beloved Lord and Master, for He was (and is) the leader, the pioneer of our faith, but we can-

not claim such an honour; rather would we realise that He has given His underlings the command to prevent us at all costs from becoming overcomers. Knowing that our enemies are legion we should seek to become aware of their methods and the rules which govern their tactics. There are, in the physical sphere, various kinds of warfare. For instance, we of this generation are being subjected to a "cold" war, a term which would sound strange to our forefathers. Some of us have been subjected to aerial warfare, and we are all familiar with such terms as "bacteriological" "atomic" warfare. We mention these only to emphasise the fact that the Adversary and his armies have moved with the times and are always inventing new ways and weapons of destruction. The Scriptures speak of our Adversary as "a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour", but we would suggest that such tactics would be very unlikely to intimidate the Christian at this end of the Age; and whilst we are aware of the fact that our enemies will use any and every means to achieve victory, we would suggest that one of the main methods used by the Adversary at this time, might be likened to the jungle warfare which has been waging so long in the Far East. In this type of fighting personal bravery and resourcefulness is pitted against individual cunning and craftiness, rather than concerted action in large numbers, and this would seem to be the method the Christian must adopt in meeting the craftiness of those who seek to destroy him. The rules of warfare adopted by the enemy are so foreign to us that we should be fully cognisant of them.

Orders for the day issued by the Satanic Majesty might well read as follows:—

1. Full use to be made of misrepresentation, lying and deceit.
2. Frontal attacks to be avoided; back-door tactics to be employed.
3. The enemy must be lulled into a sense of security before any attack is made.
4. All and any weapons may be used as circumstances indicate, even to the use of truth where the purposes of error can be served.
5. No mercy to be shown to any child of God, for darkness and error must prevail at all costs.
6. Any member of our forces who fails in his duty will be considered totally unworthy of his calling and will be dealt with unmercifully.

How can we hope for victory against such a ruthless and relentless foe?

What we must never do is to adopt any of his methods. Lies and deceit must be met with truth and righteousness, back-door tactics met with bold frontal attacks, and we must never allow ourselves to be lulled into a sense of security, for, until we lay

our trophies down such a contingency is possible. We must never under any circumstances deal unmercifully with any one who may APPEAR to have failed in his Christian duty, for we, too, may fail and will need merciful judgment. The realisation of the great and terrible forces arrayed against us might well discourage and dismay us were it not for the knowledge of the forces of righteousness and truth with which we are surrounded.

The Adversary, even in his fallen estate, has a claim to greatness, but he was soundly beaten by our great and glorious Prince Leader, and is now fighting a losing battle ; whereas our victorious Lord, raised to heavenly splendour, is leading us to victory. True it is that there is a host of demons now serving Satan, but let us remember, at all times, that for every demon disposed against us there are countless angels standing ready, not only to fight with us and for us, but to minister unto us when we are weak, wounded or weary.

So, armed with the Sword of the Spirit, clad in the whole armour of God, having the measure of the forces against us, conscious of the multitude of angels fighting with us and for us, let us press forward under the command of our Prince Leader, going on to a victory which will be final and decisive.

The fruits of victory are outlined in the Word, and will affect not only the victors but also their ultimate subjects, for the overcomers are to be seated with the Lord in His throne even as He overcame and is seated with His Father in His throne. This is one of the many promises held out to the overcomers, and we have not the space to discuss the remainder in the second and third chapters of Revelation, for they are each a subject in themselves, but taking them as a whole, we find that they embrace every aspect of life.

Some Christians of the last century took a rather literal view of the life hereafter and visualised an eternity of sitting down and playing a harp, but our

understanding of the promises holds out for us a life of glorious activity, not in any way laborious or onerous, but rather filled with loving service no longer as soldiers under a captain but as joint-heirs in a Heavenly Kingdom. The promise is that "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father," not merely as ornaments to brighten the heavenly realm, but as brilliant luminaries bringing light to a ransomed race and health to a world stricken with the sickness of sin and degradation. Then the overcomers—the victors of this Age—will not be mere symbols of power, as are many rulers of this day, but powerful, wise and just executives wielding the rod of iron of Rev. 2. 27, ruling the nations with that sublime authority which is now vested only in the God of heaven and our victorious Lord.

In summing up, we are conscious of the fact that we are quite unable to visualise, with our finite minds, the glory, the grandeur, the honour and majesty which will be conferred upon the victors of this Age, but our purpose has been to try to show that the activities which follow victory will be a fitting sequel to a lifetime spent in gaining the ascendancy over darkness and error, and which will be an abundant reward for those who have succeeded by God's abounding grace so to subdue the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness that they have proved themselves worthy to be counted among the overcomers. The way may be hard, the battle prolonged, the fortunes of war may at times seem to be turned against us, but what lasting joys, what eternal satisfaction awaits those who, at the end of life, rising to exultant heights, can say with the Apostle Paul "*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 unto all them that love his appearing*".

THE CHRISTIAN CALL

It was at Nazareth that Jesus first preached. His message embraced three points which are still true. *One*: to preach good tidings. Always characteristic of the Christian faith but often overlaid with theology. Jesus' message related to His coming earthly Kingdom when He recovers all from the grave and offers them full and final opportunity to take their rightful place in God's creation. *Two*: to comfort the distressed and free the captives. Christianity is a practical faith and the Christian is obligated to do good unto all according to opportunity. The method and sphere by and in which he does so varies with

individuals but the obligation is there. It is thus that Christians are the "salt of the earth." *Three*: to invite us to identify ourselves with Him in full surrender of life, abilities and possessions to His service. It is only in Christ that there is any hope for men, individually or collectively ; only by personal acceptance of all that He did, and does, and stands for, that we become acceptable to God ; therefore the greatest and most important aspect of His message is that which is expressed in the words "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The Five-Fold Vision of Jesus

Part II.—THE LAST TWO VISIONS

The first part of this exposition spoke of the three vision-pictures of Jesus and His work during the First Advent and the Gospel Age under the Revelation symbols of the Man-child (Rev. 12) the Lamb with the sealed scroll (Rev. 5) and the High Priest in the midst of the seven lampstands (Rev. 1-3). Each of these visions teaches one definite aspect of the Saviour's work for the Church and the world. Now the treatise concludes with the remaining visions, those of the angel at the incense altar (Rev. 8) and the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev. 14).

* * * *

The fourth vision is of a different nature. It takes us back into the doctrinal field, and it begins to look at the effect of Jesus' life and death in the world here and now. The Church comes into this picture also, for once the Ransom had been given on behalf of all men and Christ had ascended on high then the Church began to follow in His footsteps of suffering and humiliation, that one day she might share His glory and power. The beginnings of these things are shown in Revelation 8.

Revelation 8 is a chapter of judgment, judgment on the godless masses of the earth who have rejected Christ. It is not the final judgment because their rejection of Christ is not final. It is a picture of this present Age as respect the attitude men take toward Christ and His Church and the consequences which that attitude brings upon them. It brings into focus the position of those who suffer with Christ "without the Camp" being alien from the world and all its standards, "in the world but not of the world". Hence it is not surprising that the vision takes us back in thought to the days of Israel's tabernacle in the wilderness.

"Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne". (Rev. 8. 3.)

That angel is Christ, first during His own life upon earth and then, and more particularly, when He ascended into the presence of God "for us". This vision certainly does take us back to the Aaronic priesthood. It was the duty of the High Priest, offering the sin-offering, to take a censer of burning coals, and incense beaten small, into the Holy

with him when he carried the blood of the sin-offering to sprinkle on the Mercy-Seat. He could not enter the Most Holy with that blood until he had first offered incense on the Golden Altar in the Holy. With that cloud of "sweet smelling savour" preceding him into the presence of God, he could pass within the Vail and present the blood of the sin-offering in confidence that it would be accepted.

This is a picture of Jesus the Church's High Priest in its doctrinal aspect, officiating in the presentation of the sin-offering which is the means of removing sin from the world. Here again Heb. 2 comes in. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people". (Heb. 2. 17.) That is what the angel is doing here at the altar. The Ransom has been given; the man Christ Jesus has given his life on the Cross and the way is legally clear for all men to return from the grave and stand trial for life. But that of itself does not give them reconciliation to God. There is a long story yet to tell before that blessed outcome can be proclaimed. And the first step in the programme is the selection of those who, like their Master, are prepared to pour out their own lives unto death in a daily dying, as did He.

The prayers of saints, ascending up as incense before God, out of the angel's hand, picture the whole offering of all who during this Age come to God in consecration and give their lives to be buried with Christ by baptism into His death. There is nothing indefinite about this. The members of the Body yield their earthly lives and all their endeavours on behalf of the world's reconciliation to God just as truly as did Jesus. Their offering is accepted by God and ultimately is used by Him for the benefit of the world. That will be realised when the "righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their father". Jesus at Pentecost, having already offered up the fruits of His own three-and-a-half years of human life to be used in the interests of mankind's removal of sin and reconciliation, now offers up the prospective fruits of all the consecrated lives of all His followers yet to come, for the same purpose. And the Father accepts the offering. Henceforth it is true that "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him".

Having thus laid down the basis for the ultimate reconciliation of "whosoever will", the angel turns, filling the censer now with fiery coals alone, no more with incense, and casts it into the earth, and the consequence of that action is the progressive sounding of the seven trumpets, each with its tale of judgment upon an unbelieving world.

That, after all, is just what Jesus foretold. "I am not come to bring peace, but a sword". He knew that the message he brought to earth would be rejected by many, and since the hearing of the message brings responsibility, the rejection of the message can bring naught else but judgment. That judgment came first and heavily upon the people who first rejected Christ, the Jewish nation. Hail and fire, mingled with blood, came to the earth, and the Jewish world was destroyed.

So it has been throughout the Age. Even although it is true that God has appointed a future day in which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17. 31) the fact cannot be ignored that there is a responsibility upon men now to do what in their hearts they know to be right. Every rejection of the wise counsel of God brings corresponding penalty; every persecution of those who do serve God involves retribution. The world to-day has departed from right principles to a greater extent than ever before in its history, the time of the Flood perhaps excepted; and the world's trouble is greater in consequence than has even before been known. "A time of trouble" said the angel to Daniel "such as was not since there was a nation". (Dan. 12. 1.)

So we come to the fifth and last vision, that pictured in Revelation 14 under symbol of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him the hundred and forty-four thousand having the Father's name written in their foreheads. This is a wonderfully soothing and comforting picture; all the strife and trouble and disappointment is over and the redeemed have entered into everlasting peace—but that aspect of the picture is only prospective as yet. Chapter 14 goes on to speak of things that definitely have their place at various times during the Gospel age, from the proclamation of the everlasting gospel at its beginning to the treading of the winepress at its end. In great measure it parallels the fifth chapter and the breaking of the seals, but whereas the events of chapter 5 are those of the social order these in chapter 14 are of the ecclesiastical order. Naturally enough, therefore, the vision of chapter 14 has to do chiefly with those who at least have named the name of Christ, and it is out of such that the members of the hundred and forty-four thousand are drawn. Hence the insistence of verse 4 that these on the Mount Zion are "they which were not defiled with

women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth". In the Epistle to the Hebrews a pointer to this vision is given in chap. 3, verse 6 "*Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*". This company on Mount Zion is a house over which Christ is the head; the fact that they stand on Mount Zion is a symbol of their being overcomers, and the whole picture is a foreview of what will come at the end when the Church of Christ has completed its earthly course and has been translated to the heavens and united for all eternity to the Head.

But this 14th chapter has a present application which is very real. The Lamb standing on Mount Zion, surrounded by the Church, immediately prior to the messages of the everlasting gospel and the doom of Babylon, pictures the commissioning of all consecrated disciples, of whatever period in the Age, to undertake their life's work. To some, especially in the early centuries, it was to go out proclaiming the everlasting gospel. To others, in later times, it was to witness against the falsity of great Babylon and warn the faithful against any kind of alliance with, or sympathy for, the apostate systems of men. Still later it was to proclaim the imminent presence of the Son of Man, returning in spiritual glory to gather His saints to himself, and finally it was to witness to the inevitability of Divine judgment upon a guilty world. These early verses of chapter 14, picturing a radiant and joyful company standing on Mount Zion, the royal mountain of Jerusalem (Zion in the Old Testament) are paralleled by the declaration of Heb. 12. 22 "*Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven*". This is a present achievement and not a future state. We have now come to Mount Zion and we now stand upon it, secure in the knowledge that our Lord will never fail us, and therefore if we maintain our faith we are surely saved. As the same writer shows so plainly in chapter 4. 9, "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works". If we have measured fully up to all our privileges we will have come into the secret place of the Most High and received that God-given peace which in very truth puts us upon the Mount Zion. We can sing the song which none but the redeemed can sing. We have come into a world apart from this present world, a condition of existence in which old things are passed away and all things are become new.

This Mount Zion, then, is the state of perfect peace and confidence into which all of the consecrated should pass when they accept the leadership of Jesus in their hearts and lives. No matter what may be our position in the everyday workaday world, no matter how hard the circumstances or how trying our environment, no matter how near the world, the flesh and the devil and how far away those Divine ideals toward which we seek to approach, we can all the time be on Mount Zion singing the new song and rejoicing in the constant spiritual presence of our Lord with each. Even although all this is a matter of the heart and mind it is no less real. It is this standing on Mount Zion in company with each other and with the Lamb that is steadily taking us more and more out of accord with the things of this world and bringing us more and more into harmony with the things of the spirit. *"We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image"*.

That is the final lesson. Of these five glimpses of Jesus and His work at His First Advent and during this Age on behalf of His Church, surely none is

more appealing and soul-inspiring than this one which tells us what is to be the glorious outcome of it all. *"In their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault"*. That is the intent and purpose of the Gospel Age, to develop and perfect a company of beings of whom it will be declared, when the work is finished, that "they are without fault". Glorious, not only for themselves, but for all the world, for if God can so work upon the hearts of these weak and imperfect creatures to render them without fault before His glorious majesty in the courts of heaven, He can surely do the same with all the sons of men, "whomsoever will", in the coming Millennial Day upon earth. If Jesus can so work on the hearts of these few during this Gospel Age, surely He can do the same for others in the next Age. The work of the Good Shepherd with the Church now is an earnest of what He will do with the world later on. The High Priest standing now in the midst of the seven lamp-stands, ministering to His beloved, will come forth with them in the blazing glory of meridian sunlight to extend the blessings of His loving care and shepherd rule to all the nations.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in Isaiah 53

Part 12.—"WORTHY IS THE LAMB"

"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" (vs. 11).

When the Creator of all things stood and viewed all that He had made, He pronounced it "very good". That was at the close of the primary work of creation, when man had been given life and introduced to his Edenic home, but before experience of evil began to have its effect on the moulding of human character to the ideal which God set in the beginning. Even that incomplete work was considered "very good" by the Lord of All. By how much more, therefore, shall our Lord be satisfied when he beholds the glorious consummation of His redemptive work! The tremendous forces of material things, working together over vast spans of time, eventually brought this universe of ours to the point where our earth was born. After further long ages, whilst angels looked on, this planet became fitted for human habitation. The morning stars had sung together, and all the sons of God had shouted for joy. Man lived, and rejoiced for a brief spell in the innocence and happiness of Eden. Then came sin, and the orderly progress of Divine creative

power was rudely interrupted. Death reigned over mankind; no longer was man the lord of the lower creation, having dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowl of the air and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. And God was not satisfied.

That is a most important principle. God, who had looked upon His creation in the days of Adam's sinlessness and perfection, and found it satisfactory, after the Fall was not satisfied. He did not intend to leave matters where they were. There and there He put into operation the great Plan of redemption of which Jesus is the central figure. The serpent was to bruise the heel of the seed; but the seed was to bruise the head of the serpent—to destroy it. That was the promise given in Eden, and although many long years were to roll by before there was any outward evidence of a Divine moving to the fulfilment of the promise, still God was not indifferent. In the fulness of time the work of deliverance began.

Here in Isa. 53 that work has ended. The Deliverer looks back upon the dark and tragic story of the past, and views the glorious consummation in the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to the

Father. All that mankind has achieved during the thousand year day of trial that we call the Millennial Age has been in consequence of the "travail of His soul". All that ascends to God in praise and worship from the multitudes of redeemed humanity is the direct result of the "travail of His soul". The happiness and the loyalty of all mankind, the beauty and the glory of the restored and ever-lasting earth, the peace and harmony of a whole creation ordering its course exactly as God desires it shall be ordered, all has come about because of the "travail of His soul". So when our blessed Redeemer looks upon the human creation made perfect through belief in Him and willing acceptance of His sacrifice on their behalf, He will be satisfied. As He enters into communion with the glorified body of saints who are called His Church, "changed" to be like Him and to be with Him where He is, He will be satisfied. All these wondrous fruits of the Divine Plan will be sources of satisfaction to the One who suffered and died for us that we might live for ever with Him.

The fact that our Lord will only be satisfied by such a sequel to His life and death on earth is only one of the evidences we have in the Scriptures that the Plan of God is going to be a glorious success insofar as the number of the saved is concerned. In the old days it used to be thought that only the very few would be saved; the great majority were doomed to rejection and eternal banishment to hell. To-day we view matters differently. We know that God would have all men saved and is putting forth every possible inducement to effect that end. If any man is rejected at the last it will only be because he has deliberately and of set intent wilfully resisted every good influence God can bring to bear upon him, and he is determined to continue in his sin. Every indication is that there will not be more than a comparative few of such.

How has this wonderful sequel to the Divine Plan, the reconciliation of all who will, been effected? It is by the knowledge possessed by our Lord. Knowledge of God, gained by His presence with the Father "before the world was", when He was as the Father's right hand, rejoicing always before Him. Knowledge of man, gained during His earthly life when He was made like man that He might share with men in all their infirmities and sorrows, and be made a merciful and faithful High Priest able to have compassion upon the ignorant and them that are out of the way. Knowledge of the Devil and his wiles, gained both from the times before the fall of Lucifer, when he was a sinless creature in the high courts of Heaven, and in the time when he bore the grim title of prince of this world. It was because of this knowledge that our

Lord was able to carry out his mission with inflexible determination and assurance of ultimate triumph. He, the Lord of glory, was of necessity possessed of all knowledge; that is why his personality is present under the name of "Wisdom" in the early chapters of the Book of Proverbs. In later days the "Wisdom" of early Jewish thought became the "Logos" or word, thought, mind, of God. The "Logos" in turn became identified with the Man of Nazareth when John, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, told his listeners that the "Logos" had been made flesh so that the invisible and incomprehensible Son of God might be manifest among them and to them. So the One who lived among men, ministering to them, taught them, suffered with them and ultimately suffered for them, being put to death upon the Cross, was himself the repository of all Divine wisdom and knowledge, the very Logos of God. Thus it was that by his knowledge the One we love and serve justified many.

"For he shall bear their iniquities". "When" he shall bear their iniquities, is the right thought. It is when Jesus has borne the iniquities of the children of men and given himself a Ransom for All, that the basis of justification is laid down. Even then men are not automatically justified, for there is man's part in this matter as well as that of God. No man can be justified by faith until he has exercised faith and become conscious of faith in Jesus Christ. No man can enjoy the state of reconciliation with God which is the state of justification by faith until he has first accepted Jesus as his Saviour and trusted in him as the basis of his acceptance before God. And no man can attain that state without repentance—repentance for the sin of the past, repentance for his own share in the undone state of the world, repentance for all that he is that is out of accord with the Divine ideal. And not very many do thus repent in this Age. Even though God has ever since Pentecost extended to all men a call—nay, a command—to repentance, few of earth's millions have as yet heard the call and still fewer have heeded it. And meantime the world goes on in its sin and the Redeemer still bears its iniquities, and must do so, until at length those iniquities are for ever removed by the cleansing measures of the Millennial Kingdom. In that day it may truly be said that the righteous servant has justified many, that the Plan of salvation has reached its glorious climax and the fruits of that two-thousand-year-old manifestation of the Divine Logos in human form "for the suffering of death" has "justified many".

"Therefore will I appoint him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and

he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Vs. 2).

This final verse is something like the "Hallelujah Chorus" in Handel's "*Messiah*". It is the acclamation of triumph that ends the story. This glorious climax was inevitable from the first; there was no doubt at all of its coming, but none the less it resounds with notes of joy and gladness which could not have been struck before. This is the Father setting the seal of His own satisfaction upon all that has been done. The first two clauses of this verse constitute a picture of a victorious warrior returning from the battle to receive honour and reward from his King. The Lord Jesus Christ is the warrior and he has vanquished death and all its powers and driven sin and evil far away so that they can never return. There are many captives and trophies of the battle; all those things which in any way have opposed the righteousness of God or have flouted His laws or have ravaged His dominion have been subdued and led captive by the conquering Christ. All enemies have been put under his feet. But since he also is to be subject unto God Who did put all things under him, that God may be all in all, it is an entirely appropriate picture here that shows him bringing the trophies and spoils of victory to God his Father, as it were, and receiving back from his Father's hands the reward that it is to be rightfully his. We know what that reward is; in the name of Jesus shall every knee bow, both in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So when the Father is depicted as declaring "I will appoint him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong" He implies that He himself is the great and the strong one to whom has been rendered the spoils of war and who divides those spoils with His Son, who is the victor in the conflict. In no better manner could we have had shown to us the unity which exists between the Father and the Son in the final triumph over evil. The whole Plan of Redemption is of the Father; its execution is by the Son. The power which overthrows evil is of the Father; that power is wielded by the Son. During the long period while sin subsisted upon the earth but as yet the time for the work of atonement had not come, Father and Son co-existed in the heavens, working in complete unity and oneness of thought and purpose. When in due time Christ Jesus was "born into the world to save sinners" the Father in heaven, dwelling in the indescribable light which no man can approach unto, and the Son on earth, made in the form of a bondman, manifest to men in the likeness of humanity, remained still in the intimacy of unfettered communion and the harmony of per-

fect unity. When the time of sacrifice and suffering was ended and the way prepared for men to walk the highway back to God, the risen Christ ascended to perfect reunion with his Father, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In all of this the relationship of the Son to the Father is clearly shown; and now in the end of all things the Son receives from the Father excellent honour and glory. God the Father has appointed him a portion with Himself the great; He has graciously given that the Son shall divide the spoil with Himself the strong, and so the heavenly chorus goes up in jubilation "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches, and power, and honour, and glory, and blessing*".

Because he poured out his life unto death—that is why. For three-and-a-half years he faithfully carried out his earthly commission and the whole of that ministry was a pouring out of his life unto death. Jesus not only died for men; he also lived for them, and that living was in itself a dying, for he died daily, giving and being given, spending and being spent, yielding to all who would partake, his flesh which was to be for the life of the world.

Because he was numbered with the transgressors—that is why. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. That becoming poor involved his being counted among the transgressors—he who knew no sin. It involved his being condemned as a criminal—He who knew no guile, neither was deceit found in his mouth. He the holy, the sinless one, was put to death as an offender against the holy laws of God, and counted among the criminals of this world. In bearing away the sins of mankind he was himself accounted a sinner. But that is the final note of triumph. By this very means he made intercession for the condemned and dying race before the Throne of God, and established his plea. The fallen sons of men, despairing and dying in the darkness, without hope and without God in the world, all unwittingly saw a great light. Adam's children, sitting unheeding in the land of the shadow of death, found the light streaming upon them. The Light of the world shone at length into their hearts, transforming the fear and gloom and terror into peace and joy and love. The all-powerful wisdom of God had found a way—the only way—whereby the creation of His hands could achieve its fore-ordained destiny despite the invasion of sin. The holy Son of God, looking down from his exalted station in the heavens "shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied", and from all the earth shall arise the joyful chorus "*Lo, this is our God we have waited for him we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation*".

The end.

THE ANGEL OF THE PRESENCE

A lesson from
the story of Israel

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest". (Exod. 33. 14.)

These lovely words, so full of encouragement and promise, were spoken to Moses whilst he was bringing the children of God through the "terrible wilderness" of temptation and trial, to the Promised Land. They also, surely, apply to all who to-day are seeking the "secret place" of the Lord's overshadowing wings in this present "wilderness" of doubt and confusion—this transition period, which is, praise God, drawing near to its end, and bringing us to the crossing of Jordan, and the Land of Caanan.

This glorious promise of God's Presence is ours to-day, and oh! what a continual stay and comfort it is. Let us, therefore, seek to understand the meaning more clearly of this gracious promise to all who, like Moses, are seeking to guide the people of God forward to the Heavenly Kingdom—the Promised Land.

How well Moses understood the promise is clear to see by the fact that he looked to the Lord continually on every occasion of strife, difficulty or doubt, and that the Lord's Presence was known to be with him was likewise clear by the Lord's response to his appeals in the sight of all the people.

In the words with which Moses answered the Lord's promise, however, we have a wonderful view of the at-one-ness of Moses with his God. Let us ponder carefully these revealing words in these days of darkness and doubt.

"Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the earth". (v. 16.)

It is by the Lord's Presence with us, then, that we know that we have found grace in His sight. Jesus made the same promise to His disciples, saying to them "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (or age).

St. John, in his epistles, shows how we may know that the Presence of God is with us:—

"And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us". (1 John 3. 24.)

If we have the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Comforter, we are safely led through all the doubt and confusion and the conflicting voices, by the Voice of the Indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ, and we are enabled to discern the true mouthpieces of

God, those who have His Spirit, and those who have not: "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God".

Yet another gracious promise is given to those who are guided by the Spirit of God, for St. John says: "the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." How difficult some find this promise to accept and to make their own, and to rely upon the guidance of Spirit which abides in us. Yet He is faithful who promised that "he will guide you into all truth" and also that "he will shew you things to come". (John 16. 13.)

"Where Thou art Guide, no ill can come".

As we come to realise more and more the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit, we become more and more sure of His guidance. We learn to trust the still small voice of the Spirit, and, like Elijah on Mount Horeb, we feel we must "wrap our face in our mantle"—a sign of deep humility, for our Mantle is the Robe of Christ's Righteousness, by which alone we can stand before the Lord, and in which alone we are "accepted in the Beloved".

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost". (Titus 3. 5.)

Again St. John says:—

"Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit". (1 John 4. 13.)

Oh what a wondrous gift is this. His "free gift" to all, bringing with it all that we need for our enlightenment, and our spiritual progress; of help and support, of strength in times of weakness, of upholding power when we would fall, of protection from the clamouring voices without, which would distract us from our pathway, of encouragement when we seem so alone, and of comfort and cheer when we are cast down by our faults and failures: when, with Elijah, when he cast himself under the juniper tree we feel inclined to say "Lord it is enough, I can go no further, I have failed utterly, and cannot go on". Then the Angel of the Presence—the still voice of the Spirit—comes to bring us refreshment and strength, and food for the journey, until, as Elijah did, we can go in the strength of that food to Horeb—the Mount of God.

All this, and much more, is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit, until we come to rejoice in the Indwelling Presence and say, morning, noon and

night "Praise be to thee for thine unspeakable gift".

Here, then, in this "free gift" of the Holy Spirit, is the fulfilment of the promise made to Moses:—

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared".

The Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is the Indwelling Spirit of whom St. Paul says:—

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you".
(1 Cor. 3. 16.)

Let us pray, therefore, that the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, with His Sevenfold Gifts, may be imparted to us all, and increase more and more. Let us pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh" in these last days, for

*"He came sweet influence to impart,
A gracious willing Guest,
While He can find one humble heart,
Wherein to rest".*

St. John, in his wonderful vision, sees the Spirit of God dwelling in the hearts of all men, and transforming their lives by His sweet influences, and gradually winning the world to Christ until—

*"All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing".*

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God". (Rev. 21. 3.)

Until we have found the Kingdom of God within our own hearts, being "born again of water and of the Spirit" (we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without this regeneration or re-birth of the Spirit) we cannot be effectual in bringing the Kingdom of God into the lives of others. The salt will have lost its savour if we have not the Holy Spirit indwelling us, changing us, moulding us, and conforming us to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Above all things will the Holy Spirit teach us to "Love one another". "If ye love one another God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us". (1 John 4. 12.)

*"Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost,
Taught by Thee, we covet most,
Of Thy Gifts at Pentecost,
Holy, Heavenly Love".*

St. Paul prayed for all his followers:

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another *and toward all men*, even as we do toward you". (1 Thess. 3. 12.)

As, therefore, we are taught by the Holy Spirit to covet the best gifts, so shall we, by His help and guidance, be taught to develop and increase them. Charity St. Paul describes as "the bond of perfectness", saying "Above all, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness". (Col. 3. 14.)

The fruits of the Spirit, he says are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith". May we, therefore, seek to realise the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit ever more and more, and thus come to trust His sure guidance, to develop His Sevenfold gifts, and to claim the promises of God to those who dwell in Him, and who have learnt to

*"Make our hearts Thy dwelling-place
And worthier Thee".*

As we learn to trust in the Angel of the Presence who will indeed go with us, we shall indeed find that "He will give you rest".

*As through the wilderness the People went,
Leaving reluctantly the world behind,
Lest they should falter, God His Angel sent
And fed the flame of hope in their dull mind.
A Fire by night His gracious Presence burned,
A Cloud by day He moved before their eyes;
None from the path of safety need have turned,
None have come short in His great enterprise.
Just to have known themselves to be but men,
Just to have let Him lead them by His Hand,
Just to have had a little faith, and then
All had come safely to the Promised Land!
And yet they failed. O, by their failure teach
Those that come after, in the same distress,
More faithfully to follow till they reach
The land that lies beyond the wilderness.*

A VITAL PRINCIPLE

The Bible declares that "the wages of sin is death"—not eternal torment. God has provided "a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained". (Acts 17. 31.) That day is the Millennial Age, when the Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King and require every man to make an intelligent choice between good and evil. The gift of life is given to man that he might voluntarily take his place and fulfil his responsibilities in God's creation, and if he is not prepared to play his part in maintaining

the creation in the peaceful and orderly state which is God's intention for it, the gift of life will be withdrawn and conscious existence ceases.

Here is a study for Bible lovers. First read Rom. 6. 23 and think about it for a moment. Then read in succession Gen. 2. 17, Gen. 3. 19, Rom. 5. 12 and Rom. 3. 23. After that turn to John 3. 16 and then read, successively, Ezek. 18. 4, Psa. 145. 20, Matt. 10. 28 and Psa. 146. 4. Then go back to Rom. 6. 23 and read it again. Whilst you are doing so remember what Satan said in Gen. 3. 4.

"MANY MANSIONS" — A COMMENT

A reader of many years' standing, going over the article entitled "Many Mansions" which appeared in the April, 1953, issue, is led to submit the following thoughts in John 14. 2. The suggestion differs in interpretation from the tenor of the article mentioned, but it is well worthy of consideration and thought, and in the belief that it will be of interest to many readers it is reproduced here.

* * *

Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus told His disciples that He was about to leave them. They were surprised and troubled. All their hopes seemed shattered. They had come to lean upon Him so much they felt like becoming sheep without a shepherd. Moreover they had hoped He was about to set up His kingdom so that they might be with Him forever. He too seemed disappointed that, having been so long with them, they had not understood His teaching or His mission. "If", He said, "you loved me you would have rejoiced". (John 14. 28.) "So", He exhorted them, "Trust in God (whose will it is) trust in me also". (John 14. 1.)

In paradoxical language He told them that if He did not go away they could not remain with Him. Then, in words familiar to everyone acquainted with the Scriptures, He said: "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you." Many interpret these words as a declaration that He was about to go to God in the heavens to prepare a dwelling place for them there but, after His resurrection, He said that He had not ascended to the Father. Where then was He going and what sort of place was He going to prepare? Weymouth's translation suggests an explanation: "In my Father's house there are many resting places . . . I am going to make ready a (resting) place for you".

The Father's house is universal. Solomon said, when dedicating the temple: "Who can build Thee an house; and the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." Psalm 139 also describes the omnipresence of God, and Jeremiah 23. 24, says: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

As the Creator of all things, the universe must emanate from, and be a manifestation of, God. The modern conception of Creation as a form of life or energy compels the thought that the Creator is an incomprehensible Being which none of His creatures can ever fully understand. Being infinite His will and wisdom must be perfect and with Him all things must work together for good. Nothing apart from His will can be true or right and everything that

conforms to it praises Him by obedience (Psalm 148) and is at rest with Him. Man alone failed to praise Him and forfeited the rest created for him in the beginning.

There was therefore a wide distinction between Jesus, the perfect Son of God, and His disciples who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. He had access to the Father; they had not. He had a right to life; they must die. If their hopes of always being with Him were to be realised they needed redemption. He was about to go *into death* for that purpose so that they might have eternal life and be at rest with God. Freely translated John 14. 1 would then read: "In the universe there are many kinds and planes of beings, all in harmony (at rest) with the Father. I am going into death as a sacrifice on your behalf so that you too may be at rest with Him even as I am". "No one has greater love than this . . . a man laying down his life for his friends". (15. 13.) "Because I live ye also shall live". (15. 19.) Thus He summarised the gospel He had proclaimed to them for over three years. No wonder He was disappointed. "Have I been so long with you and yet you have not understood me?" (14. 9.)

They were more mystified when He said: "Where I am going ye know and the way ye know". "How should we know?" asked Thomas. How should they know!! Had not the Law and the Prophets clearly explained that they could not enter the Father's house (presence) except by means of an acceptable sacrifice? "O dull-witted men with minds so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24. 25.) "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me".

But how did they know the way? His whole life had been an exhibition of self-sacrifice. Whatever circumstances He found Himself in, He accepted as the will of God and humbly submitted. It should have been evident, from the opposition of the High Priests and Rulers, that it must result in death. We cannot estimate the immensity of such sacrifice. He had it in His power to call on "more than twelve legions of angels" to defend Him but His loyalty to the Will of God prevented Him.

In this last talk Jesus was speaking to His immediate followers (His friends) and also to those who trust in Him through their teaching (John 17. 20.) His promise that "Where I am ye shall be also" is therefore very significant. This large group of followers (the church) will share in the First Resurrection and be raised to fulness of life

and righteousness. They will not always surround Him as then but will be "where I am"—in the same harmony and relationship with the Father—and be "like Him". He towered above His

disciples even as Adam above his fallen descendants. So the Church will be honoured and distinguished from the remainder of mankind until the restitution of all things is accomplished. (G.T.)

Whitsun Convention at Leicester—1954

Whitsun proved to be a great disappointment for many people due to the unsuitable wet weather for open air pursuits. But for those who enjoy Christian worship and fellowship, with sunshine in the heart, there was no lack of happiness. From Saturday mid-day in Leicester, the plans which had been commenced early in the year, began to materialise. As the time of the first session drew near, the spacious auditorium at the Boot and Shoe Trade Hall began to fill with brethren from all parts of the country.

At 3.15 p.m. Brother S. A. Couling (*Rugby*) extended a warm welcome to the friends who were present. Basing his remarks upon 2 Thess. 2. 16-17, he invited us to enjoy to the full the blessings which the Lord had provided. In the first address of the convention, Brother H. Chrimes (*Altrincham*) drew our attention to the very sharp distinction between those who have been "born again" and those who have not. He referred to our heavenly sonship and his concluding thoughts were an exhortation to trust in the power of God to keep us in the "evil day".

An interesting discourse entitled "Eldad and Medad" was given by Brother A. O. Hudson (*Welling*) in the evening. He first spoke of the lessons to be learned from the Numbers 11 narrative and later showed how Jesus repeatedly instructed his disciples to be tolerant and sympathetic towards all. He warned of the sin of judging others and the need to imitate Jesus in His attitude towards sinners and little children.

Sunday morning began with a short service of praise and devotion. This was followed by Brother W. D. Grey Rees (*Neath*) whose topic was "I am the true vine" from John 15. Having discussed the various aspects of our Lord's illustration the speaker drew some helpful lessons concerning our complete dependance upon and identification with Christ.

After lunch, the customary short talk from a young brother was given by Bro. Derrick Nadal (*Melton Mowbray*). Using the life of Nehemiah as an example he showed how a repentant heart, persistent prayer, and co-operation among God's people are essentials for effective service for Him. An interlude of praise and prayer gave many the

opportunity of choosing their favourite hymns. While this was in progress those who had attended the children's service returned to our midst. They had been hearing about the story of the Prodigal Son, and we are happy to record this brief note regarding this special item of interest for the little ones.

Brother H. E. Panteny (*Ilford*) gave a lively discourse on Ephesians 4. 13. He used some powerful illustrations to convey useful thoughts on growth and development and also emphasised the importance of reading, studying and memorising the Word of God. The tea interval, like all meal times at the convention, gave us an opportunity for informal fellowship. Two things seemed predominant in the conversations at Leicester at Whitsun; firstly, the Greater London Crusade under the leadership of Dr. Graham and secondly, the expected crisis in the world and the coming of the Lord. Not everyone shared the anticipation that this year would see the culmination of our hopes but we all look for the near establishment of God's Kingdom at such a time as He should plan. Nor did everyone condemn and criticise Billy Graham, in fact some, especially among the young brethren, expressed appreciation and pleasure concerning the work and wisdom of this great evangelist.

The evening sermon, delivered by Brother F. H. Guard (*Forest Gate*) was a powerful message in which sectarian dogma was contrasted with the really important "truth" of God's Word. In his own inimitable way the speaker stressed the value of a personal knowledge of God above a mere catalogue of facts. He urged his audience to prize above everything a true understanding of the character of God and of His worship.

The Midland friends have a high tradition in catering and this was most honourably upheld. An enterprising display of literature together with some brightly coloured texts made the hall a very pleasing and attractive place of worship. We look forward to yet further occasions (God willing) of such opportunities of fellowship and we trust that these few recollections will stimulate others to join with us in "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . .".

“Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me” A reader's comment

In the instalment of the series “Man of Sorrows” which appeared in the July/August issue there was a suggestion regarding the Lord's cry on the Cross “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” in which reasons were given for thinking that the usually accepted explanation, that for a time the Father turned his face from the Son and left him without the consciousness of His approval, is incorrect and that in fact the cry was an affirmation of faith and triumph in the words of Psalm 22. A brother who has given the subject some thought writes to offer certain considerations bearing on the other side of the question and, being offered in a helpful and constructive spirit, his words are reproduced below for the interest and thought of others who feel there is yet more to be said on this subject.

* * *

“We still continue to read the ‘B.S.M.’ with interest, and on the whole, are in agreement with most that is said therein. To be able to say that one is always in agreement with everything which is always published in any magazine is, to my mind, to expect too much. Perfect knowledge will not be ours until the church is glorified. Now we know only in part, or a little of much, as some translations put Paul's thought in 1 Cor. 13. But there is one point in the last Monthly upon which I should like to be permitted to make a brief comment. At first I was not going to bother to raise it, as every one is entitled to his or her own understanding on these matters which are not fundamental to our faith.

“I am referring to the statement in “Man of Sorrows” p. 107. It is there suggested that to believe that the cry on the cross was caused by the temporary withdrawal of the Father's face was to imply ‘that for a moment our Lord's faith failed’. To my mind, dear brother, this is just the argument to the contrary. If the turning away of the Father's face was an actual reality (because of sin-bearing) then our Lord's faith was not failing. It could only fail if in actual fact the Father had NOT temporarily forsaken Him. The question really is, Had the Father turned away His face from His beloved Son or not on the cross? If not we say it in reverence—then our Lord's faith WAS failing Him, because the Father had NOT turned from Him. But if the Father HAD in fact turned from Him then the Lord was

not calling out because of loss of faith, but because of the reality of the experience. You go on to say that Christian men who have suffered martyrdom for their faith without sign of deliverance from God, and yet remained firm in faith, would in this case be superior to our Lord in faith. This would indeed be true, if the Father's face HAD NOT indeed turned from His beloved Son, but not true if this was indeed a real experience—an experience through which, according to Heb. 13. 5, no member of the Church can pass. Our Master's experience, was therefore unique. The cry on the Cross was a real one, but not through lack of faith. It was not uttered, as seems suggested in the article, just to show fulfilment of Psa. 22. This would make a mockery and a farce of our Lord's experience. It also leaves unexplained the agony and prayer and bloody sweat in the garden. What was our Lord fearing? Not the death on the cross—all through His ministry He knew *that* lay before Him. The burden of the sin-bearing agony—of being *made sin* for us, who *knew no sin*, was falling heavily on His soul.

“I leave these few thoughts with you, dear brother. Much more could be said, but I think it better to leave it there. I have no wish that it should be thought that I am trying to force my understanding of the matter on another fellow believer; that would not be a right thing to do: but the true understanding of this matter has cleared up many difficulties for me; difficulties which I have seen many try to explain, and fail to do so.

“I would like to point out in passing that ‘hiding the face’ is associated with ‘forsaking’ in Psa. 27. 9, and ‘hiding the face’ is always because of sin (Isa. 59. 2; 64. 7.) The beloved Son of God had no sin of His own, but He bore the sin of others. Psa. 69 is prophetic of our Lord—v. 9 and 21 is so quoted in the N.T., and v. 17 speaks of our beloved Master as saying ‘Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble, hear me speedily’—or as the R.V. renders—‘I am in distress—answer me speedily’. Our Lord's prayer WAS answered—the breaking of the blessed relationship of *Father* and *Son* was only for the moment—the last cry from the cross—like the earlier ones—was ‘FATHER’. The sin-bearing cry of agony was ‘MY GOD’.” (G.S.)

An Old Clock Speaks

There is an old clock in Wimborne Minster, Dorset, which was constructed in the 14th century. It is an unusual clock in that it indicates the hours of the day and the day of the lunar month by means of a model sun and moon both moving round a central model earth. Despite its great age the clock is still working and still indicates the correct time.

When that clock was made, it was the universal belief that the earth was the centre of the universe and that the sun moved round the earth—once every day. That was why the clock was made in that fashion, with the sun travelling round the earth to mark the hours. The discoveries of Nicolas Copernicus, which demonstrated that the sun's apparent motion round the earth is only apparent, and that it is the earth's own rotation on its axis which causes the illusion, were yet two centuries future.

So the clock was designed, and functioned, on the basis of a false theory. Nevertheless it did give correct time, and does so to this day. Although its external trappings represented the elements of a wrong understanding of science, its internal mechanism was constructed in accordance with right principles, and therefore the clock has served its intended purpose through the centuries.

So it is with the Christian life which is lived in the light of an only partially correct understanding of the Divine Plan. We are so often told of the necessity of an accurate understanding of doctrine.

Almost every sect demands that its particular distinctive doctrines are necessary to real and full acceptance with God. That is not true. Repentance of sin, and justification by faith in the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consecration of life to God on that basis, are the things which bring us into the condition of full acceptance with God. Doctrines have their place in shaping our characters and determining the course of our lives after that position has been attained, but the believer does not depend upon a full and accurate understanding of every Biblical doctrine before God can put him to useful service. To assert otherwise would be to deprive all of us of Divine approval, for with all our knowledge of the Divine mysteries we all still know only "in part". It is not until "that which is perfect is come" that we attain to fulness of knowledge in Christ. In the meantime, even if our knowledge of Bible teaching is like the front of the clock in Wimborne Minster, a bit behind the times, not so correctly represented as it might be, let us rejoice if our internal mechanism is sound, if we have been truly reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Let us rejoice if we have been buried with Him by baptism into His death, and have risen to walk with Him in newness of life. We can be sure that the rest will follow in the Lord's due time. For, after all, we have the assurance "He preserveth the paths of his saints" and if in perfect sincerity we have given ourselves to Him then we know that He will do the rest.

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.

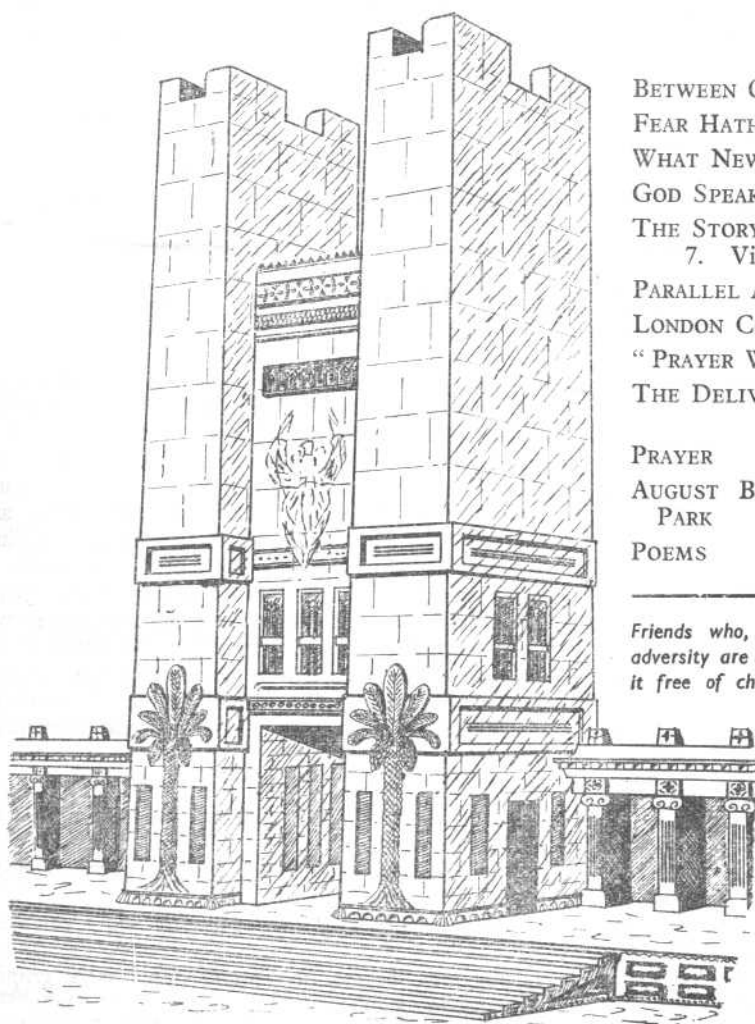
Vol. 31, No. 9

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	...	...	130
FEAR HATH TORMENT	...	...	130
WHAT NEW THING IS THIS?	...	...	131
GOD SPEAKS!	...	...	134
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD			
7. Vindication of Faith	...	...	136
PARALLEL ACCOUNTS OF THE FLOOD			138
LONDON CONVENTION, 1954	...	...	140
"PRAYER WAS MADE"	...	...	142
THE DELIVERED REMNANT AND THE GREAT NATION			144
PRAYER	...	...	146
AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY IN HYDE PARK	147
POEMS	148

*Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
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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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Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

It has been found necessary to combine the October and November issues in one and to publish this in the middle of October, making it a slightly larger issue than normally. A number of circumstances having conspired to delay the work of preparation made this the only practicable course and we are sure that our brethren will understand the position.

The next issue will be that for December.

Gone from us

Sis. E. Johnson (Swannington).

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

FEAR HATH TORMENT

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace."

Trenchant words, for they speak of the greatest obstacle to Christian progress we can find in our own characters. Fear is a gesticulating boggy which gibbers in front of the mental vision of every Christian who has not sufficient confidence in his Calling to press forward in implicit belief that even his mistakes and errors of judgment will be used in the Divine economy to effect good works in his character or in those of fellow-members in due course. To be an alert and zealous disciple in these days demands a full assurance of faith and supreme confidence in the overruling power of God in all of our affairs. *"He hath opened mine eyes, and I have seen the Holy One, the Lord of Hosts. His angel hath touched mine lips with the live coal from the altar; and I have heard the Divine voice speaking: Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?"*

If in our later days we can summon to our side the same devoted, zealous spirit which at the beginning prompted us to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me", then indeed the spirit of fear will find no lodgment.

In these days of no open vision and when the lamp is burning low in the Temple of God there is need not only for clarity of vision and depth of spiritual insight but also for definiteness of purpose and determination to think, to speak and to act upon behalf

of the scattered of Israel. That alone will be the antidote to the spirit of apathy and lethargy which settles like a miasmic cloud upon the assembly of saints who have begun to lose the freshness and zeal of their earlier days. These times of depression come to all of us. The toils of the way, the strife and schism caused by false brethren, the apparent failure of fond and perhaps long cherished hopes, cause us like Hezekiah to want to go softly all our years. Would that we could be equally appreciative as was that good king when a term of years is added to our time, and go forward with faces up-raised, remembering that we are still and for all time His witnesses, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

*"His Word was as a burning fire shut up within my bones,
For fear was there; and while it stayed I heard not heaven's tones
But I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay,
For men around in sin and death were groping for the way.
And faith was strengthened whilst I sought to bring them to the light,
And lo! Millennial Day was come—and gone,
earth's weary night."*

What New Thing Is This? *Some reflections on the power of Christianity*

Part 1—THE WAR WITH JUDAISM

“ . . . he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. . . and they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying ‘What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him!’ ” (Mark 1. 21-27.)

It was right at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry that men realised a new thing had come into the world. For so many years they had known only the stereotyped tradition-serving pronouncements of the scribes, barren alike of illumination or inspiration. All their lives they had been familiar with the glorious history of the long-distant past, when the arm of God was demonstrably outstretched to bless and protect, and miracle wrought by prophet or seer, or by the direct intervention of God, was no uncommon occurrence, but they in their own lifetimes had never seen a miracle. Now the unexpected and the unbelievable had happened and a man, a messenger of God, stood in their midst teaching and preaching with the confidence of Divine authority, and healing the sick and diseased of body and mind, in outward token of that same authority. No wonder the people cried to one another in wonder “What new teaching is this? What new thing is this? With authority this man teaches and commands, and his teaching is positive and his commands are imperative! Even the demons listen, and obey! What does it mean?”

It was at Capernaum, the Romanised town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, that Jesus found the first real response to His ministry. He had travelled a little in the countryside around Nazareth and become somewhat known—we are told by Luke that “there went out a fame of him through all the region round about” (Luke 1. 14) and then He returned to Nazareth and ministered in the synagogue there, before the townsfolk who knew Him so well, reading to them the 61st chapter of Isaiah and applying it to His mission, there and then commencing. His own people rejected Him and He went back to Capernaum and it was there that He preached to good effect and performed His first mighty works. The marriage at Cana of Galilee, at which He turned the water into wine, must have been just before this, and since according to Matthew (4. 13) He did about this time leave Nazareth to

dwell in Capernaum, teaching every sabbath in the synagogue, it is possible that the entire family migrated to Capernaum, perhaps induced to leave Nazareth after the scene in the synagogue and probably subsequent ostracism on the part of neighbours. John 2. 12 may indicate something like this.

It was at these sabbath synagogue services in Capernaum that there became manifest that which has been the distinguishing mark of Christ’s message and of Christianity from that day to this. Luke has it; he says (4. 32) speaking of the worshippers’ reaction to this One Who had so revolutionised the teaching in their synagogue “they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with *power*.” That word was to recur a great many times in the history of Jesus and of His apostles before their lives’ works ended; and it has recurred many times since, and will recur, for the great secret of the faith which we in our day hold as our own, the faith that we know is one day going to save the world, is that it is a faith of *power*. Seemingly impotent in the face of the world’s sin and the forces of evil, there is nevertheless a mighty force lying quiescent beneath the surface, only waiting for the due time; and when that time has come there is nothing in all God’s wide creation that will be able to prevent its exercise to full effect.

The people judged rightly when they asked “What *new* teaching is this?” for despite the fact that it was built upon the Law and the Prophets the teaching of Jesus was definitely a new thing and was destined to supersede that which was now decayed and waxed old and ready to vanish away. (Heb. 8. 9.) Here is the first leading characteristic of our faith, of Christianity, its **NOVELTY**. What we receive from Jesus and what we in turn hold out to the world is **NEW**. Mankind built up the records of history over long millenniums of years without sensing or glimpsing anything like the wondrous revelation of God that came in the person and message of Jesus Christ. They were weary and sick of heart long before the light appeared, so much so that the prophet speaks of them as the people who walked in darkness and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. But he declared in the same breath that at the time of their extremity a great light was seen, and that light came and shone upon them. That was what the people of Capernaum experienced

and what every generation to which the gospel of Christ has been preached has experienced. They have seen and heard something new and it has been something that they have never seen or heard before.

Nowhere is this new power that had come into the world shown up in greater relief than in the narrative of the early chapters of Acts. Peter, standing up with the eleven, evoked an astonishment and an amazement on the part of his hearers that was only equalled by that which had been caused three and a half years previously when Jesus commenced His ministry. It is noteworthy that precisely the same expression is used in both accounts, in Mark 1. 27 and in Acts 2. 12 "And they were all amazed." The result of the first Christian sermon ever to be delivered was, as we well know, that the whole vast concourse was stricken with remorse and cried out to the apostles "Men and brethren, what shall we do?". There and then the Holy Spirit convicted those men and women of sin, as Jesus had foretold would be the case (Jno. 16. 8) and the spirit of repentance came upon them, and in obedience to the Apostolic injunction many gave themselves in submission and consecration to the Lord they had previously rejected, "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Thus was the Christian Society established, a new brotherhood of kindred minds the strength of which all the forces of evil immediately began to test. But the proud gates of Hell have never prevailed against it. The Christian society remains in the world to-day, two thousand years later, and nothing of all the forces that have been brought to bear against it has ever successfully resisted that power by which it lives, the power that was given to the Church at Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit.

It could not have been many weeks before the second great test came upon the new society and it emerged stronger than ever. Peter was preaching again, and this time had taken his stand in the courts of the Temple itself. Once more we meet the familiar expression; the people "were filled with wonder and amazement" at the miracle that had been performed by Peter. Once more the power operating through the Christian community, the power of the Holy Spirit, had manifested itself to the people and forced them to consider anew this new thing that had come into the world. Once more they were compelled to listen to the ringing declaration, so unwelcome to those in authority amongst them, "the God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus . . . whom God hath raised from the dead."

Those authorities did not dare delay any longer. Mysterious though this new power which inspired these men may be, they must in sheer self-defence take some action to preserve their interests. Peter and the others had given them a loophole by speaking

to the people from the Great Court, within the jurisdiction of the priesthood having charge of the Temple area. They could be charged with an offence against the ecclesiastical regulations. And so the Temple guard, a kind of Jewish ecclesiastical police, entrusted with the task of maintaining order in that area which was barred to the Roman soldiery, was called in to arrest these presumptuous men and put them in ward until the Sanhedrin could be summoned. The apparent triumph of the priests must have been tempered with chagrin, for as a result of the day's events another five thousand converts had been made (Acts 4. 4). Temple guard or no Temple guard, the new and apparently irresistible power was still at work, turning men from the power of darkness and ushering them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The account of this assembly of the Sanhedrin—possibly the first occasion of its gathering since it met to condemn the Lord—is vivid with the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit. Here were Joseph Caiaphas the legal High Priest, his father-in-law Annas who had been High Priest during the boyhood of Jesus, and, maintaining his hold on power, was still tacitly known as such, John and Alexander, and other prominent members of Jewry. It was only a couple of months after they had, as they thought, removed the threat to their positions and interests by putting Jesus to death, and now here was the heresy arisen again in apparently greater strength than before. The expression in Acts 4. 13 "they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" means, in the Creek, that the judges began to recognise Peter and John as men they had beforetime seen with Jesus. *Then*, the prisoners now before them had been frightened, panic-stricken men, deserting their Master in His hour of trial and denying knowledge of Him with curses and oaths. It had seemed so eminently reasonable an expectation, *then*, that with the death of the leader, Jesus, the whole movement would collapse and nothing more be heard of it. *Now*, two months later, they looked at these same men, noted their bold, fearless demeanour, their absolute determination to continue with the preaching of this new doctrine, their insistence that Jesus, Who admittedly had been dead, was alive again, their uncompromising accusation that "ye crucified . . . whom God raised," and, once again, we have that familiar comment, "they marvelled."

Now notice the striking difference in the behaviour of the Sanhedrin. Only two months ago this same assembly had not hesitated to condemn to death the Man of Nazareth, despite what they knew of His super-human powers and His uprightness of life. They had cajoled and threatened the Roman governor in order to achieve their purpose. There

was no fear either of God nor man before their eyes when they set out to achieve their base design. Surely then it would have been expected that without any further ceremony they would have meted out the same treatment to these two men who quite evidently were bent upon restoring and propagating the teachings of the One the Sanhedrin had crucified. What had been done once could surely have been as easily done again. It must have been as great a mystery to that Sanhedrin that they could not do so as it would be to us, did we not know the reason.

The reason that the Sanhedrin was impotent was that the new power, the power of the Holy Spirit, was present at that assembly, and they could not fight against it. When Jesus was taken, no such power was in operation. He Himself told them, in the garden "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22. 53) and it was willingly that He went forth to death, submissive in the grasp of His enemies, conscious that the Father could indeed send, if it were necessary, twelve legions of angels to save Him, but conscious also of His own inflexible determination that it should not be so. That Sanhedrin had power on that dark night because all other power was deliberately withdrawn. The powers of darkness had full licence and liberty to work their worst, but it was for the last time. When the same Sanhedrin faced the same disciples two months later the position was completely reversed. The disciples were the ones confident, assured, conscious of power, and the Sanhedrin weak, hesitant, vacillating, dreading they knew not what and realising already that the initiative had slipped from their hands and they were fighting a losing battle.

The great city of Babylon was once the metropolis of the world—its merchandise was renowned among all nations. But the proud city was a city of sin, and Divine condemnation came upon it. The fiery words of the prophets regarding Babylon are familiar to all of us, and in fulfilment of those words, the site of Babylon has now, for thousands of years, lain desert and derelict, the proud buildings levelled with the ground, the wonderful gardens and parklands dry and sterile, and wild beasts the only signs of life.

In recent years there has been a change—date-palms are springing up everywhere over the ground that is ruined Babylon. During the archaeological excavations of recent years, dates formed the staple food of the native labourers, and the stones, thrown down haphazardly, have taken root and begun to clothe the desert with living green.

The date palm was the most valuable product of ancient Babylonia, providing food, several kinds of drink made from the juice of the fruit, timber for

Consider their dubious, faltering words, so unlike the arrogance and vehement hate of the previous occasion. "They could say nothing against it;" "What shall we do to these men . . . we cannot deny it;" "let us threaten them;" "They let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them." Who would have believed that this was the Sanhedrin which condemned and crucified Christ?

Peter and John went back to their brethren and the assembly rejoiced and praised God and prayed for more strength and boldness in preaching of His word. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4. 31). That was the secret. In their consecration and devotion to God and their zeal for His service and for witnessing to His Truth they found a new strength and laid themselves open for the ingress of the Holy Spirit with power, not only as individuals but as a community, and that was why the Early Church did such mighty works. The power of the Spirit was upon them and in them in more abundant measure than has ever been the case since.

So closed the first chapter of the Church's conflict. It had come into the world to supersede Judaism: it had challenged that dying system which commenced with Moses at Sinai fifteen centuries earlier and it had conquered. But in the very hour of triumph a new foe faced the infant Church, and with that foe it must now engage in a still more deadly conflict. That foe was Paganism.

* * *

Part 2 next month will tell of the conflict with Paganism and how, once more, Christianity was victorious.

building, and fibre for many other uses. This is the tree which is depicted as the "tree of life" in Babylonian and Assyrian legend and sculpture. How appropriate then that upon the very site of the city which above all cities stands for the reign of evil, there should now be springing up "trees of life", as a result of the work of men who have been busy there proving the Bible true.

During this Age the earnest consecrated followers of Jesus have been sowing seed—the seed of the Kingdom—and soon it will be springing into life in the very soil of the reign of evil, the hearts of fallen men, called at last to rise up from the ruins of this "present evil world", and see it transformed into a "world wherein dwelleth righteousness". The seed sown to-day will become trees of life in the Millennial Age just as those date-stones dropped in the ground of ruined Babylon are clothing the waste place with living green. "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

GOD SPEAKS !

*A brief glance at the
Book of Hebrews.*

God speaks ! So begins the epistle to the Hebrews ; and without the customary apostolic greeting : and properly so, for the writer's qualifications and his blessing on his readers must be left unmentioned while God is speaking. He speaks to a people whose first great leader exceedingly feared and quaked when the voice of God once shook the earth, and from whose ranks arose those mighty men of word and deed of whom the world was not worthy. He speaks to a people who had heard His voice through many centuries ; to a nation which could rightly claim that to them were committed the oracles. The olden prophecies had not come by the will of man for often the will of man was contrary, nor did the prophets proclaim together, but spoke at sundry times when the burden of the Lord was upon them. Being of Adamic descent they died like their hearers ; yet their words have not died, and they still speak to those who listen, and appropriate quotations are made in this epistle from their writings. And the passage of time has by fulfilment of their prophecies revealed that for all their frailty they are truthfully referred to as holy men of God who spake as moved by the Holy Spirit.

But a great change of procedure is announced at the opening of this epistle. God is speaking again, and the new channel of truth is the greatest He could desire or find, or man need. We all know through whom He now speaks, but the apostle, apart from speaking of Him as the Son of God, does not immediately announce His name. He first mentions some of His glories and greatness, and when he has thus prepared the minds of his Hebrew readers, he declares Him, in chapter two, to be Jesus. He is not of sinful stock as the early prophets, yet his words do not abrogate the prophecies of his predecessors, for all spoke by the Spirit's direction. But this will emerge from the comparison—that if God had of old spoken through the faithful several and is now speaking through one, His Son, then He must possess outstanding qualifications and virtues. He has ; and the first seven chapters of Hebrews tell, among other things, how much better, how much greater is this faithful and true witness than the stalwarts of the past. And note how, in those chapters, the faithful servants of old (the very ones revered in Israel) are one by one surpassed by Jesus the Son of God.

Early in the first chapter we see the close association of the Son and His Father, so complete that He is spoken of as the reflection of the power, the

character, the voice of God. But there are two facts in which the Son must necessarily differ from the Father, yet they also prove how glorious is the union of Father and Son, and they are that it is the Son who by himself purges our sin, and having done that great work sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. This is the channel through whom the message of God now comes, and it will be noticed that this new prophet is also priest and king. And he excels all previous holders of these offices in that He possesses the power of an endless life, enough to fit Him for all Israel's and the world's many needs. That he holds this immortality is seen in this chapter by his gaining by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels.

The remainder of the first chapter has as its theme the proving of the Son's superiority to the angels, and ample quotation is given from the voices of the past, which look forward to His coming and faithful performance of His Divine mission ; and these in turn seal the old writers as prophets of God. The apostle propounds the question—to which of the angels said he at any time, "thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." No answer is given, for there is none. His superiority to angels is so marked that the apostle uses that strong figure of speech—erotesis—where the unanswered question is more telling than any reply. Further quotations show the Son's work in the beginning of laying the foundations of the universe. Some of the work erected on those foundations will perish, but the founder will endure and bear a righteous sceptre in the coming kingdom.

Not to angels is assigned the great work of subduing the future habitable, affirms chapter two, yet it reasons that if the word once spoken by angels was accompanied by severe penalties we ought to give more earnest heed to the words which first began to be spoken by this new voice of God, which God himself has confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Great indeed must be the responsibility of the hearers now that the last and greatest voice from God is speaking ! And, leaving the subject of angels, the apostle mentions the superiority of the Son to man. This may be an obvious truth, yet if we recall that the Son was once of high heavenly rank and became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, or in other words that he might redeem man by dying for them, then his superiority to man can never be called in question. And his superiority

to the Devil is apparent, for by the same act of death He will render him powerless.

And then the comparison changes. Though superior to angels and man in general, He is shown as better than man in particular from chapter three forward; and the first great man in the list of worthies is Moses, one of the faithful voices of the past. It will be remembered that Moses the servant of God and of Israel the house of God, prophesied that he himself would be succeeded by another to whom they would hearken without fail; and thus he became a testimony or illustration of those things which were to be spoken after concerning Jesus the Son. But though Moses heard the voice of God and faithfully served the words to Israel, it was necessary for the house of God to be constantly prompted to loyalty by the insistent words, "To-day if ye will hear his voice." And all know that the word preached did not profit, for it was not mixed with faith in them that heard. Then the apostle mentions two more leaders in Israel, Joshua and David; yet both failed to give rest to Israel. The word of God had come to Israel through such as these at sundry times and in divers manners with but little result, and the word of God being quick and powerful spoke again and said, "They shall not enter into my rest."

It will then be reasoned that now that God is speaking by his Son, who surpasses Moses, Joshua and David, we ought to give the more earnest heed. It is as though the writer was saying, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, and how shall we escape if we neglect?" Yet, the warning note of chapters three and four is tempered by the announcement of the new voice of God being a faithful high priest Who was, apart from sin, tempted in all points like as we. So we may come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help. But we must listen to the voice.

The mention of high priest will remind the Hebrews of their first and greatest, Aaron. He did not take the honour to himself, but was specially called for the post, as was Moses called to his service. In fact, each of these leaders of old time was called to his service, and it was proper that Israel should heed them in those days when they spoke from God; but their superior has come, the princely leader of salvation, the Son, and they must listen to Him. They had looked to Aaron as model high priest even as they saw Moses as the great prophet, but both are succeeded by One, in whom combines each office held by Moses, Aaron, Joshua and David. When the apostle has compared one by one the leaders of the past with their one successor they must perforce accept Messiah. Again the writer points out their responsibility (in chapter 6), but again he has

comforting words to speak, for he is persuaded better things of them, even though he must speak strongly.

There seems to be only one more name in Israel to which they would cling now that each of their leaders has been superseded by Jesus, and he is the father of them all and in whom inhere the promises—Abraham. And, as we expect, the apostle shows how he too is superseded by the same one. None of them are superseded in the sense that they have been discarded by God, but the new channel of God's word and promise and deed is so much better than they, great though they were, and most worthy to be revered in Israel. Abraham received blessing from one of unknown descent and whose appointment as high priest came not in the fashion that Israel was accustomed to. Abraham gave him tithes in acknowledgment of his honour. Consider how great this man was, for he was made like unto the Son of God and he received tithes of Abraham and therefore of Levi and the whole house of Aaron, who in their turn received tithes of all Israel. Of such rank is Jesus the Son of God.

The apostle begins the eighth chapter as though the previous seven chapters are given to describing the glories of this One high Priest, for he says, "Of the things we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest", greater than angels, than man, than Moses, than Joshua, than David, than Aaron, and greater than Abraham. He it is through whom God now speaks, and we must give heed, for no better can ever be found.

The well-known "Two-minute Tracts" listed on back page of this issue are still available free on request, in packets of 100 assorted, and it will be a pleasure to send quantities to anyone who has use for them. Please state how many you can use and they will be sent by return.

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Hymn sheets suitable for public meetings are available, comprising folded four-page sheet with sixteen hymns specially chosen from the Hymnal, and space for name and address, price 8/6 or one dollar per 100 post free.

* * *

For the production of one single ear of corn we should need the same sun, the same sky, the same earth, and the same conditions as is needed for all the harvests of the world. If only one soul were to be redeemed, the same propitiation would be needed as is demanded by the entire population of a lost world. The sacrifice of Christ removes from the mind of God every hindrance to the pardon, the restoration, and the justification of every sinner.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 7—Vindication of Faith

It was in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, and on the tenth day of the second month of the year, that the loading of the Ark was completed. On that day Noah and his family looked for the last time on the world that was so shortly to be utterly destroyed. It could not have been without emotion that they surveyed the scene. This was the world they had known and the only world they could visualise. Here on this earth Noah had lived and laboured for six long centuries. Here had his predecessors lived, and here had been enacted the memorable events of ancient time, Eden, the Fall, the Expulsion, the exile of Cain, and the slow growth of the human family wrestling with the wild and untamed earth into which they had been driven all too soon. By the time of Noah much of the early pioneering was already a thing of the past, and men dwelt in magnificent cities with many of the refinements of civilisation about them. And now it was all to come to an end; the decree had gone forth and could not be recalled. Men had spurned and despised the opportunity of deliverance, they continued with their daily occupations and interests and refused to believe that verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth. So, sadly, we may be sure, Noah looked out from the safety of the Ark upon a scene at which he knew he would never gaze again.

There is plenty of evidence that the ancient year began in October—not until the Exodus did the children of Israel adopt April as the beginning of their religious year and even then their civil or secular year continued to begin in October, as it does to this day. This tenth day of the second month, therefore, corresponded to our mid-November. On that day the last of the beasts entered the Ark, already well loaded with stores and all else that Noah purposed to save from the old world, and on that day the Lord shut him in.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female . . . for yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." (Gen. 7. 1-4.)

According to Gen. 7. 2 every clean beast and bird was to be taken into the Ark by sevens and the

unclean beasts and reptiles by twos. This need not conflict with Gen. 6. 19 which refers to pairs only. Since the record goes on to say that immediately upon emerging from the Ark Noah offered burnt offerings of every clean beast and clean fowl upon the altar it is obvious that he must have had more than one pair of all such or those species would obviously have become extinct at once. If the "sevens" are assumed to have comprised three pairs for replenishing the earth and one odd one for the subsequent sacrifice the narrative becomes reasonable. Vs. 7. 15 "They went in . . . two and two of all flesh" can be as true of several pairs of each species as of one pair. It is probably the fact, then, that there were seven of every "clean" creature in the Ark and two of the "unclean."

What did Noah know about clean and unclean creatures? So far as the Bible is concerned, the distinction between clean and unclean is not made until the time of the Law at Sinai, something like two thousand years later. That fact has been seized on by some of the Modern Critics as proving that the Flood story is by no means so old as it claims, that it was written at a much later time in Israel's history when the distinction between clean and unclean beasts was well known. Of course it does not follow. There is no reason to suppose that the suitability of some animals for food and the unsuitability of others was not thoroughly understood long before the time of Moses. There is a great deal in the laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy which existed in legal codes of a thousand years before Sinai. It is much more reasonable to suppose that if God talked about clean and unclean beasts to Noah it was because Noah would understand perfectly what He was talking about, and no necessity existed to add an explanatory treatise on clean and unclean to what was intended to be a historical narrative of the Flood.

A point of greater interest is the fact that, apart from this passage, there is no evidence that the antediluvians were flesh eaters. The Divine permission given after the Flood and recorded in ch. 9. 3 "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you" would seem to indicate a change in man's diet to animal flesh at that time. The fact however that there is, coupled with this permission, a prohibition against eating flesh with the blood thereof would at least suggest that this was a practice that was already known and for the future must be forbidden. There is a passage in the Book of Enoch which declares

that the sons of the Nephilim, the fallen angels, were guilty of this crime: ". . . they consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them the giants turned against them and devoured mankind, and they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour the flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against them." (I Enoch 7. 3-6.) It is recorded in Gen. 4. 20 that Jabal, in the seventh generation from Adam, was the first to keep cattle; it is probable that the cattle were kept for food. Jabal would appear to have been contemporary with Methuselah so that the antediluvian age must have been getting on toward its close when the keeping of cattle came into vogue. All things considered, it seems probable that men were flesh-eaters for at least some centuries before the Flood, and the prohibition against eating flesh with the blood thereof which came immediately after the Flood was the first step in the Divine laws regarding this matter which became necessary with the progressive degeneration of human vitality. The law distinguishing between clean and unclean beasts, which was given at Sinai, was another such step.

The nineteenth century commentators used to ransack books on Natural History to discover just how many species of animals and birds exist in the world and then performed elaborate calculations to show that the Ark could contain them all. It is not likely, however, that Noah collected kangaroos from Australia, armadillos from South America, and polar bears from within the Arctic circle. It is much more likely that the animals in the Ark were drawn from his own immediate vicinity and represented the brute creation peculiar only to that part of the earth's surface which was devastated by the Flood. It is not a very important point; the narrative speaks of "all the earth" and "all flesh that moved upon the earth" but the question does arise as to what was intended by "all the earth". We in our day think of the entire planet with its six continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia and Antarctica. But Noah and the antediluvians could not have known of those continents; to them "the whole earth" was a comparatively restricted territory. A good illustration is afforded by the works of Strabo, the Greek geographer who lived and wrote when Jesus was a boy at Nazareth. Strabo undertook to describe the entire habitable earth, which to the Greeks was known as the "*oikoumene*." (This word *oikoumene* appears fifteen times in the New Testament to denote the inhabited earth—examples are Luke 11. 26 "Things which are coming upon the earth;" Matt. 14. 14 "In all the world for a witness;" Luke 4. 5 "showed him all the kingdoms of the world;" Heb. 1. 6 "Bringeth in the first-born into the world;" Rev. 12. 9 "Satan which

deceiveth the whole world.") Now Strabo is careful exactly to define the limits of the "*oikoumene*." Expressed in our terms, it extended from Spain to Western India in the east-west direction and from the British Isles to Central Africa in the north-south direction. That was the whole world so far as educated men at the First Advent believed. When they spoke of the whole earth, that is what they meant; they just did not know of the existence of America, Australia, the islands of the Pacific, Siberia and Eastern Asia, the Arctic or the Antarctic. Strabo's limited tract of the earth's surface was the "*oikoumene*", the inhabited earth, and outside that, they believed, was nothing but the barren ocean which surrounded all living things and in the midst of which the "world" floated like a kind of giant island.

Even more restricted must have been the ideas of the antediluvians about this earth on which we live. And just as when St. Luke, telling us that Augustus Cæsar issued a decree that all the "*oikoumene*" should be taxed, he meant the world as it was then known and not all men living everywhere, in regions not known to the Romans or the Greeks, so in this Genesis account, the words of God to Noah respecting the earth and its creatures need only be taken to refer to the earth that Noah knew.

We come next to a rather difficult problem, that of the numerous time indications in the narrative. A period of forty days is prominent; the waters are said to have prevailed for one hundred and fifty days. Noah sent out a raven at the end of forty days, but he himself remained in the Ark for twelve months. Chap. 7. 1-10 indicates that Noah entered the Ark seven days before the onset of the Flood but verse 13 would appear to indicate that he did so on "the self-same day" that the waters descended.

These apparent discrepancies are removed once it is known that Genesis 6, 7 and 8 really combine two separate and distinct Flood stories, interwoven to make a complete connected narrative, in the same manner that modern editors have produced a combined version of the Four Gospels interwoven to make a single story including all the incidents of each Gospel. Modern Critics like to call these two Flood stories the "Jehovistic" and "Elohistic" versions because usually they employ different words for the Deity—appearing in the Authorised Version as "God" and "Lord". The consequent theories propounded by the Critics need not be noticed here; it may rather be surmised that Moses, compiling the Book of Genesis, possessed two versions of the story and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit accepted the two as equally reliable and fused them together into one narrative. As to the originators of the two stories we have no clue; almost certainly one of them—the one that preserves the dates and times—

was written at the time the events were happening, by Noah or by one of his sons. The other might be a record made very shortly afterward. It might be that one story was preserved in the line of Shem and the other in that of Ham, the ancestor of the Sumerians, so that eventually Abram, a Semite living in the Sumerian city of Ur, would be familiar with both stories, possess copies of both, and take them with him into Canaan, whence they eventually came into the hands of Moses.

Properly to understand the story of the Ark's voyage and its outcome the two stories need to be

disentangled and set out side by side. An attempt has been made to do this, and the succeeding article in this issue sets out the twin narratives in parallel columns. The reader can thus see how they supplement each other and how the alleged discrepancies in the Bible story vanish when viewed in this light.

To be continued.

* * *

Further instalments of this series will refer back to the parallel narrative which now follows, and this issue should be retained for reference when reading those instalments.

THE PARALLEL ACCOUNTS OF THE FLOOD

STORY No. 1

6.5. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6.6. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

6.7. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

7.4. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

6.18. But with thee shall I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives and thee.

6.19. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

6.20. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

6.21. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

6.22. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

STORY No. 2

6.9. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

6.10. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6.11. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

6.12. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

6.13. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them from the earth.

(Here follow the directions for the construction of the ark, vs. 14-16)

6.17. And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die.

7.1. And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

7.2. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

7.3. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of the earth.

7.5. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

7.7. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

7.8. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth.

7.9. There went in two and two, unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

7.10. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

7.11. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

7.12. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

7.18. And the ark went upon the face of the waters.

7.19. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

7.23. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

7.24. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

8.1. And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged.

8.2. The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

8.3. And the waters returned from off the earth continually, and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

8.4. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

7.6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7.13. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.

7.14. They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

7.15. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

7.16. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him, and the Lord shut him in.

7.17. And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

7.18. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth.

7.20. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

7.21. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man.

7.22. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

8.6-10. And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. Also he sent forth a raven, which went to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

8.11. And the dove came to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

8.5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

8.13. And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

8.14. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

8.15. And God spake unto Noah, saying,

8.16. Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

8.17. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

8.12. And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again to him any more.

8.18. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him.

8.19. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

(Here follows the account of the sacrifice, vs. 20-22)

LONDON CONVENTION — 1954

As one leaves the busy thoroughfares of High Holborn and Theobalds Road to enter Red Lion Square it is like passing from stormy seas to a peaceful haven. Especially was this so for those who attended the fourteenth annual convention of Bible Students in the Conway Hall during the August Bank Holiday week-end. Before reaching the doors of the convention building one passes the pleasant gardens in the square. Here brethren may walk and talk together during the intervals between the sessions or sit quietly to meditate upon the messages from God's servants. Here too the children may relax more than is possible in the sanctuary.

It is 2.30 p.m. on August Monday. Many brethren in the vestibule are taking one of the last opportunities for informal fellowship while others are making last minute purchases at the bookstall. Strolling down the corridor we come to the Dining Hall where the catering staff are very busy packing up the "twelve baskets" and generally completing their onerous task of serving our meals. We are deeply indebted to them for their efficient service and most delightfully prepared menus, provided under very difficult conditions. Another labour of love is rendered by the brethren in charge of the cloakroom, which is just opposite the catering department, for they take care of surplus luggage, clothing, etc. Returning to the main hall, we pass a table of tumblers together with a jug of water for anyone who feels thirsty between meals, and we are reminded again of the thoughtfulness of our catering

brethren. They too provided their fellow labourers in various parts of the building who could not leave their posts during the week-end, with special trays of food.

As we take our seats for the last session we cannot help noticing the loudspeakers in all parts of the auditorium, including the balcony. By the aid of these nothing said on the platform is missed by any of the congregation. From the same microphone our deaf brethren are given special aid, while over the amplifying system at certain periods between sessions we can hear sacred music, specially selected to provide the hall with an atmosphere of worship. This service has been built up and maintained by the consecrated time and zeal of a young brother.

It seems much less than forty-eight hours since we first took our place here to listen to the familiar voice of Brother Lodge, bidding us welcome in the Lord's name. As we sit meditating, we can almost hear his voice coming through the microphone still, reminding us that we are gathering together to worship God, and asking us whether we are prepared to hear His voice and to obey it. Pondering still further we can hear the other voices that have travelled over those wires during the convention—the speakers, the chairmen, the secretary making the announcements, and the choir.

Following the warm welcome to the Convention, Brother Grey Rees (Cardiff) spoke to us on prayer. The talk was entitled "I called upon the Lord and He answered me", and brother took his text from

Psalm 91. 15. He analysed his subject in principle and practice, showing how God answers our petitions in three ways—"Yes", "No" and "Wait". He called our attention to prayers made by disciples in the early Church, and finally related a personal experience of how God answered his prayer and thereby saved his life.

In the evening Brother Will Batcheller's subject was "*We would see Jesus*". He discussed some of the aspects from which we look at our Master. Our first vision of the Lord is as our Saviour, for "There is life in a look at the Crucified One"; and we had recalled for us John's exclamation "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." We next see Jesus as the Lord of all things in our life and later claim Him as our Bridegroom. What more beautiful spectacle could we see than Christ, our beloved. Space does not permit us to recapture those other inspiring pictures which he had drawn for us that evening.

The next voice that we heard "across the air" was that of Brother Quennell on Sunday morning inviting us to choose our favourite hymns. This was followed by a talk on "*The Resurrection and the Life*" from Brother Derrick Nadal (*Melton Mowbray*), which proved to be a message on the power of Christ operating among and through the early Church. The theme was developed through various phases of Church life, showing the essential need of frequent and practical prayer in public and private Christian life. The concluding remarks concerned the spread of the Gospel by the first disciples and the urgent need to follow their example in the witness to our faith to-day.

Brother Percy Morte (*Osseti*) delivered a very helpful message upon the topic of the "*Family of Isaac*". He showed clearly how God works through individuals and frequently adopts a course of action quite different from that which the wisdom of men would expect. Our attention was directed also to the fact that God's favour does not always at first take the form of material blessings. Some edifying lessons were drawn from the domestic life of that far-off eastern home, from which sprang the great nation of Israel.

During the afternoon session, the children were in a remote part of the building enjoying their own specialised service in which they were able to make their own particular contribution to the worship of the convention. By singing choruses and listening intently to the Bible stories that were told to them, they too "delighted in the law of the Lord".

The choir's prelude of song and praise was greatly appreciated by all, for indeed their rendering of sacred music was lovely. Under the heading of

"*While it is called To-day*" Brother F. H. Guard (*London*) preached upon the urgency of accepting the privileges and responsibilities of our present time. He recalled how Israel had failed to avail themselves of the favour of God when He held it out to them and then warned us against mistaking feelings for realities. He appealed to any present who had accepted Christ as their Saviour to do so without delay. For those who had been "born again" he urged to greater faithfulness with respect to their high calling in Christ.

The friends gathered extra early on Monday for the Prayer, Praise and Testimony Meeting. This permitted ample time for prayer, especially in regard to the Open Air Service sponsored by the young brethren to be held at Hyde Park that evening. Several interesting testimonies followed and those wishing to express their sentiments by the choice of a hymn were able to do so.

A sympathetic audience was then given to eighty-six year old Brother R. B. Hartley (*Burnley*) whose arresting discourse on "*Looking Ahead*" was a fine summary of prophecy relating to the "Time of the End". Speaking entirely without notes and quoting frequently and accurately from memory from the Scriptures this veteran student stirred up our minds with some very stimulating thoughts concerning the breaking down of the kingdom of this world and the establishment of God's kingdom.

And now . . . the last meal has been taken together. Some of the visiting friends from long distances have already departed and we await the final session. Once more the choir is delighting us with their songs of worship and we are caught up in the rapture of this spiritual melody. We are then taken to the heights of spiritual experience and understanding by Brother Clive Bowman (*Salop*) who speaks to us on "*Evidence of things not seen*". Faith is his theme and many of the thoughts expressed in preceding sermons are now exquisitely drawn together in this one. The power of prayer is once more underlined, and the wonderful purposes of God are skillfully contrasted against the transitory things of this world. With these delicate but lofty tones still ringing in our ears we have our parting handshakes and take leave once more of our brethren.

Thus filled with nourishment at the hand of the Lord, thoroughly instructed in the way and work of our Master, we return once more to the daily routine and familiar surroundings. But as a result of our gathering together we are more fitted to take our place in our family circle, stronger to labour in our local assemblies of God's people and better equipped to witness to our faith and preach the Gospel of Peace.

“But Prayer was Made” *A mighty example of the power of prayer*

In the Scripture from which these few words have been taken the story is told of a season of deep distress which befell the few staunch, faithful souls who braved the wrath of the fanatical Jews in Jerusalem, and remained there with the Apostles. An intense persecution had broken out in the days when Stephen was arrested and stoned to death, and had continued with great ferocity through all the subsequent weeks and months. Many members of the mother Church had fled for safety to other towns and villages, and had been the means of spreading the gospel story over a wider field (Acts 11. 19), and of winning converts to the church of Christ.

Some, if not all, of the Apostles had remained resident in Jerusalem, to keep the standard of the faith flying in the city which had raised its felon hand against the Son through whom God had spoken to them, and against the first martyr, who had been privileged to follow the Master in the way of sacrifice and death.

In view of the intensity of the persecution, instituted and conducted by the zealot, Saul of Tarsus, who, as leader of the persecuting band, entered houses and hiding-places, applying methods of coercion and constraint, it would require a rare courage to stay on in the rage-maddened city, even though maintaining discreet silence in public about the great things committed to their care. When the conduct of people is actuated by blind passion rather than cool reason, it calls for heroism of the finest quality to linger on under circumstances where misdirected zeal and burning fanaticism may, at any moment, and without any warning, kindle the fiery furnace with manifold intensity.

In spite of the fact that the hand of the Lord Jesus had plucked the chief of the persecutors as a brand from the fire, there was no respite from the severities of the persecution. Rather, that event fed fuel to the flames of wrath which burned in the cruel hearts of priest and Pharisee alike, so that to remain in Jerusalem became increasingly dangerous from that time thenceforward for all the Apostles and for those stalwart souls who chose to remain with them in the metropolis.

At length, to curry favour with the Jews, the Edomite king, Herod, while on a visit to Jerusalem,

caused James (the brother of John) to be arrested and slain with the sword.

This cruel act gave great satisfaction to the Jewish hierarchy—a satisfaction which was openly made known to the royal murderer. Desiring to give further pleasure to the flattering Jews, Herod next proceeded to arrest Peter, and threw him, under guard, into prison. But because the Jewish people were engaged in the observance of one of their great feasts—perhaps the most important of them all—Herod postponed the final act of execution for a few days.

When the ritualistic solemnities of the Passover feast-days were at an end, Herod purposed to bring Peter forth from prison and give him to the headman's sword, and thus deprive the defenceless followers of the Nazarene of the second member of that favoured trio which had enjoyed the closest intimacy with their Master so many times.

Herod had done all that a royal despot could do to ensure Peter's safekeeping in custody. Two soldiers were chained to his wrists, and two others mounted guard outside his prison door, in relays, day and night. Also, his cell was deep within the building—within the “first and second wards” (v. 10), and the guards were under the strictest orders to keep the prisoner safe and secure, in readiness for Herod's further act of appeasement when the appropriate moment should have come.

Thus far the royal and military position! What of the prisoner? Was he cowed and broken, ready to forswear his faith in face of death?

Three words only describe Peter's state of mind. “Peter was sleeping . . .” (v. 6). Not much is said, but enough to show that Peter's heart was at rest in the Lord. Without doubt, he knew of Herod's purpose on the morrow, for soldiers' tongues would talk! But Peter found a “Power” in his heart, which enabled him to look death coolly in the face without fear or dread. He had learned to live or die without regrets, submissive to his Master's Will and Providence.

Peter was “at rest”! What of his brethren? It could not have been wholly a happy Passover-time for them. Their fervent remembrance of the Master's death would be tempered by the remem-

brance of Peter's plight. They would have remembrance also of a long record of martyr sufferings, beginning with Stephen and ending, within recent days, in the death of James. They would be quite cognisant that God, the Father of them all, and Jesus, the great Shepherd of them all, had permitted the persecutor to prevail and work his evil will upon the defenceless flock. Would they permit Peter to be slain? Would Herod do with Peter as he had done with James? They did not know.

The apprehensive little company had remained together in continuous session through all the days of the Feast. And now, knowing, perhaps, of Herod's intention to slay Peter on the coming day, with full heart they betook themselves to prayer. What else could they do? They had no one with influence at Herod's court, so there was no ray of hope there. They could not expect a change of the Pharisical heart, and, save for God's intervention, there was no way out of the dilemma. Peter's deliverance, at best, was but a forlorn hope. "But prayer was made."

It was, indeed, the prayer of a forlorn hope, the prayer of human extremity, the prayer in the dark! For what did they pray? Was it for Peter's deliverance? Was it for the frustration of Herod's plans, and the return of Peter to their midst? It may have been, but it is somewhat doubtful whether that was so. Their reaction to his knocking "at the door of the gate" scarcely agrees with such a thought. They were doubtful even after Rhoda had heard and recognised his voice, whether Peter could have been set free. Their unkind reply to the damsel's joyful words reveals only too well how little they had expected Peter's release.

For what, then, had they prayed, if not for Peter's release? Is it not more likely that prayer was for Peter's "faith"—that he might be faithful in the hour of death, that he would not retract one word, nor flinch his eye, when face to face with the headman's sword.

God has His own wise way of teaching His children to trust Him. To Peter He sent that inward peace, so that on the last night before the fateful morrow Peter could sleep. Peter would never forget—could never forget—the holy calm that possessed his soul and closed his eyes in sweet repose. Then, after his restful sleep, came the unexpected release. God gave him deliverance from his "fears," and then deliverance from his foes.

Can one wonder that it was Peter's hand which wrote the deeply confident words, "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation . . ." (1 Pet. 1. 6). The mighty power of God "kept"

Peter from his own weaknesses, and from his enemy's sword—a lesson which tintured every word and thought from that day on, and though long centuries have passed, that confidence "yet speaketh".

The lesson for the little prayer-circle was that God can take man's extremity as His opportunity. In royal circles Peter's decapitation was as good as done—to the little assembly it was all but accomplished, but God decreed otherwise. The Divine caretaker allowed the peril to persist right on till the last night, till hope was all but dead, then, out of the "seemingly inevitable" God rescued His trusting child. Could the little band ever forget that God gave more than they had asked—"exceedingly above all that they could ask or think."

Every circumstance of life is an occasion and an opportunity for the child of God to pray. He has causes without end to voice his gratitude to God. He has need more than he knows to utter his requests, but in all the changeful experience of life it is the prayer of the "extremity" and the "forlorn hope" that best shows the moral fibre of the soul. A weak faith may say, "it is too late", a doubting heart could say "What is the use of it all?"—a dauntless faith will say "But prayer may still be made."

Thanksgiving and request are the appropriate prayers for the ordinary occasions of life. The "but prayer" is the prayer for the extraordinary times, when we have reached the end of our tether, or a bit beyond, and we can see no way out or through or even over the tangled thicket that surrounds us. Like the little company in Jerusalem, we may not always word our prayer to the right end, but the essential thing is not the mere fact of asking, but the attitude of asking. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint", said Jesus, and it is when fainting seems the next obvious human thing to do, that "but prayer" wins the Divine reward.

*"When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay."*

When the Herods of this world have laid their evil plans, and we seem to have no way of escape from their toils—as may yet well happen amid the present strains of life—we must not faint or fall, but remember that prayer can be made, and out of the dark scene the angel of the Lord will lead the way to the working of the Will of God. Let us ever remember that whether we are the "prayed-for" (as Peter), or of the praying Church, it is the prayer which rises from the farthest edge of our extremity that will bring the Divine blessing in full measure into our lives.

The Delivered Remnant and the Great Nation

A short consideration of Israel prophecy

'I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation, and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, ever for ever'. (Micah 4. 7.)

The majority of Biblical students believe in the restoration of fleshly Israel, to be a great nation in the Millennial age. Many however would find a difficulty in explaining the two-fold division of which our text speaks—a remnant, and a strong or great nation. Reading the previous verse we note that the Lord is going to assemble the 'halting ones' who will form the remnant and gather from afar the 'cast off ones' to form a great nation 'even whomsoever I have afflicted' (*Rotherham*) whether forming the remnant, or the strong nation.

We have not here Hebrew poetry or repetition, as in Isa. 9. 6, for here in our text the word 'and' separates the two classes. What is the significance of our text?

The Scriptures make clear to us two great facts in connection with the resurrection of Israel, which we shall examine. They are:—

1. Not all Israel returns to the land of their fathers prior to 'Jacob's trouble', in which trouble they will be delivered in the land from their enemies, and brought to the recognition of their Messiah. A great inflow will take place after this event is passed.

2. Not all Israel will be delivered and preserved in Jacob's trouble, but a remnant, who turn to, and call upon, God for help.

In Jer. 3. 14 Jehovah says of Israel, '*I will take you one of a city, two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion*'. Here is a partial return. In v. 71 we have the time when the Kingdom is established—when Jerusalem is the Throne of the Lord, and all nations gathered to it. (Compare Zech. 14. 16; Isa. 2. 1-4; Isa. 24. 23.) Then in v. 18 we are told '*At that time* (when the kingdom is established) *the house of Judah shall walk with* (in harmony with—see Amos 3. 3) *the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north* (land of exile—see 16. 15; 23. 8—the Septuagint adds at 3. 16 'and from all the countries' which is in harmony with the two last passages mentioned by the same prophet) *to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers*'. Here we have distinctly in this prophecy the two regatherings—one before Jacob's trouble and the establishment of the

kingdom, and one after—one a partial gathering—'one out of a city, and two out of a family' and the fuller regathering of all Israel.

In Ezek. 38. 8, in speaking of the invasion of the land of Israel at the time of Jacob's trouble by the great hordes from the north, the prophet, speaking of Rosh and the peoples with him, says, 'In the afterpart of the years shall thou enter into the land of the *remnant* brought back from the sword, gathered from among many peoples' (*Rotherham*). Not 'all Israel', but a preserved remnant will have to face and be delivered from this mighty invasion.

In Zech. 14. 2, 3, speaking of another aspect of this same invasion in 'Jacob's trouble', God reveals to us that Jerusalem will be taken, and its people become a spoil at the hand of the invaders, with the exception of a 'residue'. This is the 'third part' referred to by the same prophet in the previous chapter (13. 8-9) who there shows us that this 'third part' will be brought through the purging fires of tribulation, and purified, they will call upon the name of the Lord for help, and He will hear and deliver them. Not all those therefore who have returned to the land at that time will be delivered and preserved, but a remnant or residue who call upon Him for help.

In Joel 2. 32 (*Rotherham*) speaking of this same time, we are told 'It shall come to pass, whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, shall be a delivered remnant, just as Yahweh hath said, and among the survivors, whom Yahweh doth call'. This is the residue referred to in Zech. 14. 2, 3. Concerning the Hebrew word for 'deliverance' in Joel 2. 32, Strong tells us that it signifies 'deliverance, or an escaped portion'. The same word occurs in Obad. vs. 17 'In Mount Zion shall be a delivered remnant which shall be holy' (*Rotherham*). This prophecy, and that in Joel 2, also reminds us of the one in Isa. 4. 2-4, which speaking of the same time, tell us—

'In that day shall the Branch of the Lord (same word as Jer. 23. 5; Zech. 6. 12—the King Messiah of David's line) be . . . beautiful and glorious . . . for them that are *escaped* (same word as Joel 2. 32; Obad. 17) of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem (remaineth is the same word as 'left' in

Zech. 13. 8, and the same root as 'residue' in Zech. 14. 2) shall be called holy, every one that is written unto life (RV.—compare Dan. 12. 1—'thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book'. "Delivered" in this last text is the same word as "delivered" in Joel 2. 32).—in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion (after they look upon Him they pierced—See Zech. 12. 10 ; 13. 1) and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem (its blood—guilt—see Rotherham, also Joel 3. 21 and Mat. 27. 25—the blood of their Messiah) from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning'. Here again we have the purged and delivered remnant at the time of Jacob's trouble.

In Zeph. 3. 12, 13, we again have the delivered remnant who have been delivered from their enemy (v. 15—the great invader of Ezek. 38 and Zech. 14). Subsequent to this, as stated in v. 18, others are to be gathered to them, and the land of promise, who were far away, scattered in others lands 'These that mourn far away from the festive assembly do I gather, those that were separated from thee' (Leeser). Here is the great ingathering after Jacob's trouble of all Israel from all lands where scattered. This is the time when the full re-union (only partially accomplished after the return from Babylon, which re-union was broken up again in the further great dispersion of A.D. 70 onwards), is realised, as pictured in Ezek. 37. 16 to 28.

Turn now to Isa. 66. 15-21. After speaking of the great time of trouble on all nations, when 'by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh' (v. 15, 16) the prophet goes on to speak of the fact that 'those that escape of them' (the same root word as in Joel 2. 32 ; Isa. 4. 2, 3) will be God's missionaries to the nations, to proclaim His glory. Who among the earthly peoples of that time will be more fitted for that work than the preserved remnant of Israel? It will lead to the cry of the nations for the Divine rule as given as in Isa. 2 and Micah 4. Then in v. 20 we are told that following this, 'all your brethren' will be brought as an 'offering unto the Lord out of all nations'. Here again we have the great inflow after Jacob's trouble.

In Isa. 49. 19-22, when this great inflow from out of all nations takes place, when the nations 'shall

bring thy sons in their arms' (v. 22—Leeser) we have the picture that the present Land of Promise is not large enough to contain them. 'Yet again will say before thy ears the children of whom thou wast deprived, the place is too narrow for me—make room for me, that I may dwell' (v. 20—Leeser). Then indeed the prophecy will be fulfilled 'Thou hast increased the nation O Lord, thou hast increased the nation (not only through birth but through the great inflow into the land). Thou art glorified ; Thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land' (Isa. 26. 15—RV.). Many Christians do not realise to-day that Palestine is only a small portion of the original Land of Promise. In Gen. 15. 18 the land promised to Abraham and his seed was from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates—an area some thirty times the size of Palestine to-day—probably much greater, according to where the boundaries will actually touch, and this will fully accommodate 'the whole house of Israel' (Ezek. 20. 40). Marvellous indeed is God's provision for His people, when fully restored to His favour and blessing.

It is interesting to note that our Lord's great prophecy on Olivet is in line with what we have seen above. First, in 'Jacob's trouble' the 'sign' of the 'Son of Man' shall 'look upon Him they pierced', and then following that the great inflow of 'all your brethren' out of all nations. 'After the affliction of those days . . . the sign of the Son of Man will then appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will lament (compare Zech. 12. 10) and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great majesty and power. And He will send His messengers with a loud sounding trumpet (Isa. 27. 13—note the verse before, here, the first gathering—one by one) and they will assemble His chosen (see Rom. 11. 28) from the four winds (see Zech. 2. 6) from one extremity of heaven to the other'—this last statement being based on Deut. 30. 4, 5 'If any of thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven' etc. (Mat. 24. 30, 31—Diag.)

Like the apostle, reviewing God's past and present and future dealings with His anointed people, we say 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out'.

FREE TRACTS

Two-minute Tracts.

101 Times of Restitution.	109 Creation of Man.	105 What is the Soul?	113 The Three Worlds.
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104 Where are the Dead?	112 Restoration of Israel.	108 The Holy Spirit.	116 Angels that Sinned.

PRAYER

Reprinted from the
"Herald of Christ's Kingdom"

"With one accord!" The day had brought
Its vexing cares, its anxious thoughts;
With labour worn, with doubts perplexed,
With toils and troubles sorely vexed;
When evening brought its hour of prayer,
With sweet accord we gathered there.
"The door was shut!" "With one accord"
We kneeled before our risen Lord;
Some needed strength; some needed peace;
Some prayed that wrongs and woes might cease;
All felt the need of humble prayer,
All needed Christ, and Christ was there.
"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to
you."—Jas. 4. 8.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew
thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest
not."—Jer. 33. 3.

"Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray
and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice."—
Psa. 55. 17.

Now, if we are to grow in our prayer life, there
are five things which are necessary:

The first of these is **TIME**. Like everything else,
prayer requires time; daily time, like the other essen-
tials, eating and sleeping. It needs to be time enough
to forget how much time it is, even though duties
call you away. So it must be planned for, sometimes
well ahead, so no duty is slighted. One must *take*
time. No one worth while has time for all that comes
crowding to his door. Something must be left out,
so time must be taken for something else—possibly
something else important, yet less important. Prayer
does need time.

The second thing prayer needs is a **PLACE**. You
can pray anywhere—on a train, walking down the
street, measuring gingham, operating a typewriter,
cutting out a dress, in kitchen or parlour or shop.
But you are not likely to, *unless you've been off in
some quiet place with the door shut*. Christ said:
"Enter into thine inner chamber and shut the door"
—the world shut out—but you are shut in with some
One unseen. It does not matter where the place is.
The corner of a kitchen is as good as the cloistered
corner of a cathedral. Indeed, some kitchens I have
known are better than some cathedrals. It is the
recognised presence of our blessed Lord that makes
holy ground, whether kitchen or cathedral. And the
real rare blessing of the daily quiet place is not only
that you actually pray, though you will; not only
that you read the Book, though you will. It is this:

There is some One else there. And to sit quiet in
His presence, thank Him that He is there, and that
He died for you in the love of His heart; maybe to
sing Him a soft hymn of praise; this is the real
blessedness of that bit of quiet time in the shut-away
corner. Prayer needs a place, and prayer hallows the
place—any place.

Third—prayer needs a book. **THE BOOK**. The
Book is the basis of prayer. Bible reading is the
listening side of prayer. In the Book God speaks to
us. In prayer we speak to God. What He says to us
radically affects what we say to him. Prayer needs
three organs of the head—an ear, a tongue and an
eye. The ear to hear what God says, the tongue to
repeat His promises as our petitions, and the eye to
look out expectantly until the result comes. Thought-
ful Bible reading is giving God our ears. What goes
in at the ear, warmed up as it goes through the
heart, comes out at the tongue in simple, expectant,
warm prayer, communion and petition and inter-
cession.

Yes, give this Book a place in your prayers. What
God says here will change what you say, and so
wholly change the results. The Book will shape and
mould your praying. Let it!

The fourth is particularly important—**LET THE
TEACHER TEACH YOU**. There is One who is
peculiarly the prayer Teacher. . . . It is He who
puts the desire to pray in our hearts. He will direct
all our praying (through the Holy Spirit) as a wise
father directs his son.

Where is the Holy Spirit? . . . In every one whose
heart has opened to the Lord Jesus—not because we
are good or deserving or saintly, but because He is
faithful to His promise.

Yes, let the Holy Spirit teach you. . . . When you
go into the quiet schoolroom, with the school Book
open, ask this Teacher to teach you. And He will.
You may be a bit slow and stupid—most of us are.
But He is very gentle and patient.

You will likely find your praying changed some.
It will become simpler—more confident, and per-
sonal, and practical. Some things you will *stop*
asking for—they will slip out of your thoughts in
that Presence. Other things will come in—certain
things you will pray for more boldly and confidently
and expectantly.

The fifth need is to cultivate an **OPENNESS OF
SPIRIT**—I mean that habitual openness of mind
that opens up more and more as clearer light breaks

in. It begins with that first surrender to Christ as Master, but must continue to be a habitual surrender in the actual practice of daily life. As clearer light comes in on this habit, that line of conduct, that problem, you yield and actually live the surrender you made in the initial act.

Stubbornness, sifted down, is simply refusing to yield to the new bit of light that comes. Openness to light is the one doorway to growth. Yes, we will welcome the light by obedience, we will pore thoughtfully over the Book, to get its meaning clear. We will cultivate the sane, thoughtful, brooding, meditat-

ing, to get things clear and clearer.

Here they are—a praying TIME, a prayer PLACE, the prayer BOOK, the prayer TEACHER, the Holy Spirit, the HABITUAL OPENNESS to more light. Let us all start into school afresh.

Lord Jesus, teach us to pray. Help us to learn how. Thou knowest both ends of prayer, the praying end down here, and the answering end up yonder. We would be good students in Thy school, punctual in attendance, keeping the door shut, and the Book open, and the knee bent, and the will too. Teach us—in Jesus' name. Amen.

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY IN HYDE PARK

Many hundreds of people passed through the park gates at Marble Arch during the afternoon and evening of August 2nd. A large number of them were enjoying the intermittent sunshine as they sat on the huge lawns, while others were strolling beneath the trees. A vast crowd steadily collected on that piece of the pavement which has become the traditional site of public meetings. As one moved from group to group, speakers were to be heard trying to convince their audiences upon various racial, political and religious matters. As one wandered along the thronging side-walk, above the mighty roar of London's traffic and Hyde Park's orators, were the strains of an old Gospel hymn—"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Upon coming closer to the little group who were singing, there was to be seen in their midst a banner bearing a text in bold lettering—"Dost thou believe in the Son of God". Following the hymn, the leader of Open Air Service made a few introductory remarks about the purpose of the meeting and the nature of its message. He called for those gathered around him to testify to their Christian faith and several young men came forward in quick succession to speak to the crowd about their Saviour. They confessed that only the Cross of Christ had been able to break the power of sin in their own lives, and they appealed to those present to accept Jesus into their hearts. Each in turn acknowledged whole hearted belief in the Bible and emphasised its inspired message for the days in which we live. Two older gentlemen also gave evidence concerning the World's need of a Saviour and entreated their listeners to give heed to the love of God as shown forth in His Son. Two young ladies then publicly avowed their allegiance to Christ and spoke fervently of what He had done for them. It was learned afterwards that one of these ladies was not normally attached to the group holding the service, but finding herself so much in sympathy

with their cause, she readily supported their witness. It is a great cause for rejoicing that by this time she is on her way to preach the Gospel to the Eskimos.

As the evening air cooled and people began to drift homewards, their attention was again caught by the soul stirring words of "*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the Cross*" lustily sung by those participating in the meeting. Finally two more young men spoke for Christ, assuring their audience that the way of repentance and prayer before God were the only solution to the problems of fear and sin. They pointed men and women standing by to the returning Saviour, saying that only by Him and His kingdom upon earth could the trouble among the nations and in the lives of all peoples be put right. The last testimony was given by all those who sang together the words of "*What a friend we have in Jesus!*" The service was concluded with a benediction and a second invitation to join hearts and voices in saying the Lord's prayer. For nearly two hours this little company of about thirty Christians had held a crowd which sometimes had swelled to more than sixty.

The young brethren who sponsored the open air witness, an account of which is given above, are very grateful to the many older brethren who gave them support by their prayers and by their presence at the meeting. Warm thanks are also due to the London Convention Committee, who announced the witness from the platform at Conway Hall during the August Bank Holiday meetings. The special prayers on behalf of the witness, made at the Devotional Session on the Monday morning were of particular benefit, as also was the Prayer Meeting held in Conway Hall, just before departing for Hyde Park. A great deal was learned from the occasion and all those interested in this work are earnestly appealed to for their prayerful support.

THE CEDAR TREE

'Twas there 'neath yonder cedar tree my heart was
deeply stirred,

His goodness overwhelmed me, why had I then
demurred ?

Far from the noise of other worlds, it seemed I
walked with God

This was the tree of Lebanon—on sacred ground
I trod.

The cedar's mighty branches and huge wide-spread-
ing arms

Embrace the whole wide universe, and win her with
its charms.

The wood is incorruptible, firm and sound it stands,

A challenge to my unbelief— to heaven I raise
my hands.

God make me lovely as a tree—my roots be true and
strong

So when the storms of life pursue, I cannot then do
wrong ;

But stand and face adversity, misfortune or distress—
Think of others needing help, and of myself far
less.

E. M. MILES.

Verses inspired by the Lebanon Cedar tree in the
grounds of the Rosehill Conference Centre, Reading.
(Reproduced by the courtesy and permission of the
"Local Preachers' Magazine".)

BLESS OUR HOME

Bless our home in the morning, Lord, when work
begins anew.

Help us tackle our daily work ; for there is much to
do—

Shopping, scouring, sweeping—and the planning of
the day.

Help us set about it in a quiet devoted way.

Bless our home in the daytime, Lord, and grant that
we shall be

Nothing lacking in patience and in hospitality.

May each meal be peaceful, though a frugal fare,

Plainest food a banquet, with Thy spirit there.

Bless our home in the evening, Lord, when tasks are
laid aside ;

As we gather round the fire, may peace and love
abide.

And may we have the knowledge that we have done
our best ;

Tried to live the Christian life—and earned the
promised rest.

(With acknowledgments to the unknown author.)

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The Golden Future Tells of the setting up of Christ's
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31/- (\$4.50).

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

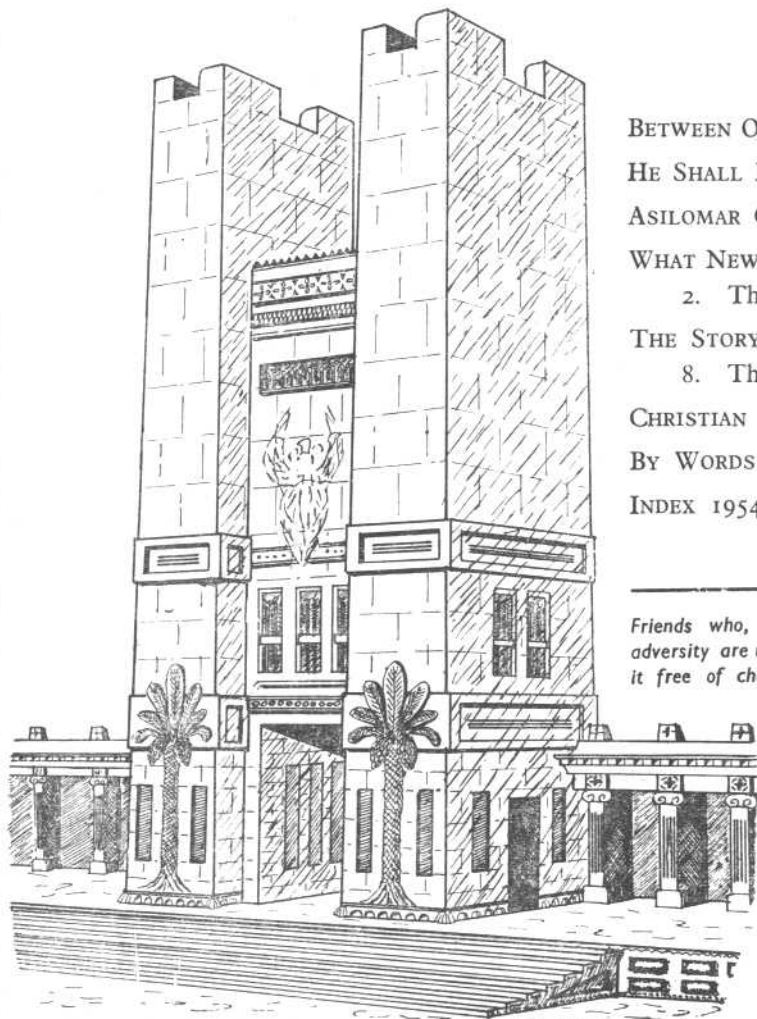
Vol. 31, No. 10

DECEMBER, 1954

CONTENTS

BETWEEN OURSELVES	150
HE SHALL BE GREAT	151
ASILOMAR CONFERENCE	152
WHAT NEW THING IS THIS ?	
2. The War with Paganism ...	155
THE STORY OF THE FLOOD	
8. The Voyage of the Ark ...	159
CHRISTIAN LIBERTY	162
BY WORDS ACQUITTED	163
INDEX 1954	164

*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

Christian Home Calendar

Bro. F. Lardent advises that he is able to supply this well-known calendar as in past years. This year's issue is identical in style and design to that of last year, giving monochrome pictures of British beauty spots in each month-page and a Scripture text for each day of the month. The price (post free) is 2/3d. each, three copies for 6/3d. or one dollar. Please send orders to Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, and *not* to Welling.

Tract Fund

For some years it has not been possible to publicise the supply of free tracts since donations to the Tract Fund have been almost negligible, confined to just a few donors. It has been possible however to supply some brethren with free tracts and booklets for their personal work and these together with some who have themselves defrayed the cost of the tracts they have used will by the end of the year have accounted for the distribution of a fair number of tracts and booklets. Quite a number of enquiries have been received in consequence and where possible these enquirers have been put in touch with brethren in their districts. One brother's zeal in sending literature to hospitals in various parts of the country has resulted in two separate hospitals asking for, and receiving, quantities of the Hymnal Carol Supplement for the use of their patients at Christmas-time. In quite a few cases the Matrons of hospitals have written to express appreciation for literature received for patients' use and in some cases have asked for further supplies.

The extent to which this Tract Fund work is carried on is of course determined by the donations received, but it has to be admitted that the present-day high cost of printing is a drawback to the extensive adoption of this kind of service. Nevertheless such results as those mentioned above are sources of encouragement to those who participate in this work.

New Books

There are a few new copies of various translations, etc., on hand which are available at prices shown below. When these are gone it is not proposed to keep any further stocks at Welling. They will be sent anywhere immediately on receipt of request. All prices include postage.

Ferrar Fenton Bible, offered at 31/- (\$4.50).

New Revised Standard Version, rexine binding, 39/- (\$5.50).

Weymouth New Testament, large size, 9/6 (\$1.50).

Septuagint in Greek and English, 32/- (\$4.75).

Apocrypha, 6/6 (\$1.00).

Letters of St. Paul (Arthur Way's new translation of Pauline Epistles), 11/6 (\$2.00).

Little Life of Jesus (for children), 6/6 (\$1.00).

Oxford Bible, Minion clarendon, 16mo., French Morocco, 36/- (\$5.00).

Scottish Metrical Psalter (words only), 3/- (50 cents).

Special Second-hand Book Offers

A complete set of the Commentary of Albert Barnes, comprising twenty volumes in good condition is available. Barnes was the author of commentaries on Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, and the entire New Testament and this set comprises them all. For anyone who is already desirous of acquiring the complete edition of Barnes' Commentary this is a unique opportunity. The price of this set including postage is 55/- or \$8.50, and it will be sent to the first request received.

There is also one set of Barnes' Commentary on Daniel only, consisting of two volumes, in poor condition. These will be sent for 3/- (50 cents) on request.

One set of books of interest to anyone wishing to take up the study of Hebrew is available. The four books, all in reasonably good condition although all dating from the last century, are:—

Phillips Hebrew Grammar, giving principles of the language.

Harper's Introductory Hebrew Manual, leading the student on to easy readings, principally in Genesis.

The Book of Leviticus in Hebrew and English, parallel columns.

The Passover Service, in Hebrew and English, parallel columns.

The set of four books, post free, 12/- (\$2.00).

Please note especially that since only the first applicant can have any of these books, money should *not* be sent with first application. Notification will be sent to the successful applicant when books are despatched and the money may then be sent. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that the books are sold.

He Shall be Great!

*A Christmas
Meditation*

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest." (Luke 1. 32.)

In this world men are accounted great because they have achieved some noteworthy thing that has produced immediate results. A skilful general wins a crucial battle—he is accounted a great soldier. A commercial magnate welds a number of trading organisations into one enormous unit, controlling a major part of some vital commodity—he is a great business man. A shrewd and eloquent ecclesiastical leader combines worldly wisdom with a show of piety and becomes supreme in religious circles—he is a great Churchman. None of these is called great while as yet he is in the state of progress towards his goal, while his plans are developing, but only when he has "arrived". The world demands, not only success, but the visible evidences of success, before it will bestow its diploma. The man who patiently and zealously builds for the future, knowing that his goal will not be reached in his own lifetime, and that the fruit of his labours will only be reaped by posterity, is never esteemed great whilst yet he lives, even though recognition may come after his death, when at last the realisation of all his dreams is there for all to see.

So be it then, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Of all great men He is the greatest, He who came down from Heaven to achieve the greatest work of all time, the redemption and reconciliation of all mankind and the consummation of God's creative Plan. His greatness was not recognised then, but in days to come it will be plain for all to see. "He shall be great"—that is the promise and it cannot fail of fulfilment. Men, and angels too, will join together in worship and adoration, praising and blessing the name of the Son, that name which is exalted above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

At the time of His birth there was no evidence of coming greatness. Born in the meanest of mean circumstances, his mother a lowly descendant of a once kingly line from which all the insignia and trappings of kingship had long since departed, born a citizen of a conquered and subject people, born into a humble workaday environment. What promise of greatness reposed here? His only creden-

tials were those declared by an aged priest and an even more aged woman Temple attendant, neither of them of any moment or influence in the world of big things. Who would have thought that the infant son of a village maiden would start a fire that was destined to sweep the world and never be put out? Who would have thought that this tiny babe was foreordained to outlive all the kings who ruled at His birth and to succeed to the kingship of the world when all their thrones had been swept away? Who would have thought that this little life so quietly and unobtrusively come into the world would catch up and knit together so many other lives through generations yet unborn and make of them a mighty striking force, a power so great that even the proud gates of hell would not prevail against it? That was to be the outcome, an outcome that has not been fully realised even as yet, but an outcome that will surely one day cause all men to recognise the true greatness of that Light which two thousand years ago came into the world.

We do perceive that greatness. To us He is already great. How could it be otherwise? We know of the mighty power that descended upon the Church at Pentecost and has remained since with all whose lives have been given to Him. True, we do not yet find it possible to perform mighty outward works and so far as the world is concerned there is still little evidence of the power working within. But the power is there, a power that is preparing us and fitting us for the full revelation to all men which is to come "at His appearing". And without the long years of that inward working in our hearts and minds we would be quite unready for the duties and responsibilities which will devolve upon us directly the Kingdom is established in power and the word of the Lord begins to go out to all people.

During the first few years of this century a young man in his early thirties resided in London. He was poor, desperately poor, made so by his chosen way of life, for he was a student, studying and equipping himself with the intention of one day delivering his people. Day after day he could be seen in the great reading-room of the British Museum, that world-famous repository of learning, groping after the knowledge that was to give him ability to choose and judge aright when the time of power should come.

No one who came in contact with him took him very seriously; he was just an enthusiast riding a hobby-horse of his own and he would never achieve anything great in this world. His name was quite unknown to the people who mattered, and only a very few people knew he existed at all.

There came a day when, a mature man of forty-seven, he stepped to the front of the dais before a wildly cheering crowd of elected representatives packed into a great hall in one of the world's capitals, and uttered a few simple words. "We will now proceed" he said "to the drafting of the constitution of the new Republic". From brief notes on a few papers held in his hand he sketched the outlines of the creation which he had been planning and for which he had been equipping himself through those arduous years of study in London and Paris. To-day, less than forty years later, the power set up by Vladimir Lenin on that historic night in 1917 controls nearly half the world, and has transformed a feudal, benighted, ignorant people into a community of States that together form one of the world's great Empires.

Lenin is rightly esteemed one of the world's great men. Whether the social system he founded is a good thing or a bad thing for the world does not alter that fact. He was an atheist and his achievement was a purely material one, but from the world's standpoint he was a great man. But no one esteemed him such in those early student days; only after the fruit of those labours appeared in the creation of the Soviet State and its continuance against its enemies was that recognition granted.

So will it be with our King. He was despised and rejected of men, accounted a dreamer and an enthusiast, ignored and unheeded, in the days of

His flesh. His followers too, in like manner, are accounted fools, for His sake. The world does not really believe that the saints are going to reign. Men do not take seriously the oft-repeated declaration that in a day yet to come the Lord Jesus will assume His great power and command all men's obedience. The disciples of Jesus go about their studies and their training, conspicuous only by their poverty in the things of this world, and their absolute devotion to the ideal they have set before them, and the world smiles tolerantly and takes no further notice.

One day our King will stand up, a nonentity in the counsels of the world no longer. He too will proceed to the creation of a new social order, one that will embrace, not half the world as does the Soviet system, but the whole of the world. "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." The kings of the earth will fight against it, just as the Western powers tried to fight at first against the new Russia, and they will fail to arrest its progress. The Rider on the White Horse will cleave the heavens in His descent to the last great battle and the powers of this world will give way for the last time. The kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ—and He shall reign for ever and ever.

"He shall be great!" The promise stands, disbelieved and disowned by the world of men. They shall believe, in that day when He stands up to command obedience. There will be no uncertainty about the matter then, no disputing. The benefits of that Kingdom will be abundantly manifest to all, and in their joy and exaltation of spirit men will declaim to the very heavens "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and he will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

ASILOMAR CONFERENCE

The following account of the convention at Asilomar, California, in November, 1953, is somewhat belated but its nature makes it of interest to all who love the "assembling of ourselves together." It has not been possible to find room for the complete report but we feel that the abridged account here presented will enable many of our readers to recapture something of the spirit of what must have been a very blessed time.

At the request of a number of brethren who could not attend the above gathering of the Lord's people

and who have expressed a desire for an account of what transpired at beautiful Asilomar over the last Thanksgiving holiday period, we submit this summary. Of necessity this write-up, giving our impressions, observations and reflections as well as pertinent facts and figures, will have to be rather brief. So in this concise report we will not even endeavour to give you the thoughts expressed in the discourses and study periods. This will be a general review of conference events.

It was one of those perfect, sunny days, Wednesday, November 24th, when we arrived at Asilomar

("Haven by the Sea") at noon. Five brethren had checked in by then. The first session was scheduled for 8.0 that evening. More and more of the friends assembled as the clock ticked off the minutes and hours, so that as the sun set over the Pacific most of those who had sent in their reservations weeks previously had registered, were getting comfortably situated in their rooms and becoming acquainted with one another.

At the scheduled time we converged on the Chapel and the conference got off to a good start as we heartily sang Hymn Number 85, "O Revive Us," which coincided so well with the theme text of the convention, Psalm 85. 6—"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" Brother Vernon Warren led us in an earnest petition to the Heavenly Father for the Divine blessing to rest upon the four-day assembly. Brother Casimir Lanowick's address of welcome followed, in which he directed our attention to the spirit of the season with such Scriptures as Psalm 95. 2—"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving." He stated that we had gathered together on the finest of all our strictly national holidays. As the Pilgrim Fathers and the Israelites of old (I Chronicles 29), we wanted to unitedly give thanks for all His tender mercies. In stressing the purpose of our convocation, the speaker expressed the strong hope that all present would indeed be revived in spirit and that it could be said here, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." We were assured that there would be no fear of expressing one's self at Asilomar, for "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Then Brother Lanowick read a short, thought-provoking article from the columns of the *BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY* of England:

"Throughout the ages the progress and development of Christianity has been marred by doctrinal strife. Intolerance, discord and persecution has stained many a fair page of the Church's history with its indelible markings. Men and women whose loyalty to the cause of Christ was beyond question have nevertheless so utterly failed to grasp the essence of Christian teachings that they have soured their lives and blemished their good works with the evil fruits of religious controversy. And realising, as one must do, that the seed of these things lies in individual conscientiousness and zeal for the Truth it is a matter for wonder that greater thought has not been and is not being given to the essential place of theological teaching in the Christian life. That it is an important—perhaps the most potent—of the external forces shaping and influencing our

development cannot be denied. That it is of all aspects of our fellowship together the one most productive of misunderstanding, division, and the waxing cold of that love which constitutes the evidence that we have passed from death into life, is unhappily only too true. That we in this day have been blessed with an insight into the deep things of God far exceeding the portion of past generations is so tacitly accepted amongst us that the position is never questioned. Yet current thought amongst us still tends to gravitate to the extremes; we are told on the one hand that salvation comes by reason of an intellectual appreciation of true theology, and by means of which faith remains unshaken in the evil day; upon the other hand that doctrinal understanding is of such relatively little importance that nothing more than a mental acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Ransom for All, coupled with a life of good works, is asked of those who would follow in the steps of the Master. Somewhere between these extremes the truth must lie; and it is with sober and reverent minds that we should inquire, first as individuals, and then in communal discussion, if we are to occupy our rightful place as ambassadors for Christ to this generation."

The friends were reminded that many were praying for the success of the Western Bible Students Conference, and this realisation was encouraging. In a note of caution we were also reminded that on another occasion when the sons of God met, "Satan came also." However, at Asilomar we were intent upon honouring God and bringing edification to his people. While some may have approached the conference with a bit of reserve, we were looking for an inspiring season of study, meditation and fellowship. We were not anticipating great revelations but on the other hand were seeking keener insight into prophetic developments. As good "Bible Students" we were to "reason together" and not quarrel. Our conduct was to be exemplary. So, after a number of exhortations we adjourned to the Administration Building where at 9.30 p.m. coffee, tea and delicious fruit cake were served amidst some good rounds of fellowship. By then the joys of anticipation were turning into realisation.

Aside from the half-hour opening services, between breakfast and lunch there were only two sessions daily, both of them studies. Four topics were selected by the brethren for class discussions: "The Operation of the Holy Spirit," which was conducted by Brother Warren; "The Present Mission of the Church," led by Brother S. C. DeGroot; "The Manner of the Establishment of the Kingdom," pre-

sided over by Brother C. R. Siglin; and "*The Time of Trouble — Jacob's and the World's*," of which Brother Harold Dart of Paradise, California took charge.

The two testimony meetings were best described by one of the brothers, who said they were "refreshing, because not stereotyped."

There were few discourses given, and because they were scarce they were likely more appreciated, and not tiring. Brother DeGroot spoke on "*How We Got Our Bible*" and also delivered a lecture on "*Revelation 17*." Brother Siglin, in his forceful style spoke on the theme, "*Are You in the Truth?*" Besides presenting the closing remarks of the conference Brother Warren gave a sermon on "*The Garden of the Lord*." Just from these titles you can gather that there was variety in the speeches. And they were above par.

Each evening was turned over to visual education. In conjunction with the sound motion-picture feature of each day there was an exhibit on the same theme. So, for instance, on Thanksgiving Day we had a film from the American Bible Society entitled "*The Book for the World of Tomorrow*" and an exhibit of Bibles (various translations, such as Dr. Young's Literal—by the compiler of Young's Analytical Concordance—which was very recently re-published), concordances, Bible dictionaries; besides Brother DeGroot's talk on "*How We Got Our Bible*." Another instructive collection of printed matter consisted of the American Bible Society's four Gospels and Book of Acts reproduced separately in brochure-format and marvelously illustrated with pictures of places mentioned in these respective Biblical accounts.

The following day was "Israel Day," so we saw the Cinecolour production, "*The Magnetic Tide*," showing many interesting scenes in the new Jewish State. The exhibit that day had maps of the old and new Israel, a beautifully illustrated copy of Israel's Declaration of Independence, postage stamps being issued there which depict the history of the country, the first Bible published in Jerusalem since Israel became a nation in 1948, etc.

Then on Saturday, November 28th, a new exhibit was displayed, consisting of a couple dozen relics of antiquity from the uncovered city of Mizpah near Jerusalem. This, you see, was "Archeology Day." We not only saw these excavated articles (loaned to us by the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California) but we were able to touch and handle them. The items were all a few thousand years old. Several different kinds of oil lamps, a plowshare, carbonised grain, a slingstone, a teraphim, etc., all accompanied with cards of descriptive Scripture quotations.

There were photographs of Mizpah and the archeologists' story of the find to go along with its history. On the table were fascinating books on archeology with titles such as "*The Deluge Story in Stone*," "*Dead Men Tell Tales*," "*The Bible Comes Alive*," and "*Thrilling Voices from the Past*." In the evening we were enthralled by the movie, "*The Ancient Stones Cry Out*."

The most popular films were those on "science and the Bible", which we showed each evening. Superbly produced in colour by the Moody Laboratories in Hollywood by Dr. Irving Moon, they gave us a better comprehension of the greatness of God's creative work, and they were truly inspiring. You will be interested in the titles of these films: "*Voice of the Deep*," "*Dust or Destiny*," "*Hidden Treasures*" and "*The God of Creation*." They verily glorified our Heavenly Father.

It seems that the keynote of the conference would best be expressed by the word "liberty." The following statement was made by one attending: "The difference between this convention and so many others is that at the others they frequently come together with differing views but do not express them, whereas here brethren come together with differing views but feel free and are free to express them and they still retain sweet brotherly love, with no one to hurl the charge that they 'have gone out of the Truth'." And those who met at Asilomar were very thankful to our Heavenly Father that this difference was manifest.

However, this liberty was not violated, either in study or from the platform. It was not used as a springboard for any personal plunging into uncharted waters of aimless spiritual digression. This liberty was rightfully used but not abused. The fundamentals of the Truth that have been known for years were in no sense minimised, nor were the non-fundamentals unduly magnified.

It was not a session of repression or dictation but a session of true co-operation. It was not a session of the mere toleration of putting up with some brother or sister, but a session of manifested love and sweet fellowship. It was not a session of religious speculation but a session of investment in Bible truth, in Bible peace and joy and love. It was a true fellowship of the spirit, in which God's Word had free course, in which it was the sole authority, and in which the spiritual food was well balanced. Many of us felt as one brother expressed it: "I have had more peace of mind since coming to this convention than in years."

Beautiful Asilomar—haven of rest—God grant we shall see you again.

What New Thing Is This?

*Some reflections on the
power of Christianity*

Part 2—THE WAR WITH PAGANISM

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." (Rev. 12. 11.)

That wonderful panorama of the Book of Revelation pictures the conflict between the infant Church and the entrenched forces of Paganism, in a setting which calls all the militant ardour of our souls to the front. This was a war, and a war to the death. No compromise was possible; one side or the other must eventually give way under the strain, and break down, and be swept away. There was no room in the Roman world for both Christianity and Paganism; one had to go. Paganism had the entrenched strength of nearly a thousand years close-knit organisation and its roots in the mythologies of long-past ages; it had State and people on its side and all the malevolence of a demon-controlled priesthood alert to challenge and resist this new power that had appeared in the world. Christianity, from the worldly point of view, had nothing; an insignificant band of peasants and fishermen, without education, without money, without friends, without influence. How the Pontifex Maximus—Supreme High Priest of the entire Pagan priestly hierarchy—in his splendid palace at Rome, must have smiled—at first—when tidings of the new faith reached him. He was not smiling, later, when the hidden power which inspired that band of simple disciples began to be manifest in the changed lives of men and women, and the temples which for so long had claimed the allegiance and the gifts of all people began to be deserted, with vacant courts and empty coffers.

But the battle was not won without casualties. Nearly four centuries were to elapse before the triumphant song of Revelation 12 could become a reality. The gods of Olympus did not vacate their marble palaces at the first onslaught. The philosophies of Greece and Persia, no less than the ruthlessness of Roman State policy, were to create havoc in the growing Church and set back its development time and time again.

The fatal urge to compromise with the enemy, to gain time by means of strategic retreat, was there, and just as it was in later days, and has been in our own times, the relatively few bold

spirits who plunged forward with drawn sword to engage the foe in mortal combat all too often found that their fellows had fallen back and withdrawn from the fierceness of the fight. The love of the many that waxeth cold was as much of a menace to those early champions of the faith as it is to us to-day.

Nevertheless, they won through. The gallant little ship which right from the outset faced up to the mounting waves and howling winds, the evil forces of earth and heaven, of pagan priests and demon-gods, sailed through at last into the sunlit glory of a quiet and peaceful ocean. And although other dangers still lay ahead of the stout-hearted mariners, the Church's second great foe, Paganism, was utterly broken and unable ever to raise its ugly head again.

The battle was joined almost immediately after Pentecost. The challenge of Christianity to the Gentile world was as bold and uncompromising as it was to the Jewish world, and the Gentiles took up the challenge. A system of thought and a way of life which threatened to destroy at one and the same time the popular gods of the masses and the cherished philosophies of the elite invited opposition from both parties and the opposition was not slow in coming.

Paganism in the First Century had two aspects, both destined to give way before the advance of Christianity. The first aspect was the worship of pagan gods, which was general among the ordinary people, who crowded the temples and whose lives were regulated by the ritual observances imposed upon them by the priesthoods, and made burdensome by the exactions and gifts wrested from them. The upper classes—the educated—in general had given up faith in the existence of the gods, and treated the national religion with a kind of amused tolerance, merely yielding formal observance to the extent required by the State. The educated classes in general adopted the philosophies of one or another of their leading thinkers—Plato is acknowledged to be the most well-known if not the greatest of these—and Greek or Oriental philosophy served such instead of religion. Christianity attacked both the gods of the poor and the philosophies of the rich, and demolished them all.

The Roman system of worship was taken almost entirely from Greek mythology, the names of the gods and goddesses being Romanised. Thus Zeus of the Greeks (Jupiter to the Romans) was the supreme god, dwelling in his palace on the top of Mount Olympus in Greece. The brothers of Zeus were Poseidon and Hades. Poseidon (Neptune to the Romans) was the god of the sea and Hades (Pluto) the god of the underworld, the world of the conscious dead, for the immortality of the soul was an inherent feature of Greek religion. Beside these three there were "gods many and lords many," as Paul remarked in I Cor. 8. 5. The teaching of the apostles was carried on against this background. Barnabas and Paul, visiting Lystra (Acts 14. 8-18) were mistaken by the natives for Jupiter and Mercury come down from heaven, and only with great difficulty could they restrain the people from offering sacrifices to them.

That was only a casual contact with the symbols of Paganism. A little later on, during the course of Paul's next missionary journey, Paul and Silas, visiting Philippi (Acts 16. 16-23) made closer acquaintance with some of the darker forces behind the gods that were no gods. A damsel possessed with what the Authorised Version calls a "spirit of divination" followed them and gave testimony to the truth of their mission. The correct rendering of the expression is "a spirit of Python." The python was the serpent-oracle at Delphi to which men resorted from all parts of the world to enquire about the future. The Delphic Oracle was esteemed above all other oracles of Greece; its demon-possessed high priestess was revered and feared as one who had veritable communion with the other world—as indeed, she had. The damsel who met Paul and Silas at Philippi was another such, and being a slave, brought much gain to her masters by reason of the revelations she was able to make in consequence of her obsession by the demons.

Here was a direct challenge to the power of Christianity. True, the demons had publicly acknowledged the superiority of *El Elyon*, the Most High God, and proclaimed to all within earshot that these men had the message of salvation. That acknowledgment was on a level with the declaration of the demons who testified Jesus to be the Son of God. But it also by implication maintained the standing of the pagan gods. The Most High was not the only God, but merely the highest and most powerful of the pantheon of Greek gods. Paul rejected the offered compromise forthwith. Without entering into any kind of treaty with the demons,

he commanded the obsessing spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of the unfortunate girl, and the demon had no option but to obey. "He came out the same hour."

The sequel to that encounter was the casting of Paul and Silas into prison, the consequent earthquake, the conversion of the Philippian jailer, and the coming of the city authorities personally to entreat the two missionaries to leave the city peaceably. That was the first step in the overthrow of the ancient gods.

Paul must have had this incident in mind when, writing to the Ephesians long afterwards, he penned those immortal words "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against angelic princes, against spiritual powers, against the world rulers of darkness, against spiritual hosts of evil in the spiritual realm.*" (Eph. 6. 12.) None knew better than the great Apostle how intimately involved with those dark spiritual powers of evil were the religious and civil powers of the Roman world, and as he looked forward into the future he must certainly have foreseen the fierce nature of the conflict that was yet to be waged before Paganism was finally overthrown.

The first decisive blow at the enemy was dealt at Ephesus. Paul had dwelt there for two full years and the power of the Spirit had been mightily manifested, in the casting out of demons, in miracles of healing, and in the growth and development, in Christian grace and steadfastness, of a church that was later to be famous throughout the world. Ephesus was an important city and it was moreover the home of one of the "Seven Wonders of the World," the Temple of the goddess Diana. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" was the cry of the people. For nearly four hundred years had the world come to Ephesus to see and to worship in the wonderfully beautiful edifice that had been built by Alexander the Great, and during all that time the pagan gods and goddesses held undisputed sway. But after the incident related in Acts 19 the story was never the same. As the church at Ephesus increased in power so the worship of Diana declined. The mighty structure fell into disrepair and was eventually used by the Roman emperor Justinian as a source of materials for building a Christian church. Throughout mediaeval times the site of the temple remained a stagnant marsh thick with reeds and rushes and tenanted only by water fowl. Not until the year 1869 were the ruins of the great temple of Paul's day discovered beneath the water and the mud.

Whilst Paul was attacking the ancient gods in their own strongholds, the battle was also being joined on another front. Peter, holding up the banner of the Gospel in Judea and Samaria, met the first onslaught of Eastern philosophy, the "wisdom of this world." Strangely enough, as at Paul's encounter with the Pythoness damsel, so Peter's first contact with the enemy offered an opportunity to compromise. It was in Samaria that Simon Magus was converted by the preaching of Philip, and baptised (Acts 8. 9-24), and upon meeting Peter offered money in exchange for the impartation of miraculous gifts. Simon Magus is said to have been at one time a disciple of John the Baptist, to have been born in Samaria and educated in Alexandria in Egypt, where he studied Eastern philosophies and came back possessed of certain supernatural powers which are referred to in Acts 8. The reply of Peter was sharp and to the point; Simon could expect no part nor lot in the work of the apostles and indeed no share in the fellowship of the church until he had given evidence of a true and sincere repentance of his wrong condition of heart.

Simon Magus was one of the early leaders of that blend of Oriental mysticism and Greek philosophy which was known as Gnosticism. Greater havoc was wrought in the Early Church by Gnosticism than by any other form of paganism. The Gnostics took to themselves various items of the Christian faith, incorporated them with the theories of Plato, the religion of the Persians, the wisdom of Egypt, and produced a composite and insidious doctrinal belief which seduced many immature Christians from their faith. The warnings of the New Testament against false doctrine and false teachers are nearly always directed against the Gnostics. The "deeds of the Nicolaitanes" of Rev. 2. 6. in the message to the Church at Ephesus, refer to Gnostic doctrine. Some of the "doctrines of demons" thus taught were that the world was not created by the Most High God, but by a lesser god; that God, who dwelt in the unapproachable light, the "*pleroma*", produced two mighty but lesser beings, one of each sex, and from them came further such beings (the "*aeons*") of whom Christ and the Holy Spirit were one pair. Some declared that Jesus of Nazareth was an ordinary man and that Christ entered into him at Jordan and left him just before he died on the cross. Others said that Christ never had a real human body but was a phantom, an appearance. These are the teachings St. John condemns in I John 4. 1-3. During the century following the death of John, the last of the apostles, Gnostic meetings, seceding from the Christian assemblies, were formed in many

towns. The worship of Mithra, the Sun-god of the Persians, was a prominent feature of Gnosticism. With all this the apostles and their faithful co-workers had to contend. The educated classes, the rich and noble, the soldiers of the Empire, all who laid claim to knowledge superior to the common people, were peculiarly liable to be attracted by the specious theories of Gnosticism, and so it was that St. Paul on Mars Hill in Athens, the cultural centre of the world, challenged the whole system of this world's wisdom with the simplicity of Christ and Him crucified.

Acts 17. 16-23 tells us that some of those who listened to Paul on that historic occasion were of the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans derived their philosophy from Epicurus, who had lived three and a half centuries earlier. They maintained that the gods were not interested in mankind, that there was no immortality, no after life, no reward or retribution for good or evil. The highest aim in life was to seek pleasure and satisfaction without causing harm to others. The Stoics held that the Divine Mind pervaded all the universe and inspired men to high ideals, but was itself quite indifferent to pleasure or pain. Hence the Stoics steeled themselves to endure whatever life brought them without complaint, and prided themselves on uprightness of life with little sympathy for others.

Paul cut through all this involved reasoning by presenting a God Who *does* care for mankind and is actively planning for man's welfare and happiness. Moreover he declared that while God had in the past allowed men to reason in their own way and philosophise to their hearts' content, the time had now come when they must listen to Him. "*The time of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*" That tremendous utterance sounded the death-knell of Paganism. The wisdom of this world must now give place to the wisdom of God, and although those philosophers shrugged their shoulders and speedily forgot Paul and his preaching, yet those words lived on, and to-day the doctrines of the Epicureans and the Stoics, the theories of the Gnostics, and the worship of Jupiter and Mercury and Diana are no more. But the command of God through Paul, for all men everywhere to repent, lives on.

So, as the Apostles fell asleep, and their immediate disciples and followers followed them into rest, the Church, spreading outward into every part of the known world, continued the conflict. Paganism was not overthrown in the First Century nor yet in the Second. Nearly four hundred years were to pass before the cry of victory could be raised,

and meanwhile the Church must pass through much tribulation. Time and time again the dark forces of evil rallied their ranks and held the Christians at bay. Persecution and martyrdom attested the reality of the conflict, and the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. False teachers attacked the assembly of the faithful and the churches found foes within as well as without. Manes, the Persian mystic, in the Third Century embraced Christianity and then tried to combine the teachings of Mithraism, Persian sun-worship, with his new-found faith. His theology declared that man, created by the Prince of Darkness, was delivered by Christ, who he identified with Mithra. After his death Christ returned to his place in the Sun, Manes himself being the promised *Paraclete* or Comforter. The heresy of Manes, Manicheism as it was called, attracted great numbers and became a great religion—but to-day it is as dead as the Mithraism from which it was derived.

So the years passed by. The dark days of Diocletian, instigated by pagan priests to conduct a persecution more fierce than any that had gone before, tested the Church's faith and strength to the uttermost. But the power of paganism by the year 300 was dying. Diocletian's persecution ceased in the year 311. The next year, 312, the new emperor, Constantine, gave all Christians everywhere full liberty to practise their faith and in 325 he decreed that Christianity should be the State religion, and cut the bond between civil power and pagan priest, between State and Temple, which had endured since the founding of Rome a thousand years earlier.

Paganism made one last dying effort. Under the Emperor Julian, nephew of Constantine, the temples were re-opened and the pagan faith re-established upon a basis of equality with Christianity. Julian, brought up under the tutelage of Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, renounced Christianity at twenty years of age in disgust at some of the abuses that were already creeping into the now triumphant Church. An enlightened man, of naturally noble temperament, he prohibited the Christian persecu-

tion of pagans which was already becoming noticeable (for which reason Church historians usually call him "Julian the Apostate") and devoted himself to encouraging the revival of paganism. He also commenced the rebuilding of the Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, desolate since Titus destroyed it three centuries earlier, but his work was frustrated by an earthquake and abandoned.

It is probable that Julian was too farseeing a man really to believe that he could thus put the clock back. Perhaps he never really expected to restore the pagan faith; maybe his fight was in protest against the emergence, in the new hierarchy of priests, of just those evils for which the old one had been condemned.

Julian ruled for less than two years, and in the middle of his plans for exalting Paganism above Christianity was mortally wounded fighting the Persians. It is said that as he expired he raised his head and uttered the words "*Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.*"

That was the end of Paganism. Less than twenty years later the Christian emperor Theodosius the Great had rooted out the last remnants of the old faiths. The ancient gods no longer dwelt on Olympus, their temples had become Christian churches, the philosophers had yielded place to Christian theologians, and throughout the world the message of the man of Nazareth was preached without let or hindrance. In four centuries that new thing which came into the world in a Capernaum synagogue had overthrown and taken the place of established religions and philosophies a thousand years older. At long last, men looked on the Church, and beheld a Church triumphant.

But in this hour of triumph, even greater dangers threatened. The war with Paganism was over but the true Church turned from the conflict only to face a still more ruthless foe — ecclesiasticism. Next month's instalment will tell of that battle.

How narrow this way! say some! contemptuously of those who, like Paul, devote their energies to the *one thing*—the service of the truth. Yes, that will be the verdict against you, of all except the few who, like yourself, have carefully sought out this "narrow way" and who are determined to walk in it, regardless of the reproach it brings.

Life, hands, feet, voice, lips, silver and gold, moments and days, intellect, will, heart, love, myself—all in the Way of the Cross—to be moulded and shaped after the pattern of Christ, a loving God's other self. It must "needs be" therefore, that all who would serve Him, must "take up his cross daily."

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 8—The Voyage of the Ark.

To and fro, in and out, the gaily dressed dancers weaved their way in unison with the rising and falling of the throbbing music. The hot, heavy air was redolent with rich perfume, the exotic flowers and glossy shrubs adorning the great amphitheatre forming a fitting background to the rows of richly caparisoned slaves, standing motionless at their posts, watching the gay scene. Behind them gleamed the white walls of houses, the marble and gold of palaces and temples, the splendour of the antediluvian city of Shuruppak. In the middle distance shone the blue waters of the Euphrates, gay with the multi-coloured sails of the little boats in which so many of Shuruppak's citizens were at this moment taking their pleasure. The haunting strains of music floated on the air and mingled with the faint sound of the pleasure-seekers' cries from the river. No evidence of sorrow or care in this wealthy and godless city; prosperity and idleness went hand in hand and the people took their careless way, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, as their fathers had done before them and as their sons expected to do after them. The sun had always shone upon this favoured land, the ground had always been fertile, life had always been easy, and although the common people in the huts outside the city groaned under the burdens laid upon them they too had no more thought for the morrow than had their masters in the palatial buildings of the city. The strains of song rose upon the air and the music went on, while the dancers moved round the vast arena, halting from time to time to join one or other of the little parties gathered around the long tables laden with food and drink.

Down near the river there lay a huge black bulk. Ungainly and forbidding, it looked strangely out of place amid the golden cornfields, the soft fronded green of the palmgroves, and the deep blue of the river. Where all else was life and movement, it alone was still—still and immobile, as if waiting for something. Now and again someone from the crowd in the arena, or a holiday-maker in one of the boats on the river, would glance towards the strange object, and stop, and point, and say something to his or her companions, and there would be a burst of merriment from those around. Then the dancing would start again and the little boats drift lazily over the water, and the workers in the

cornfields and palmgroves bend anew to their tasks.

A party of youths had approached the silent structure—one of many parties that had done so during the past seven days. The outlines of the massive door, high up in the side of the building, could just be made out, but it was shut, and no sound came from within. One of the youths threw a large stone at it; the stone struck with a dull thud and came rolling down the sloping side and bounced off to the ground. There was no response from within and the lads with jeering laughs went on their way. Two men were idly pacing out the length of the thing—nearly two hundred paces had they taken before they reached its farther end and then they stood still, looking up to the apex fifty feet above their heads; they returned, laughing together and making derisive signs toward the unseen occupants inside.

Suddenly, it seemed, the singing of the birds and the chirping of insects had ceased. The atmosphere had become strangely oppressive. A steady, remorseless hot wind was springing up, blowing steadily from the south, laden with stinging dust. A low rumbling as of thunder could be heard, grumbling in the distance.

One of the players looked up, irritated at the persistent wind. His eyes caught and held something in the distance. He gave a cry of horror; his fellows looked up too, and the music abruptly ceased. From among the dancers a man's arm pointed and a strong voice was raised in a great shout. The whole vast assembly stood, transfixed.

Away in the south, across the whole span of the far horizon, where normally golden fields met blue sky, stood a long grey wall, a wall of immeasurable height, seeming to touch the sky itself, a wall that extended across the full field of vision from east to west. It was a moving wall, a living wall. Even as the spectators watched, it approached, its upper line swallowing up the heavens and its base submerging the fields as it advanced at incredible speed, its whole visible face rippling and moving, glimpsing white streaks and patches of foam, bearing down upon the doomed city like an avenging Fury. The watching crowd in the arena heard the panic-stricken cries of the idlers on the river, suddenly cut short as the mighty mass of water, many hundreds of feet in height, passed straight over the river and obliterated it with all its load of shining boats. They

saw now the foot of the giant wave, a surging torrent of boiling foam stretching out in front of the main mass, carrying on its brow heaps of debris, and they saw that foam surge over and swallow up the long black vessel which had been the butt of their jokes for so many years past. They saw the Ark leap up as it were to meet the oncoming Flood and they saw it disappear into the depths of the great wall of water which swept over it as if it had been a matchstick.

A loud cry rang out from among the stupefied watchers. "He was right. He was right after all. It is the Flood." In panic the multitude turned to flee; even as they did so the flood waters, travelling at fearful speed, swept up the slope on which the city was built, gathered homes and palaces and temples, trees and shrubs, men and women, into one confused mass, and carried them all away, buried in the sand and clay and gravel gathered up from the plain by the torrent.

In a matter of seconds it was all over. All that was left of the proud city of Shuruppak and its citizens lay buried beneath many feet of silt and mud, never again to see the light of day. And as the relentless waters rolled on, speeding to the north, a frightful conflict began in the heavens above. The wind, whipped up to gale force, resolved itself into a tempestuous cyclone and the heavens dropped water, a torrential downpour such as the world had never known since the days of man, a downpour that was to continue unceasingly for forty days and forty nights.

As the windows of heaven thus opened to discharge their contents upon the earth, the Ark, submerged with all its load under the first impact of the deluge, came uncertainly to the surface, righted itself and began to float serenely, undisturbed by the drenching downpour which cascaded upon its sloping sides and ran off smoothly into the surging waters.

We do not know whether the city of Shuruppak on the Euphrates really did exist before the Flood. According to Babylonian legend it did, and was the home of Noah. The Shuruppak which Abraham knew, not many miles from his own town, Ur of the Chaldees, had not been standing many centuries when Abraham passed through it on his way to Canaan. It is not possible that the builders of the cities which sprang up after the Flood found any traces of the antediluvian cities. But it is quite likely that the names of those earlier cities were preserved and given to the later ones, so that there may be something in the old legend after all.

We have, then, to picture a monstrous tidal wave, many hundreds of feet high and travelling at a speed of possibly four hundred miles an hour, originating

somewhere in the Antarctic seas and sweeping northwards across the Indian Ocean. This great flood would be more and more hemmed in by the converging coastlines and mountain ranges of Africa and India so that it could have reached maximum destructive power when it passed up the Persian Gulf and spread out over the flat land of Babylonia. A few hours would suffice for the mass of waters to reach the mountains of Armenia, where, if the Valian theory be correct, it would have met a similar flood advancing across Siberia from the Arctic Ocean.

This flood from the Indian Ocean was the breaking up of the "fountains of the great deep" of the Genesis story. The same account also says that "the windows of heaven were opened". The rapid advance of this vast quantity of water from the tropics involved certain secondary effects. The sudden transfer of the weight of water involved from the southern hemisphere to the region of the Euphrates would almost certainly produce earthquakes. In addition, atmospheric disturbances would result from the temperature changes consequent on the movement of the waters and the effect would be the lifting into the air of vast masses of water vapour and its almost immediate condensation into heavy rain, which would fall to the earth as a torrential downpour of unusual magnitude. According to the Bible this downpour continued for forty days.

At the first impact of the waters the Ark would have been completely submerged, swept along like a cork by the force of the water. That must have been a terrifying experience for the occupants, shrouded in pitch darkness and unable to do anything to help themselves. They were entirely at the mercy of the waters. That phase might conceivably have lasted several minutes until the natural buoyancy of the vessel brought it to the surface, after which it floated, still borne along by the swift current but in no immediate danger.

It is very probable that the force of the waters, as they filled the Babylonian plain, was speedily greatly reduced. With mountains almost all round, the plain would become a kind of flat-bottomed basin in which the water would become relatively calm and there would be little or no current. According to Genesis the Ark took five months to drift to the mountains of Armenia (Ararat) which means that it would only cover about twenty-five miles in a week if it travelled forward all the time. More likely it drifted aimlessly, the slow northward current of the waters serving to bring it at last to Armenia.

Long before the end of this five months Noah had looked out of the Ark. If the parallel accounts of the Flood (see Oct./Nov. B.S.M.) are referred to it

will be seen that he opened the window at the end of the forty days, that is, immediately after the rain had ceased. It would seem that it was at this point he sent forth the raven, which "went to and fro, until the waters were dried up from the earth." The meaning of this expression is that the raven remained in flight in the vicinity of the Ark but periodically returned for rest and probably food. There was no other place on which it could alight. Just how long afterward Noah sent out the dove for the first time we have no means of knowing, for the account does not say. It seems to have been during the time that the Ark was still drifting, before it grounded. The return of the dove on the second occasion with an olive leaf in her mouth could be an indication that the Ark was nearing land which either had not been covered by the waters or had been covered only a short time; the fact that the tree still bore leaves capable of being plucked shows that. On the final occasion the dove did not return which must imply the existence somewhere nearby of trees capable of providing sustenance.

That five months' aimless drifting must have been a new trial of faith to Noah and his family. As they looked out, day after day, across the limitless sea, they must have wondered how and in what way God would bring them safely to land. They probably had no means of determining the depth of the water, and as week succeeded week and no land appeared on the horizon, no mountain peaks emerging from the surface of the sea, they must surely have had need of all their faith and trust. The daily routine of attending the wants and needs of their animal cargo would have occupied much of their time, but it must have seemed a long five months.

Local legend to this day supplies many alleged incidents of the voyage. It is said by the Yezidis of Northern Iraq that the Ark, while drifting, bumped on the top of Mount Sinjar (in the desert to the west of the Euphrates) and sprang a leak. The vessel would have foundered if the serpent (who was to have been excluded from the Ark but who got in by means of a trick) had not crawled through the hole, coiled his body into a ball on each side, and pulled himself tight like a rivet, thus making the hole watertight. He remained thus for the rest of the voyage, and so saved the ship.

It is only fair to add that the Armenians dispute the claim that this incident happened in the Yezidis' land on Mount Sinjar. They assert that it occurred on the top of Sipan Dagh (Mount Sipan) in their own country (near Mount Ararat) and that Noah, feeling the bump, ejaculated "*Sipan Allah*"

meaning "Praise God", which, they say, accounts for the present name of the mountain.

Scripture itself is silent as to the details of the voyage. We are told only, in simple words, that "the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." That is the second geographical indication we are given in the Bible. The first was as to the locality of Eden. Both references presuppose that the reader already knows perfectly well the districts to which reference is made. In our day, so many thousands of years later, that is not easy. What we do know is that Ararat (Urartu in the native language) was the ancient name for the land now known as Armenia, (divided at the present time into three parts, belonging respectively to Turkey, Russia and Iraq.) If we want to decide for ourselves where the Ark actually did land, we have the whole of the mountains of Armenia for our field of investigation.

So the voyage came to an end! It was to be still another eight months before Noah and his family could set foot upon dry land, but at least they knew the waters were receding and that the day was not far distant when at long last they could commence their great task of building a new world. Sin and evil had been destroyed; they had a great and unique opportunity to create a "world wherein dwelleth righteousness." That idea must have been in their minds and it must have been with perfect sincerity that they set about the work of establishing a new order of society in which God would be honoured. That they failed does not impugn their sincerity nor their zeal nor their labours; it only demonstrated what had to be demonstrated time and again in later history that "there is none other name given under heaven" but the name of Jesus, whereby men can be saved.

To be continued.

Honeyed words are sometimes only the masks of deep hypocrisy; but the mask is sure to drop off some time, as soon as selfish policy renders a change of tactics necessary. The fact therefore remains that the words, the entire chorus of conversation and conduct, are an index of the heart.

No place for Him in the inn, no place of His own in which to lay His head, no burial place but a borrowed tomb. Humanly speaking, if ever there was a wasted life it was the life of Jesus when here amongst men. When viewed from the Divine standpoint a different conclusion is reached.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BASED ON PRINCIPLE

Our authorisation to meet as brethren is the Master's Word: "*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.*" (Mat. 18-20.) As this is our charter-right for meeting as the Lord's people, we concede an equal right under it to all of God's people who may choose to meet in His name at any place and at any time. We remember the Bible illustration of this principle: On one occasion the twelve disciples had returned from a preaching tour, and St. John said to Jesus, "*Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.*" (Luke 9, 49, 50.) This one forbidden by John would correspond well with some now holding meetings other than those which we attend. What did Jesus say? *Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name that can lightly speak evil of Me.*"—Mark 9. 38-40.

Here is a general principle which will serve to guide, to instruct God's people of today respecting His will in similar matters. We, of course, think our arrangements most pleasing to the Lord, or we would not have them so. If others think differently, the responsibility is with them and with the Lord. It is not for us to forbid them, but it is for the Lord to bless them or not to bless them, according to His wisdom in the management of His work.

Some one may suggest, Would not this thought, acted upon, break up the meetings of the Lord's people into very small classes? We reply that this must depend upon the brethren themselves. They have the right to meet in twos and threes or in larger numbers. If they can find it to their advantage to meet in larger groups, no doubt they will be glad to do so. This means a great deal of liberty in the Church within the limits of the word and spirit of Jesus' teaching, directly and through His Apostles.

Brethren meeting as a class should understand that in so doing they properly waive, or make void, some of their personal liberties and privileges. Individual preferences are to be more or less subjected to class preferences. Even the majority of the class should be considerate of the wishes of the minority, and if possible, should moderate the arrangements, so that all can be accommodated and pleased in respect to speakers, and in respect to place and character of meetings. No one should

selfishly consider merely his own preferences and welfare. The spirit of co-operation, the Golden Rule, the spirit of love, should prevail. And as this is true, all those filled with the Spirit of the Master and living close to Him will find fellowship one with another in yielding personal preferences in the interest of the whole number.

The only things that may not be yielded to the will of the majority are matters of conscience. No one is to do what he believes to be sin, injustice, wrong, even though all the remainder of the brethren think it right. And no one is to leave undone what his conscience dictates, even though so directed by all the remainder of the brethren of the class.

Conscience is always to be respected—never to be throttled or violated. Nor is any one who stands faithful to his conscience to be disesteemed therefor by his brethren, even if their consciences view the matter differently. On the contrary, his courage in standing by his convictions is to be considered estimable.

On these principles liberty may be maintained in the Body of Christ; and we shall find blessing in proportion as those of one mind can fellowship with each other. Where fellowship is not maintained, the assembling is neither desirable nor in harmony with the Divine arrangement. But where the brethren find it advantageous to meet in different classes, it will usually be found, we believe, that originally too great restraint of personal liberty was exercised, and that the majority were too careless of the sentiments of the brethren constituting the minority.

But even where it may be found necessary or desirable to have more than one gathering of the Lord's people in one city, it certainly still is true that they should have one heart and one mind, and be of one brotherhood under the Anointed Head. They should consider each other's interests, and do all in their power "*to provoke one another to love and to good works.*"—Heb. 10:24.

Our time is not our own if we have consecrated all to God; and 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 time to devote to the ideas and pursuits which engross the world's attention.

BY THY WORDS ACQUITTED; BY THY WORDS CONDEMNED

The above words of our Lord indicate that the heart and the mouth are under His very special scrutiny. It is in this same view of the matter that those words of wisdom were penned,—“*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.*” The indication is clear that a right condition of heart is necessary to right words; for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”, as experience testifies to every man. It is therefore just that our words should be a criterion of judgment in the Lord’s estimation, as he tells us they are. True, honeyed words are sometimes only the masks of deep hypocrisy, but the mask is sure to drop off some time, as soon as selfish policy renders a change of tactics necessary. The fact therefore remains that the words, the entire course of conversation and conduct, are an index of the heart.

Our first concern, then, should be for the heart—that its affections and disposition may be fully under the control of Divine grace; that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there; that justice, mercy, benevolence, brotherly kindness, love, faith, meekness, temperance, supreme reverence for God and Christ, and a fervent love for all the beauties of holiness, may be firmly fixed as the governing principles of life. If these principles be fixed, established, in the heart, then out of the good treasure of the heart the mouth will speak forth words of truth, soberness, wisdom and grace.

Concerning our Lord Jesus, whose heart was perfect—in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, it was said, “*Grace is poured into thy lips*”; and again, “*All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.*” Moses, personating Christ, foretold the blessed influences of the Lord’s words, saying, “*My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.*” And Jesus said, “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*” So wise, just and true were the Lord’s words, that, though his enemies were continually seeking to find some fault, it is said, “*They could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answers and held their peace.*”

Thus our Lord left a worthy example to his people, which the Apostle urges all to follow, saying, “*Let your speech be always with grace (with manifest love and kindness), seasoned with salt*” (a purifying and preservative influence) And Peter adds, “*If any man speak, let him speak as the*

oracles of God”,—wisely, and in accordance with the spirit and Word of the Lord.

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions, was careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and the words right, saying, “*What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (calamities, troubles—for discipline or refining)? . . . The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*” There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear apprehension of the Divine wisdom in permitting them.

How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under a firm adherence to it. In an unfriendly world we can expect to receive only the reproaches of our Master, for the servant is not above his Lord. The world, the flesh and the Devil oppose our way: there are fightings within and fears without, and many are the arrows and fiery darts aimed at the righteous. But what is the safe attitude of the soul under afflictions and severe testings? Is it not in silence before God, waiting and watching first to see his leading, his will, in every matter before presuming to touch things that often involve so much? So the Psalmist suggests, saying, “*I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, even from good (even from doing or saying what seemed good in my own sight); and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, and in my self-communing there burnt a fire (description of a fiery trial).*”

Thus chastened and comforted, we learn to look beyond the present to the glory that shall by and by be revealed in the faithful overcomers, who, by patient continuance in well-doing in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, seek for the prize revealed to faith alone. Thus disciplined and blessed under fiery trials by going to the Lord for comfort and help, the child of God begins to realise what it means to be dead to the world and alive toward God, with a keen appreciation of His love and goodness and grace; and being thus separated from the world, and more firmly united to Christ, the language of the heart is, as the Psalmist further suggests, “*And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*”

Such is the blessed result of bridling the tongue under circumstances of trial and vexation, and humbly taking all our cares to the Lord in prayer, to the end that, when we speak, our speech may be with grace, seasoned with salt.

