



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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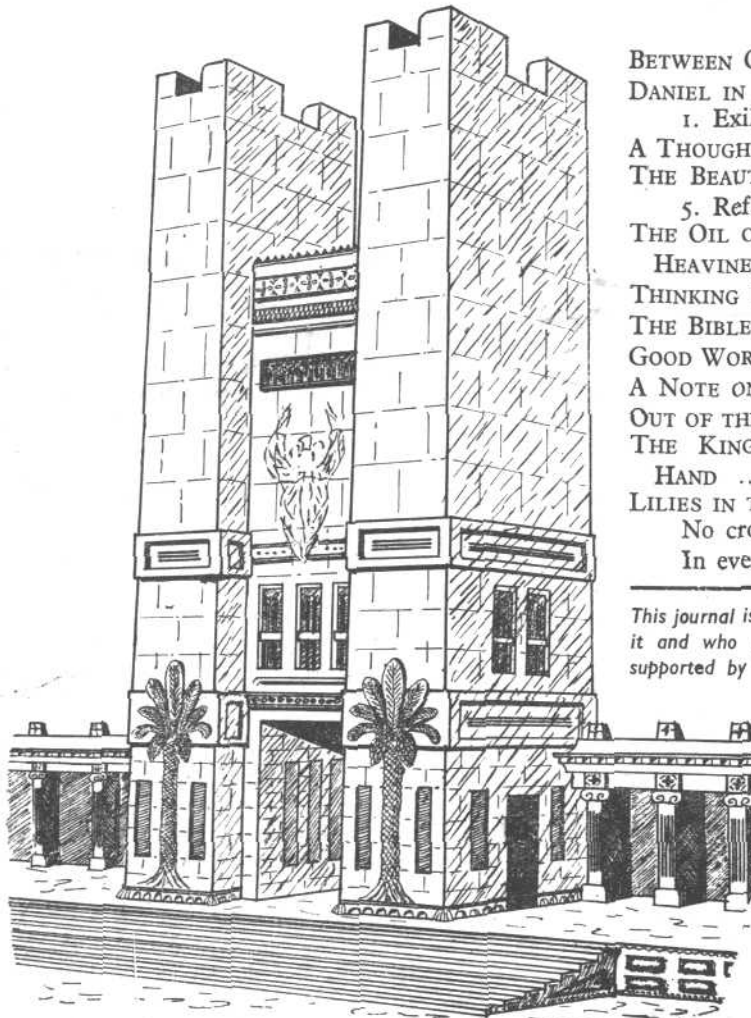
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

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

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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

LONDON BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

A meeting at

CAXTON HALL

(Tudor Room)

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1

Saturday, 3rd March, 1956

6.30 p.m.

Chairman:

BRO. A. O. HUDSON

For speakers see loose leaflet announcement

The purpose of the meeting is to pray and praise; to practise and proclaim the faith that is in us; to enjoy the fellowship of kindred minds, and to raise the Baptist cry: "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The meeting is being advertised in the public press.

New Features

With the new year we commence two new serial features each of which we trust will be of interest to our readers. First comes a treatise entitled "Daniel in Babylon" which is to follow the life of Daniel from his first going to Babylon as a lad to the last glimpse we have of him as an old man. Our former studies in the lives of the prophets have always brought expressions of appreciation; we have in the recent past gone through the books of Jonah, part Isaiah, Joel, Habakkuk and during the year just past, Obadiah. This new study in the life of Daniel will not be a verse by verse exposition as were those of the three last named prophets but more a descriptive study similar to "The Mission of Jonah." It is felt that this is the best way of treating this book so as to make it interesting to all. The first instalment, in this issue, opens the story with the taking of the lad Daniel to Babylon.

The other new feature is to be a collection of the poems of Rebecca Fair Doney. These poems, breathing the spirit of the faith as we understand it, are more familiar to brethren of an older generation than the present, and it is felt that a good purpose will be served by reproducing them. Sister Doney was born in New Jersey, U.S.A. in 1865 and died at her home at Pen Argyl in 1940. A tribute to her says "Aunt Rebecca was a wonderful character—one who was always studying every small detail of the Lord's plan, and it was a privilege to be in her company". We trust that many of our readers will find these poems a help by the way and an encouragement to hold fast to the things that we have learned from those who "went before."

Gone from us

Bro. C. H. Hillary (Bishop Auckland)

Sis. Jennings (London)

Sis. A. Lilley (Birmingham)

Bro. D. P. Vaughan (Aldersbrook)

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

Continued on back page.

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith*

He comes on the stage a youth, with life just opening out before him, but already an exile from his native country, doomed to attain manhood's estate in an alien and unfriendly land, far from the Temple of God and all that Temple represented. When at length the curtain drops, we see him there, still on the stage, an old man and full of days, too aged and infirm to join the procession of rejoicing men and women wending their way back to the land of their fathers, there to rebuild their Temple and worship their God in His own appointed way. During the long years of a life spent alternately in prominence and seclusion, in honour and neglect, he maintained inflexible faith and a constant passion for the restoration of his people to their own land, and when at last the fruition of all his hopes appeared he was too old to share in the home-going. Nevertheless he died content, knowing that the time would surely come that God would remember him and, in the resurrection life, grant him his heart's desire. For the intervening time he left on record, as his legacy to all who in after times would come to know God, a narrative so thrilling in its adventure and so stimulating in its sterling faith that it has been the inspiration of thousands who in their own day and generation have endured the fires of persecution and withstood opposition to righteousness.

The Book of Daniel is full of vital interest both to the student of prophecy and to the earnest believer who seeks strength and encouragement for faith. Its vivid stories, of heroic deeds dared by stalwart believers in God, and of the mighty arm of God stretched out on their behalf, never grow old and will never die. The revelations of things to come, given to Daniel by means of visions and dreams, have proven themselves beyond all doubt to be "visions of God". They have occupied the attention of students all through the twenty-four centuries which have elapsed since his day. Less than two hundred years after his death, if the historians are to be believed, Jaddua the High Priest of Israel showed the prophecies of Daniel to the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great, explaining to him how his own career of conquest was foreshadowed in those prophecies. Now in this twentieth century Christian students still scan the ancient words to gain some clue to the significance of present-day events, and take assurance from them that the days of the Kingdom cannot be much longer delayed. But what is of greater importance is the insight this remarkable book gives us into the personal lives of men; the

stimulus to faith and constancy which is afforded by the stories of loyalty, fortitude and Divine deliverance which have made the book to stand out in the Old Testament as a record of marvellous achievements against a background conspicuous for its gallery of remarkable men. The lad Daniel, making his way by sheer force of character and unswerving loyalty to the highest office in an idolatrous and materialistic land; the proud pagan king Nebuchadnezzar, arrogant in his might, at length utterly abased and humbled before God; his effeminate grandson Belshazzar, ignominiously slain in the midst of unheeding revelry; the three servants of God who were prepared to suffer a cruel death rather than deny him; Nitocris, the royal daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who grew up with Daniel, never espoused his faith yet turned to him for enlightenment when the mysterious hand wrote the doom of Babylon upon the banqueting room walls; the jealous courtiers who plotted the death of Daniel but themselves fell into the pit of their own contriving; these characters stand out vividly against a background which tells us more about the life and customs of ancient Babylon than any other single book now in existence.

Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were boys together at that time, about six hundred years before Christ, when the kingdom of Judah was declining to its fall. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, inhabiting the northern part of the Promised Land, with its capital city of Samaria, had already gone into captivity, over a century earlier. Now it was the turn of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. Jehoahaz, king of Judah, had been deposed by Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt, and Jehoiakim placed upon the throne. He had reigned only a little over two years when the dreaded Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, not yet sole king, for his father Nabopolassar was still alive, had invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was forced to renounce his allegiance to Egypt and become the vassal of Babylon. As surety for his good behaviour, the Babylonians took some of the aristocracy and nobility of Judah back to Babylon as hostages, and these four lads, either of royal blood or related in some definite way to the royal line of the kings of Judah were taken among them.

It was a common practice of the Babylonians thus to take into the royal court of their own land selected members of the younger relatives of vassal kings. The idea was to train them in the ways and

ideas of the conquerors so that eventually they might become trustworthy rulers over the conquered peoples from whom they had been drawn. Daniel and his companions found themselves thrown into the society of many other lads of their own age in *the king's court at Babylon, taken from other countries which the Babylonians had overrun and conquered*. Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, was a son of the High Priest of the Moon god at Haran, where Terah the father of Abraham died, and he had been taken captive in the same way as Daniel and ultimately rose to become the husband of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Nitocris, and, by virtue of that marriage, the last but one king of Babylon. Belshazzar, their son, was the last king.

Daniel could hardly have been less than eighteen years of age when he was taken to Babylon. Nabopolassar died in the next year and Nebuchadnezzar became sole king. Two years later Daniel stood before him and interpreted his dream of the great image (Dan. 2. 1). The term "children" (Dan. 1. 4) in the original Hebrew has the meaning of *youths or young men, a different word being employed when the meaning is limited to a child; the word used allows for any age up to twenty-four or so*.

Jeremiah was living at Jerusalem at that time and had been for twenty years past. The venerable prophet was well known in Court circles and the lad Daniel must have been well acquainted with him. They had probably often talked about the coming judgments which Jeremiah so consistently predicted would surely come upon the nation. His message and preaching must have had much to do with the early development of those four young men who showed so soon afterwards what sound training they had received in things pertaining to God.

Ezekiel, too, was a lad of seventeen at this same time but since his home was, in all probability, down by the Dead Sea he and Daniel may not have met. It was not until eight years later that Ezekiel in his turn was taken captive to Babylon. Two other prophets who also lived and prophesied at this same time were Obadiah and Habakkuk, but there is no evidence to indicate whether or not they and Daniel ever came into contact. It would seem, however, that Daniel kept in touch with the older prophet, Jeremiah, and had obtained copies of his writings as the years passed by, for when in Dan. 9. 2 we are told that Daniel understood by the books of Jeremiah that seventy years were to mark the limit of the Exile he refers to a prophecy that Jeremiah uttered in the first year of Zedekiah (Jer. 29. 10) by which time Daniel had been in Babylon eight years.

So it came about that one day a little procession

could have been seen making its way out of the Damascus Gate on the northern side of Jerusalem. First came a detachment of Babylonian soldiers, stepping smartly along the highway, their coats of mail gleaming in the sunlight. Behind them, a line of chariots, each containing five or six passengers, chiefly bearded Babylonians, but in some of them a number of Jewish youths. After these came heavy waggons, lumbering along with their loads of treasure, of gold and silver vessels, taken from the Palace and the Temple. Finally, another detachment of soldiers. Daniel and his friends were leaving their native home for perpetual exile in a strange and idolatrous land. Never again were their eyes to look upon that wonderful Temple which Solomon had built more than three centuries earlier. They could not have known, at that moment, that only another nineteen years were to elapse before that *glorious edifice was to sink down in the destroying flames and lie, a desolate mass of rubble, while Israel expiated her national sin in a foreign land*.

As that little procession left the Damascus Gate and the city walls behind, it passed a little rocky eminence on the right hand side of the road. Daniel's eyes may have lighted upon it as the chariot rattled past. He little dreamed that the Messiah for whose coming he was in later life so ardently to pray must one day in the then distant future suffer and die upon a cross on that little hill. The soldiers, elated at the prospect of soon getting back to their own land and homes, had no idea that long after their own city and nation had vanished into the dust, soldiers of another empire would gamble for a robe at the foot of that hillock. So the land of Judah was left behind, and for something like thirty days the little party travelled, through Samaria and Syria, along the great high road that led to Carchemish on the Euphrates, and then, turning southward, and following the course of the river as it flowed serenely across the flat Babylonian plain, come at last in sight of the great city Babylon.

Daniel could not have failed to reflect that he was re-tracing the very steps of his forefather Abraham, in the reverse direction. This was the road by which Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees, following the river Euphrates past Babylon and up to Haran, and, when his father Terah was dead, down through Syria into Canaan. Abraham, obeying God's call, had left the luxury and glitter of that pagan land for the simplicity and purity of a pastoral life in the place to which God had led him. Here had he lived and died, his son Isaac lived and died, and the twelve tribes of Israel grown into a nation. Now this young lad was called upon to leave the hills and valleys, the tree-clad mountains and rushing streams, the vineyards and olive-yards, the orange

groves and pomegranates, of this hallowed country where God had put his name and planted his chosen people, for a land of great and luxurious cities, gigantic temples and magnificent palaces, wide rivers and straight-cut canals busy with the trade and commerce of many nations. Instead of the chaste and dignified worship of God Most High he was to witness every form of debased idolatry, the allegiance and reverence of the people given freely to images of gold and silver and wood and stone—objects that could neither see, nor hear, nor speak. Like his friend and teacher, Jeremiah (10. 4-5) he might say of their idols "They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they

cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good." Abraham was called to come away from this place and be separate from the unclean things: Daniel was called to go back among them. Surely the ways of God are mysterious and past finding out! Daniel must have wondered what purpose God could have in sending him to such a place, what usefulness a life spent in these surroundings could have for him. And as the towering walls of the world's greatest city loomed up before him the lad's young heart must have been lifted to God in earnest supplication that, in the unknown life which he must now face, his faith and loyalty might never give way.

(To be continued)

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense on altars of brick . . . which say 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou'. These are a stench in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day". (Isa. 65. 3-5).

And not only in the days of Isaiah was that spirit manifested. We have it to-day, with ourselves, in the professedly Christian church. The effect of a lifetime studying the Divine purposes, and maintaining a claimed consecration to God, is all too often a smug self-righteousness which is the very negation of all for which Christ stood. There were Pharisees two thousand years ago who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others". They have their spiritual descendants to-day; if the Lord Jesus was right when He told those of His day that they were of their father the Devil, we should logically come to the same conclusion today. That might come as a shock to some of the very respectable church officials who anticipate the Millennial Kingdom by ruling their flocks with a rod of iron here and now under the delusion that they and they alone have the monopoly of Divine Truth. Better that kind of shock than the one which will inevitably come to some when they stand and hear the Saviour say "I never knew you . . . workers of iniquity". "There is a generation" said the Wise Man in Proverbs "O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up". We all know them; complacent in the oversight of the little religious clubs they control; secure in the knowledge of their own assured salvation; contemptuous of any other

believers whose understanding of the Divine mysteries differs anywise from theirs, and firmly resolved to allow no breath of air from outside to disturb the serenity of their sacred enclosure. Unfortunately, for them and their flocks,

*The eternal truth of God moves on
In undisputed sway
While all the little creeds of men
Wax old and pass away.*

Nothing can hinder the development and enlargement of Divine truth as it becomes known to successive generations, and nothing can restrain the strivings of the human spirit after closer communion with the Divine and a more accurate understanding of the ways of God.

Sacrificing in gardens: burning incense on altars of brick. It is a terrible condemnation, and so easily earned. After all, almost everyone sacrifices in a garden of some sort nowadays, worships within the enclosed confines of some particular denomination. So many altars are man-made, polluted by the lifting up of man's tools upon them, instead of being the natural unhewn stone demanded by God. But the Most High is not talking about our denominational affiliations when He talks like this, nor yet about our particular preference for one or another kind of worship, whether rich in ceremonial or Puritan in its simplicity, whether Bible study or sermon. He is talking about those who use their denominational position, or their standing in the church, to build a wall around their flock to separate them from others of Christ's brethren outside, and to compel them to

gather around a man-made altar instead of the table of the Lord. Such professed servants of God are as the acrid smoke of a fire burning all day long and getting into the nostrils—an ever-present irritation

and vexation. And that is a very different thing to the incense which ascends to God from His faithful followers as a sweet-smelling savour. We all do well to remember that.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

A series of studies
on Sanctification

T. Holmes

5. Reformation begun

Many are the lines of thought carried over from Old Testament days into the Gospel story to teach the need for a holy life. Indeed, for the Church of Christ, since Pentecost, the need for a deeper sense of holiness has been more pronounced, for the simple reason that the day of types and shadows has given place to the day of realities. Concerning many of the items of the Aaronic system of ceremony and services the Epistle to the Hebrews says that they were "imposed . . . until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9. 10.) This time of re-formation has no connection with the period of Church history covering the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries of our era, but is located in the Apostolic days. Moreover it is not church reformation which is thus indicated, but Israel's re-formation. The first of the great realities being come — in the person of our Lord Jesus, that is, a new and better High Priest being come with the first of the better sacrifices, God began to reform and re-mould the instrument He designed to use in accomplishing world deliverance from sin. This re-formation is intended eventually to affect the whole regathered nation of Israel, when their days of scattering are over, and when they are ready to enter into a new and better Covenant with their waiting, long-suffering God. The clay which was once marred in the hand of the Potter will be moulded again another vessel as it will seem good to the Potter to mould it. (Jer. 18. 4.)

In preparation for that great day the great Master-craftsman has been re-forming and re-moulding the Priesthood. This is the first stage of God's Reformation, and the whole of this Gospel Age has been set aside for it. It began by the supersession and removal of the Aaronic House of Priests and in the installation of the Christian priesthood (Heb. 9. 12-15.) One feature of this Reformation was that the principle of taking one whole tribe (with its further division into Levites and priests), was abolished, and the earlier system of counting the first-born as the family's priestly member was re-introduced—but on the higher spiritual level. This priestly privilege was the first born's true relation-

ship to the rest of the family at the time that the Old Law Covenant was made, and this relationship is to be restored in readiness for the establishment of the New and better Covenant. In harmony with this thought we find that the first-fruits unto God (the first-born class, the 144,000 of Rev. 14. 4) are not represented as coming from Levi alone, but as *though gathered from all the tribes of Israel.* (Rev. 7. 4-8.) This is in keeping also with the thought in Hebrews that the followers of the Lord Jesus are called "the Church of the first-born" (Heb. 12. 23.) This is in accord, too, with the position in Egypt, when the destroying Angel spared the life of every first-born sheltering beneath blood-sprinkled lintels, irrespective of tribal lineage. The first-borns of every tribe alike were in danger that fearful night, and in their "passing over" they were hallowed unto the Lord.

A further feature of this reformation was that the essential things belonging to the new day were to be "real," not shadowy. It would not now be enough to follow a course of ritual and ceremony, no matter how elaborate the ordinance may be. Instead of "incense, beaten small", the odour and fragrance of a consecrated life would be acceptable through Christ to God (2 Cor. 2. 15.) The blood of bulls and goats was no longer acceptable to God. He required the surrender of human blood—that is of human life. Thus the whole system vested in Aaron and "his house" which endured from Sinai till Jesus came, was swept away, and the whole nation for whom they served was set aside to wait until the reformation of the "First-born" should be complete. When the first-born class has been made complete the remainder of the Israel family will be brought in ("All Israel shall be saved." Rom. 11. 26.) and be formed anew—re-formed—and made another vessel, as it will seem good to the Potter to make it.

If then God spake so earnestly to the "shadow" priesthood of Israel, beseeching them to walk before Him in such holiness as was then possible, with how much greater emphasis has God spoken to the Christian Church to walk worthily before Him, per-

fecting holiness in His sight, from day to day. How greatly he desires that they shall shape their lives so that His Will in them shall have free course! How ardently He wants the innate qualities of His own great heart to be reproduced in them, so that they can be the first and chief portion of that long-purposed Seed, through which His Love can flow to heal the sin-sick nations of the earth. "*Be ye holy—for I am holy,*"—how intensely these words reflect the longing of Almighty God.

What is this holiness? What does it mean to be a saint? Does it denote a state of easy recognition to one and all? Do worldly minds understand it when it is in their presence? Do even Christian minds realize what it means? Does it mean the cultivation of a "goody-goody", sentimental "holier-than-thou" attitude among men? Does it require the wearing of distinctive dress, or the possession of some special title? Can the Church make saints at will?

Holiness is a word usually associated with religious life and experience. We have an equivalent in the word "Saintliness". Our modern English word "Holy" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, "*Hal.*" Holiness comes from a kindred word—"*Halig.*" In the less-developed language of our forefathers' day these words did not have the almost exclusively religious meaning which the modern word has, but were applied to various physical and mundane things too. We have several kindred words to-day which spring from the same roots. One such is "*hel*"—a word denoting good sound health. Another such is "*hell*"—to make sound or well. Still another is "*whole*"—(or "wholly") meaning "entire," "complete," "nothing lacking."

Our modern word "Saint" comes from the Latin "*Sanctus*," and means "one set apart"—i.e., one wholly devoted to a purpose, usually a religious purpose. The words "Holy" "Holiness" and "Hallow" (used instead of holify) and "Sainly," "Sanctification" and "Sanctify" are synonyms for each other respectively, and stand, almost without exception, in our English Bible, as the equivalents of one Hebrew word (*Qadash* or *Qodesh*) in the Old Testament and one Greek word (*Hagios*) in the New Testament. How accurately the Greek "*Hagios*" corresponds to the Hebrew "*Qadash*" may be seen by the fact that the Septuagint translation (a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) uses that word exclusively to pass over into the Greek tongue the old Hebrew thought of holiness. This is of great advantage to us, and helps us to carry forward the Old Testament thought into New Testament days. It affords us additional advantage also to have two

sets of English words by which to define that ancient Hebrew thought.

Holiness is usually taken to mean sinlessness, undefiledness—an equivalent thought to absolute purity. Under present conditions this can mean different things to different men, according to the creedal conceptions employed. For instance, some Christians believe they have not sinned for months and years. They claim to have kept unbroken all the ten commandments. They claim to have forborne to steal, to lie, to covet, etc., and on this ground claim sinlessness of life—i.e., they thus advance a claim to holiness. All Christians do not agree to this claim because they do not accept that definition of holiness.

Others, mindful of their sins, confess them freely, and while telling of God's forgiving grace, strive to promote feelings of deep emotion, leading to tears of contrition or songs of praise. The flow of deep emotion is understood by them to be a state of deepening holiness—a deepening of heart-felt revulsion for sin, and appreciation of unattained purity. True holiness is neither the one nor the other of these states. To seek to attain to holiness by keeping the ten commandments constitutes a "throw-back" to the Jewish Age. It tells of retrogression to the lowly Israelitish level, to an attempted holiness of the flesh, and shows that the would-be observer of such commandments is in bondage to the "letter" of a law. It seeks to attain "subjective" holiness at the very low level of the "types" and like Israel, it obtains not what it seeketh for. It forgets that Israel was not made sinless by keeping those commands, but was accounted so by the shedding of blood. Cleansing blood, not works, is the primary essential to holiness among men.

The other body of Christian thought fails to take holiness at its proper value, and dwells, with tears, upon its desperate and perverse unholiness—and of its constant need for grace and mercy. It lives the Christian life on its penitential side alone. It dwells in one room only of the Christian's abiding-place, forgetful or unknowing that the house is large and wide. Repentance unto tears, in proper place is right; but repentance is not the whole of the Christian's life and standing.

Holiness in man begins first with God. It is a standing-ground before God, conferred by Him for a purpose. Of His own Will, God took Abraham's seed to be His people, notwithstanding their defects. By His own hand He separated them from other men—and that not for their deserts but to serve His own designs. This was the first step in their sanctification, and arose purely out of His grace,

This is where holiness begins in the Christian's life. Of His own Will God still takes hold of Abraham's seed, but in these days it is a spiritual seed, and God takes them notwithstanding their defects. Again it is not for their deserts, but purely of His grace—to serve His own designs.

Delivered through the Red Sea, God next offered terms of co-operation and service. He gave them statutes and commandments to educate and advance them, the observance of which, had they been taken to heart, would have refined and elevated them high above the nations around. By slow degrees this would have wrought a change of heart in them—akin to that evinced by those rarer souls outlined in Hebrews 11:—and taught them a love for their neighbour nations within the spirit of that gracious promise which told of a blessing for all the families of the earth. Especially should this have been accomplished in the priestly tribe, who had been called into such close association with the holiest things.

God offers terms to the responsive believer in His Son "If ye will . . . then . . ." (Matt. 26. 24-27) But now the terms mean sacrifice and submission to His Will. It is not enough to have been separated from a world of sin. Separation "from" must be followed by separation "to". Having left the world, it is necessary to live with God, walking thus with God, the Word of Truth made active by His Spirit's power will work a change within. The inborn taint of sin will need to be removed, and as God adds grace to grace, the heart will be healed and made sound and whole; made ready for the resurrection change when that which is perfect will be come.

Thus the holiness which begins in us objectively—that is with God's great object in view—comes to completeness by the healing (or *haling*) of the sanctified believer's heart. The grace that invited and accepted us to co-operate in the achievement of its plans will win our heart's most loyal compliance, till our own hearts beat with the spirit of that great purpose. The love that won us from the ways of sin, so that through us it may win a world from sin, can so infill our hearts with its own radiant warmth, that we shall ardently desire only those things which God desires. Holiness in us, means Godlikeness, and Christlikeness, cooperating with God and Christ in the fulfilment of His plans.

This two-fold aspect of holiness runs through many New Testament Scriptures, exactly as it did throughout Old Testament records. Let us note a few passages first which speak of holiness from without—holiness coming through a channel outside ourselves.

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . sanctification . . ." (1 Cor. 1. 30.)

" . . . such were some of you, but . . . ye are sanctified . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus . . ." (1 Cor. 6. 11.)

" . . . both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one." (Heb. 2. 11.)

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3. 1.)

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. . . ." (Heb. 10. 10.)

" . . . the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified . . ." (Heb. 10. 29.)

" . . . that He might sanctify the people with His own blood." (Heb. 13. 12.)

In this list of Scriptures the reference is to a sanctified standing accorded to us by God, on account of the death of His dear Son. This sanctified standing was represented by the cleansed and purified standing of the Priesthood, on the Atonement Day after the blood of cleansing had been presented in the Most Holy Place. That cleansing accomplished, the priests were in a position to co-operate with God in their services to Israel at large.

We then have another list of Scriptures which show the vital necessity for the inward change of heart.

" . . . yield your members servants of righteousness unto holiness." (Rom. 6. 19.)

" . . . and become servants to God, ye have your fruit into holiness." (Rom. 6. 23.)

"let us cleanse ourselves . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7. 1.)

"Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12. 14.)

These Scriptures will suffice as a sample of their kind to show the absolute necessity of that growth in grace and Godlikeness which is characterised as subjective holiness—holiness within.

Thus far then, God's reforming work has gone. That which was shadowed forth by linen robes and holy ground and sacred instruments stands forth on its higher plane as purity of heart and life—a love for all that is right and true, balanced by a hatred for all that is sinful and wrong. And because God's great objective is to set up for evermore the right and overthrow the wrong, each day the consecrated believer lives he grows more ardently desirous of working together with God to accomplish His great design.

The Oil of Joy for the Spirit of Heaviness

A. O. Hudson

A word of exhortation

"The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isa. 61. 1-3.)

Isaiah the golden-tongued was the first to receive this soul-stirring commission, but he was not the last. The Israel of his own generation was to hear these thrilling words at his lips, but not only to Israel of that generation was this word given. Our Lord at the commencement of His earthly ministry took the same message to himself and told the wondering listeners in the synagogue at Nazareth *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."* His whole life was spent in fulfilling the provisions of this mandate, to the people of his own day; when He returned to his Father, He gave the commission to his disciples, and they in turn passed it on to those that followed, so that to-day we who carry the flaming torch in our own midst can say as truly as did Isaiah of old *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me . . ."*

But there is more than one way of interpreting the details of the commission, and if we are to be as certain as was Isaiah of the meaning and application of the message preached we do well to consider them carefully and in the light of the main principles of the Divine Plan. We do not want to preach a message now which is due to be preached only in another Age; neither do we wish to fail in the preaching of the message which ought to be given to the people of this generation. Noah preached repentance against the background of a coming Flood; John the Baptist preached repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; Isaiah preached repentance in the light of the Divinely promised glorious restoration of Israel's former glory. All condemned sin; all preached repentance; all sought for conversion, but in each case there was associated with their message that which gave it both point and urgency.

So the question comes before us and has to be

posed: Are these blessings which we offer to the unconverted—beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness—are they, as most orthodox theologians insist, spiritual blessings in Christ to be enjoyed here and now, in this life, by the converted, and nothing more, or are they blessings of the future, to be realised when God turns His face again toward his erring children, and sends the "Times of Restitution," the Golden Age, spoken of by all His holy prophets since the world began? Future — or present? An inheritance to be anticipated or a possession in the heart now, the inward peace and joy which only the reconciled to God can know?

It is easy, of course, to say "Both", but that answer is altogether too indeterminate and avoids the real issue. Is our message to promise the repentant and converted one happiness and peace with God in this life only, or is it also to relate the fact of repentance and conversion to the ultimate purpose for which God calls to repentance and conversion? Are we to rest content with one who, being justified by faith, now has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and not tell him anything about the purpose for which God has called him? Or are we to prepare and fit him for his entry into the world that is to be—irrespective of whether it be a spiritual or an earthly world into which he is to enter?

Isaiah seemed to be in no doubt as to the scope of his own commission. In a blaze of passionate fervour he throws out his arms and cries *"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations; and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations."* This is comfort for the present evil time certainly, but comfort based upon a solid hope for the future. This clear vision of the promise and purpose of God is held forth as a positive inducement to the men and women of Israel to turn from their evil ways and return to God, who is working all things for their ultimate happiness. *"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem"* cries the prophet *"which shall never hold their peace day or night"* and then, addressing those watchmen *"ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* And so the glorious message of joy and peace is to go on and

widen over the length and breadth of the earth until the Golden Age of all prophecy has swept away this present world of sin and death, and the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings.

This theme of the future restoration of Israel's glory as the comfort for present distress is the constant burden of the Old Testament prophets. Not for nothing did St. Peter, preaching Restitution to the wondering crowds at Pentecost, remind them that this coming glory had been spoken by all the prophets from the beginning. There is hardly a notable name, from Moses onward, that is not associated with some one or another foreview of the day that is to be, when not only Israel, but all men of every nation, will realise to the full what great things God will have prepared for those who have waited for Him and who love Him. "*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires . . . thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.*" (Isa. 54. 11-14.) "*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.*" "A new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh . . . and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers . . . and the desolate land shall be tilled . . . and they shall say 'This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.'" (Ezek. 36. 26-35.) "Thus saith the Lord 'Again there shall be heard in this place . . . in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast, the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say 'Praise the Lord of hosts; for the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.'" (Jer. 33. 10-11.) We could roam to and fro over the pages of the Hebrew prophets and find one all-absorbing central theme, the glory that shall come when the lessons of this Age of sin and death have been learned. To those fervent, devoted men this life had no meaning except it were co-related to the future life. Sin, evil, suffering, death, were insoluble enigmas until in the distant but certain future they perceived righteousness, goodness, happiness, life. Judgment must mark the dividing line between the two; yes, they knew that. And repentance and conversion must be the only bridge whereby one may pass from the one to the other; they knew that too. But they never lost sight of

what lay on the other side of the bridge. To them it was no mysterious avenue ending only in mist and obscurity, a vaguely defined world having nothing of the certainty of this one. To those men the future earth was as clear and sharp as the present, and as they saw it resplendent in the golden light of the Sun of righteousness they pointed men to it with every device and embellishment the art of description could bring to their aid.

It is true that this roseate message was always associated with stern condemnation of past and present apostasy. And the realisation of the vision always pre-supposed repentance and conversion. The people who are to inherit the golden land must be the people of the Lord. And since "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59. 2) there must be a Redeemer, a Mediator, one who is both able and willing to take the sinful but repentant ones and lead them along the way that will at the last bring them into the presence and favour of God. So the message of repentance and the message of the Kingdom, the word for to-day and the word for to-morrow, both have a common background, the form of He that shall come, the Messiah, the Saviour. That mysterious ardently desired-figure is never far distant from the thoughts and words of the prophets. Their sins barred them from entrance into the holy city, but, "He shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1. 21.)

Now the New Testament equivalent of the prophets are the Apostles, and the New Testament equivalent of Moses is Christ. What was their attitude, and his attitude to this question of the Divine commission, and what was the message which they preached? Did their sermons and exhortations and writings relate only to this life or did they include a generous view of the life to come? Did their appeal to the Jews and later to the Gentiles rely for its force entirely upon the sense of release from guilt, upon the peace and joy of the Christian life, which admittedly is the lot of those who are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1. 13)? Or did they follow the example of Moses and the prophets and point men to the coming Day when God will arise to determine for all time the issues of good and evil and require all men to make a personal choice? Putting it like that, how can we expect Jesus and the Apostles to have done anything else than follow their predecessors' examples? To preach Christianity without preaching the Kingdom is to preach a trun-

cated Gospel—cut in half, with the very part which gives meaning to the whole thing missing.

Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Since He came, not only to die for men, and minister to them, and win the love and allegiance of some, but also to raise every one of them out of death and teach them the issues of life, that the purpose of God in creating man might be accomplished, it is inconceivable that Jesus could have done anything else than preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in its future aspects as well as in its present one. It is just as inconceivable to imagine any instructed Jew receiving His message from any other standpoint. A Messiah without a Messianic kingdom is a contradiction in terms. Not one of those who gave any credence at all to His claim to being the "sent of God" could have associated His message with anything else than the promised future Kingdom. Not one of those who gave their lives to Him did so without expecting the glory and power of the Kingdom in consequence. So the disciples must have lent very attentive ears when, in response to their question, Jesus told them that when He came again, in the regeneration, seated on the throne of His glory, they also would be seated on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. When the dying thief begged to be remembered when the Lord should come into His kingdom it was because he had been taught by the rabbis, and because Jesus had confirmed that teaching in His preaching, that the Kingdom was yet a future event but one surely to come, and the thief had believed Him.

Similarly with the Apostles, there was a strong under-current of what to-day is called in Church circles, somewhat scornfully, "dispensationalism". The mission of the Apostles was two-fold, first, to convert men and women to Christ, and second, to instruct and build up those thus converted so that they might become, at the last, "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light". There were two aspects of the future Kingdom to which the Apostles had to give attention, the earthly and the heavenly. They knew, too, that the High Calling to the heavenly Kingdom was first in order of time in the Divine Plan, and it is only what we should expect to find when we do find them spending their principal efforts in exhorting, teaching and establishing those who had intelligently given themselves in consecration to God, that they might eventually be the Divine instruments in the work of reconciling all men. But in all that exhortation and teaching there is always the hope and vision of the future Kingdom set before the faithful as an encouragement in time of despondency or weakness. "*Give diligence to make your calling and election sure*"

says St. Peter "*for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2 Peter 1. 10-11.) St. Paul in I Thess. 4 and in 2 Thess. 2, in I Cor. 15, and in a score of places, relates the present life of the Christian very closely to the consummation of the Christian hope in the celestial Kingdom. Paul's whole theology was rooted and grounded in the resurrection of all men from the grave in consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, and his experience when, in or out of the body he knew not, he was "caught up into the third heaven"—the kingdom of the future—coloured his thoughts and words with an other-worldly hue which makes it impossible to separate Paul and the Kingdom of God.

In just the same way we find that in their more evangelistic preaching the Apostles could not divorce their message from the theme of the coming Kingdom. It requires only a brief glance at the record to establish this as a fact. When Jesus was about to leave them and ascend to His Father they asked Him "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1. 6.) That long-cherished hope of the Messianic Age still held first place in their hearts. St. Peter's first sermon, preached on the Day of Pentecost and recorded in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, was a Messianic sermon. It took as its basis the prophecy of Joel which envisaged the events surrounding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom and Peter told his hearers that the prophecy was even then entering into its fulfilment. In saying that he only anticipated what St. Paul said to the Athenians a few years later. The time had come for God to turn from His former overlooking of the world's ignorance and sin, and send out a world-wide call for repentance, preparatory to the full establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. St. Peter's second sermon, a few days later, elaborated this theme and defined his position even more clearly. He called for repentance and conversion in order that the times of refreshing, the times of restitution, associated with the Second Advent of Christ, might come to earth. There is here a direct connection between the present work of preaching reconciliation of men to God, and the coming of that Kingdom which is fully to effect world-wide reconciliation, which calls for our most serious attention. It runs counter to the usual rather glib assumption that there is no message for the "world" at this present time, no responsibility on the part of Christ's disciples to call unregenerate men and women to the foot of the cross, to bid them renounce lives lived without God and to take God into their lives. But the responsibility does not end there; we have then to

explain, as did Peter on that memorable day two thousand years ago, just what is the ultimate purpose behind this call to repentance and what God intends for those who hear and obey the call.

The Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 connected the growing missionary work of the Church with Amos' prophecy of the Millennial day; St. Paul, addressing the philosophers of Athens, as related in Acts 17, made the whole point of God's call for repentance hinge upon the coming of that day in the which He was to judge the world in righteousness; later on, before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, St. Paul publicly avowed that the whole of his position stood or fell upon the "hope and resurrection of the dead" which to all Jews was synonymous with the Messianic Kingdom. Making his defence before Felix the Roman governor, he re-affirmed that position, and later on, before the Jewish dignitary Herod Agrippa, "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" (Acts 26. 3) he affirmed it again. (See Acts 23. 6; 24. 15 and 21; 26. 6-8 and 22-23.) Last of all, the final glimpse we have of the missionary work of this doughty warrior is in the 28th chapter of Acts, where, a prisoner at Rome, he "*expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.*" (Acts 28. 23.) The curtain drops with Paul still "*preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Acts 28. 31.)

But if this was in fact the background teaching of the Apostles, and the whole of their evangelism and pastoral work was coloured by constant pointing to the future Kingdom, how comes it that normal Christian teaching has no place for it to-day. We have to admit the fact that, apart from a few minor Christian groups, what is popularly called "Millennarianism" is discredited and ignored. The evangelistic work of great revivalists such as Moody, Whitfield, and in our own day, Dr. Billy Graham, did and still does put the emphasis upon the immediate and "present-life" consequence of repentance and conversion without much more than casual reference to the heavenly reward of the believer. There is not much endeavour in the work of the average revivalist to introduce the element of Divine purpose, especially for the ultimate development of God's Plan, into the call to repentance. Like John the Baptist, they cry "Repent" but do not add, as he did, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Like Paul, they declare God's command to all men to repent, but do not say that the reason is He has appointed a day for the trial and judgment of all men. The "gospel of the second

chance" is not accepted in any orthodox evangelistic group.

For the answer we have to go back to the third century of the Christian era. During the first two centuries the growing Christian community held faithfully to the Apostolic teaching regarding the essential connection between repentance, conversion and the Kingdom. Chronological expectations had a lot to do with it. The Early Church only had the Septuagint Old Testament and since the Septuagint chronology made six thousand years from Adam end in about A.D. 400 or so, general expectation of an imminent Second Advent and introduction of the "Times of Restitution" of all things maintained Apostolic teaching at a high level.

It was St. Augustine who changed all that. During the latter half of the third century this Latin prelate—Bishop of Hippo in North Africa—exercised so great an influence on the thought of the Church of his day that he has been called, with reasonable truth, the greatest theologian of the Age. Augustine, who was without doubt a sincere and high-minded man, had no faith whatever in the coming of a future Age in which Christ would reign to convert the nations. Augustine it was who conceived the idea that the mission of the Church is to convert the nations now, in this Age. Living, as he did, just at the time when Rome was destroyed by the Goths from Germany, and the whole ancient empire sustained by paganism fell to pieces like a pack of cards, he quickly proclaimed this catastrophic event to be the fall of Babylon foretold in Scripture, particularly in the Book of Revelation, and the triumph of the Church, the only established institution remaining after the fall of Rome, to be the long-foretold Millennium.

A further factor in Augustine's theological beliefs led to the speedy banishment of Apostolic and prophetic teaching regarding the earthly phase of Christ's Kingdom. Augustine had in his early days imbibed a great deal of Gnostic philosophies, (the "doctrines of devils" of I Tim. 4. 1-3) and throughout his life held to the view that all material things are inherently evil and only the spiritual side of man can ever be holy in God's sight. From this he reasoned that the bringing of children into world—whether within marriage or not—was itself a sinful act (a doctrine which led directly later on to the celibacy of the clergy). The sooner all men finished with their material bodies and became spiritual beings, "angels," with nothing of earth remaining in their constitution, the better. The logical development of these arguments demanded that eventually all things terrestrial must be destroyed in the Day of Judgment leaving only the souls of the righteous—and wicked—to find their

eventual destiny in their respective spiritual habitations. Thus the Scriptural doctrine of the Divine intention for the redeemed and perfected race of humanity living eternally on the everlasting earth, disappeared from orthodox theology and has never been restored. From the days of St. Augustine to the present, believers in the earthly salvation and the resurrection of the dead to a new life on earth have been heretics, outside what the B.B.C. Religious Broadcasting Department calls "the main stream of Christian tradition." It is no reflection upon the sincerity and Christianity of any preacher or revivalist when it is said that every such public figure in the Christian world must of necessity accept, in the main, the Augustinian theology.

So the established denominations and Christian groups of to-day put all the emphasis on the present, and very little upon the future, because that was how St. Augustine had it. The traditional Heaven of white robes and golden harps has become strange and repugnant to modern tastes, and so have the fires of Hell, and so not very much is said about either. Having no more up-to-date or Scriptural conception to put in the place of those out-moded ideas, the tendency is to lay stress upon what might be called the "present inheritance" of the Christian and let the future take care of itself. But this of itself is unsatisfactory. The glory of the Christian gospel is that it takes this life and the next life and of the two makes one harmonious and understandable whole. By explaining to us the future purposes of God it enables us to see our place in the Divine Plan *now* and to work intelligently for good. Our consecrated lives can be charged with definite purpose. We serve and labour and evangelise with a definite end in view and can see the connection between our present efforts, be they crowned with success or apparent failure, and the ultimate outcome.

Without the message of the Kingdom neither our evangelistic work nor that of other Christian groups can attain its highest peak. It is a noteworthy fact, attested by careful observers, that whereas of the people who respond to the message of the Gospel the greater proportion do so between the ages of 15 and 30, by far the larger part of these lose their enthusiasm and discard their profession of faith by the time they reach the middle forties. That is very largely because after the first flush of conversion is over there becomes evident the lack of any real guidance as to what it is all about, to what it is all intended to lead. Some go as missionaries and others find an outlet for their ardour in some kind of church activity or social service and the rest are swallowed up again by the world. The dim vision of possible participation

in the eternal songs of an everlasting heavenly choir seems a poor climax to the spiritual life which began with the tremendous experience of conviction of sin, repentance, conversion and reconciliation to God.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." It is written that the old men must dream dreams, the young men must see visions. The prophets of old soared into their loftiest heights of understanding and gave voice to their most eloquent appeals when their eyes were fixed on the future. The Apostles laid down their clearest definitions of Christian doctrine when they were enabled by the Spirit to range in thought backward to the beginning, and forward to the climax, of the Divine Plan. The whole counsel of God must include a wide and comprehensive view of the eternal purpose of God, and if in our evangelistic work we are really to accomplish that to which we are called, that eternal purpose must be closely integrated with the call to repentance and reconciliation which admittedly lies always at the foundation of all our work. If, like St. Augustine, we do not really believe in the coming of a future earthly Kingdom in which all the dead will receive a full and abundant opportunity to turn from their past evil ways, and live, then we still have the same message as orthodox Christians to preach—but in such case we may as well preach it in association with them and forget that we ever had a grander vision of the Divine purposes than it has been the lot of most Christians to enjoy. But if we *do* believe in that coming Age of blessing, if we *do* believe that God is using and will use every artifice within His power to reconcile men to Himself rather than afford just one paltry opportunity, in one brief human life—and not always even that—then the issue is clear. We should go out in full faith and confidence that, whatever may be the Divine will for other Christians, our own commission is plainly and positively to reveal the light that is in us. We must be in no doubt that our understanding is infinitely superior to, and nearer the truth than, the Augustinian theology. In all that we say and do we should point men and women to the coming era of Divine rule when Himself intervenes in the affairs of men to reconcile men to Himself. *"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."* (John 3. 11.) It is the glory of the Truth that we can speak positively of things which lie beyond the veil of the future, where so many others can only wander in a vague and misty land. It is that same certainty which can give our message the force it had in early days—if only we are truly positive about it. *"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."*

So much of Christian evangelism to-day holds out as the great attraction of repentance and conversion a kind of deliriously happy life, here and now, in which the possession of Christ evokes an eternal sunshine around all one's affairs. The idea of a calling to sacrifice and suffering is not always stressed as it should be. In the teaching of Jesus it was stressed. "*Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom.*" Perhaps we are on much safer

ground if we take Isaiah's words to mean exactly what they say and go out, in the power of our faith and knowledge of the Divine Plan, to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give beauty, joy and praise for sadness, mourning and heaviness, *because earth's dark night of sin is nearly at an end, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*

THINKING POINT

The current issue of an evangelical weekly features a question by one of its readers as to the theological implications of space travel. Inevitably the answer gravitated to the possibility of intelligent life existing on other planets and the conclusion drawn was that the matter was so speculative that there was little theological point in discussing it. But is this so? No man to-day could dogmatically affirm the impossibility of life existing elsewhere in the universe, as was affirmed so confidently only fifty years ago, but even to admit that there *might* be life elsewhere does pose a theological question of the first magnitude. The question is this: Can sin and evil be thought of as confined to this one planet, or is it reasonable to expect that other intelligent creatures, on other planets, fall or fell as did Adam, and needed a Redeemer as did Adam? Must Christ appear and die successively for one creation after another? If, on the other hand, such creations did or do not fall as Adam, why then the expediency on God's part in permitting such a fall in our own case with all of suffering that it has involved? If other creatures could attain their ultimate place in the Divine purpose without this experience of sin and death, then why do we need it? Why then is it that Christ himself was "made perfect through suffering"? Yet if sin and evil is to be perpetuated on other and perhaps all of God's future material creations, then are sin and evil thus forever to hold sway in some part or other of the Divine domains? The whole tenor of Scripture is against such a thought. If we accept such a possibility we may as well go back to the mediæval doctrine of Hell, for that is almost what would be implied.

These are not idle questions. They relate very closely to the fundamentals of our own faith. We believe that God has permitted evil on this earth for a wise and good purpose, to demonstrate once and for all the truth that "righteousness exalteth a

nation, but sin is a reproach to any people". If sin, both among men and angels, is to be allowed to intrude on God's creation once, and once only, and by virtue of the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ—once for all, remember, after which He is become supreme over all things in heaven and earth—then the logical inference must be that we, the human race upon this planet Earth, are the first of all created material beings, and that the drama played out upon this earth will be the all-sufficient object lesson for whatever future beings may be destined to inhabit other worlds.

There is very little evidence to be gathered from the present state of knowledge regarding the universe, but what there is supports rather than contradicts this view. Every one of the planets that are as yet within the reach of men's telescopes and measuring instruments are in a condition that this earth has already passed through at some stage in its history long ages ago, before man was created. If all the planets we know are in process of following some definite creative plan then the earth is in the lead. Astronomers consider nowadays that there may be lower forms of life on Mars and perhaps on Venus, but any creature like man, they think, is unlikely.

It may be much more reasonable to conclude that from this earth, the first example of Divine creation of material life, there is produced for all time the story of sin and death, and from mankind is taken the joint-heirs with Christ, the Church, who are to be associated with Him in all the future works of creation for which other spheres, known and unknown, may very well be intended. But we must insist, as a cardinal point in our theology, that sin is an intrusion in God's universe. It had a beginning, it shall have an end. It will by no means be permitted to endure forever.

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Comments on the above are invited. Ed.

THE BIBLE—THE BOOK FOR TO-DAY

The Bible is the most interesting and instructive collection of writings in existence. Its sixty-six books are the handiwork of at least sixty authors, the latest of whom lived only nineteen hundred years ago and the earliest nearly five thousand years ago. Of all the books that are now before the reading public, this one is the most up-to-date. It presents a full and adequate explanation of life, of life's problems and perplexities, and of life's possibilities and opportunities. Above all, it points unhesitatingly to the One Who is the source of contentment, happiness and peace.

The Bible is the oldest book in existence. It has outlived the storms of forty-five centuries. Men have endeavoured by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth; they have hidden it, burned it, made the possession of it a crime punishable with death: the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives. To-day, while many of its foes slumber in death, and hundreds of volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence are long since forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every nation and people of earth and has been published in more than one thousand different dialects and languages.

Its writings include law, ethics, poetry, drama, history, travel, prophecy, romance, philosophy, political and social instruction, everything that has to do with the life of man. Its authors were as varied in character as its contents. Kings, emperors and princes; poets, sages and philosophers; fishermen, statesmen and priests; poor men, rich men, preachers, exiles, captains, legislators, judges, men of every grade and class have contributed to the writing of this book.

General Smuts once said:—

"Whenever I see anything great or anything really moving, my mind always passes into the language of the Old Testament. It is the language of the human heart, the language of the human mind and soul expressing pure human feelings and human emotions, with a universality which appeals to all races and all ages."

No other sacred writing possesses this appeal. The sacred books of Islam and Buddhism, the two great non-Biblical religious faiths, cannot be compared with the Bible. They give no detailed history of nations as does the Bible, neither do they pronounce with such authority and reason on the burning ques-

tions of man: his origin and destiny; and of evil: its origin, the reason for its permission, and its end. The Bible merits the thoughtful consideration of every reflective person. Upon the earth there is distress of nations with perplexity; a voice that speaks with authority is sorely needed. The Bible is that voice. *The Bible is the book for to-day.*

* * *

As a record of history the Bible is unsurpassed. Over two-thirds of its contents are historical narratives. These narratives are authentic and reliable. Prof. Sayce, one of the greatest archæologists, has said: "*I do not for a moment hesitate to assert that the investigations in Assyria and Egypt thoroughly corroborate the statements of the Old Testament*", and Prof. Yahuda, another authority, declares "*Every archæological discovery in Palestine and Mesopotamia contemporary with the Bible period bears out unfailingly its historical accuracy.*"

A famous minister of the nineteenth century, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, said this:—

"The Bible is the chart of history. It affords a panoramic view of the whole course of events from the Creation and the fall of man, to the final judgment and the inauguration of the new Heaven and the new Earth. It gives us, not events only, but their moral character, tracing the motives of the various actors in the drama, as well as the results of their actions. Events are shown in relation to their causes and their effects, and the judgment of God as to their character is revealed.

Without the Bible, history would be a spectacle of unknown rivers flowing from unknown sources to unknown seas; but under its guidance we can trace the complex currents to their springs, and can see the end from the beginning."

There is evidence in the opening chapters of the Bible that they were written in Mesopotamia not later than twenty-five centuries before Christ. The history thus commenced was continued by successive writers for some two thousand years and was completed only four centuries before Jesus Christ came to earth. In the later decades of the nineteenth century the historical accuracy of these writings began to be questioned by critics, but to-day that scepticism has been proved unjustified, largely in consequence of the decipherment of Egyptian and Asiatic written records and the further discoveries of archæologists. A tremendous amount of excavation has been undertaken in Mesopotamia, Palestine and

Egypt since the war of 1914, and practically every part of Bible history has now been confirmed or illuminated by the results of this work. Numerous books have been published setting forth these facts. *The verdict of twentieth century research is that Bible history is true!*

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There is poetry, drama and philosophy of a high order in the Bible. The Book of Ruth is an idyllic romance of three thousand years ago; the Book of Esther a rare study in human character. The passionate drama of the Book of Job stands in strong contrast to the measured soliloquies of Ecclesiastes, and the staccato epigrams of the Book of Proverbs to the delicate loveliness of the Song of Solomon. The crisp sunlight and shadows of the Book of Acts make it one of the most vividly interesting books of travel ever written, and the Book of Psalms is full of the most inspiring poetry. Each of these books is one to be read slowly and sympathetically as a work of art having its own characteristics and its own peculiar appeal.

The English language has been built up largely around the Authorised Version of 1611; the English love of liberty and justice is due in no small measure to general appreciation of its teachings; the finest of British characteristics must be attributed in considerable degree to three hundred years of consistent reading and preaching of the Book. Very truly, then, was it said by the famous biologist, Prof. T. H. Huxley, some eighty years ago, "*Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilisations, and of a great past, stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations of the world.*"

In the practical things as well as in the cultured tastes of daily life, therefore, the Bible is a sure guide. For good health of body and of mind the Bible contains ample instruction. For guidance in affairs of nations as well as in relations between individuals, the Bible is the best authority. It has inspired the creative genius of writers, poets and painters through the centuries; it is no less effective in the lives of ordinary men and women who will read and ponder over its pages. *The Bible is the book of daily life.*

* * *

Finally, and above all, the Bible is the Divine Revelation.

Man does not live by bread alone. He can enjoy a full and rich life only by consciously seeking to fulfil the Divine will. For all such the Bible is the teacher.

The Bible declares that sin and death are intrusions among men and will one day be removed. The first human beings were created sinless, undying, with ability to use the earth's resources for good. Tragically, they forsook the laws of righteousness and allowed selfishness, malice, injustice, to influence their course of life. Inevitably, pain, disease and death followed and has continued until now. Bible history follows the course of that sad progress, and tells of the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to redeem the world from its sin and the consequences of its sin. The immediate fruitage of His life and death on earth is seen in the development of the Church—a world-wide assembly of Christians devoted to His service. A further fruitage will become evident when His Kingdom on earth has been established, and under His beneficent control, and the administration of His Church, humanity will be instructed and guided in that better way which will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth", abolish disease, poverty, and all the ills from which mankind now suffers, and bring to an end sin and death. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" for "there shall be no more death".

The Bible, then, is the book of the future. Time spent in reading, studying and discussing it will not be time wasted. It cannot fail to broaden the mind and ennoble the character. It cannot fail to make the reader more thoughtful for others, more desirous of serving his fellowmen, more confident of the future. It cannot fail to establish intelligent faith in God, and a conviction that men have a mighty destiny before them, reaching far beyond the limits of things that are now seen and known and stretching into eternity.

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It is proposed to reprint the foregoing in leaflet form for free distribution if there is any demand. Will readers who would use such leaflets if available please write in to that effect. Small quantities free; large quantities cost price.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The Warrington friends announce that plans are being formulated for the usual Easter Convention at Warrington, and anyone desiring information may write to Bro. F. Quennell, "The Glen", Knutsford Old Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Lancs. Programmes will be available shortly and copies will be circulated through the medium of the "Monthly".

GOOD WORKS

Reflections on an
important theme

"Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus, "that they may see your good works" (Matt. 5. 16). There was no doubt in His loving heart that good works would accompany the reception of His teachings, and no doubt either that the light of the Gospel would be manifested, not only by word of mouth, but also by practical deeds of love and sympathy toward the groaning creation. The Early Church grasped this truth more clearly than did any later generation, and the records of their times are replete with examples of the manner in which they carried out this very practical aspect of their Master's teaching. There had been no other time when the Church on earth has so completely manifested the Master's ideal. He founded a community which was to be as a family, its members closely knit by the ties of sympathetic and understanding love: a family which would exemplify the characteristics of the Kingdom it preached by doing good to all men as it had opportunity.

The miracles of Jesus, quite outside our own power to reproduce, tend to obscure the fact that He must have set the example in good works of other kinds which are within the range of our own abilities. It may be a new thought to some that Jesus, from his scanty store, did on occasion give money to the poor. The Holy Spirit has caused the evidence to be recorded that we may be in no doubt upon the subject. In the account of our Lord's words to Judas at the Last Supper, John says (chapter 13, 29): "some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, *that he should give something to the poor.*" The seeming casual allusion indicates clearly that the giving of alms to the poor was a customary action of Jesus—so much so that the departure of Judas at a word from the Lord was tacitly assumed by the disciples to be for some such purpose. We must commence our consideration of "good works", therefore, by realising that Jesus did not content Himself with telling folk that there was a good time coming, nor that His mission on earth was confined to preparation for His future Millennial work. He did something there and then to relieve the material distresses of suffering humanity in a way that would be possible later on to many of His followers.

It might have been this attitude of Jesus which led his own natural half-brother, James, the first Christian Bishop of Jerusalem, to stress in his epistle

the importance of practical Christianity. "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this*", he says, "*to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*" (Jas. 1. 27). James meant much more than a mere calling upon a widow to offer sympathy and condolence. The plight of orphans and widows in the First Century was desperate indeed, and the words of James have no meaning at all unless they imply the rendering of practical assistance to those thus bereaved. The beloved disciple John took up the same theme and drove the implication directly home when he said, "Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him? My little children, let us not love in word or tongue; *but in deed and in truth*" (1 John 3. 17-18). John could not tell us in better language that the sharing of material goods with others in need is a concrete evidence of indwelling love. The Divine recognition of Cornelius' prayers is another case in point. Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman centurion, a man noteworthy for two things: he "feared God with all his house" and "gave much alms to the people" (Acts 10. 2). When the angel appeared to him, he was told that his prayers *and* his alms had come for a memorial before God (v. 4). There was value, in God's sight, in this outward evidence of a heart sincerely afflicted with the sorrows of humanity.

The opportunity and duty of almsgiving must have featured very prominently in the life of the early Church—much more so than in our own day, because of the frightful conditions under which the poor lived. There was no system of relief such as does function, though imperfectly, in our country to-day. No one—very nearly no one—cared whether the very poor lived or died. The old, the infirm, the diseased, unable to labour for their living, turned out of their homes by children or relatives, wandered hopelessly about the towns and countryside, begging for alms wherewith to buy food sufficient to keep them alive. To Jesus, and to those who embraced His teaching, it must have been an intolerable sight; and to us in these days, despite all we know of State provision for such unfortunates, it should be no less intolerable.

The primitive Church accepted this problem of poverty as a challenge to their new-found faith. Within their own circle they did not tolerate it at all,

There was no such thing as unsatisfied need in the churches at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Rome. At the very outset the Church adopted the family relationship and to an appreciable degree the communal life. To describe this as communism may convey a wrong thought. Acts 2. 44-46, plainly states that those who believed were "*together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*" This was the secret of their power; in the joy and zeal of their conversion they counted not their goods as their own but as held in trust for their Lord and to be used for the general good. Thus, while there is no evidence of an equal division of possessions such as is generally implied by the word "communism," there was undoubtedly diligence to see that every case of need was satisfied from the store of one who possessed abundance.

One allusion to this family life is found in Acts 6. 1-4, where the election of the first seven deacons is described. There was apparently a tendency to neglect the Grecian-Jewish widows in favour of the native Jewish widows in the administration of this relief. The Church had grown greatly in numbers, and the problem was evidently assuming large proportions; nevertheless, the account reads as though there was absolute unanimity on the method adopted to remedy the defect. The impression of a spontaneously happy family is maintained throughout.

Such enthusiastic love for suffering humanity could not be kept within narrow bounds, and it was not long before the growing Church was reaching out to do good to all men irrespective of their standing inside or outside the Church. Paul's own exhortation must have been ever in their minds, as it is in ours. "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*" (Gal. 6. 30.) The stress laid upon the latter clause does not release us from the obligation of the former one. And to such an extent did the early Christians exploit this outlet for loving service on behalf of their fellow men that in the fourth century the Roman Emperor Julian (the notorious Julian the Apostate) declared that "the godless Galileans support not only their own poor, but our poor also." In the year A.D. 250 it was recorded that the Church in Rome—never a big church in those early days—regularly maintained no less than fifteen hundred destitute pagans.

"All this is very interesting", says one, "but you forget the peculiar mission of the Church in this age: 'to develop in herself every grace . . . to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age.' We can do so very little to improve the conditions of the world *now*. We shall have all power *then*.

Is it not better to leave the dead world until the day that God has appointed, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained? (Acts 17, 31). After all, Jesus did say 'Let the dead bury their dead; go thou and preach the gospel' (Luke 9. 60). 'Silver and gold have I none,' said Peter to the beggar at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3. 6). When the woman who anointed Jesus with the perfume was reproached for not using its value in the relief of the poor, He said, "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Matt. 26. 11.) Our money is consecrated to the Lord and we are stewards to Him concerning it. Is there not a danger that we might be sidetracked from our High Calling if we lend ourselves to works for the world of this kind?"

But your brother is in need! See, he stands before you, mute in his helplessness! In the face of that awful fact, can one sustain any longer these academic arguments? Would Jesus? Would Peter? "*Such as I have give I thee.*" It was a literal fact that Peter had no money on that occasion, but he had healing power—and gave it. It is an equal fact that we at this time do not possess miraculous gifts, but—"such as I have give I thee." When Jesus told His disciples that they would always have the poor with them, did He not mean that there were only a few days left in which to show their love and devotion to Him in person, and all the rest of their lives in which to minister toward the poor? Surely that saying was an acceptance of the position rather than a denial of its propriety.

"To develop in herself every grace." Yes, that is the all-important work of the Church. To have the love of God so dwelling in us and so integral a part of our lives that we individually may be found worthy of participation in the marriage of the Lamb when the blessed day shall come. We are very busy, in the upper room, putting the finishing touches to the embroidery on each other's bridal robes, and talking about the glories of the King's supper to come; but out in the street still stands that old beggar woman, hopeless eyes fixed to the ground, for no man has ever taught her to lift them to heaven. Why stands she there; cannot someone tell her to go away and come back when the Millennium is here? There will be plenty of blessings for her then. Even as the specious argument is deftly suggested to us by the Adversary of God and man, the words of the beloved disciple come down the centuries in tones of thunder: "*Whoso . . . seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*"

The problem of the poor in no wise differs from the problem of the world as a whole. The world is in need—desperate need—and our mission in life,

the whole object and purpose of our consecrated walk before God, is to fill that need. We know that the Millennial Age has been set apart by God for the full accomplishment of that work, and that God is now selecting from amongst men those who can be fitted to carry out that work. He chooses only volunteers, those whose hearts are in this work and who would be engaged in it even now, if they had the power, and the time was right. And the extent to which we use the power and the time we *do* possess is the gauge by which God measures the sincerity of our professed desire to do that great work *then*.

"Charge them that are rich in this world," says Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 6. 17-19). "... that they do good, that they be rich in good works... willing to communicate, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life*". How clear it is that the good works, faithfully performed as we find opportunity, are of themselves contributing to our preparation for the future day when all power shall be ours. Works of mercy and sympathy, deeds of kind-

ness and compassion, efforts to ameliorate the lot of some unhappy one or to infuse a little sunshine into a drab life—all these things, quite apart from the temporary relief they may bring to some afflicted son or daughter of Adam, are building into the fabric of our characters something that will endure to all eternity.

Our love for the brethren is the supreme test. Do we really appreciate the family relationship in our fellowship and look upon ourselves and our brethren as members one of another, to the extent of counting not what we possess as our own, but as held in trust for the benefit of whoever within the family circle has greater need than ourselves? And having joyfully entered into this glad communion where we too, like those of early days, can eat our bread from house to house in gladness and singleness of heart, can we soberly and thankfully look around us for opportunities of doing good, not only to the household of faith, but as we have opportunity, to all men. "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*"

A NOTE ON THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

C E Dickinson

On the last page of the Oct.-Nov. issue of the B.S.M. the great faith of Abraham is well spoken of, but there seems to be a link required to explain how it was that Isaac was willing to be bound by his father on the altar, as Isaac could easily have refused to be so sacrificed. The matter can be solved by putting oneself in Isaac's position, and dealing carefully, reverently, with this exceedingly tense circumstance, as it stands by itself in all that is sacred amongst men.

Isaac had heard his father say to the two young men "abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." It is quite natural that Abraham and Isaac would talk together, and that Isaac might probably say "You are very quiet father, as if you have something important on your mind, and I might say that in a strange unaccountable way I have been reminding myself in the wonderful ways in which God dealt with you in bygone days, how He called you out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees, and how when eventually you came to the land of Moriah, God appeared unto you, and you built an altar to Him, and God promised you should have a seed. But you little knew then how long it would be before I was born, and that my mother Sarah would then be ninety, how that I was

the child of that wonderful promise, and you were 100 then. Because I know God honoured you, looked after you, is why I have tried to do your bidding at all times; there is really no father like you, and perhaps some day if I continue to do your will I may hear the voice of God, or perhaps of one of his angels. And aren't we going now to worship Him alone? One thing has crossed my mind about yonder mountain, it may not be easy to climb, and anything might happen. I might slip into a gorge and be killed, or a rock fall on me and I should be crushed to death, but if such a thing did happen (I don't expect it will) I have a feeling that God would raise me from the dead, that His promise to you should be fulfilled, that I should somehow bless all the families of the earth, and that your promise to the two men with the ass would be true. Don't you think so, father Abraham?" "Yes, Isaac, I do think so, for God has never yet failed to keep any promise He has made to me. Isaac, it is passing strange for us both to be thinking about the same thing." In due time Isaac says "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering", and Abraham replies "God will provide himself the lamb for the burnt-offering." Naturally Isaac would reply "Of course God would not forget, He would want a special lamb,

not any lamb that we could supply; whilst we are talking like this I seem to want to ask you a question, and do it with all respect, father, but has God spoken to you lately, and, if so, could you tell me what He said, for I feel sure God has been with you." "Yes, Isaac, my son, I can tell you what He said, but before I tell you I want to say how much your words have helped me; but I must remind you, Isaac, that by your words you will be justified, and by your words condemned, if you did not mean what you say. These are the words God said to me 'Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of'. That is why we are here, and Isaac, thou art the lamb, the lamb that God has chosen. Do not answer hastily, think before you speak. Remember you have spoken of your confidence in God. What sayest thou, Isaac?"

"Father, I received life from you, as God had promised, therefore, if God decrees, it is right that I submit to your taking it away. God gave me to you, God is taking me away; though He slay me yet will I trust in Him. I am fully confident that He will raise me somehow to life again, that I may be of the seed which is to bless all the families on the earth. I shall also be raised again that your words to the two young men will be fulfilled."

Abraham, aged 125, did all in order. He built the altar. Isaac *had no part* in this. What a time it would take, plenty of time for Abraham to refuse to go on—plenty of time for Isaac, in full youth, 25, to refuse to be sacrificed. Isaac stood by his word, so did Abraham. Abraham bound Isaac on the altar. What a tenseness of hearts was shown in this lonely spot. Finally Abraham *reached forth* to take the knife, but his hand was stayed. Abraham hears the angel's voice; Isaac hears the angel's voice, "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22. 11-12).

Abraham's test was crucial, enough to stop the heart from beating, to make one turn one's head to hide the glistening tears.

Abraham freed Isaac from the bonds that bound him to the altar. Many years later God cut the bonds of death which held His Beloved Son, and made Him "heir of all things."

Jesus' own words (Jno. 10. 17-18) have helped towards the above solution "*Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I of my Father.*"

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

The House of Commons was told recently by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury that the purchasing power of the pound in 1954 compared with 1914 was 5/6d., compared with 1939 was 8/1d. and with 1946 was 12/5d. At the same rate of decrease, by the year 1964 the £ will be worth 2/- and by 1972 it will not be worth anything at all. Presumably that will be the time when men will throw their gold and silver into the streets because it will no longer be of any value to them.

In the Millennial Age, at any rate, under the beneficent rule of Christ's Kingdom, it appears that money will not be necessary. "*Ho, every one that thirsteth*" cries the prophet, speaking of that day, "*come ye to the waters, and he hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" (Isa. 55.1.) It would seem obvious that in a state of society "where each man shall love his fellow" and the production of all the necessities of life is undertaken as a labour of love and not by compulsion, tokens of exchange such as money will become completely

redundant. All the gold which, with immense toil, men have dug out of holes in South Africa and transported across the Atlantic so that it could be buried in more holes in North America can either stay there or be resurrected to be fabricated into articles of beauty and utility. And a lot of people will be set free to devote themselves to more useful work in the new world.

* * *

And what does anxiety do? It does not empty to-morrow of its sorrow, but it empties to-day of its strength. It does not give escape from evil, but it makes us unfit to cope with it when it bursts upon us. It does not bless to-morrow, and it robs to-day. Every day has its own burden, which is quite heavy enough for the day's strength. Sufficient for each day is the evil which properly belongs to it. We shall be wise if we do not add to-morrow's weight to to-day's load, nor drag the future into the present, where there is no place for it. The present has enough to do in looking after its own concerns,

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND

It was at a time of crisis like the present that one of the most singular figures of history came to the front. John the Baptist was a man of obscure parentage, the son of a priest, brought up in a country village and never moving more than a hundred miles from his birthplace. But his influence upon world history and the fates of nations has been tremendous. The principles he enunciated, the moral teaching he expounded; above all, the startling declaration which formed the chief burden of his message, all have been proven true, gloriously true or tragically true according to the notice men have or have not taken of them, throughout all centuries since his day.

He was born two thousand years ago, and was executed by a tyrant whilst still a young man. He was thirty before he came into the public eye, but within six months he had an entire province of the Roman Empire waiting on his words. His short-lived appearance prepared men for the coming of the greatest teacher the world has known—Jesus of Nazareth! But the impetus of that forward move which accompanied the birth of Christianity has spent itself, and now the world we know faces an even greater crisis than that which destroyed Judea two thousand years ago.

The effects of society's disease are manifest. Crime, vice and immorality are rampant and increasing. Respect for law is vanishing; the most elementary rights of the weaker are habitually denied them by the stronger. Fundamental qualities such as self-denial and generosity are discounted as signs of weakness; selfishness, self-seeking and greed are exalted in their place. Honour in business and political life has given place to intrigue, bribery and corruption. The social fabric is undermined by laxity in the marriage relationship, dishonesty in daily life and excessive addiction to debasing pleasures and diversions. Twenty-year-old boys shoot policemen and gangs of children rob houses. A dry rot permeates society and causes grave concern to all serious observers. And the question comes "Why?"

The peoples of earth—speaking now more particularly of the so-called "civilised" peoples—have renounced God and in the main no longer acknowledge His supremacy. The moral principles of the Bible have been cast aside and many men take whatever course their inclinations, desires and passions dictate. There is no real belief in judgment to

come, or even in the certainty or likelihood of retribution for their crimes. Therefore many indulge themselves according to their fancy without thought of the consequences to themselves or their fellows.

But the Bible still proclaims the basic principles of creation: that which is evil cannot endure; it may subsist, uneasily, for a time, but it must eventually pass away. It bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. That is why St. Paul says in one place "the wages of sin is *death*" and Ezekiel in another "the soul that sinneth, it shall *die*", and St. Peter, referring to the order of things instituted by man upon earth, speaks of a heaven and earth of evil repute, which now exists, being destroyed as by fire and replaced by a new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The operation of this Divine law implies retribution, judgment, and so a secondary maxim is propounded: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap".

The world is reaping a bitter harvest of its own sowing. The ills from which we suffer have their origin in the things we or our fathers have done in times past. There is no escape; it is inevitable that the world should enter into this period of judgment and suffer the calamities that must come upon it. It is futile to blame God. We were created with ability to govern ourselves along lines of benevolence and equity, but we have elected to take the easier way and must find for ourselves that it leads only to destruction. God means to save; He does not will that His purpose in creation should be frustrated; but men must learn their lesson.

Now although there can be no universal deliverance from the judgment of this world, there can be, and is, individual deliverance from the state of mind and way of life that has led to this state of things. That is the first step. Multiplied a thousand, a million, ten million fold, it will bring world judgment to an end and usher in an eternity of peace. But it can only be attained by means of repentance.

The word "repentance" is associated with the emotional fervour of nineteenth century revivalism, conjuring up visions of the old-fashioned "penitent form" in mission halls and impassioned appeals to leave one's sins at the foot of the cross. Now this does enshrine a fundamental principle, but it is not the whole meaning of the word. To "repent" means to change the mind, to repudiate a previous course of action, to enter upon a new way. Applied to men and women conscious that all is not well with the world in which they live, nor with themselves,

it means to consider what there is in one's own way of life that is out of accord with the principles of rightness, and to resolve that those things shall be banished and a new way of life adopted, a way which shall have as its object due acknowledgement of the supremacy of God, and the well-being and happiness of one's fellows. Since no such resolve can be put into effect to any appreciable degree without close attention to the examples and precepts of Jesus Christ, it follows that such repentance must of necessity involve belief in the efficacy and integrity of His teaching and acceptance of His leadership in life.

This of itself is not enough. Many have sought to model their lives after the example of great philosophers and teachers, becoming powerful influences for good in consequence; but they have not banished the evil that is in the world, and nothing short of the elimination of evil can solve the problems which distress mankind. The acceptance of Jesus and His message involves something more than any other teacher demands. Jesus claimed to have come from above, from God, to bring His world-saving message. He declared the necessity of His death as man in order that men might be saved, and also His intention of returning again to earth after the lapse of a pre-determined period of time—during which the seed of His teaching was to germinate and spread among the nations—to complete His work of abolishing evil and bring all men into fellowship with God. If Jesus is to be accepted as a reliable guide to a new way of life all this must be accepted too. If He was mistaken in this theological and eschatological aspect of His message, forming as it does the whole framework within which His teaching is set and upon which that depends, then He was a misled and completely deluded man and no leader in whom men to-day, with the problems they have to solve, can afford to repose confidence.

Jesus was not mistaken ! He came from God. In His Divinity He is supreme over all created things, and comes again in the glory of that Divinity, a glory not perceptible by human sense but none the less real, to finish His work on earth. There can be no physical or intellectual proof of all this, for these are matters transcending human values and means of measurement. The proof comes *after*, and not before, the repentant individual has "turned" to serve God. Having accepted Christ, not only as a guide to conduct and instructor in morals, but a personal Deliverer from sin and the effects of sin, he becomes increasingly conscious of a new and different sphere of understanding which advances satisfactory and convincing proofs not capable of

demonstration by the materialistic arguments of every day.

Repentance, then, *does* involve coming to Jesus in submission as to a Master and leader. It *does* involve claiming Him and accepting Him as a personal Saviour and subordinating one's whole life and interests to His service. The object is not merely that one may be "saved from the wrath to come". God does not look with approval on people whose sole desire is to save their own skins, and advance their own interests. The world has seen too much of that already. Rather should one come to God in dedication of life to be used by Him in the further reclamation of the world from evil. It implies service, and it implies hard work. The day set aside by God for this purpose is the still future Millennial Age, during which all men, including the returned dead, will be taught the ways of God and be led to choose between good and evil and decide their future destiny for themselves. Nevertheless there is much that can be done in this present day, before God breaks through into human affairs with His promised Millennial Kingdom. That is why the repentance and dedication to Christian service of any man or woman has an immediate effect upon the prevalence of evil. It is one more blow struck for right dealing and right living, one more influence making for peace and rectitude in the affairs of men and nations, leading immediately to some mitigation, however slight, of the troubles that now afflict mankind.

This then is God's call. "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may 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.)

Will you do this ? Will you, in the privacy of your own heart, give yourself unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, in full repentance of the past and complete acceptance of His death suffered on your behalf ? He will guide your next step; it will be into a new and fully satisfying way of life that will bring you personal happiness and content, and make you a unit in the force that is going to abolish evil and bring in everlasting righteousness.

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It is proposed to reprint the foregoing in leaflet form for free distribution if there is a demand. Will readers who would use such leaflets if available please write in to that effect. Small quantities free: large quantities cost price.

Lilies in the Valley

poems of hope, faith and certainty.

Rebecca F. Doney

NO CROSS, NO CROWN

Oh blessed crown of glory !
 Oh crown of righteousness !
 Oh crown of life immortal,
 How can I thee possess ?
 In answer to my longing
 A voice said, soft and clear,
 "The crown is yours, beloved,
 If you the cross will bear."

"What is the cross ?" I questioned.
 'Tis bearing every day
 The trials which the Father
 Permits along the way;
 'Tis sharing the reproaches
 Your Master meekly bore,
 While those who claim to love him
 Revile you, more and more.

The world will look upon you
 With disapproving eye;
 And friends whom you love dearly
 Will coldly pass you by.
 They'll have no patience with you;
 Your good works they'll deride,
 And every righteous motive
 To you will be denied.

And all the powers of evil
 Will gather to assail;
 They know your every weakness
 And where they might prevail.
 They'll try to overwhelm you
 By coming like a flood,
 You must with force oppose them,
 Resisting unto blood.

The flesh will strive to win you,
 Exerting every power,
 'Twill be perpetual warfare
 Between you every hour—
 A fight that ceases only
 When one of you is dead.
 It is no easy pathway,
 Beloved, that you tread.

And then I answered, "Master,
 I've counted all the cost;
 And deem it highest honour
 To bear with Thee the cross.
 And I will bear it gladly,
 Till it works out in me
 That blessed transformation
 Which proves me part of Thee.

And when the cross grows heavy,
 By faith I gaze upon
 The crown Thou art reserving
 For those who overcome—
 The crown of great rejoicing,
 The crown of righteousness,
 The crown of life immortal
 I'm striving to possess.

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

Dear Lord, with sorrow, I confession make
 That while with joy I suffer for Thy sake,
 Yet in the cares with which my days abound,
 Where I should smile, I fear I often frown.
 In days gone by I've murmured o'er and o'er,
 And unkind words have left me feeling sore;
 Those whom I come in contact with each day,
 Disturb me oft by things they do and say.

And thoughtless actions have left such a sting
 I could not find it in my heart to sing.
 Lord, I'll be honest with myself and Thee,
 I have not been as sweet as I should be.
 And I have said, "Too hard the wind doth blow,
 Too hot the day, too much rain or snow,"
 And tho' at times I've checked the hasty word,
 Still, in my heart rebellious murmurs stirred.

And I have thought that I could grow in grace
 Much better, were I in another's place.
 Lord, to this whole long list I guilty plead;
 And I am grieved o'er it, I am indeed;
 And I am come to make a Vow to Thee,
 That in the coming year, whate'er shall be
 My portion, trials, cares, vexations, pain,
 Dear Lord, I will not murmur nor complain,

And I will say when I arise each morn,
 This day my Lord wants me to overcome,
 "In everything give thanks," this is His Word;
 And I will school my heart to sweet accord.
 I'll thank Him for the sun, and for the rain;
 I'll thank Him for the sorrow and the pain;
 And in the things which try my patience so
 I'll thank Him that I have a chance to show

How sweet and kind and loving I can be,
 How much His Holy Spirit dwells in me.
 Dear Lord, I'll trust Thee though I do not know
 Why I should walk the path I'm called to go.
 I'll give Thee thanks whatever be the way
 Which Thou shalt lead me in from day to day;
 Relying on Thy grace to see me through,
 Lord, this is what I've promised Thee to do.

BETWEEN OURSELVES—concluded from page 2

Bread upon the Waters

From a letter received last month "We are having a fine time here with the B.S. Monthly. A newly formed Bible study class in our Methodist church have been reading *"The Story of the Flood"*; and also using the material for the children in the Sunday School. Do you have extra copies of those numbers? Maybe after the holidays you could let us know".

* * *

The "Herald"

Many of our readers are also readers of the *"Herald of Christ's Kingdom"*, published by the Pastoral Bible Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38, New York, U.S.A. For the benefit of any of our own new readers who may be interested, we would say that we can highly commend this magazine for its high Christian standard and deeply devotional tone. It is published monthly at an annual subscription of 7/-, the British agent being Bro. Edwin Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Gardens, Ilford, Essex. A sample copy will willingly be sent on request addressed to Bro. Allbon.

* * *

"Jews in the News"

A most informative periodical devoted to current news of Israel is the *"Jews in the News"*, the autumn issue of which came recently to us. This journal, already known to many of our readers, is now published quarterly, consisting of sixteen large pages, well printed and produced. It is edited by Casimir Lanowick and published at Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. The paper has no equal in its flair for collecting and presenting reliable and factual up-to-date information on progress in the Holy Land, and no one who is interested in the outworking of Divine promises regarding that land can fail to be interested in its contents. The annual subscription in Britain is 7/- and the British agent is Bro. A. James, "Rehoboth", Woodford Bridge Road, Ilford, Essex. On the North American continent the

subscription is one dollar, to be addressed to "Jews in the News", P.O. Box 51, Grand Rapids, Mich.

* * *

Notices of Functions

It has several times been suggested to us that friends planning special gatherings and the like would be greatly helped by knowing what arrangements may already have been made by others making similar plans. Some sort of general advance notice might often result in the avoidance of two functions clashing on the same date.

The *"Monthly"* is always pleased to help the accomplishment of this desire by publishing dates and brief details of any such gatherings, and for the convenience of the friends it would be much appreciated if notice of date, time and place of gatherings and special events was sent us in order that publicity can be given. Secretaries and others are asked to remember that we go to press a month before publication so that any notices relating to a particular function should be in our hands in good time, not less than one month before publication date of the issue in which the notice is to appear. The publication date will be found stated on the front cover of the preceding issue.

* * *

The "Monthly"

It is with very sincere pleasure that we record our Master's evident blessing upon the decision, made twelve months ago, to abandon the fixed charge for the *"Bible Study Monthly"* and send the journal freely to all interested, relying upon voluntary gifts to continue the work of publishing. Whilst we have no right to conclude that the course is "set fair" for an indefinite number of years to come, it is true that the response of many friends during the year just past has put the *"Monthly"* in a condition to permit the continuance of publication, and for this we are sincerely appreciative to all who have thereby manifested their Christian goodwill and desire to help. As promised when the new system came into operation last January, a statement of accounts for the year will be published, and it is expected that this will appear in our next issue.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 33 No. 2

MARCH-APRIL, 1956

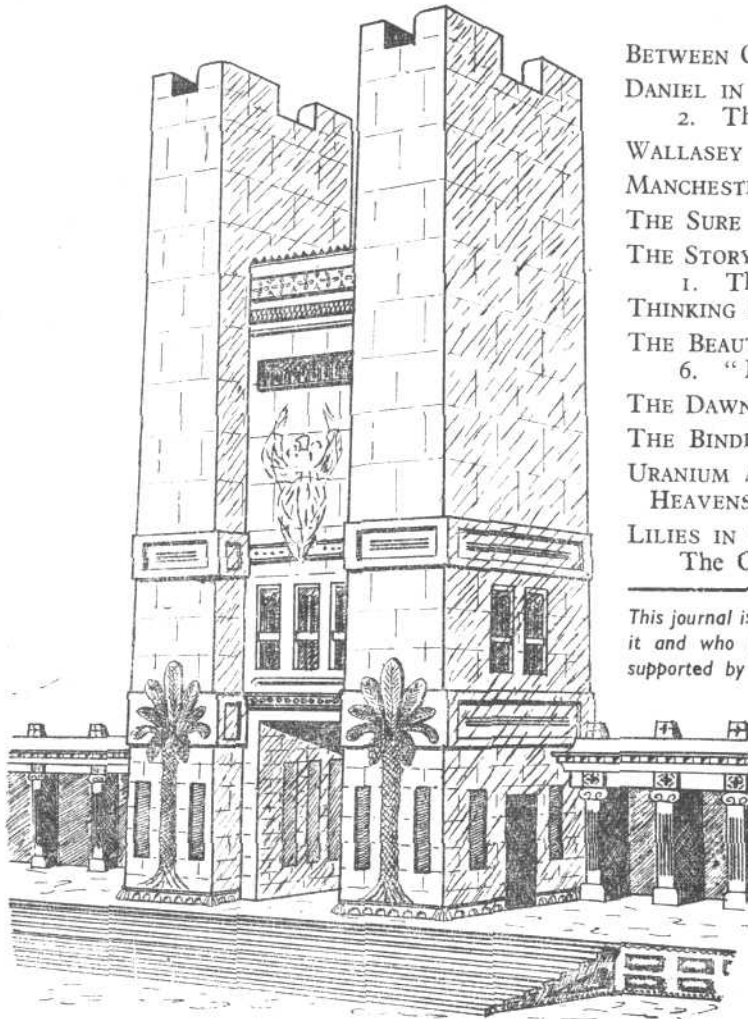
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Next issue June 1st.

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested



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

(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 entirely 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.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

LONDON BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

A meeting at

CAXTON HALL

(Tudor Room)

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1

Saturday, 28th April, 1956

6.30 p.m.

Speakers:

Bros. H. E. NADAL, A. O. HUDSON

The purpose of the meeting is to pray and praise; to practise and proclaim the faith that is in us; to enjoy the fellowship of kindred minds, and to raise the Baptist cry: "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The meeting is being advertised in the public press.

A further meeting on Saturday, 26th May, at 6.30

Concerning recent happenings

Readers of the "Monthly" will have been waiting for some further explanation of the three months' gap since our last appearance, and the necessarily short note which was circulated in late February announcing the temporary suspension of our usual activities. Briefly, there was a fire at the house which destroyed the roof and damaged the upper floor and its contents. The house had to be evacuated for rebuilding and redecoration and the contents hurriedly removed into store where they were of necessity inaccessible. In these circumstances the work directed from Welling was perforce closed down until matters could be restored to normal. As the news of the incident spread abroad there were many letters of Christian love and sympathy received and our appreciation for all these letters is now expressed here; it was quite impossible to reply to them individually at the time. And now by the Master's grace it is possible to pick up the threads where they were abruptly dropped in February, still with our "Ebenezer"—"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us".

Whilst this period of enforced "shut-down" is still subsisting discussions have been taking place between several brethren interested in the continuance of the "Monthly" and its work and in consequence some new arrangements have been made with the object of restoring this little service to the brethren as quickly as possible and spreading the labours involved over a wider circle of co-labourers than was the case before. At the time of writing this note the scheme of re-organisation is not complete, but the principal features are agreed and all our brethren are asked therefore to note the following.

Bro. Basil Dumont has taken over the duties of Treasurer, and the address for all correspondence except manuscripts and editorial matters for the "Monthly" will now be:—

Continued on back page.

Gone from us

Sis. C. Cassell (Chingford)

Sis. M. O. Giloth (Jersey City, U.S.A.)

Bro. H. Millington (Birmingham)

Bro. W. H. Halton (Hyde)

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great
man's faith

A. O. Hudson

2. The Land of Shinar

When, in later years, Daniel committed to writing his recollection of how the treasures of the House of God in Jerusalem had been carried into the land in Shinar and deposited triumphantly in the treasure house of Babylon's idol-temple his heart must have been heavy with the recollection of that sad day. He began his narrative with that incident; it stood out to him as the commencement of a life spent away from Judah and all its hallowed memories, a life given to serving God in a strange land, yet, because he was serving God and because he had no other will in life but to serve God in His way and at His bidding, a life of supreme content. The golden vessels of the Lord were in pagan hands and defiled by their residence in a heathen temple, but he remembered the words of the prophet Isaiah and took comfort in the sure knowledge that one day those vessels would come forth again and be restored to their own place. "*Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing*" the elder prophet had cried in the ecstasy of his vision. "*Go ye out of the midst of her. Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.*" (Isa. 52. 11.) That had been nearly two hundred years before Daniel's time, but the lad knew that the words would surely come to pass, and the bitterness of seeing the sacred vessels profaned by the sacrilegious touch of unbelievers was mitigated by his realisation that God had not cast off His people forever; He would surely come to deliver. And before Daniel died he was to see that faith vindicated.

It was probably not without design that Daniel used the ancient term "land of Shinar" to describe the country of his captors rather than "land of Babylon" by which it was more familiarly known in his own day. "Shinar" was the name it bore in those early days soon after the Flood when Nimrod established the first empire there, and impious men built a great tower "whose top should reach unto heaven." The tower was still there and Daniel probably saw it as he entered into the city. The name "Shinar" was associated in his mind with rebellion against God and apostasy from God and defiance of God, and in the book he was to write he would have all the world to know that this land and city which had been the scene of his life's work was one that stood for everything God hates. Neither its wealth nor its magnificence blinded him for one moment to the fact that it was under Divine condemnation—the city of God's curse.

That thought might have been of some comfort

to him as he watched the treasure-waggons turn aside at their journey's end and pass through the gateway into the courtyard of the great Tower, in the treasury of which the sacred Temple vessels were to repose for seventy long years, until a then far-off day when the impious Belshazzar was to lay careless hands upon them to grace his drunken revels, and so doing to lose his kingdom and his life. But Daniel could not foresee that at this time. Now he gazed from his chariot at the stately buildings of the Temple of Marduk, the god of Babylon, set in the midst of wide gardens and paved terraces. He saw the four massive gateways, each flanked by two huge bronze serpents, gleaming red in the sunlight, and must have remembered how that it was by means of a serpent that sin came into the world and man apostasised from God, and that here he was in the very midst of a worship that perpetuated that apostasy. His eyes followed the waggons bearing the vessels of God's Temple across the wide courtyard that surrounded the tremendous seven-staged building which towered into the heavens behind the Temple. He knew what that building was without being told. It was the famous Tower which godless men had commenced to build in the days when the world was young and the memory of the great Flood had scarcely faded from men's minds. "*Go to*" they had said "*let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, that we be not scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*". (Gen. 11. 4) God had come down to see the city and tower which those men were building, and he had frustrated their design and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. But later generations had gone on building the city, and their kings had each added his contribution to the tower, and now as Daniel gazed upon it he saw it soaring six hundred feet into the sky, the highest building men had ever built or would ever build until this modern day of American sky-scrapers should exceed the height they had attained. He saw the staircases hugging the sides of each successive stage and the terraces surrounding the top of each stage. The scintillating light at its summit held his attention and right up there he could see the solid gold sanctuary to Marduk, the god to whose honour this great tower was dedicated . . . The chariot rolled on and Daniel could see the Tower no more. "E-Temenanki" the Babylonians called it, "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth," and they claimed that it was

going to stand as long as the world endures; but into the lad's mind there must have come something of the words of Isaiah "*And Babylon the glory of Kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah . . . and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.*" (Isa. 13. 19, 22.) He was travelling now along the royal road which led from the Temple and the Tower to Nebuchadnezzar's palace, "Ai-ibur-sabu," it was called, a name meaning the "Processional Way" and along that road the idolatrous processions of the worship of Babylon's false gods often passed. The lad looked down upon a gleaming white limestone road with pavements of white and red veined stone slabs on each side, flanked by high walls of glazed enamelled coloured bricks, sculptured in the form of lions, white lions with yellow manes and yellow lions with red manes, on alternate light and dark blue backgrounds, all seeming as if themselves marching toward the great palace which could be clearly seen in the distance. From his elevated position in the chariot Daniel could see over those glaringly ornate walls into the straight streets and small houses of Merkes, the artisans' and industrial part of the city, and then, looking forward, the place which was to be his own home and that of his three companions, the palace of the great king himself.

Even when judged by modern standards, the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar can truthfully be described as colossal. Only about one third of it has been excavated as yet, but enough is revealed to show that the building, or rather range of buildings, was something like a quarter of a mile square, flanked on one side by the river Euphrates and surrounded on the three other sides by wide canals so that it was virtually a fortress. Here lived the king and his family, the officers of his Court, many of the priests and wise men of Babylon, distinguished captives taken as hostages in similar fashion to Daniel and his companions, and a host of servants, guards and soldiers, anxious, in abject obedience, to carry out the wishes of this great king who was rapidly making himself master of the world.

The chariot rumbled over the bridge that spanned the Libilhigalla Canal, sped a hundred yards, turned left and passed through a lofty double archway into the East Court of the palace. The horses came to a standstill and a group of soldiers stepped briskly towards the travellers. Thus the four Hebrew captives reached the end of their journey.

It was the intention of the king that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah should receive three years' schooling in the ways and the learning of the Babylonians and then become personal attendants on

his wishes in his court. They were not the only ones to be thus treated; Nebuchadnezzar had taken lads from other conquered countries for a similar purpose, and therein lay the first trial of faith that was to befall the four Hebrews. Cast daily into the company of youths of their own age but brought up in different and idolatrous surroundings, their impressionable young minds could very easily be diverted from the faith and the code of conduct they had learned, sullied with the standards and the outlook of the pagans, and so spoiled in great degree for the life of usefulness for God which would in other circumstances be theirs.

It speaks well for the unknown teachers who instructed these four boys in their earlier years in Judah that they showed not the slightest trace of being influenced by their surroundings. It was the order of the king that they should be given the rich foods and wines habitually used at court; this doubtless included refinements and luxuries of all kinds normally enjoyed by those upon whom the king's favours were bestowed. "*But Daniel purposed within himself that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.*" (Dan. 1. 8.) So he made request, on behalf of his three companions beside himself, that they might be permitted to refuse these rich viands and subsist upon plain fare. Pulse and water is specified in verse 12, but this might very reasonably be extended to include any kind of vegetarian food and non-intoxicating drinks. The principal thing in Daniel's mind appears to be the fact that to partake of foods and drinks from the king's table might well involve eating and drinking that which had been offered to idols, or poured out as a libation, or in some way associated with idolatrous ceremonies, and Daniel was determined to have nothing to do with such things.

The official to whose care the four lads had been entrusted was, not unnaturally, rather dubious about assenting to this request. If the thing became known, and the lads appeared to suffer in health in consequence of this rather Spartan diet of their own choosing, his own head would be endangered. Royal justice was administered in an arbitrary and summary fashion in the Court of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel showed considerable tact in proposing a ten days' trial on the understanding that he would abide by Melzar's judgment of the results at the end of that time. The bargain was struck, and at the end of the ten days the four Hebrews were manifestly so superior in general health and appearance to their companions—who anyway had probably been making full and not too wise use of the royal favours so freely granted, with the obvious result—that no further objection to their preferences in the

matter of food was raised.

This was the first stand for principle and the first victory. It might seem to revolve around a comparatively trivial matter, and from one point of view so it did. But it was the starting-point from which much greater things were to proceed. The lads who obeyed their consciences, not fearing the wrath of the king, in so trivial a thing as daily food, were as grown men to withstand a more vital assault upon their faith, to the extent of facing, without fear, what seemed to be the prospect of certain death in a fiery furnace.

So their education in the "learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans" (ch. 1. 4) was commenced, a course of study that was to last three years. What that learning was has been revealed to us in these latter days by the multitudes of inscribed clay tablets, treating of almost every conceivable subject, which are now in the possession of scholars and distributed through the world's museums. The term "Chaldeans" in every book of the Bible except Daniel refers in a general sense to the people inhabiting Babylonia, but in the Book of Daniel it is used to denote a certain class of men within the nation, men who formed a kind of quasi-religious society which preserved the ancient lore and traditions of the past. The priests, the historians, the archaeologists — for there were archaeologists even in Babylon, delving into the relics of civilisations as much older than their own as is theirs than ours — all were members of this caste of the Chaldeans. They held the highest positions in the land and wielded immense power. The priesthood's possession of the national records, extending over many thousands of years, enabled them to construct an elaborate system of omens and portents by means of which they claimed the ability to forecast future events. The art of astrology played a large part in their practices, and their knowledge of astronomy was by no means inconsiderable. The Tower of Babel had been used as an observatory for thousands of years—when Alexander the Great captured Babylon in 324 B.C., the scientist Callisthenes, who was with him, found records of astronomical observations in the library of the Tower going back to the year 2200 B.C. During all those centuries the priests had kept watch on the stars and planets from the top of the six hundred foot high Tower, and recorded all that they had seen.

These were the men under whose supervision Daniel and his companions pursued their studies. One of the leading subjects was sure to be history and Daniel would have been taken back to the early days of the empire, long before Abram left Ur of the Chaldees. It is almost certain that he perused

the Babylonian accounts of the Flood and Creation, and compared them with the more accurate accounts of the same events in the Book of Genesis. He must have spent much time learning the five hundred signs of the Babylonian alphabet, and gradually become expert at reading the literary treasures in the great library of the Temple of Marduk—a library which still lies sixty feet below the sand and has so far defied all the archaeologists' efforts to penetrate into it. It is fascinating to reflect that he may have come across records which had been written by his own ancestors when they lived in this land, Abram, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Keu. More than one record from their days, though not from their hands, now reposes in one or another of the world's museums.

Many of these tablets could be understood only by a few scholars among the Babylonians themselves. The spoken and written language of Babylon in Daniel's day was not that of ancient Babylon. In saying that Daniel was to learn the "tongue" of the Chaldeans it is plain that he was to study the ancient languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, which were spoken in the days of Abram, and in the dim centuries before Abram's day when the first descendants of the three sons of Noah were peopling this land, building its cities and creating the civilisation which endured for something like three thousand years. Probably no Hebrew since Moses had been able to read those ancient languages, the mother tongues of the sons of Ham and the sons of Shem, and in learning them Daniel probably found entry to a written revelation of the deeds of his nation's remote ancestors which coloured all his future outlook and was very probably left on record by him for the enlightenment of later generations in Jewry. Much of the later Jewish stories of early days, not derived from the historical books of the Bible, may have had their origin in Daniel's researches in Babylon.

Daniel's interest in the ancient history of this land which had been the birthplace of his own race would probably be equalled by that which he manifested in its religion. Not that Daniel was in the least degree likely to anticipate the example of some modern Christian leaders and proclaim that "there is good in all religions", and on that—measurably true—statement proceed to admit the world's false gods to a place of equality with the only true God. Daniel knew that the gods of Babylon were sham, the creations of men's minds, but he must nevertheless have reflected on the manner in which the originally pure faith possessed by Noah and his sons had become corrupted into an "image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1. 23.) It is perfectly

obvious to those who accept the Biblical story of the Flood that there was a clear and accurate knowledge of God amongst men immediately following that event, and that the faith which Daniel found when he came to Babylon must have been corrupted through the centuries from that one-time pure faith. Joshua is authority for the statement that Israel's fathers dwelt in old time beyond the flood (i.e., the river Euphrates) and served other gods (Josh. 24. 2) so that even at that early day the falling away had extended to the Abrahamic line. And we also know that the worship of the "Most High God" prevailed in Canaan at the same time, and evidence of this is to be found not only in the story of Melchisedek in Gen. 14. 18-20, but in that of Abimelech king of Gerar, between Canaan and Egypt, who was also a true worshipper (Gen. 20. 1-10) and in the discoveries made at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria in 1930, when a whole library of tablets was found that gave testimony to this worship.

So, at the end of three years, their education was complete, and they were brought in before the king. But that education was not only, and not even principally, in the "learning and tongue of the Chaldeans." During those same three years, we are told in ch. 1. 17, "God gave them knowledge and skill

in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." What a vivid picture that simple sentence paints for us; four earnest young men giving themselves in all sincerity to the reception, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of the wisdom that is from above. How God taught we are not told, but can there be much doubt that it was in the communing and reasoning together of four young hearts, poring over the sacred Scriptures which were to them the guide of life, the Old Testament as we have it as far as the Book of Isaiah and no further, earnestly seeking enlightenment from above? In all their enforced studies in the ancient lore of Babylon they found time to devote to the wisdom from on high which is the noblest science and the best instruction. Now in their very early twenties they stood forth equipped as few men ever have been equipped to spend a life in useful service for God at a time when the needs of the Divine Plan called for such consecrated service in the face of opposition and ruthless persecution.

So they stood before the king; "*and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm."*

To be continued

WALLASEY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

The following report of the inception of a new meeting will be read with interest.

* * *

Looking back over 1955 there is much cause for rejoicing. One such cause, and by no means the least, is the fact that the Heavenly Father has blessed the commencement of a Bible Fellowship in Wallasey. In June, 1955, a dozen brothers and sisters gathered in the Friends' Meeting House to discuss the formation of a new meeting. The Friends' room was suitable in every respect but one; the owners of the building, being a group of the Society of Friends, could not allow us to have any music. Music, of course, was a requirement that we all felt was necessary and so new rooms were sought. This search was well and truly blessed for the Father directed us to a Welsh Baptist Chapel on the main Liscard Road and quite central. The owners of this beautiful little chapel only use it for one hour per week, on Sunday afternoon, and so our requirements were very soon met.

We meet at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon

and commence with thirty minutes' prayer, followed by Bible study from 4.30 to 5.30. At present we are making a careful and prayerful study of the Gospel according to St. Luke. From 6.30 to 8.0 we hold our Gospel service and so far we have been ministered by brethren from Wallasey, Liverpool, Chester, Shotton and Warrington, with one visit from a London brother and one from Ossett in Yorkshire. We meet again on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 for prayer and Bible Study, this study being reserved for topical subjects, and at present we are discussing the resurrection of the dead, focal chapter being I Cor. 15. A meeting which has become very popular and useful is held on the last Saturday in each month. We call this our public meeting because it is advertised in the local press and by house-to-house visitation with leaflets. In addition a circular letter is sent each month to brethren in the districts of Liverpool and Birkenhead.

At the end of the year we had a visit from our brother Hubert Thompson of London. Brother Thompson took us on a lecture tour of the Holy

Land, and aided by a number of clearly defined maps he held the interest of a congregation of 56 for one-and-three-quarter hours.

The brethren who now meet regularly are being

bound together in a real spiritual relationship, and some of these were almost strangers in June last. Yes; 1955 calls for a loud song of praise for all that God has wrought in our midst.

NEW YEAR CONVENTION AT MANCHESTER

The two-day Convention at Rusholme Public Hall, Manchester, arranged by the Manchester Bible Students (Christian Fellowship, Fernley House, St. Ann's Churchyard) was a time of rejoicing and feeding at the Lord's table. About 90 to 100 were present at each session.

After a welcome by the chairman the first address was given by Brother Hartley (*Burnley*). His subject was "*Light is sown*" and he showed the outworking of the Divine Plan of the Ages. It was a comprehensive address and renewed in our minds those truths which we all cherish.

After tea Brother Lodge (*Central London*) gave his discourse from the text, "*Comfort one another with these words*" (1 Thess. 4: 15-18). He showed how the Christian's hope in the days of Paul was the same as now, viz., the Lord taking the church to Himself when those who remain shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, showing forth the thought of the mystery that "*we shall not all sleep,*" but "*shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.*" This was now so near at hand that we can truly comfort one another with these words.

On Sunday morning, Brother Holmes (*Melton Mowbray*), with the help of a chart of the Tabernacle, brought out many beautiful features from the text "*Whose temple ye are*" (1 Cor. 3: 16-17). He showed the relationship of the Christian (1) to the world as shown outside the court, (2) to the great number of believers or "Household of faith" (by the court, the brazen altar and the laver), (3) to the fellow members and begotten children of God partaking of the shewbread, enlightened by the golden candlestick and offering incense on the golden altar in the Holy, (4) to God as represented in the Most Holy.

He stressed the point of not defiling the Temple and pointed out that he who defiled the Temple of God ("*ye are the Temple of God*") him would God destroy.

After lunch the Prayer, Praise and Testimony meeting was ably conducted by Brother Musk (*Bury*). The time seemed to pass all too quickly.

Then followed the address by Brother Jennings (*Central London*) on the text "*When He Who is our life shall appear.*" He showed that the real

Christian must have the living and vital life of Christ in himself; the thought being well supported by such texts as "If ye be risen with Christ" (Col. 3: 1), "Buried by baptism into His death that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6: 4). From Eph. 1: 19-20 the thought was brought out that God's same mighty power is now working in the Church as it worked in raising Christ Jesus from the dead. The similarity of the Christian life to that of the Master was further brought out by showing that "If ye be dead with Him ye shall live with Him" (2 Tim. 2: 11, 12; also Gal. 2: 20).

After tea the last address, "*Prophetic light in the present darkness,*" was given by Brother French (*Forest Gate*). He showed how many prophetic Scriptures in the past had become history; how some were in process of fulfilment and how others are still to be fulfilled in the future. Referring to the second class, he showed how the changes now seen in the world such as the fall of many kings and the events in the near East, and present conditions in the world are fulfilments taking place before our very eyes. All these are light and knowledge to the people of God in the present darkness.

Loving wishes and greetings to the various classes represented were sent by the brethren, then, after thanks being offered to our Heavenly Father for the blessings received, the hymn was sung, "*God be with you till we meet again.*" Brother Hartley, the oldest brother present, closed in prayer. Expressions of joy and gladness were heard on all sides and with radiant faces the brethren reluctantly separated, lifted up in spirit, being resolved to follow closely the Master, and to watch and "Be ready—"

LONDON CONVENTION

Arrangements are now complete for the usual August London Convention at Conway Hall, sponsored by the Forest Gate, Welling and Windsor friends. The secretary this year is Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks., to whom all enquiries should be addressed. Programmes will be available shortly on request and will be circulated as usual through the medium of the "*Monthly*".

THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

This modern world has little interest in the prophecies of the Bible. Their strange phrases and settings seem to be so divorced from reality, and their frequent insistence upon such themes as sin and judgment do not find responsive chords in men's hearts to-day. Therefore ordinary people are very generally quite unaware of the treasury of literature that does exist in the writings of the prophets or of the light those writings throw upon current happenings. Past events have their bearing upon the present; it is an old adage that "history repeats itself" and it is only when one comes to the Bible with the sincere intention of finding out what it has to offer by way of solution to the problems of the present that one realises how much is lost through unfamiliarity with "all that the prophets have spoken".

It is necessary to deny most strongly the assertion often made nowadays that the Hebrew prophets were not seers of the future, but merely men who saw and exposed the evils of their own days and declared the inevitable outcome. It is true that they did act as such teachers and instructors, expounding the principles of Divine government, ever reproving sin and corruption, and calling men to repentance and a better way of living. They certainly did do this and in many instances were persecuted and killed by those whose antagonism they had aroused. But the term "prophet" had a wider significance than this. It denoted a man closely in tune with the Holy Spirit so that his spiritual faculties, more acutely conscious of "other worldly" things than were those of ordinary men, perceived something of God's plans and intentions for the future. Very imperfectly at times, but none the less assuredly, such men caught glimpses of the great events in world history which were to characterise the slow development of human experience, and its culmination in the time of Divine intervention that is to save the world from the consequences of its own folly and sin. The prophecies of the Bible give abundant evidence that the Holy Spirit did reveal to these men something of the future. In many instances the fulfilment of such prophecies is recorded in some other and later part of the Bible; in other cases the fulfilment came in post-Bible times and appears on the pages of histories; whilst yet others still await fulfilment. There are striking examples of Old Testament prophecies, regarding the coming of Christ to earth, known to have been written down more than five

centuries before He came. For this reason many people were in expectation of his coming at the actual time that He did come. The Prophet Isaiah described the details of the fall of Babylon with considerable accuracy nearly two hundred years before the event; Daniel outlined the succession of the four great empires, of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome when as yet Persia was only in the infancy of its power. Less spectacular examples than these are to be found without much difficulty; however it is, and by whatever power it is, that God sees into the future as men look back into the past, and reveals something of what He sees to His chosen messengers, it is impossible for us from our limited knowledge to say; but that He does so is indisputable, and the instruction regarding events of our own time and of future days that the Bible gives us is not to be lightly regarded or dismissed as unworthy of consideration.

The principal theme of Biblical prophecy is the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is not confined to the heavens; a very important phase of it is that which is to be established upon the earth. Although Jesus Christ came into the world to live amongst men and to die for man, a historic event that took place nineteen centuries ago, He has not yet completed His work for humanity. After the present interlude of two millenniums, which is for the development and completion of the Christian Church, He comes again to establish a world-wide Kingdom, in which all that is evil will be systematically eliminated, so that disease and death will become things of the past. This is the subject upon which the prophets spent their eloquence; "times of restitution of all things, spoken of by all God's prophets since the world began." (Acts 3. 23) That Kingdom, say the prophets, will satisfy man's every good desire and will establish the reverence and worship of God in every human heart. "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us" (Isa. 25. 9.) The earth will yield its increase, the deserts will be made fertile and the waste places productive. "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35. 1). In that earthly paradise not only the living of the generation that witnesses the coming of the Kingdom, but also the dead, restored from the grave, will find space to live and abundance of occupation, conditional upon their giving heed to the laws of God that will then be promulgated for mankind's benefit, for "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and

the word of the Lord . . ." (Isa. 2. 3).

But the prophets also dwell upon a more sombre theme, the inevitability of a great Time of Trouble, coming upon all the world in consequence of its own sin and selfishness, immediately to precede the establishment of the Kingdom. This Time of Trouble is described in the Bible under various names, of which perhaps the most familiar to the man in the street is "Armageddon". It is a time in which human institutions and forms of government break down and disappear; in which society dissolves into chaos, to be saved from utter disaster only by the hand of God. It is to be characterised by disastrous wars, famines, and pestilences on a world-wide scale, and it is to occur at a time of wide-spread irreligiosity and decay of faith in God. "*Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears, let the weak say, I am strong . . . and let the nations come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge the nations*" (Joel 3. 9-12).

Thoughtful men for several generations past have interpreted the general trend of world history as pre-aging a great change. Christian students have seen in these things clear evidence that the Time of Trouble is upon us, and the Kingdom therefore at hand. It is true that some rather unreasonable enthusiasts have brought a certain amount of popular discredit upon this expectation by announcing the spectacular ending of all things upon certain set dates, but nevertheless there is serious ground for sober anticipation of the coming Kingdom within the not too distant future. This conclusion is not based only upon political events and the increase of the extent and scale of wars; it is based upon something much more portentous.

For the past three hundred years the white races have been exploiting the world on a scale unparalleled in previous history. During that period, in consequence of scientific research and mechanical invention, the population of the earth has increased by leaps and bounds. Two hundred and fifty years ago this planet was the home of five hundred millions of human beings. A century later the number had doubled; the population was a thousand millions. To-day it is two and a half thousand millions. Concurrently with this the unrestrained spoilation of the earth's natural resources, due to commercial greed much more than to the effects of war, is making the production of food for these millions an increasingly serious problem. Sir John Boyd-Orr, the famous food expert, declares that the human race faces death by starvation. Although it has been reliably estimated that the earth, properly cultivated, is capable of supporting four times as many people as now inhabit it, the misrule of man has reached a stage where even those who are now

alive cannot properly be fed. The inevitable outcome, if God does not intervene, is world-wide famine, consequent widespread disease and pestilence, and wholesale death by starvation.

Apart from those pestilences which are caused by food deficiency, it is now well within the power of men to launch plague and disease upon such a scale that all the resources of medical science will be quite inadequate. There is no need to dwell upon this aspect of the matter in detail; the daily papers do so, often. But can there be any doubt, in the light of recent events, that some men would not hesitate to loose such scourges upon humanity if by so doing their own interests or desires are served?

The scourge of war, and the increasing frightfulness of war implements, is another factor characteristic of this time. War also plays its part in this "Battle of the Great Day": that is clear from the words of the prophets.

It is with confidence, therefore, that the events of to-day are held to fulfil many of the dark sayings of the Old and New Testaments and to constitute evidence too clear to ignore that the Kingdom of God upon earth is at hand. Man's extremity will be God's opportunity. From the day of man's first fall into sin, many thousands of years ago, the human race has followed an increasingly downward course into degradation and death. It has nearly reached the end of the way; without God it must inevitably destroy itself from the earth. But God created man for a great purpose and He is pledged to fulfil that purpose. "*As truly as I live*" He has said, "*the whole earth shall be filled with my glory.*" That is a prophecy none may dispute, because it has been given by the Most High Himself and what He has declared will surely come to pass. The day of earth's darkest trouble will be turned into the day of earth's rejoicing. Men will come up out of the fires chastened and subdued, but thankful in heart that, after all, God has cared; God has delivered. It is the object of Bible prophecy to convey that assurance to us now.

It is proposed to reprint the foregoing in leaflet form if there is any demand. Will readers who will use such leaflets if available please write us to that effect. Small quantities free; large quantities cost price.

NEW ADDRESS

Our friends are asked especially to note the change of address for all general correspondence from 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent, to 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex. Since the work is now to be shared between Hounslow and Welling there may sometimes be some little delay in sending literature ordered but on the whole the effect of the change should be to expedite dealing with the needs of the brethren.

The Story of Nehemiah

Lessons from the life of a
stalwart man of God

D. Nadal

I. The King's Cupbearer

Our story opens in the imperial palace of Artaxerxes, Persian Emperor in the fifth century B.C. He was a wise and tolerant king, giving his subjects as much freedom as possible. He had inherited the great empire of Babylon together with other conquered lands, hence the land of Israel was included in his vast domain. In his service at Shushan, capital of Persia, was a Jew named Nehemiah. Like many of his fellow nationals, he was part of Israel's exiled nobility. His position in the royal household would carry many privileges, providing him with every comfort and giving little cause for complaint. Yet Nehemiah's heart was in far off Jerusalem and he eagerly sought information from travellers concerning his brethren in Judea. News from his homeland was bad and the plight of God's people was truly an unhappy one. The stories he heard made him long more than ever to return to the land of "the Promise", to see the rugged hills of Judah and to help to restore to Israel her ancient heritage and national prestige.

The King was an observant man and he readily detected the sorrow reflected in the face of one who served him at table. Enquiry soon revealed the cause of Nehemiah's distress and permission was given to him to go to Jerusalem as governor of the city. Artaxerxes also supplied military protection for the long and hazardous journey and requisitions to obtain building materials to restore the walls of Jerusalem which were in ruins.

Two very important principles emerge from this first episode in the story of Nehemiah. His first reaction was to pray about his great trouble. He had learned to trust the King of Heaven rather than the kings of the earth and thereby God opened the way for Nehemiah's successful audience with the King.

Israel as a nation had sinned and according to the prophecy of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 4:25-31 they had been scattered and exiled by a foreign power. Nehemiah does not blame someone else for this situation but links his own name with those who had sinned. His prayer, found in Nehemiah 1:4-11, is remarkably like that in Daniel 9. Daniel and Nehemiah exhibit a wonderful spirit of humility and express to God their repentance for the sins which they have not committed. Neither of them were responsible for Judah's exile, because the fate of the children of Israel was sealed by their idolatry and general disobedience to their covenant

with God, long before Daniel and Nehemiah were born. It was not their fault that Jerusalem had been sacked and God's holy temple thrown down.

It is an important lesson for us because we so readily blame other people for the distress in the world and for the lack of spirituality in the Church. This was the beginning of Nehemiah's success. He went before Almighty God with a repentant heart and thus the floodgates of God's mercy and mighty power were opened to him.

We should notice that this was not the repentance of a flagrant sinner who forsook a wicked life for the first time. This was a fine upright child of Abraham who realised that he constantly fell from grace and was in need of Divine forgiveness. To those who have come into Christ the same principle applies for in 1 John 1:7, 8 we read "*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*"

Throughout his great work, Nehemiah constantly resorted to prayer, particularly in any special crisis. His prayers were not vague, abstract sermons about the plan of God, but earnest, practical entreaties for help, guidance and strength. Such is the example given by all true servants of God from the time of the Patriarchs until the present day. Like Daniel, Nehemiah probably practised the Jewish custom of special hours of prayer of which we read in our Lord's day.

Regular, frequent prayer is the solution to many of the difficult problems which beset the Church of God in this twentieth century. The hindrances to our unity and to our preaching of the Word of God to unbelievers would vanish if prayer meetings became a regular feature in the worship of God's people.

We in England, where complete religious freedom has been protected by the government for more than a hundred years, enjoy the same privilege that Nehemiah experienced while living in Persia and Palestine. He was guarded on his journey from Shushan to Jerusalem. He did not obstinately refuse Gentile assistance, but gladly accepted the credentials given to him by Artaxerxes. God does not expect us to make ourselves odious in the sight of the world merely for the sake of it. Godly men

have frequently throughout the various ages acknowledged and received the help which this world has given to the Divine purpose. Jesus never showed any antagonism towards the civil powers and Paul solicited the aid of pagan Rome in order that he might further his missionary work.

When righteous principles are not jeopardised, we ought to take advantage of civil liberties to advance, not our own interests but, the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another essential aspect of serving the Lord is to be willing to sacrifice the comfort and security of a fine career in secular life. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of this. We must be ready to give up those things which we hold dear according to the flesh in order that our spiritual life may develop, and make our service more effective.

There are many things around us in our everyday lives which hinder our service for God. Our daily occupation, worldly wealth, a comfortable home,

entertaining pleasures, the accumulation of knowledge, all of which might be beneficial and given to us by Divine providence, yet they can, and frequently do, distract God's servants from fulfilling their duty.

When the voice of the Lord calls us from the things of this life, let us relinquish our grasp upon them and cling more surely to the unseen, eternal things which will never perish, mentioned in Hebrews 12, 27-28.

These two principles, a repentant and prayerful heart and a willingness to deny self of earthly comfort and ambition, are essential if we would embark upon any great work for God. We must recognise that we can do nothing alone, but be fully devoted to the will and purpose of God, and live in an attitude of prayer and communion with our Heavenly Father.

To be continued

THINKING POINT

*"O eternal God! Lord of all being!
As for the king whom thou lovest,
And whose name thou hast proclaimed as was
pleasing to thee;
Do thou lead aright his life,
Guide him in a straight path.
I am the prince, obedient to thee,
The creature of thy hand.
Thou hast created me,
And with dominion over all people thou hast
entrusted me.
According to thy grace, O Lord,
Which thou dost bestow on all people,
Cause me to love thy supreme dominion,
And create in my heart the worship of thy deity;
And grant whatever is pleasing to thee,
Because thou hast fashioned my life."*

That is a prayer which is not found in the Bible although it was composed and spoken by a Bible character. Can anyone find fault with it? Does it not breathe the spirit of reverence and acknowledgment of a higher Power, overseeing the kingdom of men and giving it to whomsoever He pleases? Does it not say, in effect, "Thou hast made me great in the earth amongst men, but—teach me Thy will, O Lord. May thy will be done in me". Could not any of earth's present rulers among the reputed Christian nations use those words with perfect propriety at times of national prayer, remembering always that the "powers that be are ordained

of God"?

Who was the king whose reverential mind gave shape to those words? Was it Solomon—was it David—Hezekiah; Josiah? None of these! no king of Israel at all. It was Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king whose long reign of forty-three years included long allegiance to the god of Babylon and a short time of acknowledgment of the true God.

That prayer is in existence to-day, inscribed on a tablet; there is no doubt whatever that it is the work of that king. But it was Marduk (Bel), the idolatrous god of Babylon, in whose honour the Temple and Tower of Babylon stood for thousands of years, to which that prayer was addressed. A great many of king Nebuchadnezzar's still existing writings bear witness to the sincerity and depth of his religious feelings, and if it were that we knew not to whom he addressed that passionate entreaty we might be pardoned for thinking that here surely was a man who lived close to God.

The famous king of Babylon was not the only one. In all their idolatry and worship of gods many and lords many, the Babylonians and Assyrians, and their predecessors the Sumerians and Accadians, produced a wonderful literature of what have since been called "penitential psalms", in which consciousness of sin and need of a redeemer is clearly revealed. Without God in the world they, ignorant and blindly, were seeking God.

And what of men in later times who also, not

knowing the name and worship of our God, nevertheless manifested the true spirit of His ways in their hearts and lives? What of Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest men of the twentieth century, who turned away from Christianity on the day the doors of a South African cathedral were closed against him because he was a coloured man, and lived and died in the Hindu religion? Has God no use for Gandhi in the world that is to be? What of the prince Gautama Buddha, who founded the world's second great pacifist religion, the ethics of which are powerful among the teeming millions of the East to-day? Is he rejected from Divine service because he knew not and therefore acknowledged not Christ? What of those men and women of all past ages, Moslem, Buddhist, Confucian, pagan, whose perception of the fundamental truths of Divine rulership and Divine creation was sharp and clear, akin to Jews and Christians in their own generations, who if they had happened to be born in a Jewish or Christian environment might have been found among the ranks of the "Old Testament saints" or in New Testament days, disciples of Christ? If in their lifetimes they manifested characteristics which God is avowedly looking for in those who are to guide the world to its true destiny in the next Age, will they be debarred from taking up a work for which they have shown themselves to be eminently fitted because, to use the disciple's words, they "followed not with us"?

On the other hand, if they died, not having personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name alone, we are told, is there acceptance and reconciliation with God, how can they be qualified to lead other men to God by way of Jesus Christ? Can a man, however noble and well fitted, who has not himself intelligently accepted the "only name", be acceptable to God? Or does God really take so much notice of the difference?

Comments on the above are invited.—Ed.

* * *

LAST MONTH'S THINKING POINT

The thinking point dealt with the question posed in another Christian periodical as to the possibility of life on other planets and its relevance to theology. We raised the further point as to the effect upon our understanding of the permission of evil if there should really be intelligent creatures elsewhere in God's creation. Some of our readers' comments, abbreviated, follow:—

"The Creator is a great economist. Although the resources at His command are limitless, He does not use them wastefully or to no purpose, and that is exemplified not only in the exhortations of Holy Writ, which urge carefulness in the use of all we

possess, but also in the world of Nature with its law of 'crop and return' in which nothing is wasted. Also, 'Christ dieth no more', and death hath no more dominion over Him; He could not again become a ransom for a future fallen race, and seeing also that 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name' both in heaven and on earth, who else could take His place as the equal to Him? I believe that this one exhibition of the baneful results of disobedience will be used as an object lesson to any future intelligent creatures yet to be." *W.B.*

"As one reads of man's efforts to reach into space and solve the problem as to whether any other of the planets of our solar system are inhabited, those of us who hold the Bible teaching are bound to feel the challenge of our times and bring the test of Bible theology to bear upon the subject. The work of God on the earth in regard to man would seem to be the genesis of such work in the Universe, which is in agreement with the findings of science. We cannot believe that God the Creator will in any way duplicate the work of redemption in Christ in view of the many statements in Scripture as to the finality of that work and the exalted position of Jesus, set at God's right hand. Just as we look upon Palestine as the Holy Land because it was there that the great sacrifice was made so perhaps in the distant future our earth may be looked upon as the centre of the universe because it was here that Divine Love paid the price necessary for the establishment of the universe in moral and spiritual unity." *F.F.*

"The Bible furnishes no evidence that life exists on any planet other than the earth . . . the universe is vast beyond our finite minds to grasp and when astronomers speak of other vast universes far greater than our own it goes beyond the ability of the mind to grasp. I would suggest to the wise of this world that they consider the challenge of Isaiah 41. 21 to the end, and venture to say that then there will be no more breath left in them." *H.G.*

"This earth is God's workshop, His laboratory, where He is demonstrating the lesson of sin, disobedience, the consequences; and salvation with restoration. That Jesus will never need to die again, as what has been worked out here will be an everlasting object lesson for future human beings. We can see how other planets are in process of creation as earth was." *L.O.*

A "thinking point" is a question arising out of the relation between our traditional faith to modern knowledge, appearing to challenge the accuracy of that faith. Readers are free to suggest such points for consideration in this fashion.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

A series of studies
on Sanctification

T. Holmes

6. "Be ye holy"

Before we can reach a proper conclusion concerning the holiness of believing saints while here on earth there is one other aspect of the question which we must consider. It centres round the English word "wholly". We may speak of it as "wholeheartedness" or all-outed-ness. It implies the diligent, full-out application of all one's powers for all one's time, till all the full purpose of one's life has been achieved.

We see this aspect markedly manifest in God. Our gracious God is Holy, not only because of what He is; Holy, not only because of what He does, but Holy because of "HOW" He acts. God is so utterly devoted to His great Plan that it "wholly" absorbs His vast resources. He has set Himself apart without stint or reservation to carry it through. Through all the years since time began He has kept on His way, pursuing His great objective. Though men have failed Him (as when Israel fell) He has not failed nor halted. He ceased not to work on, with such as served Him well, until He led them up from the temporary, literal, carnal things to the higher, better, eternal, spiritual things; and as each stage was reached, no whit of all His mighty Power, nor of His infinite Wisdom, nor of His regard for righteousness, nor of His inexhaustible, unfathomable Love has been withheld, nor will be withheld, until He has accomplished all His great design. He placed the whole of His illimitable resources at its call. Not merely for a day, or century, or age, but for all time, until the task is done, He pledged Himself—all that He is—all that He has—to see it through. Our God and Father has consecrated Himself to fulfil His Pledge—His oath-bound Promise—and from that He will not change. God is "*Hal*"—holy, "wholesome," without taint, loving, benevolent, kind, in all He undertakes to do: and God is "*Halig*"—He is "wholly," completely, and forever pledged to His great eternal purpose to root out all sin and make the whole earth sweet and clean.

Do we wonder then that God should ask us to lay down our "all"—our ALL, for ALL our time? If He has consecrated His vast resources to that one great end, could He require less from us? Will He accept the bits and scraps, the odds and ends of human life given when the mood suits us, to co-labour in His Plan? What if God had done the same? What if He attended us by fits and starts? What if we had to wait upon His moods?

Thank God He is "all out," in all He does, for all the time!

Now let us trace this through and place the facts together. All whom God takes to be His own were born children of wrath, even as others in the world. None was righteous; none was good. All had turned out of the way. Of His own Will He formed His plan to redeem and bless, in order to demonstrate to man His own great Love. When by His grace and leading we learned of this great Love, through the Saviour whom He freely gave to die, our hearts became lost in wonder, love and praise. As the truth broke out more clearly, we saw that He is calling a people for His Name, through whom to teach and bless "the residue of men" (Acts 15. 14-17.) All whose hearts are right in the sight of God, and who, while they love their fellowmen, have found that all schemes of human uplift must fail, rejoice with great joy to know that *God purposes to help the human race* to throw off its burden of sin and selfishness. When they learn that God invites them to become co-workers with Him in this great task, it gives them joy untold. Though aware of their own sin, they ask "How can I be a co-worker with God—He is holy, just and good—and I am of the earth, weak, frail and tainted by my sin?"

The diligent student of God's word who progresses in his studies until he has learned something of the "deep things of God" finds God's way of enabling him to co-operate set out in types and shadows of Israel's wilderness days, as well as in more direct New Testament statements. In both Old and New Testaments he learns that all who walk and work with God must be made holy. But how can that be? What part can light have with darkness; or how can God consort with sinners?

There is but one way. The scheme—the plan—must swallow up its advocates, both great and small, and then the excellences and virtues of that design will diffuse themselves to all who participate in its outworking. God has put Himself into it, and pledged Himself to Abraham and his posterity to carry it through. It is now open to such as would share in this task as Abraham's Seed to do likewise. God, as author of the scheme, has full knowledge of the conditions and requirements incident to its performance, hence it is imperatively necessary that His mind should be the directing mind of the project, and that all other participants should subordinate their minds to Him. God only has the

energy to carry it through, hence all who would share in its activities must be prepared in such manner that they become suitable conduits through which the Divine energy can flow. A million volt conductor requires much more careful preparation than a ten volt conductor.

Since God has put Himself and all His illimitable resources into this scheme, and the believer (even though now reconciled and justified and made free as Abraham's Seed), is putting nothing but his very inefficient little self into it, it should be very obvious to all who understand that the very very junior membership of this co-partnership must be under the absolute direction of its competent and omnipotent Sponsor. Hence consecration and full surrender is so very necessary.

However, no matter how poor and inefficient the invited participant really is (when accepting the gracious invitation) the intrinsic excellence of this purpose applies to him as it applies to all. He shares the credit of the co-partnership though in himself of little worth. Thus it matters not how little he brings into the scheme, he shares with all his partners its good-standing—whether of low or high degree. Its claims of what is just and righteous, but, after satisfying every claim, it overflows and provides an abundance of grace and mercy for a needy world. The all sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, as a Ransom for all (as part of this Plan) met all the exacting claims which Justice preferred against the sinner—then, that embargo to life being removed, grace and mercy will reach down to the lowest depths of sin, and lift up the released sinner to life, to happiness and peace.

This Plan is one of kindness, benevolence, and tender love—it designs to set men free from sin, and enable them both to love and do the righteous thing—and do it from a sincere heart. Hence, the scheme is more than righteous in its aims, for righteous act is but the outflow of holiness within. It is wholesome in itself, and seeks to make men wholesome too. It is a holy thing, holy in itself, the absolute and certain foe of sin and self, and when completed will make the world of men holy too. It is a holy means leading to a holy end, a holy instrument devised for a holy task.

Each participant in this plan, to-day, has a special place allotted him. He is accorded a first-born's place. While all the Seed of Abraham will have a primary place in the plan, they who can show Abraham's faith are made a special Seed—a Spiritual Seed—and given a special place. This was foreshadowed and foreshown on two occasions when Israel was being separated from the nations.

In that dread night when the destroying angel carried the sword of death through Egypt, and slew

its first-borns of man and beast, God claimed Israel's first-borns for Himself. He spared them from the angel's sword by the substitutionary death of a lamb, and by the sprinkling of its blood upon the door. From that night thenceforward God claimed them for His own, to serve His own deep purposes. All first-borns, both of man and beast, belonged to Him. God hallowed them to Himself; that is, He made them holy for Himself. Since Christ became the Lamb of God—"our Passover slain for us"—all who are God's first-born class, who have received the first-fruits of His Spirit, were claimed by God, to serve His greater purposes. They are hallowed unto Him. He makes them holy to serve His Plan.

When God had taken the whole tribe of Levi to replace the whole company of first-borns (Num. 3. 12, etc.) God chose Aaron and his sons from among their brethren and hallowed them again, to serve as priests in a very special sense. He caused them to be anointed with a very special oil, which no one else could make or use. Ear, thumb, great toe,—representing hearing, serving and walking—were all touched with the sanctifying chrism (Lev. 8). That anointing oil was emblematic of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of anointing which we have received from Him constitutes all its recipients holy. It sets them apart specially to do the Lord's Will; to be prepared as instruments for His great scheme.

It needs a strong faith to believe that faulty, tainted men can be of use to God, and that men with ingrained sin can be counted holy men—yet, so it is! Aaron was but an ordinary man till God chose him and clothed him in white robes and chrismed him with oil. It was not for what he had already done that God's choice fell on him, but for what God could cause Him to do. No more is it for what we have done that God's Spirit comes upon us, but for what God will fit us to do. Consequently, as in Israel the priests were not made holy *by* service, but *for* service, so the priestly members of the Royal Priesthood are not accounted holy by what they have done, but by the blood of sprinkling and by their reception of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1. 2).

In spite then of their vacillations and weaknesses, and their daily round of trespasses and sins, their holy standing is not lost. Based upon the precious blood of Jesus as the appointed Lamb of God, supplemented by their own absolute surrender to the Will of God, their hallowed standing remains secure. The Altar sanctified all that touched it, no matter whence it came. (Ex. 29. 37., Ex. 30. 29., Matt. 23. 19.) So the Church's Altar, hallowed by Jesus' own precious sacrifice, makes holy all that comes thereon no matter whence it comes. Our

little sacrifice, so small and poor, so marred by nature, and defaced by sin, is savoured by holiness what time the Holy Priest of our profession takes it into His holy hands to place it on the altar-privilege. Apart from Him, it is of little worth; in His dear hands it is a holy thing. In all this elementary stage of our partnership with God He blesses us with an objective holiness, holiness received by us from an external source, holiness bestowed upon us with an "end" in view. It is "wholeness" attributed to attained men.

There is another side however to this design. Another phase of holiness begins when God has claimed us for His own. He starts to take the taint away and make the inward man hale and sound. By grace, God helps His child 'mid stress and strain, and by means of life's afflictions (counted light) God creates the likeness of His Son within. God shows His children what He is—a God of tender love and infinite compassion—and by this vision beautiful inspires a deep yearning in their hearts to be also made compassionate like Him. Their native leaning towards sin is slowly checked, its taint removed and its power broken. By slow degrees the sin-biased heart becomes more sweet and wholesome and actual holiness, increasing in degree, begins to take the place of sin and self. Thus new desires of heart and mind, created and natured by the hand of God are brought slowly into line with God's great plan. We too, become inspired by the same desire to see men blessed, and set free from sin and death. Thus the Holy Spirit's work within brings us actually more into line with the spirit of the Plan, and of the holiness of its Author and Master-Workman.

To Israel and her priesthood God said "Consecrate yourselves and I will consecrate you." That is the spirit and principle of the whole Plan. First, as we surrender our "little all" we are sanctified for the plan's sake, afterwards we are made holy for our own. First it is an holiness derived from without, then it becomes an holiness developed from within. We become possessed of holiness which deepens every day—a real subjective holiness which increases in degree. Whosoever therefore desires God's favour to-day must devote himself "wholly" to the same plan and purpose to which God has devoted Himself. It requires a full and complete surrender to the Architect's Wisdom, to the Potter's hands, to the Sovereign Will. There must be no reservations, no half-hearted surrender, but a full and entire submission to the Purpose; as full and complete with our "little all" as that of the great Divine Father with His illimitable "all."

Thus wholly surrendered, He accepts the poor, lean offering, and makes it His very own. Linked

with Himself it becomes indeed a holy thing. Men see it not in its true light, but God both sees and knows, and He it is who sees its holiness; He it is who calls such a child a saint. No man while on earth is entirely free from sin, flawless, but sure as the heaven is above, there are those on earth, who, accepted and owned by Almighty God, are holy in His sight—Holy, because both He and they have "wholly" set themselves apart to accomplish His great ends and purposes; holy because His spirit fills their hearts. Their standing is not "holier-than-thou" towards their fellowmen; nor is it due to some peculiarity of dress, nor does it come because of ecclesiastical preferment, but simply and solely because God dwells within—making them thus a Holy Temple for the Lord.

Some men are holy in the sight of heaven. Let others say what they may, already they are saints. A holy standing has been accorded them by God Himself. Unknown by men they work in lowly spheres—in kitchen, workshop, office, farm, or train. No titles grace their names; no silk or lawn adorn their limbs; no great accomplishments are theirs, . . . but . . . He who estimates all things for what they are, has called them saints and holy men—and they are so.

It brings no profanation to the Holy Name to say that God is working out a Plan. God could not bide eternally the rivalry of Sin. His very "Self" requires its overthrow. An end of its domination there must be, that God's habitation may be clean. That very purpose springs out of what He is. With reverence then, and deep esteem each loyal-hearted child will thank the Lord that He is working out the great Design, and in this work has asked His child to share with Him, the privilege of eradicating sin.

*Laid on Thine Altar, O my Lord Divine,
Accept this gift to-day, for Jesus' sake.
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;
But here I bring, within my trembling hand,
This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small;
And Thou alone, O Lord, canst understand
How, when I yield Thee this, I yield mine all.*

The End.

Cardiff Convention

The friends at Cardiff make preliminary announcement of a convention planned held in that city on 8th and 9th September next. Programmes will be available in due course and this notice is given now to enable those who would wish to attend to plan accordingly.

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

In the beginning God made man; God made him suited to the earth so that he could live everlastingly upon it. God provided for the natural increase of the human race so that the earth could be populated and quite evidently for the cessation of the powers of increase when that object had been attained, so that the earth continues to all eternity like a well-built house inhabited by a happy and contented family. Physically, mentally and morally perfect, man and woman could look forward to everlasting life under ideal conditions.

We do not understand the nature of life, only that it comes from God and that the life of all living things is sustained by God. We do not know how the first human beings came into existence, only that "*the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*" (Gen. 2. 7). What we do know is that they rejected the way of life ordained for them by their Creator, a way of life which would have assured them and their posterity lasting well-being and happiness, and at the instigation of the Devil chose the way of disobedience. So it was that sin entered the world, and with it, selfishness, cruelty, disease and death. Men, drifting farther and farther from God, degenerated physically, mentally and morally, more and more, until at last . . .

"*God looked upon the earth, and behold, every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil, and that continually.*" (Gen. 6. 5.)

It was in mercy that God took them away, for left to themselves they would have eventually become hopelessly depraved and incapable of reformation. God did not intend that to happen, and so it was that He brought into operation His own plans for persuading fallen men to turn from their evil ways and live. But they were long-term plans. Evil was not yet overthrown.

So that first world came to an end with a great flood which swept away all that civilisation.

"*Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.*" (2 Pet. 3. 6.)

The terrible disaster of the Flood had no lasting effect upon succeeding generations. Human history, which begins at this point, tells of increasing selfishness and sin, violence and misery, disease and pain. Some there were who served God, and strove for better things, but the majority lived without hope and without God. Thus did the years pass, until after many generations, a Light came into

the world. . . .

"*I am come,*" said Jesus, "*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" (John 10. 10.)

The coming of Jesus was an event unique in history. He had been with the Father from before all created things. He laid aside His glory, to be born of a virgin, so becoming man, living among men, sharing their joys and sorrows, teaching them the way of life God wanted them to follow. Because men then in power would not have his teaching, they took him and put him to death, little realising that He had thus become the means of their own ransom from the power of death. For three days He lay in the grave, and then rose again from the dead.

He was not raised a man, for his humanity had been given a "Ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2. 5-6) when he died upon the cross. He was raised to the heavenly nature which had been his before He came to earth, and exalted to the "right hand of the Majesty on high." And the Divine Plan provides for his return to this earth, in the full glory of his spiritual being, that He might teach men to renounce evil and establish everlasting righteousness.

The period between these two Advents is devoted to the calling and selection of believers who come to him by the successive steps of repentance, conversion, justification by faith, and full consecration of life and talents to the service of God. They are brought under the spiritually transforming influence of the Holy Spirit, the power, the influence of God working in the world. This calling closes with the end of this present Age or "world," and those who have been faithful throughout life to the conditions of their calling receive a change of nature from earthly to heavenly, and the high honour of association with the Lord Jesus in his future work, commencing with the conversion of mankind, which is the object of the coming Age.

In the meantime the human race continues on its downward course. The majority are heedless—heedless of the Gospel, heedless of their own best interests, heedless of the danger that threatens. Once again does God look down upon the earth and decree a great change. This world—the second world—is to pass away and a third world take its place, and in that third world Christ will rule, justly and wisely. Men are fast destroying this second world now, and the earth with it; but God will not

allow them to waste the earth beyond repair. The discovery of atomic energy has introduced a new and terrible menace. No responsible thinkers expect this power to be confined to good and constructive use; for the most part they apprehend havoc and destruction on a gigantic scale and perhaps the end of civilisation. . . .

"The heavens and the earth which are now . . . are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men . . . wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3. 7-12).

And at Hiroshima, on August 6th, 1945, the world was shown how terribly prophetic were those words.

* * *

Now these things are signs that the old world has nearly reached its end and that the third world, the Golden Age, is at hand. The nations, still striving each after their own selfish interests, holding Conference after Conference and failing every time to secure peace, will presently find that a new and quite unexplainable power has suddenly taken control of world affairs and that all powers, governments and rulers are required to conform their national policies and activities to the standards laid down by the representatives of Jesus Christ. *"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isa. 2. 3). Although the new government will not be backed by armed force, resistance to its requirements will be useless, for the same spiritual power that at the outset will have caused "wars to cease unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. 46. 9) will render it impossible for men to continue in any work of evil which injures a fellow man. During the entire period of the Millennial Age, set aside for mankind's training and instruction in righteousness, the liberty to do evil and inflict evil upon others, at present enjoyed by man, and permitted by God, will be withdrawn, and law-abiding men may go about their business and engage in all the manifold activities of life without any fear of harm or evil befalling them at the hands of malicious persons or interests. *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11. 9).

As soon as society has been sufficiently reorganised on this new basis, and men begin to make the earth productive and fruitful as it has never been before, the dead will be raised, to share in this universal opportunity for everlasting life. Their education to right-doing will be the mission and work of the Church, which then will be reign-

ing with Christ in the heavens to make all men see what is the true Gospel and to help them back to reconciliation with God. But God will not coerce any man's will, and so the freedom of choosing sin and its consequences remains; but the inevitable consequence of sin is eternal death. That fate must befall any who after full and fair opportunity refuse to profit by the provisions of the Messianic Kingdom.

This exquisite foreview of that coming Day was written seventy years ago:—

"Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be, and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete."

* * *

It is proposed to reprint the foregoing in leaflet form if there is any demand. Will readers who would use such leaflets if available please write in to that effect. Small quantities free; large quantities, cost price.

EDITORIAL

Relative to the change of address to 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex (for general correspondence, announced on pages 26 and 33), friends are asked to note that author's manuscripts, notices and any other items intended for publication in the "Monthly" should still be sent direct to Bro. A. O. Hudson at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Donations and renewal forms should in all cases be sent to Lyncroft Gardens but brethren may be assured that both Bros. Dumont and Hudson will see all letters and the personal link which has existed for so long between so many friends and the few who have hitherto handled the work at Welling will by no means be broken.

THE BINDING OF SATAN

A. O. Hudson

Reflections upon a
familiar subject

The vision of the conflict between good and evil in the Book of Revelation comes at length to a time when a mighty angel is seen descending from heaven with a great chain in his hands; having arrived on earth he takes forcible hold of the great red dragon which alone survives of the enemies of righteousness, binds him with the chain, casts him into the abyss, and seals the entrance with the sign of Divine authority that the nations should be deceived no more throughout the thousand years—the Millennium. Ardent longing for that day has led many to watch earnestly the signs of the times, and the questions “Is Satan now bound? Is he in process of being bound? Is he yet to be bound?” are common.

What is this binding? Quite evidently, it is closely connected with the restraint of evil which is a feature of the Millennial Age. Rev. 20, 1, indicates clearly that its fulfilment is at the commencement of that Age. This does not necessarily mean, though, that the binding must take place simultaneously with the commencement of the Second Advent. The dragon of Rev. 20, is apparently the last enemy of righteousness to be dealt with after the other great enemies, the “Beast” and the “False Prophet” have been cast into the Lake of Fire. Now, since Rev. 19, dealing with the warfare between the Rider on the white horse and these two enemies, is evidently a phase of the Second Advent, the binding of the great red dragon, coming next in order, would seem to belong to a later phase of that Advent. That binding also coincides with the commencement of the reign of the saints, and since that reign does not commence until the saints have been “changed” and the marriage has been completed, and the Lord must first return “for” His saints before the marriage feast and His subsequent revelation to the world “with” His saints, it would seem clear that the “binding of Satan” is to occur after all these things at the time of the establishment of Christ’s kingdom in power in the earth. That time has not yet come.

From that time onward, the practice of evil will be restrained. “*Nothing shall hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain*” (Isa. 11. 9). Men will not be prevented from thinking evil thoughts or harbouring evil desires; some will yield “feigned obedience” (Psa. 18, 44, *marg.*); but the power to inflict evil or harm, physical, mental or moral, upon another will be lost.

We do not know how. Divine power will be exercised here in a fashion of which we have little, if any, conception to-day. But it will be true that although a man may formulate an intention to do evil to another, he will find himself physically or mentally powerless to put that intention into effect. That restraint will operate throughout the Millennial Age.

A little thought suggests that the same restraint must of necessity be placed upon Satan. He must be rendered powerless to influence the minds of men by evil suggestions. Hence the “binding of Satan” will be a restraint upon his power, at present enjoyed by Divine permission, of instilling evil thoughts and influences into the minds of men. His personal freedom of movement need not be limited, any more than is the personal freedom of evilly disposed men on earth during that Age, but he will find himself quite powerless to reach men’s minds in any way.

A glance at daily events should make it clear that the binding of Satan has not yet taken place, and is not yet even in progress. The powers of evil have greater control to-day in earth’s affairs than they have ever had, except, perhaps, in the early days at the period of the Deluge. Many of the devices and acts of certain classes of men are characterised by a cold-blooded ferocity and disregard for human suffering which can quite literally be said to be devil-inspired. The fearful experiences through which so many of earth’s peoples must pass to-day are evidences that the archangel of evil is still the god of this world, and that his subjects still render him service. It is sometimes suggested that these facts are the results of Satan’s struggles to resist his binding, and are evidences therefore that the binding is actually in progress but this idea is built upon a purely human conception of the binding, as though the Most High God finds it necessary to wage war and use the heavenly equivalent of physical force to achieve His end of rendering Satan powerless. Nothing of the sort. God is always master of the situation, and when in His wisdom the time comes for Satan to be bound and his influence to be restrained, one word from the Almighty, and it will be done. It will not require battalions of angels drawn up in martial array, arch-angels in command of detachments and some spiritual equivalent of carnal weapons, with which to wage an invisible conflict with the hosts of Satan

in the fashion in which fallen man wages war to-day.

Against this view it is sometimes argued that the twelfth chapter of Revelation does contain a very vivid description of war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting with the devil and his angels, resulting in the devil being cast out of heaven to the earth, and that this surely constitutes a detailed description of the binding or partial binding of Satan at the end of this Age.

It is suggested in this connection that Rev. 12 has nothing in common with Rev. 20, except that the same red dragon is a figure in the symbolism. The time of fulfilment of Rev. 12 is clearly much earlier than the end of the Gospel Age—the final verses show that much, the picture closing down with the dragon going forth to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed, which is quite opposite to the idea of binding and restriction. Whatever the teaching behind this symbolism of war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, it has no connection with the descent of the angel to bind Satan at the commencement of the thousand years. By some this vision in Rev. 12 has been made the basis of a view of the "binding," which declares that at some specified time in history the Lord Jesus Christ did engage in combat with Satan and expel him from heaven, in consequence of which the latter has come down to earth and is continuing the warfare against his opponent with this earth as the battle ground. Whilst this view springs from a very sincere desire to explain the apocalyptic imagery of the Scriptures in terms of present-day events and expectations, it is none the less a form of interpretation which debases rather than enhances our understanding of the spiritual world to which we aspire and which we hope one day to enter. And Christians who believe in the propriety of war and conflict between spiritual beings for the suppression of evil forces can hardly complain if the powers of this world demand similar services in earthly armies, for the principle is the same.

It is important to realise that God is omnipotent. *"He spake, and it was done: He commanded and it stood fast."* Although He allows His ends to be achieved by means of orderly development, "first the grain, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," and although He permits the continuance of evil up to a pre-determined limit for a wise purpose, yet when God's time to act against evil and evil-doers has come, there is none that can resist His Will. The fortunes of war—in earthly or spiritual realm—have no place in the Divine order. He brought the evil of the antediluvian world to an end instantly without calling upon the help of Noah. He destroyed the Cities of the Plain without using

His heavenly messengers other than to convey the news to Abraham of what He Himself was about to do. When the hosts of this world converge upon the Holy Land in the last great day of trouble it is to be God Himself, alone, Who will act. As in the days of Jehoshaphat, *"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle"; "For the battle is not yours, but God's"* (II Chron. 20, 15-17). So with the binding of Satan. The vision is a picture of the power of God operating from the seat of His government to end, in one instant of time, every scrap of power and influence Satan may possess over man and spirit.

But, one may ask, is it not likely that Satan foresees this catastrophe, and is making preparations to resist his fate; and does this not imply something very much like war between him and the forces which will effect his binding? It may very reasonably be asked in reply whether Satan, a fallen being separated from God by millenniums of sin, *really believes in his heart that he will be bound.*

Consider man. Men to-day, in general, do not believe in God. They have lost their knowledge of God, and with it any vital belief in the power or at least the care of God. How common it is to hear "If God does exist, He either does not care or has not the power to alter things, or He would have done so and put the world right long ago." That sentiment fairly expresses the considered judgment of the natural man who has been separated from God's presence by sin for many thousands of years. Yet man at the beginning knew God, walked with God, talked with God, and believed in the power of God. That is clear from the Genesis story. What has wrought the difference? The separation wrought by sin! *"Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over . . ."* (Rom. 1, 28). So that to-day man does not believe that God can or will put things right!

Is it not reasonable to think that the same principle must hold good in the case of Satan? He, too, had the privilege of knowing God, walking with Him, talking with Him, and appreciating His mighty power. He, too, fell into sin, and since nothing that is of sin can stand in the Divine Presence, he, too, from that day must have been banished, separated from God just as truly as was Adam. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil!"* For thousands of years, then, Satan has been as far from God as has man, and through all that time has enjoyed full liberty to work out his evil designs. It is true he witnessed the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and knew that he at least had escaped his power—but it is in the highest degree unlikely that Satan has any nearer access to the resurrected Christ than

has man, and two thousand years have passed since the Lord passed out of man's, and Satan's, ken into the heaven of heavens from which He had come. Would it be surprising, therefore, if Satan, like man, blinded by sin, has concluded that God cannot or will not complete His work on earth, and that Satan's rebellion will, therefore, continue its apparently successful course?

If this be the right conclusion, the great enemy of man will be busy with his plans, continuing still to wage war against all that is holy and true and lovely on earth, unbelieving until the hour has struck. In the heyday of his power, attendant angels carrying out his dark orders, men on earth busy about his fell designs, the cry of his suffering prisoners going up to heaven, his powers will vanish as one snaps off the electric light. Like a certain modern dictator (Mussolini) whose edifice of twenty years vanished overnight, he will stand bereft of power, of influence, of servants, of an empire—alone. Too late he will realise that the omnipotence of God has waited for this moment; that right has prevailed; and as the shades of the abyss close around him he will enter into the terrible solitude of an evil mind left entirely alone with its evil.

Can one picture that lonely spirit through all the thousand years of earth's jubilee? Free to roam through the vast spaces of God's creation; free to observe, to meditate, to scheme, but powerless to affect or influence in any way the mind or the heart of the weakest or humblest of God's creatures. A being apart, seeing all, hearing all, unable to interfere. The seal of Divine authority marks him out and sets him apart like Cain—an outcast, an exile, one upon whom is the judgment of God.

Perchance his presence will linger around this earth until the knowledge of man's happiness under the Messianic kingdom, and the renovation of the once desolate earth, becomes unendurable, and drives him off to far recesses of our universe where other worlds in the making, other instances of Divine creative energy, recall to his dark mind the earlier history of our own planet when, a happy and righteous being, he may have been one of the morning stars who "sang together" (Job 38, 7). He may translate himself from this material universe which glitters around us every night into that spiritual sphere which is beyond the scope of human sense or understanding, and wander through the celestial land as alone and as remote from the presence and the knowledge of God as when he presided over earth's destinies. He may come back into our realm of time and space, to find the thousand years of restitution still in progress; but wherever he goes and whatever he does, Satan will be bound, altogether unable to interfere further in

the plans of God for His creation.

Of the loosing again at the end of the Age we know little. It would seem that the thousand years of opportunity does not profit the Evil One, for a time is to come, when freed from the restraints for a "little season," he attempts once more to deceive and enslave humanity. There is apparently no repentance, nothing but an irrevocable determination to fight against God.

And that determination, in God's due time, brings about the only possible sequel. "*I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more*" (Ezek. 28, 18-19).

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, 1955

BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION

	£	s.	d.
<i>Bible Study Monthly Fund</i>			
Brought forward 1954	122	16	7
Gifts, 1955	457	3	3

	579	19	10
Expenses for printing, postage, stationery and miscellaneous	348	5	11

Carried forward to 1956	231	13	11
<i>Free Tract Fund</i>			
Brought forward 1954	38	14	4
Gifts, 1955	61	15	8

	100	10	0
Expenses for printing, postage, stationery and miscellaneous	25	15	3

Carried forward to 1956	74	14	9
<i>Bookroom Fund</i>			
Brought forward 1954	106	14	10

Carried forward to 1956	£106	14	10

As announced in the "*Monthly*," the Bookroom section was closed down during 1955 in consequence of decreasing use of its facilities and the sum standing in the name of that fund will during 1956 be transferred to the remaining funds.

URANIUM AND THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS

Every now and again some evangelical or prophetic periodical expounds a connection between the atomic bomb and those prophetic Scriptures which declare that the "powers of the heavens shall be shaken." They dwell upon the fact that the Greek word for "heaven" is "*ouranos*" from which word, they say, the term "uranium" is derived. From this it is deduced that the Scriptures thus reveal a foreknowledge that the passing away of this present evil world is to be by means of this particular weapon of man's devising; in short, that the use of this word in the New Testament writings is an indirect prophecy of the use of the atomic bomb.

This kind of exegesis—interpretation—does not really serve the Christian faith well. The word "*ouranos*" is translated "heaven" or "heavens" nearly three hundred times in the New Testament. If these occurrences are all to be taken as referring to this latest product of man's inhumanity to man then the outlook is indeed dark, for in all consistency the term "kingdom of heaven" must be understood to refer to a kingdom of the atomic bomb.

In point of fact, uranium was so named after the planet Uranus, because the whitish-blue colour of the metal strongly resembled the colour of the light emitted by that planet as at first observed (modern instruments show its light to be more of a green-white colour). Uranus, which was discovered in 1781, and at first christened Herschel in honour of its discoverer, was named Uranus in conformity with the usual custom of calling the planets by the names of gods and goddesses of antiquity. Uranus was the Greek god of heaven.

It is quite true, as we all know, that one of the signs which betoken the end of the Age, the Second Advent of our Lord, and the inception of the Kingdom of God upon earth, is that the "powers of the heavens shall be shaken." But the words are not to be interpreted literally. Jesus was imparting His teaching like the Hebrew prophets of old, in what is called, technically, "apocalyptic," that is, a clothing of deep spiritual truths in material trappings, and against a background of the phenomena of Nature. The "*sea and the waves roaring*"—the surging, restless masses of mankind, thrusting against the rocks of the established order. "*The wicked are like the troubled sea,*" says Isaiah, "*when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*" (Isa. 57. 20) "*Therefore will not we fear,*" cries the Psalmist "*though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the*

swelling thereof." (Psa. 46. 2-3.) The "powers of the heavens" in like manner allude to the higher ruling powers among men, those who claim the sanction of Heaven, either avowedly or by implication, for their assumption of authority, and demand of mankind an allegiance which ought rightfully to be rendered to God. These same powers have been "shaking" visibly for many years now and will shake even more definitely as time goes on until they give place completely before earth's new King, if indeed they have not, to use a phrase borrowed from a celebrated writer on this theme, been first "swallowed up in the raging seas of human passion."

It is well to be careful about accepting these crudely literal interpretations of prophetic Scripture, for they can lead us by apparently imperceptible degrees to a form of Biblical interpretation quite unworthy of serious-minded up-to-date students and more in keeping with the half-light of the seventeenth century than the clearer level of understanding which is the achievement of the twentieth.

* * *

Related Items of Information

There are two Greek words for heaven—"ouranos" and "*olympus*." The latter, derived from the Greek belief that the gods had their home on top of Mount Olympus in Greece, is never used in the New Testament. "*Ouranos*" is used to denote heaven as in the region of the sky, or "up above." "*Ouranos*" is translated "heaven" about 260 times, "air" ten times (always in association with "birds of the air") and "sky" five times. Two Greek words exist for "sky"—"*ouranos*" and "aither" (our word "ether"). The "ether," in Greek thought, was a region existing above the air, lighter in texture, in which lay the blessed land or "land of the immortals," floating on the top of the air just as in our world islands seem to float on top of the sea. This latter word is not used in the New Testament.

The planet Uranus is the seventh outward from the sun. Saturn and Jupiter in Greek mythology, were the son and grandson respectively of Uranus so that it was only fitting that the new planet should bear the name of the father. Since 1781, when Uranus was discovered, two more planets, farther still from the sun, have been found; Neptune (brother of Saturn) in 1846 and Pluto (another brother) in 1930. If any more planets are discovered the astronomers will have to go to the next generation of gods, since there are now no grandsons of Uranus left.

Lilies in the Valley

poems of hope, faith and certainty.

Rebecca F. Doney

THE CALL OF THE BRIDE

A royal messenger was sent
From great Jehovah's mighty throne,
On wondrous mission to the earth,
To find a bride for God's dear Son.
Armed with all power, he went his way
From the high courts of Heaven's King,
And, brooding o'er the sons of men,
A strange sweet song began to sing.

A song of love, so grand, so great,
God's love, which gave His only Son,
The dearest treasure He possessed,
To save a race, condemned, undone:
A race which had been sold in sin,
Whose father lost the right to live;
And none could save himself from death,
Nor for his brother ransom give.

He softly sang to weary ones
Who had been feeling after God,
That now the way was opened up
By shedding of the Saviour's blood.
No more the blood of bulls and goats
Should year by year for sin atone,
The one great perfect sacrifice,
The ransom paid for every one.

In sweetest notes the song went on—
The love of Christ was now the theme:
How He left Heaven's highest joys,
That fallen man He might redeem,
Might be released from sin's dark reign
And be brought back from death's estate,
To travel up the grand highway
Where life, and health and blessings wait.

Where perfect knowledge should be theirs,
And every joy of any worth:
When they should have, as God had planned,
Dominion o'er a perfect earth.
And then the song grew grander still,
Such words were never heard before:
That *some* should leave their human state
And up to spirit regions soar.

Past angel and archangel plane,
Though that, indeed, were honour great,
Past cherubim and seraphim
To Christ's Divine, immortal state.
What wonder that all Heaven's hosts
With rapture heard the matchless strain?
What wonder that earth's lowly ones
Could scarce believe that grand refrain?

And as they trembling sought the way,
He said, "I'm sent your steps to guide
In that same path your Master trod,
Till He receive you as His bride."
He led them to a narrow gate
And bade them mark its colours grand:
"The snowy line shows Christ's own robe
Of righteousness, in which you stand."

"The scarlet colour signifies
The price to Justice has been paid,
And sprinkled on the Mercy Seat
His blood your peace with God has made.
That royal purple is the sign
That Heaven's King with mighty power,
Stands pledged to come to your relief
In every dark and trying hour."

"The threads of blue, God's faithfulness,
With which His promises abound;
Come, follow me within the gate,
I'll lead you unto holy ground."
And as they entered in the Court
The peace of God fell on each soul;
With joy they heard the tender words:
"The blood of Jesus makes thee whole."

Clothed in His righteousness they stood:
His blood-brought rights on them conferred;
Such blessed hopes faith brought to view
Their very hearts within them stirred.
Their guide now pointed out to them
A brazen altar standing near:
"There you must lay, beside your Lord,
All earthly hopes, however dear."

And every restitution right
 Which would be yours in future day
 Must be for ever sacrificed
 Ere you can walk the narrow way."
 With loving zeal they laid thereon
 All future rights by faith possessed,
 And, washing at the laver clear,
 After their guide they onward pressed.

And as they now approached that door
 Their guide related how the Lord
 Had met the Adversary there,
 And, using the two-edged sword,
 In mortal fray had vanquished him—
 And proved His power to rescue those
 Who later, walking in His steps,
 By this same foe should be opposed.

He led them to the door, and lo!
 A wondrous vision met their gaze:
 A room, where sunlight never came,
 And yet whose walls were all ablaze;
 They saw a golden candlestick,
 A golden table filled with food,
 And at the farther end, before
 A vail, a golden altar stood.

It seemed it were another world;
 The Camp and Court were left behind,
 And as they tarried by the light
 They there received a heavenly mind,
 And former mysteries opened up,
 There they rejoicing saw the plan—
 Deep things they saw, which never yet
 Had entered in the heart of man.

Their holy messenger led on
 To where, on golden table spread,
 Was food their souls had hungered for—
 Frankincense, unleavened bread.
 "Eat and grow strong," he said to them,
 "For you my Lord did this prepare:
 Then pass it on to other priests,
 That they with you the feast may share."

They felt inclined to linger here,
 And think their journey almost done;
 But no, their guide cried, "Tarry not
 But to that golden altar come:
 'Tis here you're nearest to your Lord,
 He tarries just within the vail,
 And watches you with eyes of love,
 And sends you help when foes assail."

On to the altar then they pressed
 O'erjoyed to find their Lord was near;
 They brought with them their two hands full,
 Their blood-bought rights once held so dear,
 And standing by the altar fire
 They offered it as incense rare,
 When it was crumbled in the flame,
 A sweet perfume filled all the air.

A joyful sacrifice it was,
 Their faces t'ward the vail were turned,
 And their hearts' love for their dear Lord
 With an unceasing fervour burned.
 No holding back of any power,
 Nor any grudging service given,
 "Fade, fade, each earthly joy," they said
 "And nearer come, ye joys of heaven!"

"We've nothing left but death and God,
 Our hearts cry out, How long, how long?
 We're waiting for the welcome words
 'Tis finished now, my child come home.'
 We yearn to see our Bridegroom's face,
 Rebecca's journey long has been—"
 Lo! while they prayed, their guide appeared
 And said, "'Tis finished! enter in."

Meekly they bowed themselves in death,
 Assured that they had won the race,
 And in the twinkling of an eye,
 They saw their Bridegroom face to face.
 "Oh! my beloved!" with joy He cried,
 "I long have waited for this hour;
 Ascend and share my throne with me,
 Come! taste thy resurrection power."

And then the grand procession formed,
 Ten thousand ranks of angels bright,
 And columns of archangels grand,
 In all the colours of the light;
 And cherubim and seraphim
 Resplendent, led that mighty throng,
 The pageantry of all the skies
 Was there to greet that bridal morn.

Christ's bride the place of honour held,
 As onward swept that heavenly train;
 Past earth, and stars, and sun and moon,
 Beyond the highest spirit plane.
 And as they reached the heavenly courts,
 The royal guide approached the throne
 And bending low in homage, said,
 "The bride of Christ has been brought home."

And then the Son presented them
 Before the Heavenly Father's face;
 "These are the ones Thou gavest me,
 Each one a miracle of grace!
 Each one for very love of me,
 Laid all their earthly prospects down,
 They have been faithful unto death
 That they with me might wear a crown."

In tender tones the Father said:
 "Thrice welcome to these Courts above,
 And to the joys prepared for you
 Oh! royal Daughter of my love.
 Oh, thou art precious in my sight,
 Come, royal Daughter, welcome home."
 And Heaven's King in that glad hour
 Proclaimed the marriage of His Son.

BETWEEN OURSELVES—concluded from page 26

BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION,
 11 Lyncroft Gardens,
 Hounslow, Middlesex.

All B.S.M. renewals, money gifts, requests for literature, etc., should now be sent to that address.

Bro. Albert Hudson will be responsible for editing and publishing the "Monthly" and other literature published by the Union, and authors' manuscripts, news of conventions, notices, etc., and related matters should be sent to him at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Bro. Derrick Nadal will handle the despatch of the "Monthly" to readers, but all letters and enquiries regarding the "Monthly" should go to Hounslow for attention.

A brother not yet decided will send out tracts and literature to those requesting same, but here again all requests should go to Hounslow.

We trust that our Master's blessing will be upon all these arrangements and that our dual work of building up the brethren in the faith and witnessing to that faith among those who know not the Lord may prosper under His guidance and His Providence.

Please then take note of our new address:
 BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION, 11 Lyncroft Gardens,
 Hounslow, Middlesex.

* * *

Bible Students Hymnal

The original Bible Students Hymnal, the "words only" edition published in 1939, has long since been out of print. There is only a very small demand for copies nowadays, but in one or two quarters there is a wish that the book could be reprinted. We are giving consideration to the question of producing a new edition and in order to guide our decision would much appreciate hearing from brethren or classes who find they will soon be needing to replace their present stocks, which in some cases at least must after nearly twenty years be getting somewhat worn. It is not worth while producing the book unless the price can be kept down to about 4/- per copy and brethren are in-

vited to make their replies on the assumption that this will be the approximate price.

If the reprint is proceeded with, the additional hymns introduced by the Midlands brethren in their recently published tune edition will be included; we would like to make it plain in this connection that this proposed reprint of the "words only" edition is not being handled by the Midlands but by the "Monthly" and will only be undertaken if the probable demand, and such other indications as may come to us, justifies the cost of printing.

Please send in your replies within the next fortnight since the decision whether or not to proceed is intended to be taken without delay, and in your reply state how many copies you could most likely require.

Do NOT send any money or orders for books at this stage. If the hymnal is to be published due announcement will be made and orders may then be sent in and will be recorded. Payment will not be asked for until the books are ready for despatch.

* * *

Anonymous

Very sincere appreciation is expressed for several anonymous donations which have been received during the time since our last issue went to press; this is the only means we have of reaching the donors but we do want to say how much these kindly thoughts are appreciated.

* * *

Maran-atha One-week Conference

The brethren responsible for "Maran-atha" desire us to announce a one-week conference from 18th to 24th August, 1956, to be held at the "Rosehill" Conference Centre, Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berks. This is the first occasion in this country upon which brethren will have had opportunity to fellowship together under one roof for a whole week. The sole theme of the gathering will be what is, from the "Maran-atha" standpoint, the "near" return of our Lord. All who would attend should reserve part of their annual holidays for this event and write Bro. P. Scott, 4 Kingsmead, Cuffley, Herts, for reservation forms. The all-in charge for the week is £5 15s. 6d. (in American currency 18 dollars).



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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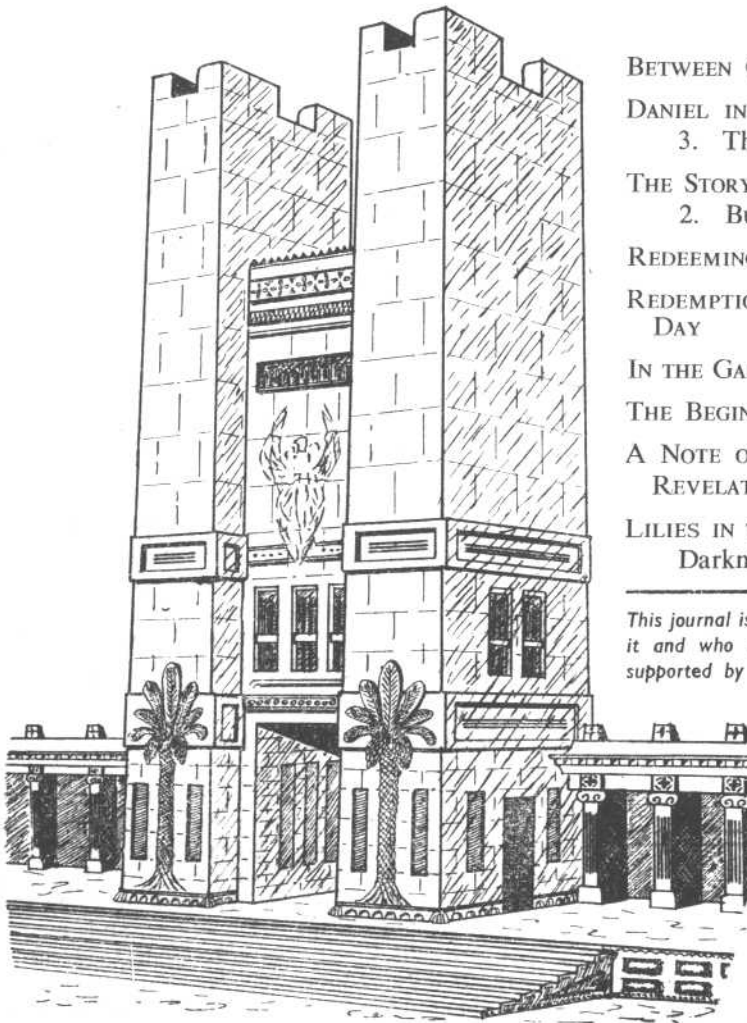
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*This journal is sent free of charge to all who request
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates.
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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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 entirely 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.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

LONDON BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

A meeting at

CAXTON HALL

(Tudor Room)

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1

Saturday, 16th June, 1956

6.30 p.m.

Speakers:

To be announced

The purpose of the meeting is to pray and praise; to practise and proclaim the faith that is in us; to enjoy the fellowship of kindred minds, and to raise the Baptist cry: "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The meeting is being advertised in the public press.

A further meeting on Saturday, 28th July, at 6.30

London Convention

Arrangements are now complete for the usual August London Convention at Conway Hall, sponsored by the Forest Gate, Welling and Windsor friends. The secretary this year is Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks., to whom all enquiries should be addressed. Programmes will be available shortly on request and will be circulated as usual through the medium of the "Monthly". Requests for accommodation should be sent as soon as possible to Bro. S. Naylor, 35 Clare Gardens, Barking, Essex. A baptismal service is being arranged and any friends desiring to be baptised are desired to notify Bro. Charlton at the earliest opportunity.

Cardiff Convention

The friends at Cardiff make preliminary announcement of a convention planned to be held in that city on 8th and 9th September next. Programmes will be available in due course and this notice is given now to enable those who would wish to attend to plan accordingly.

Editorial

Relative to the change of address to 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex (for general correspondence, announced in our last issue), friends are asked to note that author's manuscripts, notices and any other items intended for publication in the "Monthly" should still be sent direct to Bro. A. O. Hudson at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Donations and renewal forms should in all cases be sent to Lyncroft Gardens but brethren may be assured that both Bros. Dumont and Hudson will see all letters and the personal link which has existed for so long between so many friends and the few who have hitherto handled the work at Welling will by no means be broken.

Gone from us

Bro. Thomas (*Shotton*)
Bro. W. Reid Sharp (*Newcastle*)
Bro. W. Frith (*Leicester*)
Sis. Fawcett (*Sturminster*)

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

*The story of a great
man's faith*

A. O. Hudson

3. The Dream of the Image

King Nebuchadnezzar was in thoughtful mood. His deeply religious turn of mind and almost passionate yearning for the approval and blessing of the gods rendered him singularly receptive to dreams, considering them, as was the custom in those days, messages from the other world, revelations of the powers of heaven. There are sufficient examples in the Old Testament to make it abundantly clear that God has from time to time revealed Himself to his servants the prophets and patriarchs in this fashion. Many of the ancients—idolators—firmly believed that their own deities communicated their wishes in the same manner so that the idea was by no means confined to the relative few who served the one true God. Additionally, the Scriptures give several instances in which God disclosed his purposes in the same way to men who were not his avowed followers, so that there is no reason for rejecting the idea that certain noteworthy dreams of unbelievers may have been inspired directly by God for his purpose.

Such was the case in this present instance. The King, awaking from his sleep, recalled an impressive dream, and the more he thought about it the more he felt that it was no ordinary dream. That it held a message for him he felt sure; but who would interpret the symbolism of the dream and reveal to him its message? That was the problem which occupied the king's mind.

A colossal, towering image, of a man; almost certainly a warrior dressed in the style of a Babylonian soldier. King Nebuchadnezzar was himself a soldier; as a young man he had led the armies of Babylon into the field against Egypt, Elam, Assyria—all the traditional foes of Babylon—whilst his father, Nabopolassar, rested from his own military exploits and administered as king the affairs of the country which he had successfully freed from the Assyrian yoke. Now in his own turn, although his military career was by no means over, Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying a brief respite of peace, and it was while he was at home in Babylon planning the great building works for which he is famous that the dream of the image came to him.

No ordinary image this—the head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver; the body and thighs of copper; the lower legs of iron; the feet iron mingled with soft, yielding, wet clay. An impres-

sive sight, but built upon a foundation which threatened to go to pieces at any moment; nevertheless while it stood, the image proudly surveyed its surroundings as though commanding reverence and allegiance from all who beheld.

Then came action. A mass of rock, not man-made, no carefully carved monolith bearing the impress of human labour and ingenuity, but rugged and massive as if torn out from its parent mountain by the hand of God himself, came bearing down upon the image. No human hands guided it; the power by which it travelled was invisible and irresistible. Even as, fascinated, the king watched, the mighty mass of rock struck the image on its feet—the feet of iron and clay. The colossus trembled, swayed, and crashed to earth with a fall that smashed it to pieces. Fragments of gold, silver, copper and iron lay in inextricable confusion over the plain.

That was not the end. With the strange inconsequence of dreams the fragments went on breaking up, dividing into smaller and ever smaller pieces, until as fine dust they were caught up by the wind and blown away. Soon there was nothing left of the image, nothing to show where it had stood or give any evidence that it had ever existed—nothing but the dry sandy plain of Babylonia.

Now the rock itself started to grow. Before the king's amazed eyes it steadily increased in size until it filled his whole field of vision, covering the plain in every direction as far as eye could see. He saw it encircle and swallow up his own capital city of Babylon; he saw it absorb the great river Euphrates, the life-blood of his land. He saw it reach southward to the sea, and northward to Assyria with its capital city of Nineveh. He watched it as it extended its spread over the lands of his old enemies, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Great Sea in the west and the empire of Egypt in the south-west. His gaze followed it as it covered lands and peoples he had never heard of and did not know existed, and when it had finished growing he saw that it had become a great mountain that filled the whole earth. All peoples, nations and languages had their homes and their lives on its slopes and under its shadow. No wonder the king was in thoughtful mood.

It is highly probable that Nebuchadnezzar had been cogitating seriously on the possible fate of

his empire after his own death. He was now a man of between thirty and forty years of age, happily married to a wife he loved, and the father of three small children. He was firmly established as monarch of the world's leading nation and he had great plans for that nation's advancement. He had made Babylon the strongest power in the Middle East and although vigilance was still needed there was no real danger from the only other great power, that of Egypt. Nineveh had been destroyed a few years previously and the power of Assyria was broken for ever. Persia as a rival had not yet emerged on the scene. He was busy organising and administering the empire his father and he had created, and initiating ambitious schemes of building, irrigation and road-making. He was an Oriental despot and given to violent bursts of temper; but he was an educated man and a wise and enlightened ruler. He must have known how many times in past history individual men had built up just such edifices only for them to crash in ruins after the builder had gone the way of all flesh. Perhaps the great king had been thinking about the future of all that his hands were fashioning and in that frame of mind was receptive to this dream that God sent.

God did send it; there is no doubt about that. As that man lay sleeping on his ornate bed in the magnificent palace beside the flowing Euphrates, our God was setting in motion a chain of revelations that have had lasting effect on the lives and thoughts of men. The dream of the image was but the first of a sequence of messages that have made the Divine Plan clear to God's servants from that day to this, and given assurance to all who would know what God is doing to bring to an end the reign of evil, and reconcile man to himself.

So in the morning the king did the expected thing; he summoned his professional interpreters of dreams to his presence to demand an interpretation of the dream. According to ch. 2.2 they constituted a formidable assortment; there were "the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans". They all came in and stood before the king.

Later on Daniel was to find himself at the head of this motley collection and it will be necessary presently to examine their credentials a little more closely. For the moment, however, suffice it to say that the "magicians" were exorcists of evil spirits, the "sorcerers" utterers of incantations which constrained the gods to do things for men which in the ordinary way they would have declined to do, the "astrologers" were occultists who professed to have communication with the

spirit world, and the "Chaldeans" a senior caste of wise men who specialised in both astrology and astronomy, issuing predictions something after the style of the present-day "Old Moore's Almanac". It was from this heterogeneous assemblage of the "wisdom of this world" that the king expected to obtain the interpretation of his dream.

Perhaps he did not really expect it. He started off by demanding that his advisers give him first a detailed account of the dream itself, and afterwards proceed to the explanation. The company was thrown into considerable confusion. The great king was certainly in a difficult mood this morning. They had come into the royal presence with their usual serene confidence and glibly recited the customary formula "O king, live for ever; tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation". That would be easy enough; it was merely a matter of applying the rules of the art and the king was generally perfectly satisfied.

On this occasion he was not going to be so easily satisfied. Perhaps he had an instinctive feeling that this would prove to be a most important dream and he ought to be sure that he got the correct explanation. Perhaps—for king Nebuchadnezzar was a long-headed man—he already suspected the veracity of his counsellors and determined to put them to the test. If they really did get their interpretations from the gods, who knew all things and saw into the depths of men's minds, then logically they should be able to get the details of the dream as well. Their ability to do the one would convince him of their authority to do the other.

Rather helplessly, they made their plea a second time; "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it". This was worldly wisdom in its extremity; faced with a problem the solution of which was vested only in the power of God they must needs admit defeat. Despite the royal anger and the threat of an immediate and ignominious death they could do nothing else but admit that there was none on earth who could meet the king's wishes; none but the gods, "whose dwelling is not with flesh".

So in the last resort these men had to confess that they were not messengers of the other world at all; they had no Divine authority and no other-worldly enlightenment. Presented with the demand that they prove their claims they stood before the king and the world admitted impostors, and in his rage and fury at having been tricked the king commanded that the entire fraternity be put to death,

This might be the right place in which to correct a common misconception to the effect that the king himself had forgotten his dream and wanted the wise men to recall it to his memory. The idea is based on Nebuchadnezzar's words in ch. 2.5 "The thing is gone from me," but the king did not mean that at all. He was talking to the wise men and after their first refusal to repeat to him the dream he used a phrase which was common to autocratic potentates asserting the irrevocable nature of their dictum. The full text is "*The thing is gone from me; if ye will not make known to me the dream with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made a dunghill*". The first sentence is equivalent to saying "The word, or decree, is gone out from me and will not be revoked". It was the fixity of his purpose to slay the wise men to which he was referring. From that moment their doom was sealed unless the dream was told. There is little doubt that the king remembered the dream all right; he wanted to find out if the wise men could discover it independently.

At this point Daniel really comes into the limelight. He is still only a youth, in his very early twenties, but already he has attracted the favourable notice of the king by his bearing, discretion and knowledge. Unfortunately that same learning has put him and his three companions into one of the categories involved in the arbitrary sentence of death just uttered by the king, so that Arioch the captain of the palace guard was soon on the spot to arrest the four youths in order to carry out the royal command. In response to Daniel's enquiry he unfolded the whole story, and Daniel knew immediately that the time had come for his life's work to begin. There was no hesitancy or uncertainty in his mind; there is no suggestion in the narrative that he went first to God asking why this calamity should fall upon them or pleading with him to save their lives. He knew, as it were instinctively, that God was in this thing and that he was the agent of God and must needs be ready for service. He went straight to the king and declared that, given a little time, he would tell to the king his dream and its interpretation.

It is not likely that he literally walked into the king's presence with his request. It was not usually so easy to obtain an audience with the great man, and vs. 26, describing the entry of Daniel with the interpretation, does not read as if the king had held previous personal conversation with him on the matter. It is more likely that the request was made, and the permission obtained, through a third party, probably the captain of the

palace guard, who was already intimately involved in the progress of this matter.

Daniel's next action is of close interest to us. He gathered his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and bade them join him in united prayer before God for the revelation of this secret. There is surely something very significant here. Daniel was already perfectly confident that God would reveal the truth to him; his request just made to the king shows that. Why then did he not make personal solitary supplication to God; why deem it necessary to bring his three friends into the prayer circle? It could not be lack of faith in God's willingness to listen to one voice, or his being more likely to grant the petition if made by four men simultaneously. Was it that Daniel realised a certain value in the practice of prayer that made the petitioner himself more receptive to the inflow of the Holy Spirit of God; that earnest and reverent prayer of itself tends to break down the barrier of materialism that always lies between us and God, and so makes our "receptiveness," so to speak, stronger and more vital? Did he, then, following out the implications of that principle, realise that the greater degree of solemnity and urgency induced by the fact of a number praying together, and the feeling of joint-participation, itself constituted a further factor bringing his own spirit still more in tune with the Divine Spirit? The clarity of the message he expected to receive from God must obviously depend upon the degree to which he himself was able to shake off the trammels of earthly-mindedness and enter into the "secret place of the Most High". That must surely have been helped in no small degree by the fact of corporate prayer in unison together, and so the co-operation of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah was a definite factor in Daniel's attainment of a mind so opened to the Holy Spirit that he could clearly understand the details of the interpretation he was presently to repeat to king Nebuchadnezzar.

This is an important truth for us too. Some Christians quite sincerely "see nothing in prayer meetings". Yet those who consistently conduct or attend such meetings almost invariably testify to real spiritual benefit received. It may well be that failure to engage in frequent corporate prayer in the understanding and expectation that each individual thus participating will thereby be brought into closer fellowship with God has resulted in a loss the magnitude of which cannot easily be appraised.

It was now Daniel's turn to dream, "*Then was*

the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision" (2.19). The details of the dream are not related, but it is evident that they were sufficiently explicit to give Daniel the knowledge he desired. But there was no immediate running off to the king with the answer, even though the threat of death was still hanging over his head. There was something much more important to be done first. He solemnly and reverently returned thanks to God. *It is a wonderful prayer, this psalm of praise whereby Daniel ascribed all might and power to the giver of the revelation. "He changeth times and seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings; and revealeth the deep and secret things"*. Only after he had thus acknowledged the source of his enlightenment did he proceed to the palace to impart the information for which the great man was eagerly waiting.

It is related of that great Christian statesman of a past century, Queen Victoria's Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, that whilst engaged in his private devotions on one occasion he received an imperious and urgent summons to the sovereign's presence. He continued in prayer as if nothing had occurred and waited on the Queen an hour later. Her Majesty was highly aggrieved at being kept waiting and demanded an explanation. "Madam, I was engaged in audience with the King of Kings" replied the old man, and the Queen, it is said, bowed her head in acknowledgment.

Such a story is hardly likely to be re-enacted in this generation, but good it is to take heed of these examples of godly men who placed God first in all their affairs even to the extent of risking the displeasure of some earthly potentate.

Thus it came about that a probably greatly relieved captain of the palace guard came bustling into the royal presence with the welcome news that he had ready a man who would comply with the king's conditions and give the interpretation of the dream. Arioch almost certainly would be feeling that this was a most fortunate ending to the whole episode; the character of his royal master was so unpredictable that it was quite on the cards he himself might, later on, be blamed for the too literal execution of the command; possibly, too, the friends of the condemned men would find some way, eventually, of taking their revenge on the servant where they had small chance of doing so on the master. In the meantime he did his best to divert a little of the credit to himself; "I have found a man of the captives of Judah" he told the king "who can make known to the king the interpretation". He must himself have had confidence in Daniel's ability,

to have risked his own reputation in so confident a statement. Good it is for any of us if the unbelievers among whom our daily lives are spent come to have confidence in the veracity of our words and soberness of our judgment even though they will not accept and share our beliefs. Quite evidently Arioch knew Daniel well enough implicitly to accept as true his statement that he could give the king the interpretation. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay" counsels the Apostle; this is an ideal we all do well to set before ourselves.

Now brought into the king's presence, Daniel hastened to disclaim any superior wisdom inherent in himself. "Art thou able to declare the dream, and make known the interpretation?" demanded the great man. The youth before him, in a speech which is a model of restraint and dignity, first reminded him that the soothsayers, the astrologers, the wise men of Babylon, with all the boasted powers of the gods behind them, had been quite unable to interpret the dream. Then with a modesty which must have sounded strange in that Babylonian court, he proceeded to disown any claim to superior wisdom of his own in the matter. But there is a God in heaven, he went on, and that God is directly interested in the affairs of this empire of Babylon, and wields overall control of its destinies, and in his inscrutable wisdom has now intervened to instruct thee, King Nebuchadnezzar, what shall befall this empire in the last days. It was a masterly approach; no wonder the king was interested; and the quiet ring of authority in the voice of this youngster could not but have impressed a man who himself knew what authority meant.

So Daniel told the dream, and as he recounted the details his listener knew that he was speaking the truth. This young man before him could only have obtained this knowledge from the God he worshipped. The king had revealed to no one his dream and it could have come to Daniel from no other source than above. He settled himself more comfortably on his throne to hear the explanation.

That explanation is common knowledge to every Christian student of prophetic matters in these days; to the king it was completely new. The head of gold pictured he himself and his empire, ruling over the nations and supreme over all. The empire of Babylon was founded long before the days of Abraham and suffered many vicissitudes and disasters through intervening years, but it was Nebuchadnezzar who raised it to the zenith of power and extended the city of Babylon to its widest extent. We speak of Baby-

lon as the first "universal" empire; the expression is true only in a limited sense in that Babylon exercised sovereignty only over the lands of the Middle East, the Bible lands. The far extent of the wider world was only dimly known to the Babylonians and no thought of suzerainty over the great civilisations that then existed in China, North-west India and Southern Arabia ever entered their heads. Trade with all those lands was transacted by Babylon but Nebuchadnezzar's armies never pursued their career of conquest to such places. Greece and Rome both flourished in the days of Nebuchadnezzar but neither were ever subject to him. The "head of gold" ruled over the peoples known to the Old Testament and that was all that was intended.

This empire must one day come to an end. How long it was to endure Daniel did not say and it is certain that he did not at that time know, but one day it would fall and be superseded by another empire, one symbolised by silver. We know that empire to be that of Persia; Daniel lived to see that part of the prophecy come to pass. He himself eventually served the kings of Persia. In point of fact the "head of gold" was destined to survive only twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar himself. Cyrus the Persian in 538 B.C. captured Babylon and added it to the rapidly growing Persian empire. Then in 332 B.C. Alexander the Great of Greece in turn overthrew the power of Persia and the copper part of the image took the centre of the stage. Finally in 66 B.C. Greece fell before the might of the iron kingdom, Rome, and potential world domination left the Middle East and settled in Western Europe, there to remain until the "Time of the End".

Thus Daniel led up to the climax of the dream, the coming of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. These four empires, all built by fallible men, were destined each to have its day and then pass away. The fifth kingdom, built not by man but by God, shall endure for ever. After it has broken down and ground to pieces every vestige of the earlier empires it will extend its sway until all peoples everywhere shall acknowledge its power and live contentedly under its jurisdiction. God had admittedly given the kingdoms of the world and their subjects into the hands of one great king after another but all this was only for a limited time. A day is to dawn when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

There had been many earlier prophets to speak of the glories of "that day," when God turns to

speak peace to the nations and effect the reconciliation to himself of "whosoever will"; when the graves open to yield up their dead and the whole human race be called to walk the "highway of holiness" to perfection of life. Daniel was the first to relate this blessed time to the earthly kingdoms of history, to give a sequence whereby the "watchers" and the students might place it in connection with history as it is known. Wherefore we in our day, beholding with our own eyes the progressive collapsing and inevitable end of the present development of the feet of iron and clay, the last vestiges of that political system which once was Rome, have this confidence and evidence that the days of the Kingdom are at hand and cannot be much longer delayed.

These words had the ring of truth, and an astute man like Nebuchadnezzar could not fail to realise the fact. We are told that he fell down and worshipped Daniel—probably much to the surprise of his assembled Court. Of course he did it in symbol of homage and reverence to the God whom Daniel represented. The king's conversation was sudden but whole-hearted, like most of his actions. "Your God is a God of gods and a lord of kings" he declared "and a revealer of secrets". In those few words he elevated Daniel's God, not to a position of absolute pre-eminence over all the gods of Babylon, as is often mistakenly supposed, but to a position of equality with them. "Your God is a God of gods"—that is, a God worthy to be a consort of gods. There is no evidence that Nebuchadnezzar had lost his faith in his own gods, only in the wise men who claimed to represent them. In fact, the extant inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar show without a doubt that he was faithful to Marduk the god of Babylon for at least the greater portion of his life; but here he evidently acknowledged the power of Daniel's God and also the integrity of Daniel's credentials as a representative of that God. In token of that recognition he bestowed high honour upon the man who had interpreted his dream.

Daniel was made a chief ruler in affairs of State; his three companions also were promoted to high office. Honour and wealth were at their command, the plaudits and flatteries of men, and every attraction the luxurious world of Babylon had to offer. The time had now come when the value of the earlier training and self-discipline to which these young men had been subjected was to be put to the test.

To be continued

The Story of Nehemiah

*Lessons from the life of a
stalwart man of God*

D. Nadal

2. Building the Wall

When Nehemiah reached God's ancient and holy city, he immediately commenced to prepare for the practical restoration of the worship of God. In the state in which he found it, the city with its walls in ruins was the laughing stock of the neighbouring peoples. So he set out by night to examine the walls and fearlessly discover personally how great the task was that lay before him. Afterwards he spoke frankly to his fellow Jews and invited their co-operation. The walls of Jerusalem could never have been built in fifty-two days without comradeship and determination. It needed undaunted courage and willingness to serve the Lord shoulder to shoulder.

The men whom he approached to help him were equally sensible in their reply to Nehemiah. They might have been jealous of this outsider who had so recently arrived from an alien country. He had come under the protection and with the authority of the monarch who oppressed Israel. They could have felt insulted by his suggestion to restore the city walls, which was a work which they should have already done. They might have doubted the integrity of Nehemiah's intentions and believed his motives to be false. Instead they recognised that the good hand of God was upon this new governor of Jerusalem and they rose up willingly to support him. They realised that their national destiny was at stake, and if the glories of Israel's former days were to be restored, here at last was the opportunity for which they had been looking. They accepted Nehemiah on trust, submitted to his plan for rebuilding the walls and followed him as their leader.

These memoirs of a great statesman give to us some very useful lessons for the Christian life. We too must face the fact that spiritual Zion is not all that it should be. During the past fifty years, materialism, social revolution, the increase of natural pleasure and material advantages for everyone, have tended to make life easier for the Christian Church. We become apathetic in days of comparative peace and security. We must make a genuine examination of that part of the wall of the New Jerusalem that has been entrusted to our care to see if there is not a great deal of repair work needed to strengthen the bulwarks of our faith. Have we over the past years been doing all we can in the Lord's service? Are we

content with the progress we have made? Much of the walls of the Holy City are like they were when Nehemiah first arrived from Shushan . . . in utter ruins. And we have no need to look beyond the boundaries of our own movement to see those conditions.

The sense of oneness exhibited by the Jews in our story sets twentieth century Christians a lesson worthy of imitation. It is essential to our service for the Lord that we should willingly co-operate with our fellows in the Christian way. Firstly there are those in our own fellowship. Our natural differences and fleshly impediments are likely to hinder our unity in serving the Lord. The Devil is quick to notice this and to magnify it out of all proportion.

There is opportunity for all true servants of God in this work, just as there was in Nehemiah's day, the elder, the scribe, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the ruler and the artisan. They all found a place along the walls, doing their share of the work, faithfully endeavouring to do that which had been put into their hands by the Lord. This does not mean that the baker, the perfumer, the ruler of the city all suddenly became professional bricklayers. Nor did they all build the same piece of wall, in fact many of them built that portion which was just outside their own house.

So it is with Christians today. All, whatever their religious affiliation, in whatever church or group God has pleased to call them, if accepting Jesus as their Saviour may share the great work of building Zion. It is up to us all to extend the willing and loving hand of fellowship and comradeship, for all are one in Christ Jesus. This will not cause every child of God to flock into the same church or other place of worship. But there is a common union in Christ which will give us the desire to work together rather than work against other Christian people. May we say with God's people of old . . . "*Let us rise up and build*".

But Nehemiah's difficulties and troubles were not over when once the great work had begun. In fact that is just where the problems seem to have commenced. Had he not been possessed of a very wonderful faith and been a man who constantly resorted to prayer, there can be no doubt

that this remarkable task would never have been completed. Human strength and ingenuity alone would have been quite inadequate to withstand the opposition of the Adversary of God.

At first their enemies laughed contemptuously and ridiculed the effort which the Jews made to rebuild their city. They received the firm rebuke from the faithful Nehemiah in these words . . .
"The God of heaven, he will prosper us ; therefore we his servants will arise and build : but ye

have no portion nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem". (Nehemiah 2. 19, 20.) So the wall was built in spite of the sneers of Sanballat and Tobiah, and in answer to further gibes and sarcasm Nehemiah besought the Lord in prayer and the builders worked so much the harder. The Samaritans and Ammonites were very angry and dismayed by this effect of their unkind remarks and determined to spoil the work by other means.

To be continued

REDEEMING THE TIME

A reprint from the
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We often treat our invaluable time as if it were of little account. Our friends demand it from us and we freely bestow it upon them as though we had an inexhaustible supply. Sometimes, in a restless and idle mood, we find that time drags wearily and aimlessly along ; on other occasions, though we may be equally inactive and without purpose, time seems to fly past unheeded. But we cannot waste nor misuse it without serious loss and injury to ourselves. Our life is but a vapour, that appeareth for a while, and then vanishes away (James 4. 14). How important, therefore, that we use time well, for the day will come when the true value of the present life will be seen in all its importance.

Our life belongs to God, and should be entirely consecrated to His service. We are stewards, not only of our talents and our possessions, but also of our time. We are called to choose those things with which we occupy ourselves with the purpose of redeeming the time, avoiding worldly amusements, unavailing friendships, or any worthless pursuits that unsettle the mind and would swallow up this valuable asset with which we are entrusted. This does not mean, however, that every moment of the day must be crammed with ceaseless exertion, and that life must become a round of urgent business and pressing engagements.

Christians can too easily become so absorbed in Church work that incessant activities crowd every available moment of their time, whether at work, or travelling, or at home. Unconsciously we may busy ourselves in human effort, in great and wonderful work, and lose touch and sight of the living realities of the spiritual life. The human heart readily flies to tangible work to provide some form of satisfaction, and thereby misses the greatest satisfaction of all in the love, joy and peace which pass all understanding. That which usurps time that should be consecrated to personal devotion and meditation becomes an

enemy, whether it be a religious work or merely worldly pleasure. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? There is nothing we can afford to barter for this. The Master will commend only that servant who has done his bidding. His other efforts, however well-intentioned, are useless, if he has not carried out the express command of his Lord. Many shall say in that day, "*Have we not done many wonderful works in thy name ?*" and he will answer, "*I never knew you*".

Our great concern is our individual salvation. We may be tampering with other people's affairs and neglecting our own. Upon the proper attention to our own business depends our ability to be useful to others, either in religion or any other sphere of life. We can persuade ourselves that we are accomplishing a good work for the Lord and for our fellow brethren when we are really hindering both ourselves and them. We can be burdened with an anxiety to save others, and yet not have yielded ourselves to the Lord's instructions regarding our own salvation.

Because of the importance of this personal aspect of our life with God, and our tendency to get into a rut and stay there, He removes us from our labours and we are compelled to remain outwardly idle, that our inward spiritual contacts with God may be renewed and developed. Forty long years in the desert, to the learned mind of Moses, skilled in all the arts of the Egyptians, must have seemed a lifetime wasted. But it was a necessary preparation for a greater work in that very same wilderness in later years. We see similar periods in the lives of David, Elijah and others. Such a wilderness experience was part of Paul's discipline, when he conferred not with flesh and blood but went into Arabia to prepare for the work to which God had called him ; even as our Lord Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness before he began his ministry.

We may find this training monotonous, and perhaps feel how unavailing it all is. It does not gain the applause of others, often not even their recognition. It is a more arduous task and brings us less into the limelight than the man-made problems of Church government. It is much less conspicuous than engaging in some struggle for the justification or supremacy of a particular cult, or any other such movement of party or sect. But it is actually the most important feature of all our efforts, and it is in this process that we discover the lasting peace and joy which we seek. Let the Lord choose the way, and then let us maintain it at all costs, leaving the results with Him. It may lead to disappointment, our efforts may appear fruitless, and defeat may continually dog our steps, but we must remember such are His methods to train us.

Devotion, submission, and patience are the only offerings we can make to God when active and urgent duties are cut off. Yet these are the

acceptable gifts without which all other service is valueless. The meek spirit which patiently bears disappointment, irritation, reproach and contradiction, is using time in its most profitable sense and making growth in grace much more rapidly than the many who are more actively employed. Neither is the time lost which we are trying to use profitably, when we have accepted and borne with forbearance and gentleness and unwelcome and inevitable intrusion which has interrupted all our well-prepared plans. However important our occupation, however praiseworthy our objective, greater and more praiseworthy is the control we have gained over our own spirit, and much more profitably have we redeemed the time. For the great end and objective of every moment of our fleeting days, though it be but here a little and there a little, precept upon precept, line upon line, is to transform us by the renewing of our minds into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

REDEMPTION AND REDEMPTION'S DAY

T. Holmes

A doctrinal discourse

Just as a ray of sunlight, passed through a triangular glass prism, comes out on the other side split up into a number of chromatic colours, so the great purposes of God, passing through the Spirit-illuminated mind of Paul, come out split up into a wide range of inter-related themes, each of which has its own special terms and phrases to describe it. The great design is vast, embracing heaven and earth; angels and men; good and evil; holiness and sin; time and eternity.

This great array of things and principles, some finite, some infinite; some relative, some absolute, is far too comprehensive for man to grasp with ease. Even the cleansing of the earth from sin is a project much too deep for the earth-bound mind of man to comprehend without aid from God.

Living in an environment of sin, and with emotions of sin fighting against his better self, even the Christian finds it difficult to understand the real revolting nature of sin as it is seen from the standpoint of pure holiness. Even the deliverance from sin which the Christian enjoys is only a deliverance in part—he still finds the earth-bound senses warring against the spirit of his new mind, and realises at times that he cannot always do as he would. It is also a task too big for him

(even if he does close his eyes for a moment—or for many moments) to realise what it will really mean to have a sin-cleansed earth, with every countenance radiating perfect health and perfect love to God and man. The scenes of sin and sounds of woe are too prevalent around him today to allow the contrast to be drawn sharply enough between the perfections of that future day and the sinfulness of this. Thus because of frailties in himself and sinfulness in the unbelieving world around, the Christian cannot assess, at its proper value what the present and future phases of "Redemption through His Blood" really means.

At best we see things but darkly—as in a brassen mirror, in which the details are indistinct even though the outline may be clear. It is exactly thus with the opening section of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians. So far as the earthly phase of the promised universal redemption is concerned Paul shows it to us through the mirror of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. He has that structure, with its hidden meanings and ceremonies, in his mind as he sets forth the tremendous thoughts of the cleansing from sin, and the full redemption then to be realised when the appointed day has come.

Paul's mind was saturated through and through with the teachings and influences of Mosaic and prophetic days, and though he was the chosen vessel to proclaim the deeper things of God the thoughts he was inspired to make known were mainly cast in the ancient mould of Tabernacle days. Both training and experience had made the Tabernacle to him the mirror of "the Truth". Sin and sacrifice were the main features of his nation's religious polity, which met him at every turn.

When the great change came into his own intensive life on the Damascus way, these same realities of sin and sacrifice came over into his Christian outlook and philosophy, but were thenceforth linked up to higher things. Ugly, repulsive, rebellious and forbidding as sin had been in his earlier days, it became more intensely wicked than before, making the need for an expiatory sacrifice more imperative than hitherto.

Always, and in all places, from the first new-fledged labours in the oldest city of the world (Acts 9, 20-22.) through all his chequered services and wanderings he wrote and spoke of "Redemption through the blood of Christ". In the first letter from his pen we read "*God appointed us . . . unto the obtaining of salvation (redemption) through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us . . .*" (1 Thess. 5.9). In Corinthians he says, "*Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf. . . .*" In his letter to the Romans he reaches truly great heights when he writes "*. . . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith by his blood . . .*" (Romans 3, 23-25). Such are the great words written by Paul in his pre-prison days. Space does not permit us to pile quotation upon quotation from all these epistles, but every student knows they are there.

This scarlet strand woven into his Ephesian letter is composed of the same two related threads—Forgiveness (or cleansing from sin)—and inheritance for the Saints in present days; and "Redemption," an inheritance for future years. They are the same thoughts which belonged to Tabernacle days, but now transferred to higher things. There was no other reminder or definer of sin, except the Law—nor was there any mode of cleansing from sin, except by sacrifice. That ancient system of Mosaic days out-crops at several points in familiar words and phrases in Ephesians which, when strung together form a revealing background to the enunciation of eternal things which stretch from those far-distant

times when God first laid out His Plans, to the still future days when those plans will be complete. Here are the outcropping layers of thought, to which we refer—"He chose us in Him;" "that we should be holy and without blemish before Him;" "redemption through His blood" "forgiveness of sins;" sealed with the Holy Spirit;" and "the redemption of God's own possession" (R.V.). Every phrase and word has its counterpart in the Tabernacle privileges of the Aaronic priest, the possession of which gave him right of entrance into the typical "heavenly places" of his system and his day.

Let us briefly review some of these correspondences. First, let reference be made to the remarkable phrase of verse 14, as it stands in the Greek text. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is an earnest of our inheritance until "the redemption of the possession" (see the Diaglott word-for-word text for this shortened phrase). What does this mean? Exposition of this point has always been laboured and difficult, most expositors believing that Paul left it as an unfinished phrase—an ellipsis, as so many of them call it.

It is not an unfinished phrase, but a perfect and complete phrase, if we can take Paul's own standpoint when explaining it. The sense of "possession" that ran throughout all Israelitish days, and all Israelitish things, and to which all her past and future experiences had been directed (or have yet to be directed), were repeatedly expressed in a two-fold (or double-sided) phrase, "I will be yours, and ye shall be Mine". "I will be your God, and ye shall be My people". The great intention always was that Israel should "possess" her God, and that God should "possess" His people—"Mine" and "Thine" in mutual possession. This great "possessive" thought had its primal expression in God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 17, 7) "*. . . I will establish my Covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee . . . to be a God unto them*". It took still more definite shape in Lev. 26, 12, "*. . . I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be My people*". Many times Moses reminded Israel, in his exhortations and songs, that Jehovah was their God, and that they were His people. Passing to the time of their return, Ezekiel repeats the double-phrase in Chapters 11, 20, 34, 28, 36, 28, and 37, 27, and assures the people that henceforth the possession shall become a reality—exactly as it is pictured in no less a place than Rev. 21, 3. As the Holy City settles down to earth to end the long night of sin and estrangement in Israel, a voice from the Divine

throne assures all in the four-square city of God that "they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God." Here the hopes of long ages past reach their complete realisation, and thenceforth Israel "possesses" her God and God "possesses" his people.

This is the great thought that Paul weaves into his argument—a golden thread that links Abraham's distant day with the great future Day of God.

For the time being that "possession" has been suspended by reason of Israel's blindness and hardness of heart. When God's time came to move on and up to higher things—the system of "better" things—Israel was unready and unwilling to leave the beggarly elements (the poor rudiments) of the old days. She preferred to continue under her old covenant, with the consequence that God refused thenceforth to accept her carnal sacrifices, and she was left to suffer the penalties of her broken law, without any "kaphar" or "propitiatory covering" as theretofore. All that that old covenant can now do for her is to remind her of her sin, and hold her in the way of punishment. She is a captive to a useless arrangement, from which she has no means of getting free by her own endeavours. She is wedded to a system which cannot confer Divine blessing, but which loads her life and experiences only with sufferings and maledictions.

But though Israel is now accounted an enemy, for the Church's sake, she is still beloved for her fathers' sakes, and God proposes to redeem her from all her disabilities and distresses. To that end a "day of redemption" has been provided for. In that day she will regain her "possession" in God, and in turn become again God's "possession". Paul refers to this day when he tells his brethren that they had been sealed with the Holy Spirit, "unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4, 30). Also our Lord refers to this when He said, "when ye see these things begin to come to pass, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21, 28).

The Prophet Isaiah also tells of this day: "The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of My redeemed is come" (Isa. 63, 4). Thus the "redemption of the possession" means the setting free from its ancient bondage of the people to whom God had said, "I will be yours," and "Ye shall be Mine". God's inheritance in Israel will be set free from its encumbrances, and He will then "possess" and "be possessed".

The relationship of the Church of the First-born (who have the first-fruits of the Spirit as a

pledge-penny of a full inheritance) to the "people of the redemption" is akin to that of the ancient priesthood in Israel, but on a higher level. That is exactly the thought suggested when Paul says God had "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". In these words he draws a comparison with Israel's tabernacle reared up (as it were) "end-on" with its Most Holy Place in Heaven, where God's glorious presence actually is, and with its Holy Place set far above earthly things. Those who are in Christ—those who are begotten, anointed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit—have the related but loftier privilege accorded to Aaron and his sons, who after their anointing were permitted to enter the Holy Place, and walk by the holy light, and feed on the holy bread. Those in Christ—in the Anointed—are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," and enjoy holy light and feed on holy food. And like Aaron and his sons, they were "chosen" of God, to become joint-heirs with His well-beloved Son. All such have received as a first instalment of the "Redemption" the forgiveness of their sins.

This places the Church of the First-born on a parallel with the House of Aaron, at that stage on their Atonement Day, when the blood of the bullock had been applied, as a propitiatory covering for their sin, when they were then accounted clean and free from sin. The "nation" had to wait a little longer, till the "Lord's Goat" had been slain, and its blood presented in the Most Holy Place.

So with the "people of the possession"—Israel has to wait a little longer yet, till all the sacrificing is complete, and the great High Priest appears a second time without sin—without any more sacrificing for sin—"unto salvation" or redemption.

Thus the linking together of these separated phrases (even though set amidst such tremendous lofty thoughts regarding God's eternal purposes, bridging as they do the vast stretch of time from eternal ages past, to distant ages yet to come), reveals to our minds the Hebrew mould in which Paul's thoughts were cast. Paul sets two institutions of God in parallel, and illustrates the greater invisible institution by a lowlier visible organisation.

As God predestinated Aaron and his house to the Priesthood before calling them to their sacred office, so God, when planning His purposes, predestinated the entire Christ. As Aaron and his house received the anointing with the holy oil, so the entire Christ have received the anointing with the Holy Spirit. Thus, the typical anointed and

the real anointed were predestinated and set apart.

As the anointed in Israel had access to hidden blessings in a holy (or heavenly) place so the anointed in Christ have access to "all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies". As the anointed in Israel were first to experience ceremonial forgiveness of sins, so also the anointed in Christ are first to experience real forgiveness of sins, and as redemption of the "possession" came in Israel with the end of the Atonement Day, so again, the full redemption of the "possession" will come with the close of a greater and better Atonement Day.

What a wonderful mind the Apostle Paul surely had! How easily in his maturer days he comprehended the deep things of God, and how sublimely he set them out for his brethren of a later day, so that we may understand more of the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of God's great love and of His great Plan, stretching from the eternities past into eternal years to come, revealing the cleansing and restoring powers of grace Divine as it overcomes and eradicates the sins of men, yet cast into the Divinely appointed mould of Israel's tabernacling days, when priest and people, with blood of bulls and goats were used to represent the "better things."

But let us pause to ask ourselves if it could possibly have been otherwise, when everything in Mosaic days was made and instituted according to a pattern shown to Moses in the holy mount. The Heavenly Architect of the great Divine Plan accorded to Moses a vision of those plans, delineated and drafted in the shape and pattern of a tabernacle, and its furnishings, with express command to copy it in every detail and particular. If, then, Divine wisdom compressed and crystallised eternal Truth and an eternal plan into the lines, angles and measurements of a curtained court, and a skin-covered tent; into the shapes of altars, a table and a candlestick; into the form of a mercy-seat, crowned with its open-winged cherubim, and into the robes and ministries of anointed priests, need we wonder when we behold the reverse procedure employed, and when we find Tabernacle and Priesthood becoming the shadowy semblance of eternal truth again! Is there really any ground for marvelling when the Holy Spirit of truth draws forth, and expands those same eternal truths from the Tabernacle and its furnishings, which it once compressed and incorporated into that Tabernacle?

There is indeed no ground for marvelling when Paul links those great eternal truths, as they are made to develop and expand before his Spirit-illuminated mind, with the outlines of the carefully and precisely made copies (the Tabernacle, etc.), of the pattern showed to Moses in the holy mount.

There is something here of supreme importance to think about. We cannot successfully put asunder that which God has joined together! If God has been graciously pleased to compress and concentrate the redemptive features of His Plan into the shape of a Tabernacle, and has illustrated what He purposes "in redemption" to do, by its ceremonies and services, no student of the Divine Word can hope successfully to comprehend the full extent of that redemptive Plan without frequent and continued reference to that Tabernacle, and its services.

No student can progress in the Truth except by aligning his doctrine with God's designs in that structure built in conformity with His own original "Pattern"!

Do these seem strong words? Paul's own method in expressing these deep eternal truths is their justification and warranty. On his methods we cannot hope to improve.

Let us then, dear brethren in the Lord, apply ourselves more diligently in days to come to these sacred Oracles of God, for in them we have in very deed the way of life and Truth. And let us not neglect those old shadows of the Truth, thinking we need them not because we have access to the newer and better realities of this Age, and because our calling is to heavenly things. God has blended the realities into the shadows—to get them down to our human consciousness—and none may separate what God has joined without injury to his faith!

This principle of the Lord's protection of His people so strongly emphasised in the Book of Acts has been experienced by the Church all down the age. This protection is absolute in respect of our spiritual interests and in respect of the purpose of God with regard to the witness of the Church. The Lord's people are still as lambs in the midst of wolves. In ourselves we are no match whatever for the forces arrayed against us in the world, but greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us. Though absolute in respect of our spiritual interests, this protection, however, is only relative in respect of our temporal life. We are immortal only till our work is done.

In the Garden

A study in probabilities

On a fateful night nearly two thousand years ago, an observer in the valley of the Kidron might have seen a little procession making its way by the fitful light of lanterns down the rocky descent to the stream, then up the other side toward the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Between that Mount and the city there lay a grove of olive trees, the Garden of Gethsemane, and before very long the handful of men which had set out from the upper room was winding its way between the trees to the Master's favourite spot.

The high lights of the story are familiar to all, but there are shadows in the background which have not featured so much in our meditations, and it may be well at this time to dwell awhile upon some of these fleeting figures which seem to be shrouded by the darkness which lay over that garden that night. The behaviour of the disciples has often engrossed attention. What about the other more shadowy figures who were also there?

Perhaps the most interesting of these is that of the young man, having a linen cloth cast about his body, and who, when seized by the rabble, left his linen cloth in their hands and fled naked. Who was he? What was he doing there? Why is the story recorded in the Gospel of Mark, and in that Gospel alone?

He was not one of the disciples. That is clear from the account in Mark 14, 50-52. *"They all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked"*. The disciples, all of them, had left their Master before this incident occurred, so he could not have been one of them. And at this point another question may well come to mind. Who heard and recorded the Master's fervent prayers? Not the disciples, for they were all asleep. Three times did He pray, and three times did find them asleep, a sleep from which they were apparently awakened only by the advent of the armed host which had come to take Jesus prisoner. The conclusion seems irresistible that someone else was in the garden that night, someone inspired by a love and devotion for Jesus of an order that led him to take a precaution that not one of the Lord's disciples had thought of taking.

In Palestine, as in most tropical countries, although the days are hot, the nights are bitterly

cold—often approaching freezing point. No man would go abroad at night clad solely in a linen cloth without some very pressing reason. And the reason is an obvious one. That young man entered Gethsemane that night expecting to be in danger of capture and determined to avoid capture. He adopted a ruse which is an old one in many parts of the world. He greased his body all over, and then enveloped himself in an easily shed garment—the "linen cloth" mentioned was the burial garment or "winding sheet" in which bodies were laid in the grave—so that when grasped by hostile hands he could easily wriggle out of the garment and, the hands of his would-be captors being quite unable to hold fast his well-greased body, be able to make his escape.

Who then, outside the circle of the twelve, could have foreseen the coming tragedy? Even the disciples only half believed the Master's words about the imminence of His arrest and death. They would certainly have never slept had they had any idea of the events which were about to take place. It seems, then, that this "young man" might well have been one who, not belonging to the twelve, and therefore not at the Last Supper, followed the little band at a distance, and hiding in the trees, all eyes and all ears, alone heard those never-to-be-forgotten words. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee. . . . Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14, 36).

The word rendered "young man" in this verse is one which is best rendered by our colloquial "boy" or "lad". It almost certainly denotes a youth in his teens. Was there such a youth in the following of the Master?

If tradition be true, Jesus had only just come from the house where lived such an one. Early Christian testimony says that the "upper room" in which the Last Supper was held was in the house of a certain Mary, the same house which afterwards became the centre of the first Jerusalem Christian Church, and where many were gathered together in prayer when Peter had been thrown into prison by Herod (Acts 12, 12). This Mary had a son, John Mark, who at the time of the Lord's ministry was about fourteen years of age. In after years he accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journeys as a personal attendant, and later became profitable to Paul for the work of the ministry (II Tim. 4, 11, Phil. 24).

He worked with Barnabas, who was his uncle, and eventually was privileged to write the first of the four Gospels to see the light of day—the Gospel according to Mark. Early Christian historians say that he introduced Christianity into Egypt, founded the Church of Alexandria, and ended his life as a martyr three years after Paul had sealed his own testimony with his blood on the Appian Way outside Rome.

There is more than one hint in the Gospel stories of a lad who hovered on the fringe of the crowd surrounding the Master, drinking in all that his hero said, watching with adoring eyes all that He did, storing up with receptive memory of youth the vivid detail that emerges so freshly and clearly in the second Gospel. It is a solemn thing to realise that perhaps, under the providence of the Holy Spirit, we owe our knowledge of that sublime scene in the garden, with all that it has meant to us in understanding of the reality of our Lord's sacrifice, to the quick-witted devotion of a fourteen-year-old boy. Realising that something terrible was going to occur, perhaps boyishly contemptuous of the older men's failure to realise the danger threatening their Master, he waited his time and left his home in the wake of that mournful little party. Then, when the worst had happened and the Master, alone, was being taken to the High Priest, the boy would be running hard down the valley and across the River Kidron to his home, there to tell his tragic news to the little knot of faithful women.

It is Luke who tells the story of the angel who came from heaven to strengthen the Master in His hour of trial. It is a strange little interlude. "*And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him*" (Luke 22, 43). Luke does not say that anyone apart from Jesus saw the angel; the words rather denote that no one else did see him. Several of the best manuscripts omit this and the following verse; nevertheless, there are reasons for thinking that both verses form a genuine part of Luke's gospel. The 44th verse reads: "*And being in an agony he prayed the more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground*". This verse contains four words such as a medical man would be likely to use, and there is presumptive evidence that the verses were actually written by Luke.

Did an angel really come from heaven to comfort and sustain our Lord? And if He alone saw the angel how could anyone else ever know about it, except the fact were revealed by Divine inspiration.

It is perhaps likely that the lone watcher in the

trees, gazing intently at our Lord's countenance in His hour of distress, saw the intense agony of mind displayed upon those loved features give place to a wondrous calm, a look of steadfast peace. That change must have taken place in the outward appearance of Jesus as His communion with His Father brought the rest and confidence of faith which His soul sought. The inward conflict was over, and He knew that He could go through the ordeal to the end in the knowledge of His Father's care and strength. To the watching one that wonderful change in the Lord's outward demeanour could mean only one thing; an angel from heaven, invisible to other sight, had appeared to Him for strength and encouragement.

Who shall say that the expression is not a true one? Surely the Holy Spirit of God was sent to that garden that night, bearing anew the strength-inspiring message, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". Surely God's messenger did come to Jesus and in the strength of that revelation He went forth calmly to suffering and to death.

Luke was not a disciple at that time. He gained all his knowledge of Jesus' life from others—much of it from the women. The disciples, asleep in the garden, could not have told him of this incident. He probably had it from the women; and they, in turn, from the young watcher who, having seen and heard all, left his garment in the hands of the guard and fled naked.

As, in the Lord's providence, Jerusalem had had a quiet time for the Church to grow and develop before persecution was allowed, so was it with the work in Judea and Samaria. In Acts 9. 31 we read "Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." This same principle of protection, is apparent in connection with the world-wide witness as illustrated in Paul's experiences. The bridge-head for the campaign in Europe was at Philippi and there on the threshold of this new continental expansion, the Lord demonstrated by the earthquake deliverance from prison, accompanied by the conversion of the jailer and his household, how completely He was master of the situation. Perhaps no servant of the Lord had so many vicissitudes as the Apostle Paul, but the Lord always extended to him grace sufficient. As we noted earlier, after a disappointing experience at Athens he went on to Corinth and for his encouragement the Lord appeared to him in a vision, assuring him of his protection.

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

F. Cheal

A survey of the
power of God

A fascinating series of articles, written by Sir Harold Spencer Jones, F.R.S., the late Astronomer Royal, has recently appeared in a London evening newspaper. In them the late Astronomer Royal made a survey of the whole panorama of the heavens; and the paper chosen for this description of the mysteries of space was appropriately the "Star". The writer tells us that in our galaxy, which is bounded by the Milky Way, there are a hundred thousand million stars, each of them equal to, or of much greater dimensions than, our own sun. The nearest star to us is at a distance of twenty-five million million miles, or, in the convenient language used to express stellar distances, four light years away. When it is considered that the extreme dimension of our Milky Way system is 100,000 light years, the attempt to express this distance in millions of miles would make incomprehensible reading. Moreover, the once supposedly "fixed stars" which compose our system are all moving round the galaxy at immense speeds, our own sun, carrying her family of planets with her, travelling round at the speed of 160 miles every second; and even at that speed it takes 225 million years to go round the galaxy. So much for our own system, but outside and beyond this are other galaxies, "island universes," of about the same dimensions and of the same spiral pattern as our own. The 100 inch telescope of the Mount Wilson Observatory has revealed about 100 million of these island universes, at an average distance apart of a million light years. These galaxies, in their turn, have their own speed of from 200 to 300 miles per second. "The 200 inch telescope," says Sir Harold, "can probe space to a distance of two million light years but cannot plumb it to its depths. It does not seem that with the largest and most powerful telescopes we are approaching the limits of the Universe. We do not know whether the Universe is finite or infinite in extent". Descending from this picture of the infinitely great, which the Astronomer Royal has given us, we reach the infinitely small; and the physicist assures us that one ounce of water contains one quadrillion of molecules (a million million times a million million), each of which is made up of three atoms, and that each of these in turn contains a miniature solar system of protons and electrons. From the tiniest atom to the mightiest universe all creation

unites with Moses in his acclamation of the Maker, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect," (Deut. 32. 4), and joins with the Psalmist in singing, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works: In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches". (Psa. 104. 24.)

With such a view of this incredible universe, surely the astronomer could do no other than unite with David in his adoration of the Creator. We have no grounds whatever for supposing that Sir Harold is any other than a believer in the inspiration of Scripture, and perhaps even a devoted witness for Christ; but the limitations involved in writing for the public press would induce him to exclude any reference to the supernatural. Whether this is so or not it remains that, throughout the pages of this illuminating series not one mention is made of the Creator. In his first article the astronomer approaches the border-line of faith when he writes, "The solar system has not been formed by the chance gathering together of its constituent members. It must have had a definite origin". Sir Harold favours the theory of a continuous creation of matter, but does not, perhaps for the reason that we have before mentioned, suggest the possibility of a continuous Creator. In his fifth article he writes, "Essential elements of this new view are that the Universe is infinite in extent, that it has existed for an infinite past time, and that creation is a continuous process which has been going on through all past time and which is still going on. . . . Its existence is from everlasting to everlasting, and creation is a process which is still going on". Sir Harold thus presents us with a theory of creation which is from everlasting to everlasting, but the Psalmist carries us further and points out that through and above all creation there is creation's God, and cries out triumphantly, "From everlasting to everlasting THOU ART GOD" (Psa. 90. 2). The astronomer forcibly reminds us of the question of Zophar, the Naamathite to Job, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11. 7), and of the negative answer which it implies. The reader whose mind has been unenlightened by the Word of God is left with a desolating sense of loneliness in the midst of an incomprehensible universe, and can only re-echo with Sir Harold himself the sentiments of the poet Wordsworth:

"O the burthen of the mystery of this incomprehensible world".

Professor van der Riet Wooley, who has succeeded Sir Harold in the astronomer's chair, has no diffidence in proclaiming, through the medium of the popular press, his faith in the Creator. When interviewed by "Everybody's," it is stated that his answer to the query, "Do you believe in God?" was a prompt and firm "Yes". When asked by a Wesleyan minister to preach a lay sermon before a congregation of scientists in Melbourne, says "Everybody's," he took as his text Psalm 119. 1, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork*". The scientist's job, he insists, is to increase man's understanding of God's handiwork as manifest in Nature; and the interviewer was left with the impression that in Professor Wooley's view an atheistic astronomer is as anomalous as the unicorn.

Gazing up into the starry heavens and acknowledging the Creator as well as the creation, the inspired poet of old time whom Professor Wooley has quoted sang, "*When I consider the heavens, the works of THY fingers; the moon and the stars which THOU hast ordained*". (Psa. 8. 3). In his consideration of the heavens he had probably acquired all the knowledge upon the subject which was then available to the diligent student; and in exultation he cried out, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name only is excellent: his glory is *above* the earth and the heaven". (Psa. 148. 13). The prophet Jeremiah, in his wonder at the glory of the heavens, was inspired to express his awe and adoration in similar terms, "*Ah, Lord God! Behold thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee*". (Jer. 32. 17). Isaiah, in his dissertation upon the subject, first describes the idols which men make, graven images made by the skill of the workman, and that shall not be moved. (Isa. 40. 18-20). These graven images may be literal in some lands, or in others systems and organisations which, if formed with the object of robbing God of His glory, or of dominating the minds and souls of men, are idols, and this even if they bear His Name. Especially are His reproofs directed against those who pollute His Name (Jer. 34. 16), vilifying it and vindictifying it through the earth, misrepresenting His character and His purposes, and even daring to call in question the overwhelming love of God for the whole of mankind when He "gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life" (John 3. 16, 17). "*With lies (they) have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hand of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way, by PROMISING HIM LIFE* (or marg. "that I should save his life"). How earnestly they desire the Day of the Lord, the Battle of Armageddon, when all their enemies shall be destroyed! But God says, "*Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The Day of the Lord is darkness, and not light*". (Amos 5. 18). "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isa. 28. 18). "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAN THE EARTH, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*". (Isa. 55. 8, 9). If they could be stayed from their headlong course, it would be well with them to give heed to the commandment given by the hand of that great prophet Moses, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain, for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain," and to accept as a warning the words which he wrote of "the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak . . . but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously". (Deut. 18. 20-22). The warning of that great prophet of Jehovah spans the centuries until it reaches its full significance in the false prophet of Rev. 16. 13, 14, the agency used in combination with two others for the gathering of the world to the "battle of that great day of God Almighty"—Armageddon (v. 16).

Isaiah urges us to take our eyes away from these idols of man's cunning contrivance: "their stock shall not take root in the earth and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble" (Isa. 40. 24). "*Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things,*" he urges. Why does the Bible so frequently direct our eyes to behold God's glory and majesty in the heavens? Because by so doing our minds get the right perspective. The cunning schemes of men for world domination sink into their right proportions. The power and glory displayed in the heavens show that He could by the breath of His lips destroy all the idols set up to provoke Him to jealousy. The very nations themselves before Him "are as nothing; and are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity" (v. 17). But more important to

us, perhaps, than all these great issues, is, how does such a vision of God affect us? Does it cause us to sink into our right proportion as beings dependent on our Maker for every breath that we breathe and for everything we receive? Does it cause us to realise that everything of value we possess, every virtue, every talent with which we are endowed, could have come only from this great source of all that is good? "What is man that thou visitest him?" continues the Psalmist (Psa. 8. 4), and he assures us that He has a care for everything He has made: "He humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth" (Psa. 113. 6).

If God can thus humble Himself it would seem appropriate that His creatures should humble themselves before Him. But the very contrary appears to be the case. The natural man contrives to leave God entirely out of his thoughts, and, in doing so, sees himself or his fellows as the very summit of creation. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God". (Micah 6. 8). It is the hardest thing in the world to come down to God's level. Yet this attitude of mind is the very beginning and very essence of wisdom. With all the knowledge acquired by the human mind from the beginning of creation until now, with all the dexterity of hand and brain, with all the experience gained by world-wide perambulation, if a man has not learned this truth he has not even put his foot on the first rung of the ladder of wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," said the son of the poet whom we have previously quoted (Pro. 9. 10), and who was himself, at that time, recognised to be the wisest man in all the world: and One who came later, and of whom it was said, "Never man spake like this man," stipulates as the only means of entering into the kingdom of heaven which he was proclaiming, "Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven". (Matt. 18. 3).

It is right that man living in a state of alienation from God should fear Him. There is a gap between himself and his Maker which is felt intensely at some time or other in his career. He may, like David, look up into the heavens and behold there the glory of God, and, sensing the perfect holiness and righteousness of the Being there revealed, realise by the voice of conscience how far he must come short of any fitness to be taken into fellowship with such a God. His condition is like that described by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Ch. 2. 12), "Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from

the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world". It is fitting that in such a state men should have a fear or dread of their Creator, and doubtless many have been driven by such a form of fear to take the first step into reconciliation with Him. But that is not quite the fear which Solomon enjoined as being the beginning of wisdom. The word used by him is "yirah," and has the meaning of "reverence". David uses the same word in Psa. 19. 9, 10; "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether".

Another of the basic ingredients of the very beginning of wisdom is faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him," says the Apostle Paul, "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". (Heb. 11.6.) "Thy faithfulness," sang the Psalmist, "shalt thou establish in the very heavens". (Psa. 89. 2): and of His faithfulness in His earthly provisions for men we read, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease". (Gen. 8. 22.) God never varies His purpose with His people. As age after age passes with their failure to recognise Him, and even His own people fail to bring forth that fruitage which His abounding blessings upon them would warrant, His mercies never fail. It is His faithfulness which causes our own little grain of faith to grow strong. In his wonderful analysis of faith in Heb. 11, the Apostle shows that faith believes that whatever God has promised He will never fail to fulfil. This great scholar was not here projecting his mind back into the dim past in order to discuss the origin of the universe, as the Authorised Version would suggest at v. 3. The existence of the universe is not a matter of faith but of sight, and the "things" of which it was made belong to the realm of speculation. The Apostle was here discussing God's adjustment of the ages (*Emphatic Diaglott*) and holding up to us the example of the Ancients in their unwavering faith in God's promises to be fulfilled in ages yet to come.

A mind which has already found the key of wisdom in a clean and wholesome reverence for God would seek for some revelation of Himself which He may have been pleased to make to His Creatures. And this he finds in His Word. David, who had learnt the secret of wisdom (Psa. 25. 14) extols the Word of God in every one of the 176 verses of his wonderful 119th Psalm. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee (v. 11). "Thy word is a

lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (v. 105). "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (v. 130). "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgements endureth for ever" (v. 160). The Word of God, as possessed by these Ancients, and which gave to them such an unswerving faith in His ordinances and His promises, is shown by Paul to be woven by God into a veritable Plan of the Ages (Eph. 3. 11), which plan we are privileged to see in all its fulness and beauty. This plan, says the Apostle, was formed from the Anointed Jesus, the Saviour of men. In Him we are led to find all the treasures of wisdom. The preaching of His cross, while being foolishness to the unbeliever, unto them which are called is both "the power of God, and the wisdom of God:" for "of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption". (I Cor. 1. 24, 30.)

Solomon sums up the excellences of wisdom in Prov. 8, and in doing so identifies God's only begotten Son as being the complete expression of all wisdom. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. . . . When He prepared the heavens I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depths. . . . Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and my delights were with the sons of men". (vv. 22, 27, 30, 31.) He shared to the full His Father's plan for embracing love for the whole human family, and willingly participated in His Father's plan for their redemption, even to the extent of leaving the heavenly glory, and "giving His life a ransom for all". (I Tim. 2. 6.) It is this story of the love of God for the human race and of His Son's participation even to the extent of suffering for them and dying on the cross, which is the theme of all Scripture from its first mention in Genesis unto John's vision of the future in Revelation, where we see in the very midst of the throne "a lamb as it had been slain". (Rev. 4. 6.) And it is this story which will continue to be told even "to all the generations of the age of ages". (Eph. 3. 21 *Diaglott.*) "The ransom," said that devoted servant of God, C. T. Russell, "is the hub, the centre, around which all the features of Divine grace revolve". Any "gospel of the kingdom" which seeks to relegate this Divinely-appointed centre to a secondary place in the Divine Plan is not the good news of the kingdom, but "another

gospel" (Gal. 1. 6-8), the gospel of one of the false anointed ones and of the false prophets against whom the Lord uttered specific warning—Matt. 24. 24.

The people of God who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice will continue to set their minds on things above, not so much in consideration of the visible heavens, as of the things belonging to the spiritual inheritance to which they have been called, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Their fellowship will be with the Father and the Son. (Coll. 3. 1-3; I John 1. 3.) In that Divine anomaly recorded in Isa. 57. 15 we read, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones". Thus revived by the Divine Spirit, they are already seated with Christ in heavenly places, and are being transformed by the renewing of their minds that they may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Eph. 2. 56; Rom. 12. 1, 2.) "Whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world," says the Apostle John (I John 5. 4): "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" True they have this treasure of the new mind in earthen vessels. Their daily lives are performed in earthly circumstances, and most of their associates (towards whom they still have obligations), are of the "earth earthy," and have only human aims and human treasures. We know that in the outworking of God's plans for their blessing they are not condemned because of this. All of these circumstances and associations, however, tend to tie the "new creature in Christ Jesus" to the earthly way of life. But their real way of life is in heaven from whence also they look for the Saviour (Phil. 3. 20). And with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord as it shines from heaven, they will not be beguiled by any saviour that rises out of the earth, even though he assume the disguise of the very Lamb of God himself (Rev. 13. 11). Just as they heed the voice of the Good Shepherd, so they recognise the voice of the dragon even when speaking through the mouth of a lamb. Though the plans of those who would foist such a saviour on the world begin to reach fruition, and the love of the many grow cold because of the abounding of the iniquity, those whose minds are guided by that wisdom which cometh down so liberally from above will still wait patiently on the Lord, knowing that the Chief Shepherd will be manifested in His own time (I Pet. 5. 4).

A NOTE ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

G. C. Chilvers

The Book of Revelation has for long been the subject of controversy among students of the Bible. A book of symbols, it has been variously interpreted. It has been a fertile field for disputes between the exponents of interpretations labelled "præterist," "futurist" or "historical," while some, mystified by the strange events which John records, have given up in despair the task of understanding them. Others have applied themselves diligently to discovering some event in history, however insignificant, which will correspond to each detail of the narrative. It is not an easy book, but it is an intriguing one. Proverbially, a Bible class which embarks upon its study will toil through it long and painfully. The leader of such a study may feel he needs a complete knowledge not only of Old Testament prophecy but also of two thousand years of secular and church history: and together with this a sense of proportion and an appreciation of spiritual values.

Yet, for all the difficulty, the fact remains that the book is intended as a revelation. As one scholar puts it, "*The writer obviously expects that his meaning, so far from being obscured by the strange figures of speech and symbols which he employs, will be thereby illustrated, enforced, and brought home to the mind with greater than ordinary power.*" It would be hard to believe that this revelation, given by Jesus Christ, was intended only for scholars.

The book is a prophecy of things which, when it was written, were yet future. Those who first read it must have been as perplexed as those today who come to it lacking a knowledge of history—if indeed it be that many of the prophecies of the book have been fulfilled. To the first readers the book must have seemed a vast drama, with heaven and earth for a stage, in which move the kings of the earth, the angels of heaven, the powers of darkness and the messengers of light. As the apostle John unfolds his vision they recognise themselves, persecuted and oppressed, as the souls under the altar or the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. They, with John, as spectators of the great drama of history, played before the throne of the King of Kings, in which the hero, the slain Lamb, becomes the Victor, conquering and to conquer. As the dark symbols follow one another they rejoice to find their God is to be

vindicated in His dealings with men: and the voices which speak to them in strains as of poetry tell plainly the foundation truths of the Gospel.

The modern reader as he pores over the various translations likewise notices these passages which Weymouth, Moffatt and the Revised Standard Version have rendered in verse. It is interesting to look at them. Often it is the four and twenty elders of the throne scene whose words the translators put in verse. These elders when they speak, speak to praise God. Since it is not empty praise, they give a reason for it. Their continual song, night and day, is to ascribe to God glory and honour and power. Why? Because He is the Creator of all things, and because it is by His will that the universe has come into existence. We may well echo these praises, for it is God the ever living One who through the ages has fashioned the world in which we live according to laws which only now are scientists beginning to understand. As Paul said upon Mars Hill, it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. It is only fitting that the Gospel should commence with the fact that our God is Creator of heaven and earth: and right that we too in our praises should remember thanks on this account.

In verse nine of chapter five the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song. The ages have rolled on. The world has long been established, and now the race of beings that inhabits it has been redeemed by one Jesus. But what is to follow? The anxious prayers of Christians come before God of heaven. The elders rejoice, for that same Jesus in the very presence of God is found worthy to open the book of the future, to control the destinies of this world. He has ransomed men for God from every tribe and nation, a body who will reign on earth as priests. Thus a second great fact emerges: that the Gospel Age is a time in which Christ's ransom sacrifice is applied to a selected company, for whom God has a special work. If we are among those whom even now have been redeemed, we can join with their song.

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,

"To be exalted thus!"

"Worthy the Lamb!" our hearts reply,

"For He was slain for us."

As we turn the pages of the Revelation, it is

not till chapter seven that we find the elders once more burst forth in praise. The sight that inspires them then is a numberless host of men, justified and victorious, from every nation. Their great tribulation is past: they are to suffer no more, but under God's protection are to serve Him. Irrespective of any question what "class" this multitude represent, is it not a comfort to know that the future is to hold life, with the privilege of His service and protection, to *any* one who is under "the robe of Christ's righteousness".

The theme of the elders is more awesome in chapter eleven. If the mercy of God is to be praised, so also is His judgment. It has been the lot of Christians in the Gospel Age to live in a time of darkness, when the light of the Gospel has only partly illumined the world. There is light enough to see by, for those whose eyes are open to the message of salvation; but for the rest of mankind the world is dim, full of half truths, with any course of action a choice between two evils. Men dimly perceive what is good, but lack the courage to endure that measure of suffering which right action entails. While there are men upon earth to take selfish advantage, Christian meekness will bear this reward of suffering. So the nations are not meek but angry: and God's wrath comes upon them. Wrath upon the spirit of self, wrath upon those who destroy, wrath upon all those things which work not creatively in the spirit of the Creator, but to disrupt, antagonise and embitter. This judgment is necessary. To use a homely comparison, just as the dentist drills away the rotten part of a tooth in order to preserve the good remainder, so all that is antagonistic to the very life of God's kingdom must be removed. We know that Christ's rule will be one of mercy and equity: but we also know that what he sees fit eventually to destroy must indeed be worthy of destruction. God's judgment is a cause for rejoicing. For we long to see vindicated that spirit of love which now shows so little in outward results. We long for our God to reveal Himself in all His power and righteousness, to show His majesty, to embrace mankind in His love, to make it once and for all evident that the scorned and rejected gospel of Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Truth. As the twenty-four elders say, when they fall down and worship God, "*We give thanks to thee, Lord God almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign*". While, if we are conquerors, we too may sing

*"Great and wonderful are thy deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are thy ways,*

*O King of the ages!
Who shall not fear and glorify thy name,
O Lord?
For thou alone art holy.
All nations shall come and worship thee,
For thy judgments have been revealed".*

The chapters which follow are full of the judgments of God. False religion, the lust for worldly power, infatuation with the good things of this life, hypocrisy under the garb of godliness, all these things come under sentence, together with the Dragon—the adversary—that inspires them. All is summed up in Babylon, that city into which is drawn all the wealth and pride of life. In it there is gaiety, finery, all those external things which delight the senses but without godliness are a delusion. Babylon is the epitome of the kingdom of this world: its inhabitants live for self, and they have a worldly allegiance: their conduct stands condemned, for it results in the blood of innocent men, of men made holy by their relationship with God.

It is small wonder that Babylon's fall is heralded in the language of poetry. It is small wonder that the adjuration is "Come out of her, my people". We must ever beware of the spirit of Babylon, whatever our surroundings and with whomever we meet. Only by a personal guard over our lips and our ways, by a perpetual watchfulness in prayer shall we ensure that we are free of the trammels of the world. Let us beware lest our conduct betray our heavenly city or dishonour our heavenly King. It is so easy to peddle between two masters.

After the judgment of the harlot Babylon goes up the cry of the hosts in heaven, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just". The earth is rid of an evil thing, and by contrast we see the Bride of the Lamb made ready to be joined to her Lord. From the vision of the faithless we turn to the faithful: our Lord comes into His own, and His chosen ones with Him. Babylon is doomed: the new Jerusalem rises in its stead.

As the book draws to a close, there comes a voice from the throne itself:

*"God's dwelling place is among men
And He will dwell among them
And they shall be His peoples.
Yes, God Himself will be among them.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death shall be no more;
Nor sorrow, nor wail of woe, nor pain;
For the first things have passed away".*

There follows that pure, clean vision of the

eternal city, a grand symbol to end the book of symbols. It is the consummation of God's purposes, a new order which follows the time of tempest and judgment. The waters of life flow there, and the nations, purged of sin, bring their glories to God's feet. God's servants, great and small, render Him holy service, and see His face, and are recognised as truly His.

Thus ends the Revelation passed by Jesus Christ to John on the Isle of Patmos. The broad picture is clear. God's purpose looks beyond the suffering of the present hour. The God who created man, and His Son who redeemed him, will reign over the race. Suffering serves only to mature those who will reign with them, and God's ultimate design removes pain and death from the

ken of human kind. The heart in tune with Him thrills as His designs are made manifest. Just as the Christians of the First Century longed for their final accomplishment, so do we; and we grasp His principles of righteousness, principles which seem as much in jeopardy in the world today as they must have seemed to the saints of old. If, after the nineteen hundred years of history, we can identify our position in time among the symbols of the book, well and good. But even if our minds are not capable of grasping the details of it, we may all rejoice in the one great hope, join with the four and twenty elders around the throne as they cry,

"Worthy art thou, O Lord God! . . ."

"Worthy is the Lamb!"

Lilies in the Valley

poems of hope, faith and certainty.

Rebecca F. Doney

DARKNESS AND DAWN

Oh, city of the dead, what thou could'st tell,
 What tales unfold!
 Of all the captives thou hast here in Hell,
 The young; the old.
 The soft grass waves, the birds above them fly;
 And loved ones rend the air with bitter cry;
 But here, unconscious of it all, they lie
 So still, and cold.

Oh, city of the dead, your Master, Death,
 Claims all the earth.
 And sets his mark on Adam's hapless sons
 Before their birth.
 A little while he may be kept at bay,
 And life prolonged a year, a month, a day,
 But, soon or later, he demands his prey
 At every hearth.

Sometimes he warns them of his dread approach
 By racking pain,
 'Gainst which, love's watch combined with skill
 and power
 Are spent in vain.
 Sometimes, like thunderbolt from clearest sky
 His victims drop, without a word or cry;
 And crape, and hearse, and pall, all testify
 To his dread reign.

Oh, city of the dead, with heads bowed low,
 They sadly come
 And lay their dear loved dead with tender hands
 In their last home.
 And thus, poor souls, with breaking hearts they go
 And leave them here, where storms, and rain, and
 snow,
 And wintry winds beat wildly, to and fro,
 With dreary moan.

As my mind wanders o'er the sin-cursed earth,
 I stand appalled,
 On ninety thousand new-made graves each day
 The hot tears fall.
 No wonder Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb
 When He foresaw how deep would be the gloom
 Ere He His kingly power could assume,
 And break sin's thrall.

That long procession, moving ever on,
 Strikes our hearts dumb.
 With anguish keen, we voice our only hope,
 "Thy Kingdom Come!"
 Sore need have men of words of hope and cheer;
 'Tis ours to tell them that the morn is near,
 And all earth's sorrow clouds shall disappear
 Before the Sun,

Death, I have come to have a word with thee,
 To tell thee here,
 By these still graves, where thy dead victims lie,
 Thine end is near.
 Men's part through centuries thou hast marked
 with blood,
 But O! thou terror, in the Holy Word,
 Thy doom is written, by almighty God,
 In language clear.

Our Father sent His Son in form of man,
 That He might go
 Down to the tomb, be held in bonds by thee,
 Man's deadly foe,
 That man might be released, brought back again
 To share the blessings of Messiah's reign
 And that, to life once lost, he might attain,
 Its fulness know.

Think not, O Death, Christ's new begotten mind
 Could holden be.
 The Father quickened Him on highest plane,
 Immortal, free.
 Divine in nature, now He reigns in power
 That shall increase with every passing hour.
 He has thy keys, O Death; He'll make thee cower
 And vanquish thee.

He is thy master, Death, and when His time
 Has fully come,
 He who hath power of death, this world's dread
 prince,
 Shall meet his doom.
 Those angels who have wreaked on men their
 hate,
 And who have not regained their lost estate,
 With Hell, and thee, grim Death, shall meet their
 fate,
 Within the tomb.

Dost think, O Death, that man will shed a tear
 Because thou'rt gone?
 The whole glad world will dance upon thy grave
 With joyous song.
 Methinks our ancient sires will lead the strain,
 And all their children join with might and main,
 Until the host of Heaven shall catch the strain,
 And pass it on

By faith, I catch a glimpse of that blest day,
 Earth's Golden Age,
 Dreamed of by poet, written of by seer,
 Sought for by sage,
 When eyes long blinded come at last to see,
 The glorious meaning of earth's Jubilee,
 When man no more shall helpless victim be,
 Of sin's dread wage.

I see the earth made glorious indeed,
 Her storms all o'er.
 On mountain valley, over hill and plain,
 From shore to shore,
 The fields and groves in radiant beauty lay,
 Abundantly supplying day by day
 The needs of all; grim want has flown away
 From every door.

And there, as Princes over all the earth,
 I see a race
 Who look like gods; so grand of form are they,
 So full of grace.
 In ages past, they walk by faith alone,
 Earth's holy ones, from Abel down to John,
 And now, as rulers on the earthly throne,
 They take their place.

In righteousness they rule, with iron rod,
 And justice lays
 Her lines and angles, straight and true and plain
 While love surveys
 The fallen race, and then, with tender hand,
 She leads them day by day in paths so grand,
 Until with joy they choose to walk and stand
 In Wisdom's way.

Grim war has ceased; its signs are nowhere found
 The whole world through,
 And all the deadly implements of strife
 Are shaped anew,
 And used to till the garden and the field.
 The one-time swords as pruning hooks they wield
 To dress the groves, whose bending boughs rich
 yield
 The orchards strew.

Man's curse, laborious incessant toil,
 First fruits of sin,
 And Eve's dread sentence, on her daughters laid,
 Hath lifted been.
 Instead of sweat of face, with groans and sighs,
 With magic ease, he every want supplies
 And long sweet hours are left for exercise
 Of heart and mind.

The world's blind eyes are being opened now,
 The deaf ones hear.
 And Truth, long hidden, shines o'er all the earth
 With radiance clear.
 They learn of God's great love, His wisdom grand,
 His justice stern, the Power at His command;
 And as they view it all, in awe they stand
 And Him revere.

And as they study Nature's open book
 New light is thrown
 Upon the mighty powers that round them lay
 So long unknown.
 With perfect minds, new visions they attain,
 The things which baffled them are now made
 plain.
 O'er Nature's forces they the mastery gain,
 And claim their own.

But O, the crowning joy of all is this ;
 Those who have lain
 Within the silent tombs through all the years
 Of Death's dark reign,
 Those whose bleached bones upon the desert lie,
 Those whom old Ocean thinks to hold for aye,
 And those whose ashes with the winds do fly,
 Come back again.

What cries of joy are heard on every side
 As loved ones press
 Their long-lost friends to hearts that overflow
 With thankfulness.
 And all the anguish of the bitter years,
 The loneliness, the pain, the awful fears
 That wrung their hearts, are washed away in tears
 Of happiness.

Some died believing that their spirits would
 In Heaven dwell.
 Some died with shrieks and curses on their lips,
 In fear of Hell.
 Some welcomed Death as sweet release from
 pain ;
 Some thought forever dead they would remain ;
 All stand amazed, to find themselves again,
 Alive and well.

But greater wonder stirs them at the change
 Since they lay down.
 No sickness or disease in all the earth
 Can now be found.
 Sweet peace and plenty, both have come to stay ;
 And none have power to harm in that blest day.
 The righteous Kingdom laws all must obey
 The world around.

The "Princes" tell how Christ the Ransom paid,
 And now doth reign,
 That Adam's race, enslaved so long by sin,
 Might all obtain
 One chance for life, one chance for every one
 To hear the Gospel of God's blessed Son,
 And hearing, gain the perfect life, upon
 The human plane.

As on the broad Highway of Holiness
 They all are led
 In answer to their prayers, still others come
 Back from the dead.
 One generation, then another comes
 To find warm, loving hearts and waiting homes,
 Till over all the earth, from zone to zone,
 The gladness spreads.

At last there comes a day when all are raised
 Except the pair
 Who once went forth from Eden's blest abode
 In deep despair.
 For everything was lost, dominion, home,
 The right to live ; as convicts doomed to roam,
 Death, following, pursued them to the tomb
 And held them there.

But their long sleep of centuries is past
 And death has fled,
 As o'er their graves the voice of power rings out
 And wakes the dead.
 As they come forth the air resounds with song
 That floats on every breeze, from every tongue
 And Adam stands among that mighty throng
 As primal Head.

With that grand song still ringing in my ears,
 And thrilling me,
 I waken from my reverie, and lo
 Once more I see
 The silent graves ; and as I lift my eyes
 I see the clouds of trouble higher rise
 And hear the poor creation's groans and cries
 Of misery.

But looking farther still, beyond the clouds,
 I see the rays
 Of that Millennial Dawn, which ushers in
 Earth's glory day.
 The storm comes on with an increasing roar,
 But yonder light streams brighter than before.
 With hearts of faith, we worship and adore,
 And humbly pray

"Our Father God, in reverent love we kneel
 Above these tombs
 And thank Thee, that we see, within thy Word
 This dreadful gloom
 Shall flee away as mists before the Sun
 And on this earth, Thy will shall yet be done
 And thy great love be known by everyone
 Beneath these stones."



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

LONDON BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

A meeting at

CAXTON HALL

(Tudor Room)

Caxton Street, Westminster, S.W.1

Saturday, 28th July, 1956

6.30 p.m.

Speaker:

Bro. J. W. DAWSON (U.S.A.)

The purpose of the meeting is to pray and praise; to practise and proclaim the faith that is in us; to enjoy the fellowship of kindred minds, and to raise the Baptist cry: "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Visitors from U.S.A.

At the time of publication we have with us in this country two brethren from the United States, Bros. R. R. Hollister and J. W. Dawson, each of whom will be visiting the friends in various places as they find opportunity. In addition, Bro. W. J. Siekman is due to arrive at the beginning of August under the auspices of the Pastoral Bible Institute at the primary invitation of the friends who have organised the "Maran-Atha" Conference at Reading. Brother Siekman is to address that Conference and will during the remainder of his stay visit meetings in various parts of the country. For details of Bro. Siekman's appointments (apart from Reading) please write to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. For details of Bro. Hollister's appointments please write to Bro. Cedric Smith, Ellesborough House, Butlers Cross, Aylesbury, Bucks. Bro. Dawson's movements are likely to be more fluid but for details of his appointments to serve the friends so far as they are fixed, please write to Bro. Hudson as above.

It is expected that all three of these brethren will speak at the August London Convention at Conway Hall, an emergency arrangement having been made to allow this although the programme had been fixed and printed before it was known that these brethren would be with us. Bro. Hollister will speak on the Saturday of the convention and Bros. Siekman and Dawson on the Monday, sharing sessions with the speakers already appearing on the programme.

London Convention

Programmes for the convention were circulated with the last issue of the "Monthly" but further copies can be obtained on request addressed to the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, Ryvers Cottage, Ryvers Farm, London Road, Langley, Bucks. Any friends desiring accommodation and

Continued on back page.

Gone from us

Sis. L. Hawley (*Macclesfield*)

Bro. John Hall (*Gateshead*)

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

The Story of Nehemiah

Lessons from the life of a
stalwart man of God

D. Nadai

3. Troubled on every side

The first move by the enemies of Israel to frustrate the great work which Nehemiah and his countrymen were doing was a subtle infiltration of armed men into the ranks of the Jews. Nehemiah prayed and then encouraged the people to remember the Lord and not to be afraid. They set a watch against spies and enemy soldiers. Plans were made to help each other if an attack was made against one particular section of the new wall.

In the midst of all the troubles from without came internal disorder which also threatened to stop the work of the Lord.

The nobility of Jerusalem had so badly treated their fellow Jews that many of the people lived in poverty and slavery. The equity of Israel's laws, given through Moses, should have prevented just those conditions developing. There was no excuse for the Jewish aristocrats and Nehemiah acted promptly. He told the nobles plainly that they lacked in righteousness before the Lord and that their treatment of fellow Jews was a reproach to their nation. The governor's rebuke was accepted and acted upon, perhaps the more so because of Nehemiah's own upright life. The leaders repented of their oppression and readily promised to deal more justly in future.

Meanwhile, the allied opposition, headed by Sanballat, Tobiah and Gesham, were consulting together how they might best overthrow Jerusalem. They tried enticing the governor from his stewardship in order to do him "some mischief". They tried to frighten him with false accusations of treason. They threatened his life. But each effort was frustrated in the same manner, for Nehemiah besought the Lord in prayer for strength and guidance. The source of his power and ability lay in his contact with heaven and found comfort and peace in his friendship with God.

What an inspiration to us! Does the Devil meet with such formidable opposition today? Is there such unshakeable trust in the Lord and such unshakeable zeal in His service? Wherefore all the hindrances to the work in spiritual Zion? When the world laughs and jeers at our efforts to serve our King are we able to stand firm, confident that our labours of love are not in vain? Our unbelieving neighbours are quick to cast doubts upon our faith and to tell us that our hopes will come to nothing, just as the Samaritans did to the Jews.

We may be able to refute the scoffers' arguments or to withstand persecution, but to be laughed at is sometimes more difficult to endure and we are likely to become very discouraged. May Nehemiah's example of unflinching courage and constancy in prayer urge us to seek God's help more readily that we may not fear what men may try to do to frustrate the work of God.

As in every age, the Devil will appear in a number of guises. Sometimes his agents are openly the enemies of God and brazenly seek to render ineffective the work of His people. Frequently however the approach is more subtle and the sabotage is done in secret ways. There are many exhortations in the New Testament to watch. Often these are accepted as a reference to our observation of the political drama in the world around us. They would serve their purpose more effectively if the application was made by an internal examination of the heart by each believer upon himself. It was our Master who said "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26. 41), and years later, writing to the Colossians, Paul admonished "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Peter exhorted the brethren to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Peter 5. 8). Each of these texts might have been the words of our Old Testament hero urging his faithful band of workers to greater building efforts. But they are in fact the words of Jesus and of two of the foundation members of the New Jerusalem. God's purposes move on from one era to the next but the great fight between good and evil remains the same in form and principle. By devious means Satan has blinded the eyes of God's people to the great "building project" which our Heavenly Father has in hand. To some he has said that this is a work which embraces all the world and hence their labours have sometimes been dissipated in places where they were not required. To others he has insinuated that the work is completed and so they have ceased from their tasks before they were done. Upon others he has poured his scorn and contempt until they have given up in despair. Let us each one examine our own lives, not daring to "pluck the splinter from our brother's eye lest we are blinded by the log in our own."

Just as the work upon the rebuilding of Jeru-

salem suffered because of internal disquiet, so the Christian Church has been hindered by discord and strife throughout its long and chequered history. Human ambitions and selfishness have frustrated the efforts of those who have toiled for spiritual Zion. Immediately prior to the Lord's death his closest followers were quarrelling about who should be greatest among them. To-day, in many quarters the same lesson has still not been properly learned.

Our message for the world is peace and good will whatever aspect of truth we emphasise. Whether we preach repentance and consecration in this life, or Christ's kingdom for all men in the age to come, the underlying spirit is the same—that

of reconciliation to God. But the power of our message is lost if there is not genuine brotherly affection among ourselves. Instead, as Nehemiah said of his fellows, we are a reproach to the people of God.

In spite of the troubles from without and troubles within, the New Jerusalem will be finished and it will be God's hand through His servants which will accomplish it. Let us see to it that we work for Him and not against Him. But the work does not stop there, merely to be an object of beautiful craftsmanship. Cities are not an end in themselves but are built for a purpose.

To be continued.

The Master's Joy

A word of encouragement

We are living in dark and troublous times, with perplexity and doubt on every hand; but to those who have set to their seal that God is true, the promise comes "The joy of the Lord is your strength." That joy does not depend upon conditions being easy or pleasant, or upon the continuation of material prosperity. The sources of our Master's joy were beyond the reach of men and circumstances, and in consequence it was a joy the world could neither give nor take away. The Lord Jesus joyed in God. All nature spoke to Him of His Father. This wondrous world of which we, even to-day, know so little was to Him, not alien soil, but a mansion in the Father's House, and the Father Himself was at the back of all Nature's bounty, beauty and beneficence. Jesus joyed in the Scriptures, for they spoke to Him of His Father and revealed the character of One with Whom He was in constant communion. As a boy He eagerly awaited His attainment of the age of twelve, the age at which he could get to Jerusalem and be found in His Father's House. What a keen desire there must have been in the heart of the boy Jesus to enter those Temple precincts where He could ask the great ones there, those "sitting in Moses seat," some of the many questions which even then were crowding in upon His perfect but as yet undeveloped mind!

God's Word throughout His whole life was the joy and rejoicing of the Master's heart. By that Word He repelled the Tempter at the commencement of His ministry and by it He caused the hearts of the disciples to burn within them immediately after His resurrection, at its close.

To the Lord Jesus God was unimaginably good: exceedingly abundantly above all that one could ask

or think. In the joy of His knowledge of God's love He sketched for us the picture of the prodigal son and the love of an earthly father, saying in effect, "if ye then, being evil, are like that, *how much more God!*" Our Lord experienced constantly the joy of boundless hope in a God so wonderfully and unimaginably good. Satan was the god of this world, evil was rampant, those who would do God's Will must endure persecution, He Himself was confronted by the thought of a cruel and shameful death but the Master's gaze was habitually directed beyond these things. He lived in the constant view of those conditions that will prevail when God's Will is done upon earth even as now it is done in heaven.

As our Lord Jesus continued in communion with His Father, he found God not merely One to be enjoyed, but also one to be served, and this opportunity of loving devotion was in itself to Jesus another constant source of delight. The *Will of God*; this was placed centrally in the Master's life, and to carry it out was His meat and drink. His natural love for His own home, for His mother, and for His family circle, was intense, and yet before all these He placed those who did the Will of God. "*Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" (Matt. 12. 50). From this delight in doing the service of God there arose another source of joy; that of a constant sense of the Divine approval on His life. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" was the testimony given from heaven to John the Baptist on the banks of the River Jordan; a testimony that was repeated to the three disciples upon the Mount of Trans-

figuration and attested by numerous evidences of the Father's favour during our Lord's earthly ministry. Those declarations were made that "men might know . . . Jesus Christ" whom God had sent, for Jesus Himself needed no such outward assurances. For within Himself, all the time, like sweetest music in His soul, vibrated the thought "I do always those things that please *Him*."

Greatest of all, our Master had the supreme joy associated with supreme self-sacrifice. Despised and rejected, scorned and spat upon, scourged and crucified, that wonderful love in the heart of Jesus inspired Him to exult with a deep and holy joy that in this way, through the valley of suffering and humiliation, He could bring the prodigal world back to God. All the evil that was inflicted upon the Master, all the mental and physical suffering which

He bore so patiently, all the evidences of hardness of heart and lack of faith in those near to Him as well as far from Him, only made Him feel the more how desperate was their need of Him; and in prophetic vision he saw "of the travail of his soul" and was satisfied.

How true then is the Scripture which declares that "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high." It was because our Master so consistently found joy in all that His life held for Him that He was able to say "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you . . . Let not your heart be troubled"; and the Apostle adds as a triumphant commentary and exhortation to all Jesus' disciples "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice."

MY GLORY ALL THE CROSS

T. Holmes

A discourse on Galatians 4. 14.

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

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

"urge to do" than be a useless drone, devoid of will and drive and goal.

It is when the ambitious man looks up to God that the mistake is made. He wants God to take note of his work, and place it to his account. He expects God to accord him credit marks for what he has done, and to give him a place, in moral things, higher up the scale, proportioned to what he has achieved. He desires to win the same rewards, in the moral world, that he finds in his mundane sphere. A "go-getter" here expects to be a "go-getter" there. And therein lies the germ of his mistake. God has ordained things otherwise. Heaven's blessing of sun and rain may have rewarded the toil and sweat in the harvest field (in measure, more or less, since Eden's days), but Heaven's disapproval has had to fall like frost and snow on man's attempted cultivation of his soul. Man has been slow to learn the ways of God in this higher sphere. God has not asked man to "do" but to "receive" what He has to give. Man does not understand the defiling power of sin, or that his best is far too poor to win him marks in the scale of righteousness. His best attempts have been too short—too low—to win approval before the Highest Law. As it was with Israel, so it has been with all.

"What good thing shall I do" has been the quest of ambitious man from ancient days. It is the quest of men to-day. It is the quest of ambitious Christian men. In the world that lies ahead—the

world of atomic energy—the Christian thinks he has a job to do. He thinks he has to guide the democratic urge to its destiny, and bring in a world of peace and brotherhood. He claims the right to Christianise the consciences of every man, and thus to mould the Universal State.

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

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

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

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

As he journeyed here and there the Apostle Paul found men ready to boast of this or that. The Jew would make his boast of the Law and of the Priesthood, and the Temple and the Holy City. Some would boast of their fasts and alms, and that they were not quite the same as the other man; others would boast of the family tree and the long line of their showy ancestry. The Greek would boast of his learning and culture, of his art and statuary, of his cities and palaces. Among them all there was none to be found who would boast of his incapacity and insufficiency, who would tell the whole world he could not do what he ought; and stood before heaven and earth as one who "came—short". Paul did all this to the full! Not but that he came of as good stock as they; not but that he had "gifts" as excellent as they! but because he

had come to know the way of God towards sin—yes and sinners too! He knew that fallen man could not satisfy God's Law, and that to fail in one point was to fail in the whole. He knew the best work of men was as but "filthy rags", and that the filth of men and spotlessness of Christ could never blend. He knew it must be "all" of each, or "none"—"all of man" and "none of Christ," or "all of Christ" and "none of man". And so he stood and told the whole world he could glory, not in himself, but only in the Cross of Christ; that it was his delight to stand, not on his own pitch, but on the foundation of Christ; that his was no desire to keep the Law, but to find shelter behind another Man!

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

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

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

For ourselves we would sing:—

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

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

A. O. Hudson

4. Master of the Magicians

Something like twenty years elapsed between the respective events of the second and third chapters of Daniel, the king's dream of the image and the casting of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah into the fiery furnace, twenty years of which the Book of Daniel says not a word, but a period crowded with important happenings and incidents in the story of Israel. During that time Judah became finally free from the dominion of Egypt and subject to Babylon, Jehoiakim king of Judah died and after the short three months' reign of Jehochin was replaced by Zedekiah. The king of Babylon besieged and captured Jerusalem, laid the land desolate and took the bulk of the people captive, thus completing the "carrying away into Babylon" which marked the end of the Jewish monarchy. Ezekiel the priestly prophet commenced his ministry amongst the exiles and saw the first of those glorious visions which culminated many years later in his wonderful foreview of the Millennial Temple that is yet to be. Obadiah and Habakkuk both gave voice to their prophecies in Judea. Jeremiah continued his work and was finally taken into Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem, and died there. Cyrus the Persian, before whom the might of Babylon was eventually to crumble away, was born. All these things happened during this twenty years which lie between Chap. 2 and Chap. 3, and Daniel does not so much as mention any one of them.

He was about twenty-one years of age when he stood before King Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted the dream of the image. At the time of the burning fiery furnace incident he was probably just entering his forties. During the interim he steadily advanced in favour with the king and in power, honour and influence. According to Chap. 2. 48, in consequence of his interpreting the king's dream, "*the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.*" Later on, in chap. 4. 9, Daniel is referred to by the title "Master of the Magicians." These expressions indicate that the Jewish youth had become, next to the king himself, the most important and influential person in the land. Such sudden accession to a position of power from a humble origin may appear strange and improbable to our Western minds but it was by no means an uncommon thing in the court of an Eastern King. Joseph was summarily exalted by the Pharaoh of

Egypt in just the same way; Haman was deposed and Mordecai raised to take his place by Ahasuerus of Persia, as related in the Book of Esther. Classical historians record plenty of similar instances in ancient times, and there is no reason to question the integrity of the story on this account.

The titles used make it clear that Daniel had been elevated to the position of what we would call Prime Minister of the land, and in addition constituted titular head of all the Babylonian priest-hoods and learned men. It is as though he combined the offices of Prime Minister, Archbishop of Canterbury, and President of the Royal Society all in his own person. At twenty-one years of age it was a situation calling for a most unusual degree of wisdom and discretion. The sequel to the story shows that Daniel possessed both in ample measure.

This is an aspect of the Babylonian captivity which is not always appreciated. It is customary to think of the hapless Jews going to servitude and slavery in a strange land, at the mercy of ruthless captors and bereft of the consolations of their own religion. "*By the waters of Babylon we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion.*" "*How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?*" That may well have been the heart attitude of those to whom Jerusalem and Judea and the worship which could only be offered in the hallowed land meant more than anything else in the world. But it is not likely that the captive Jews were badly treated. The story before us shows that God, although He had fulfilled His word and removed them from their own land in punishment for their apostasy, nevertheless marvellously provided for their wellbeing in the land of their captivity. Daniel was virtual ruler over all domestic concerns in the whole realm, and he had as his lieutenants other three of their own countrymen. Surely this quartette, able to decree more or less as they pleased, saw to it that their own people were at least fairly treated compared with the rest of the population. The term "province" in chap. 2. 48 means "realm" or "empire"; the "whole province of Babylon" denotes the entire realm over which King Nebuchadnezzar had control, and the fact that during the major part of his reign the king personally led his armies in the field and was necessarily absent from his capital city for long periods makes it fairly certain that Daniel was to administer on his behalf and watch for his interests in his absence.

The first use that Daniel made of his new appointment was to urge upon the king the advisability of some delegation of authority. The import of verse 49 is that his three friends, now known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, were put in charge of the detailed administration of day-by-day matters, "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon," whilst Daniel himself remained in daily attendance on the king himself for the discussion of important matters. "Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

So for a span—probably for a large part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign—the empire was ruled by a "cabinet" of which at least the four leading members were Jews. It was during these forty years that the empire expanded to its greatest extent and its wealth and magnificence reached their peak. Secular historians ascribe the honours for this to King Nebuchadnezzar, on the strength of his many inscriptions, in which he takes all the credit to himself. One wonders how much of this prosperity was in fact due to the wise and just administration of the four Jews who must of necessity have borne a large share of the responsibility for what was achieved.

That fact poses a question. What were these men doing, helping to build up a system which God had already condemned and against which the prophet Jeremiah, still away in the homeland of Judea, was pouring forth his most passionate denunciations? What kind of a service to God was this which resulted in the establishment, more firmly than ever before, of an utterly idolatrous and corrupt system which God intended to destroy?

Was it, that like Jonah at Nineveh, God gave Babylon a last chance to repent? True enough it is that Babylon became a means in the Lord's hand for the chastisement of Israel but Babylonians as well as Israelites were the creation of God's hands and even with that debased nation it must have been true that God "*hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn you from your evil ways, and live ye.*" Just as Nineveh had forty years grace by the preaching of Jonah—and by reason of her repentance earned a remission of the threatened overthrow for something like two hundred and fifty years, for Jonah preached about B.C. 850 and Nineveh was not overthrown until B.C. 606—so in Daniel's day Babylon had forty years' opportunity to profit by the righteous administration of men of God, and mend its ways. There is a cryptic word in Jeremiah's prophecy which can only be understood if something like this was indeed the case. "*We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every man into*

his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven." (Jer. 51. 9) It is a historical fact that during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when according to the Bible Daniel and his friends administered affairs of state Babylon prospered and ruled the nations unchallenged. It is also a historical fact that directly Nebuchadnezzar was dead, and they were ousted from their positions, the decline and fall of Babylon set in. A succession of five kings over a period of only twenty three years, the Persian enemy hammering at the gates; then the dramatic fall of Babylon so eloquently portrayed by Jeremiah fifty years before and Isaiah nearly two centuries before. These are facts of history which cannot be disputed, and the logical conclusion is that Daniel and his friends were in the positions they occupied by the will and providence of God. Having been thus appointed they did right in exercising to the fullest extent, in harmony with the principles of Divine law, the earthly powers with which they had been entrusted. The fact that they served a pagan king and ruled an idolatrous people made no difference to that. They let their personal light shine, they did not at any time compromise their own principles or beliefs, and they did with their might what their hands found to do.

In all of that there may well be a lesson for us to-day. All too often the argument is advanced that because of the inherent corruption of the world around us, Christians should withdraw from all participation in its affairs, especially in regard to the occupation of positions of influence or authority. It does not always follow; it may be that the inscrutable decrees of God require that we or at least some amongst us, take up some such position and administer it as did Daniel in his time, and Joseph before him. "*Ye are the salt of the earth*" said Jesus, but He surely never intended us to assume the salt was not to be used. We can only be the salt of the earth if we are fulfilling, in society, the function which salt fulfils in food; and to do that it has to be mixed with the food. "*In the world, but not of it*" says the Apostle. Some Christians are neither of the world nor in it, and that fact is not likely to stand them in good stead when the time comes for our Lord to determine who, by intimate acquaintance and experience with the needs and failings of fallen humanity are to be appointed to the work of leading men back to God.

"As "chief of the governors of the wise men" (ch. 2. 48) and "master of the magicians" (ch. 4. 9) Daniel became the official head of the entire Babylonian priestly system, which itself controlled every branch of knowledge and learning practised in the

land. He was supreme High Priest of the nation. Religious worship, education, the compilation and care of the national records, were all under his control. The temples, the schools, the libraries, all were his responsibility. All this, too, whilst he was still in his twenties. It was in the third year of Jehoiakim that he was taken to Babylon at probably about eighteen or nineteen years of age. He received three years' training before appearing before the king early in the sixth year. Nebuchadnezzar's father died at the time of the Battle of Carchemish, which was in Jehoiakim's fourth year, and this was the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign (Jer. 25. 1.) That must have been towards the end of Jehoiakim's fourth year so that Nebuchadnezzar's "second year," (Dan. 2: 1) in which he dreamed of the image, would extend nearly to the end of Jehoiakim's sixth year. Hence there is time for Daniel's three years' training to have been completed and several more months to elapse before he again stood before the king and interpreted the dream. There is no need to imagine, as some do, that "second year" in Dan. 2.1 is an error and casts doubt upon the accuracy of Daniel's account. (Some commentators on this account suggest that ch. 2. 1 is a copyists error for "twelfth year" but there is no evidence whatever for this.) The incidents of Daniel's life and all the events connected therewith can only be made to fit together on the basis that, as the Book of Daniel indicates, he attained his eminent position before the king thus early in life.

Daniel was now Supreme Pontiff—official Babylonian title "Rab-Mag" — of all the religious systems of Babylon. This is the title which was afterwards taken over by the Popes of Rome and Latinised into "Pontifex Maximus." As such he controlled the magicians, sorcerers, soothsayers, astrologers, wise men and Chaldeans, in addition to the priests of the various and many gods of Babylon. Each of these orders had distinct and separate functions; thanks to modern research and the discovery of abundant written records it is possible to-day to form a tolerably correct picture of what these men were and what they professed to accomplish.

The "magicians" (*khartumin*) were men whose office was to repulse and exorcise demons and evil spirits by means of spells and incantations. They carried wands of office and were popularly supposed to have the power of working miracles. If the crops failed, a man's cattle died, or a whirlwind blew a house down, the magician was called in to exorcise the demon who was thus venting his spite against the unfortunate family concerned.

Closely allied to these were the sorcerers (*kashaphim*) who were utterers of magic words having the mystic power of persuading the gods to grant favours to their devotees. The man who desired some natural advantage, such as the gift of children, or the removal of an offending neighbour, sought the services of the sorcerer, who would know just what secret magical words to utter to constrain the appropriate god to perform the required service.

The "soothsayers" (*gazrim*) of Dan. 2. 27 were diviners who professed ability to pronounce upon the probable outcome of any human circumstance by the aid of laws which they alone understood. If a new venture was to be undertaken or the king proposed to launch a new war, the soothsayer was consulted in much the same way as some people go to fortune-tellers to-day. The selected dignitary had several means of arriving at his conclusions, a favourite one being the inspection of the liver of an animal sacrificed for the purpose. (An example of one of these soothsayer's "stock-in-trade" is now in the British Museum. It is a baked clay model of a sheep's liver marked out in fifty squares. In each square is inscribed the portent for that particular spot.) In the divining ceremony, the liver from the sacrificed animal was examined and if any spot was diseased or showed some abnormality the portent for that particular spot was pronounced as an omen for the venture or project under review. Reference to this form of soothsaying in Daniel's own time is made in Ezek. 21. 21, where we are told that the king of Babylon, (Nebuchadnezzar) uncertain which of two ways to take, "looked in the liver."

Next come avowed occultists, the "astrologers" (*assaphim*) of Dan. 1. 20. The term is a mis-translation. These men held communion with evil spirits with the object of gaining information not obtainable in any other way. Their methods and practices were the same as those of spiritists in every age.

The "wise men" (*khakamin*) of Dan. 2. 18 and elsewhere were really the medical fraternity. Disease and sickness was popularly considered to be the work of demons and hence magical practices to drive out the evil spirit responsible was a large part of a physician's stock-in-trade. Prayers and incantations to the gods also came in for attention. Nevertheless true medical knowledge was not altogether lacking, and the medical works which have survived show that a very fair understanding of many diseases was the rule; the names of over five hundred medicinal drugs have been identified in the Babylonian pharmacopeia. Their more intimate

contact with the common people brought them into more immediate touch with many everyday problems and hence, as is often the case with medical men today—or at least was the case before the advent of the Welfare State with its nationalised "Health Service"—the local medical man was considered an important and knowledgeable member of the community whose standing and authority in any matter of civic or social interest was undisputed.

Chaldeans ("kasdim") was the name originally given to the primitive people of the land and in any other part of the Bible preserves this sense. In the Book of Daniel, however, it is limited to a certain class of men within the nation; men who formed a kind of quasi-secret society which preserved the lore and traditions of the past, and exercised power and influence behind the scenes—a kind of "Hidden Hand." This caste of Chaldeans was the senior of all the orders of society which have just been described.

On the purely religious side Daniel must have had a bewildering array of gods and goddesses, each with their temples and priests, with which to contend. First of all came the Babylonian Trinity, Ea, god of the sea and supreme god; Anu, god of heaven; Bel or Marduk (one is the Semitic and one the Sumerian name for the same god) god of the earth. Marduk was the son of Ea, was known as the "Wisdom of Ea," and was supposed to have created the earth and man upon it—a notable anticipation of the later Scriptural presentation of the Son of God Who is also the Word or Wisdom of God and by Whom all things were made. The chief goddess was Ishtar, Queen of Heaven (Ashtaroth to the Syrians and Venus in classical mythology). Another important deity was Sin the Moon-god, patron deity of Ur, Abraham's birthplace, and incidentally the source of the name Mount Sinai and the Wilderness of Sin through which Israel travelled at the time of the Exodus. Both mountain and wilderness were named in honour of the Moon-god.

Then came a number of lesser gods, seven messenger-gods or "archangels," an indeterminate number of "Watchers," three hundred spirits of the heavens, three hundred spirits of the earth, then angels and demons, good and evil, innumerable. One can imagine Daniel at times in earnest conversation with King Nebuchadnezzar, telling him of the hollowness and falsity of all this mass of superstition and corruption, and endeavouring to turn his mind to the glory of the one incorruptible God, in whom all men live, and move, and have their being. (Acts 17. 28.)

Why did Daniel accept such a position, when every instinct of his being must have risen in pro-

tests at the sights he would inevitably witness and the ceremonies he must needs allow? The answer is simple. God had called him to this position, and he was able to discern enough of God's purpose to know that God is all-wise and that some definite reason lay behind that call.

The very fact of his high position was sufficient to release him from any necessity to condone or attend the idolatrous ceremonies. There were many faiths in Babylon—one for every god—but Daniel, as chief, was above them all. Who can doubt that, in all the majesty and dignity of his exalted position, he prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem daily, as is recorded of him at a later time in his life (Dan. 6; 10.) Who can doubt that he assembled for worship with his fellow-countrymen of like faith in some plain, dignified building where God was worshipped in spirit and in truth. The known character of Daniel is sufficient guarantee to us that his official position only served to show up the more prominently to all men the faith that was in him and to give glory to the God he served.

Nebuchadnezzar had already admitted Daniel's God to a place among the gods of Babylon. Moreover, he later on publicly proclaimed Him as being the greatest and most powerful of all gods (Dan. 3. 29 and 4. 35.) Hence Daniel could with perfect propriety profess the worship of the God of heaven just as other notables might select Bel, or Nebo, or Nergal, as their own deity. The officials of the court, and the common people too, would not be likely to quarrel with the personal views of a man so high in favour with the king as was Daniel; and neither would the priests of the various temples, while the king lived. They would of course bide their time until a king more favourable to the native priesthood should ascend the throne.

It might have been, then, for twenty years or more, that the lad, now grown to middle age, administered his charge with loyalty both to his God and to his king. Beholding, as he did, every day, the sensuousness and idolatry of the God-dishonouring system in which his life was being spent, he must often have cried out in his heart "*How long, O Lord, how long?*"

But the ways of God require slow ages for their full accomplishment, and it must needs be that for many weary years more the mystery of iniquity would and still continues to work, until in God's own time comes the day when "*the law of the Lord shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" and the Lord as it were arousing Himself at long last, shall "*take away the veil that is spread over all nations.*"

(To be continued)

RESURRECTION POWER IN JESUS

C. T. Russell

A doctrinal talk

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life."—John 11: 25.

Resurrection power resided in our Lord Jesus because in the Divine plan it was He who was to redeem the world by the sacrifice of Himself and consequently to restore it. This included not merely an awakening from death, but also such vitalization as would overcome the dying processes of disease and ultimately bring the revived one up, up, to the full perfection of being originally enjoyed by our first parents in Eden, forfeited because of disobedience under the sentence, "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" (Ezek. 18. 4.) This is the most important feature of all the plan of God revealed to us, and if we discern it clearly it assists us in the understanding of every other feature of that plan. We must see that death is the absence of life, the loss of life—that it is a penalty upon our race because we are judged unworthy of life.

All references to a future life imply a redemption from the curse or sentence which came upon us because of the original sin. The cancellation of the debt or sentence, however, does not revive or restore mankind, but it does remove the legal barrier to man's restitution to all that was lost. Hence it is that our Saviour's work is to follow. First, it is to be a redemptive work: the redemption was accomplished at His first advent—though He has used this Gospel age as the period in which to accept also some of the redeemed ones as His members, His Bride, His Church, under Him as their Head, to be His associates in the great work of restitution which belongs to the next age.

Second, restitution is to be our Lord's work at His Second Advent, when His Church, His members, will have been selected, polished, prepared, glorified and associated with Him in glory, honour and immortality. Then the full work of the redemption will be granted to the world of mankind—not by raising them from the dead to absolute perfection in an instant, but by first awakening them from the sleep of death, and then, under the disciplines and instructions of the Millennial age, lifting them gradually in harmony with their own wills and co-operation, step by step, out of sin and death conditions into life eternal, as they may respond to these mercies and opportunities. The disobedient, being counted unworthy of life eternal, will be cut off in the Second Death.

The words of the Text, although specially applicable to our Lord in the future, at the beginning of His Millennial reign, when He will abolish death by lifting mankind out of its power, out of the great prison-house and out of the weaknesses that are associated with the fallen condition, nevertheless were applicable also in some degree at the First Advent. True, our Lord's own sacrifice was not finished until he died at Calvary, and the sacrifices of the members of his body would not be finished for centuries; but when our Lord at thirty years of age made a full consecration of himself to do the Father's will, to lay down his life, etc., that Divine plan which He there undertook to carry out included all these subsequent features—the completion of his own sacrifice and that of his completed body, of the Church.

That our heavenly Father so regarded his sacrifice was evidenced by the impartation of the Holy Spirit, which anointing upon him constituted him the Messiah of the Christ, and the hope of the Church, which is his body, as well as ultimately the hope of all things. Hence, since our Lord had never abrogated that covenant of consecration, sacrifice, since he was still in line with the Covenant, and since the Father still so recognized him, it was proper for him to think and act and speak from that standpoint, which not only looked down to the end of his own course with faith, but also looked down to the end of this Gospel age with confidence, and to the end of the Millennial age with assurance that all the good purposes of God would finally be accomplished in and through Him. From this standpoint, therefore, He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" He knew that the sacrificial work He had undertaken would secure to him the privilege of being the Life-Giver to the world, and that in the exercise of that right He would raise up not only from the tomb, but completely out of death conditions up to perfection, all who would come unto the Father through him—all who would have the right desire of heart to return to loving obedience to the Creator.

This present lesson follows the Sermon on the Mount—the thought evidently in the minds of Matthew and Luke in thus arranging matters being to show that He who had given the wonderful teachings on the mount was fully attested by the miraculous powers shown to reside in him. He had re-

turned to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, the home city of Peter and others, and now the home city of Jesus, since He had been spurned and rejected at Nazareth.

Soon afterwards (R.V.) our Lord, the disciples and quite a multitude of followers were approaching the little city of Nain, when forth from the gateway of the city came a funeral procession, a widowed mother and mourning friends, pall-bearers, and a bier or litter on which lay a dead young man, the widow's only son. Our Lord was touched with compassion as he saw the widow's tears, and He said to her, "Weep not," and, approaching, the pall-bearers stood still, and Jesus touched the bier and said, "Young man, I say unto thee arise." The dead man stood up and began to speak. In a manufactured story it would be considered the proper thing to suppose that the widow fell at the Lord's feet, praised Him in a loud voice, and that the whole multitude would join in acclaiming Him; but in the simple narrative of our lesson, "there came a fear upon all" — a realization that God was very near to them as represented in the power of Jesus. The multitude glorified God, not with loud hosannas, but with a reverential appreciation of the fact that a great Prophet, a great Teacher, was in their midst, and that God was thus with him, saying, "God hath visited His people."

Their anticipations were quite correct: Jesus was the great Prophet, the representative of the Father and of His favour. And yet how long the test of faith! How long the period necessary for the raising up of the members of the body of Christ, and until the heavenly Father's plan should thus be fully developed and the times of restitution fully ushered in at the Second Advent of the Lord. Our Redeemer's work of healing and of awakening from the sleep of death were merely premonitions or fore-shadowings or illustrations of the great universal blessings coming to mankind through the merit of his obedience even unto death as our sin offering. No wonder the message of Jesus and his work spread over all parts of the country.

A greater work was being accomplished by our Lord's miracles than was apparent at the time. We are inclined to be surprised that only about "five hundred brethren" were gathered during the Lord's ministry—that only that number were counted worthy of the name brethren and of the privilege of meeting our Lord after his resurrection during the forty days. However, we may reasonably suppose that under the new dispensation, under the ministries of the apostles from Pentecost onward

a large fruitage was found to our Lord's ministry. For instance, we would think it very probable that this widow of Nain and her son would ultimately become followers of Jesus, and that others in that multitude who witnessed the miracle and who were in proper condition of heart would therein find a sufficiency for a foundation to their faith in the Messiah. We cannot doubt either that after "the middle wall of partition" had been broken down, and Cornelius the first Gentile convert had been brought into faith-fellowship, the centurion, whose servant was healed and who manifested every way so noble a character, would be one who would be specially susceptible to the message of grace and truth. One lesson we may learn from this is that we must not at once look for the full fruitage to our own efforts in the Lord's service. We must be content to labour and to wait, and must realize that the Lord himself is behind his Word, his message, making the selections of those whom He esteems worthy of joint-heirship in his Kingdom. Another thought would be that there may be worldly persons who may now come to some knowledge of the Truth and yet not be blessed fully by it—who will by and by, under the trials and difficulties of the time of trouble, or later on during the Millennial age, be profited through our ministries of the Truth and our present endeavours to glorify the Lord in our bodies and spirits which are his.

Let us then scatter the good seed everywhere as we have opportunity, for we know not which shall prosper, this or that. Sometimes that upon which we bestowed the greatest zeal and effort proves fruitless, and sometimes that from which we expected the least proves very fruitful. Let us remember that the Lord will reward us according to our zeal or efforts, and not according to results; and indeed the chief results He seeks are in ourselves, in the development of the graces of his Spirit, which will manifest themselves in so many ways in connection with our love for him, for his message, for the brethren, yea, for the whole world of mankind, even for our enemies.

Our Lord's ministries of healing lasted but a few years and reached comparatively few of the Jewish people, but since He ascended He has been carrying on a work of healing on a still higher plane—through His disciples whom He acknowledges as "members of His body." (1 Cor. 21: 27.) Operating through these, many eyes of understanding have been opened, many deaf ears have been unstopped, many morally halt and lame have been cured, and many have been raised from the dead in the sense that the Apostle refers to when He says, "You

hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins"; and again, "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above"; and again, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

If we are inclined to marvel that the Jews rejected Jesus after seeing His mighty works, what might be said of us if for any reason, we become doubters or unfaithful to Him who has so clearly spoken to us from heaven, by whose stripes we have

been healed and who have realized Him to be indeed the resurrection and the life?

But, we have more confidence in each other than to surmise such an unworthy ending to our call, such an unworthy response to the mercies and favours which we enjoy at the hands of Him who loved us and bought us with His precious blood. Let us be faithful, let us remember that the resurrection work begun in us as New Creatures is the one which is to be completed by the grace of God in the First Resurrection, when in a moment of change we shall be like our Lord, see Him as He is and share His glory.

THE FIRST PSALM

An exposition

A. O. Hudson

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

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

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

The purpose of this Psalm is the declaring of the fundamental principle upon which God has designed His creation, viz., that those things which are right, just, in harmony with His own character, shall en-

sure for ever, and that which is evil, unjust, out of harmony with the character of God, although it may subsist for a time, must and will inevitably pass away and out of existence. Divine creation is so ordained that nothing which is inherently evil can subsist indefinitely. It contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction and must eventually come to its end. Hence we have the law propounded by Paul in Rom. 6. 23 "The wages of sin is death"—death being the antithesis of life, the opposite to conscious existence.

The Psalm eulogises the happy state of the righteous man, both now and hereafter, and accredits the maintenance of his righteous state to his observance of Divine Law. Against this it places in contrast the unhappy position of the sinful, and declares in no uncertain terms that the end of that way is desolation, oblivion, non-existence. The fact that God's whole plan of development for man is based upon law is stressed, and rightly stressed here. It is when this fact is realised that we find ready to our hands a yardstick by means of which we can measure the relative values of differing interpretations of Scripture.

"Blessed is the man" says verse 1 "*who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*" This word "blessed" is capable of deeper shades of meaning than the A.V. suggests. "*How happy the man . . .*" is Rotherham's rendering, and Young is even more emphatic with "*O the happiness of that one who . . .*" It is significant that "happiness" is the first quality to be mentioned in the Psalms; and characteristic of God!

His eternal purpose in creation is to the promotion of happiness amongst His creatures, and that happiness is only to be achieved by complete harmony with God. Religion is not a thing to be kept apart from daily life and practised solely on Sundays; every affair and activity of every day can be woven into the fabric of one's personal communion with God and sanctified thereby. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8. 28). "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8. 10). This is the normal condition of human life, from which men have fallen away, and only as they come back to this standing of absolute dedication of life and its activities to God can they find true happiness.

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Vs. 2.) Here is the great principle; we must be students of the ways of God and learn to understand the principles upon which He has founded creation. The term "law" here does not confine itself merely to a set of commandments with their negative prohibitions—"Thou shalt not . . ."—but extends to those basic principles of Divine creation which lie at the root of every code of laws. We must learn *why* righteousness is desirable and sin to be abhorred and eschewed; *why* God is dealing now only with the disciples of Christ, the "Church" and will turn to convert the whole world only when the next Age, the Millennial Age, has dawned; *why* there is one call to a spiritual salvation and destiny, and another to an earthly, and every individual perfectly satisfied with his eventual lot, whether in heaven or upon earth. We shall not attain to complete knowledge of these things whilst in the flesh, but we can learn sufficient to make us the efficient servants and ambassadors of our king.

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

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

week faith, and oftimes it is during the silence of the night that our deepest revelations come.

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

There is a peculiar fitness in the association of trees with rivers. In hot countries trees are planted on the banks of rivers and streams in order to screen the water from the solar heat and to check evaporation. The trees thrust down their roots into the moist soil and are themselves sustained by the same waters that they are conserving for the use and benefit of men. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" (Psa. 46. 4). Every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus during this Gospel Age is himself a "tree" nourished by that river which is the knowledge of God revealed through His Word, the holy Scriptures; and each such follower is by his Christian life and devotion helping to conserve that Word against the coming Millennial Day when its benefits will be made free to all mankind. "The Spirit and the Bride say 'come' . . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22. 17).

Now we come to the other side of the picture. "*The ungodly are not so but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*" (Vs. 4.) This likening of the wilfully wicked man and the hopelessly evil thing to chaff which is doomed to be scattered and lost is definite in the Scriptures. "Let them be as the chaff before the wind" says the Psalmist in Psa. 35. 5 "and let the angel of the Lord destroy them". "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40. 8). "How oft" says Job (21. 17-18) "is the candle of the wicked put out! How oft

cometh their destruction upon them! . . . they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away". David continues in the same strain (Psa. 37. 1-2) "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb", and again (Psa. 5. 4-5) "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish (properly 'worthless') shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity". And this, which is said of individuals, is equally true of every evil institution which cumpers the earth, this aspect being seen in vision when Daniel interpreted the king's dream and described how all the might and power of those empires which stand in the way of Messiah's Kingdom will be destroyed by the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" and how every vestige of them is to be scattered like the "chaff of the summer threshing-floors" (Dan. 2. 35).

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

"Therefore" says the inspired writer with conviction "the ungodly shall not stand in the judg-

ment, nor sinners in the congregation (assembly) of the righteous." (Vs. 5.) There is a direct link with the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of mankind during the Millennial Age here, for the word rendered "stand" is one that has the meaning of standing firm or being set up. The New Testament word for resurrection is "*anastasis*" which means a re-standing or standing up again. "There shall be a resurrection (*anastasis*) of the dead" said Paul (Acts 24. 15) "both of the just and unjust." "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment . . . the men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment" said Jesus (Luke 11. 31-32) and again "All that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto resurrection to life (*Greek*) and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection to judgment (*eis anastasin kriseus*). This verse in Psalm 1 is clearly a reference to the fact that, although "sinners" will in fact be restored to life in the Millennial Age, no sinner will "stand" in that judgment; he will either cease to be a sinner and so enter into life, or, remaining a sinner, reap the logical consequence of that choice as expressed in the concluding words of the Psalm "the way of the ungodly shall perish."

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

"Then said Thomas"

"Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11. 16.) The Jews were seeking Jesus to stone Him, when news came of the death of Lazarus, and He set out to go to Bethany despite the entreaties of the disciples, who were apprehensive for his safety. It was then that Thomas came out in such a favourable light. He was the first to express his desire to follow Jesus even though it seemed to be into certain death. Because of his refusal to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus until he could see his Lord in His pre-crucifixion likeness, he has become known in later times as "doubting Thomas"; maybe the slight is unde-

served, for in this incident his loyalty to Jesus shows up very strongly. He was prepared to take the lead of the others in following Jesus into death. Perhaps it was the same intense loyalty which forbade him believe until he had identified the wound-prints in hands and feet. If so, it seems clear that loyalty is not enough if it is not accompanied by spiritual discernment. "Blessed are they who, *having not seen, have believed*" (i.e. have not seen with the natural sight, but have done so with the spiritual sight). Thomas is reputed to have carried the Gospel to Mesopotamia and then to India, where the memory of his name is cherished to this day.

Lilies in the Valley

poems of hope, faith and certainty.

Our Father's Care

Our Heavenly Father, as Thy saints press on,
Towards their eternal home beyond the skies.
Pilgrims and strangers in a hostile land,
Thy loving hands their every need supplies;
Food, raiment, shelter, promised for each day,
And angel hosts to guard them on their way.

Within Thy Holy Place they dwell secure,
No evil can come nigh, no foes invade;
The shining walls protect on every side,
No pestilence, no plague can make afraid,
While all around the stormy winds increase
Jehovah keeps His own in perfect peace.

With linen garments thou hast covered them
Which garments cost the life of Thy dear Son,
On these white robes they work embroid'ry fine
With patient careful stitches one by one,
Till all complete in golden glory shown,
The borrowed robe is now their very own.

Here in this Harvest time Thou hast prepared
Thy table full of food, both rare and sweet;
The richest milk for all Thy tender babes,
And for Thy stalwart men Thy strongest meat;
With bread of life Thy table dost abound,
And here the living waters may be found.

Of bitter herbs and honey, there is spread
A full supply that they may stronger grow;
And wine to strengthen them for days to come,
And oil to cause their cup to overflow.
Oh, who could lack with such a rich supply
Our Father, here we'll feast until we die.

If we should wander Lord, from that abode,
If we should soil our robe, or wrinkle it,
Oh, let us hear and heed Thy warning voice—
"Ye cannot come within till ye are fit."
Help us to cleanse our robes, our steps retrace,
That we may dwell within Thy Secret Place.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Continued from page 74

who have not yet applied for same are desired to do so at once, to the Accommodation Secretary, Bro. S. Naylor, 35, Clare Gardens, Barking, Essex. A baptismal service has been arranged in connection with the convention and any brethren who would like to take advantage of this opportunity to symbolise their consecration are requested to write Bro. Charlton about this, and he will furnish all details and instructions.

* * *

B.F.U. Constitution

A copy of the Constitution of the Bible Fellowship Union, giving details of its Executive Council and financial arrangements, its aims and scope of its work, is available to anyone interested on request addressed to the Secretary.

Reading Conference

Brethren are reminded of the Conference organised by "Maran-Atha" and to be held at the Rosehill Conference Centre, Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berks, for the week 18th to 24th August. Details are available from the Conference Secretary, Bro. P. Scott, 4 Kingsmead, Cuffley, Herts., to whom applications for room reservations should be addressed (and at this stage as quickly as possible is desirable). This is the first occasion on which friends in this country will have had the opportunity of meeting together in session for an entire week. Programmes are now available and may be obtained from Bro. Scott. The all-in charge for the week is £5 15s. 6d. with appropriate rates for anyone wishing to stay for the week-end only.



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

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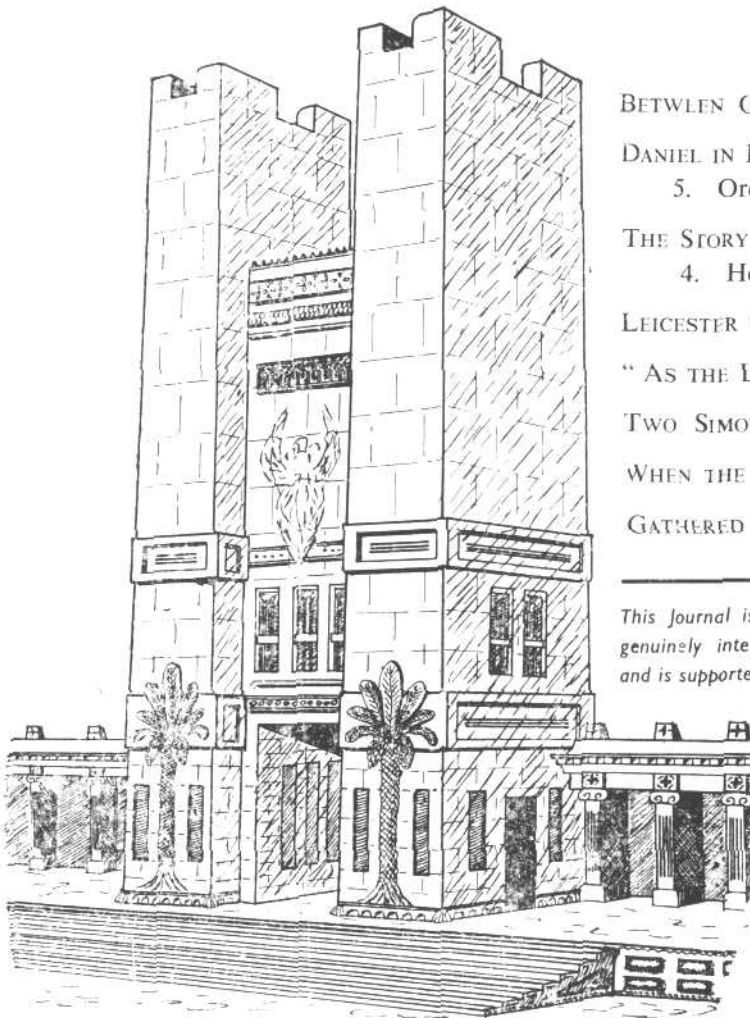
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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 entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

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

London Convention

The London Convention held at Conway Hall, Holborn, over the August Bank Holiday period was a time of very happy fellowship and uplift. In addition to a full panel of British speakers the programme included Bros. J. E. Dawson, R. R. Hollister and W. J. Siekman, all of U.S.A. and their addresses were all much appreciated by those present. Messages of greetings were sent to the parallel convention in progress at Labour Hall, Ilford, (Aldersbrook Church), and the Unity Convention also in progress at Greencastle, U.S.A., and messages were received from Kirchlengern Convention, Germany, besides British friends at Leicester, Rugby and elsewhere. It is hoped that a summary of the addresses will appear in our next issues for the interest of those who were not able to be present.

* * *

Caxton Hall

At the time of going to press no further Saturday meetings are actually fixed; if no inset slip announcing such meetings is found in this issue it is to be taken that no meeting has been found possible for September and in that case the October issue will carry information regarding future arrangements.

* * *

Tune Book

The Midlands friends responsible for publishing the tune edition of the "Bible Students Hymnal" are still able to supply copies at 16s. 6d each post free and friends who have not yet secured copies and would like them are invited to apply to Bro. G. E. Chilvers, The Haven, Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warwicks. The small printed supplement containing words only of the new hymns added to the tune edition, for inserting in the old "words" edition, is also still available at 6d. each

J. T. Read Recordings

It is generally known that Bro. J. T. Read of U.S.A. has recorded a number of sacred songs on gramophone records and a number of these have been made available via the Pastoral Bible Institute. Some enquiries have been received from friends in this country and for the benefit of all interested we would like to say that these records can be obtained by our brethren at less than cost price, due to certain gifts to the original cost having been made by well-wishers. Application should be made to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, who holds the stock of these records in this country. Full details are quoted as follows.

"This Ministry in Song consists of a beautiful sturdy little album containing five R.C.A. Victor Phonograph Records, 45 R.P.M. Flexible Extended Play, on which are recorded seventeen sacred songs sung by Bro. John T. Read. The original intention was to offer these at cost, but contributions have been received which enable them to be offered at 21s. per album, post free."

Gone from us

Bro. C. E. Dickinson (*Lincoln*)

Sis. C. Giddings (*Mill Hill*)

Sis. A. Sharples (*Bury*)

Bro. R. E. West (*Coventry*)

Bro. J. Wooley (*Pontypool*)

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

*The story of a great
man's faith*

A. O. Hudson

5. Ideal by Fire

The story of the three Hebrews who were cast alive into a fiery furnace on account of their refusal to fall down before a pagan idol is one of the classics of Biblical literature. The miracle is so apparently marvellous that men have not hesitated to put the story down as a figurative presentation of Israel's faithfulness to the one true God in all the afflictions suffered at the hands of her Greek and Roman oppressors. But the story in Daniel is older by far than the empires of Greece and Rome. It bears within itself the evidence of its own authenticity. This thing really did happen. These men really were cast into a burning fiery furnace, and did come out unscathed.

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

A great many stirring things had happened since the previous event, the dream of the image, recorded by Daniel. Between chapters 2 and 3 lie some twenty momentous years. About five years after the dream came the death of Jehoiakim and the carrying away of many Israelites into Babylon, as described in 2 Kings 24, Jer 22.18 and Jer. 36. It was at this time that Ezekiel, a young man of twenty-five, was taken there and lived among the Jewish captives at Tel-Abib. Jehoiachin began his three month's reign and because of disloyalty to the king of Babylon was taken to that city and imprisoned until the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Eleven years later came the final catastrophe. Zedekiah, also disloyal to his suzerain, who all this time had, as the "head of gold," held the Divine commission of rulership over the nations, saw the Babylonian armies lay siege to Jerusalem for the last time. This was the final taking into captivity; the city was taken and the Temple demolished. The Book of Lamentations was written to commemorate this disaster in Israel's history. Obadiah and Habakkuk prophesied at

this time, both in Judea. Jeremiah was in Judea also, and in disgrace with king Zedekiah and his court for his continued insistence that God required them to submit to the Babylonian conqueror. Jeremiah's loyalty to God brought him recognition from an unexpected quarter. According to Jer. 39.11, when the city was at last captured, "*Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do to him even as he shall say to thee.*" Jeremiah eventually went to Egypt and died there (so far as is known. The thesis advanced by some to the effect that he afterwards made his way to Ireland and ended his days in the Emerald Isle rests upon arguments which have no place in this treatise). One wonders if Nebuchadnezzar's concern for Jeremiah was inspired in the first place by Daniel, who, away in Babylon, must have remembered his old friend and teacher and used his influence with the king to ensure his safety.

This third chapter is written in a style quite unlike that of the rest of the book. There is a fulsomeness and exaggeration in the use of words, a grandiloquent and somewhat monotonous repetition of phrases, which is not at all characteristic of the reverent, straightforward literary style of Daniel. This story reads for all the world like the native Babylonian literature of which so many examples are still in existence. It might be that here we have the Babylonian official record of the happening, originally written in cuneiform characters on a clay tablet, and copied from the official archives by Daniel for incorporation in his book. There is a strong argument here against the assertion of those critics who brand the book as a kind of "historical fiction" written several centuries after Nebuchadnezzar's time.

We do not know the precise nature of this image of gold which the king set up in the plain of Dura. It has been suggested that it was a replica of the metallic image seen previously in the dream which Daniel interpreted. That is improbable—had it been so, the king would have been much more likely to have constructed it of the four metals he saw in that dream, gold, silver, bronze and iron. There is greater reason for thinking that it was an image of Nebuchadnezzar's favourite deity Bel. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus says that there was a golden image of Bel forty

feet high in the Temple at Babylon, and Herodotus also mentions a similar image. Such images were usually hollow, for the ancients were expert at casting hollow statues in metal. The sixty cubits height of the Biblical image is equivalent to an English measure of fifty-five feet, all objects of gold being measured by a special cubit of a little under eleven inches, and since the width is given as six cubits, or five feet six, and the height of a human figure of that width could not exceed about twenty-five feet, it would seem that the figure was placed upon a lofty pedestal so that it could be seen at a distance, and Daniel records the full height.

It is thought that the Plain of Dura was on the south side of the city, alongside the river. Such a site for this colossal statue would render it a prominent object to be seen by seamen and travellers as they came up the river from the sea, creating an impression something like that now afforded by the sight of the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York Harbour. In this fashion Bel, the patron deity of Babylon, would be honoured in the eyes of all men in front of his own city. The proclamation to "all peoples, nations and languages" to fall down and worship at the sound of the music must be understood, of course, as applying only to the vast concourse of people attending the ceremony. Since Babylon always held numbers of people from other nations, gathered there in connection with their trading enterprises, the proclamation was literally true. The sun blazed down from the clear sky upon a vast crowd embracing members of almost every known nationality on earth. Native Babylonians, city dwellers and country labourers, rubbed shoulders with captives from other lands, Jews and Syrians and Elamites, free-roving sons of the desert, Arabs and Sabeans, traders and merchants from Phoenicia and India; an assemblage of black and brown, yellow and white skins; the whole making a colourful mass of humanity. Near the image stood governmental officials and the various orders of priesthoods, amongst the former being the three Hebrew men who, according to Dan. 2.49, had been appointed to positions of authority in the realm of Babylon. In all that vast concourse there were two, and two only, who were not expected to bow down when the signal was given. One was Nebuchadnezzar, the Head of the State, and the other was Daniel, the Chief of all the priesthoods and wise men. According to the Babylon mythology, these two men between them represented the heavenly powers, and could not be called upon to participate in an act of obeisance which was incumbent upon all others.

The dedication ceremony proceeded, the herald cried his announcement and, doubtless after a

long succession of prayers and incantations in which the priests of all the leading gods had their part, the climax of the ritual was reached. Music rose upon the air and the whole vast concourse, taking its cue from the officials near the image, prostrated in adoration. It must have been a peculiarly gratifying moment for the king, for Nebuchadnezzar is known to have been especially interested in the introduction of public congregational worship amongst his subjects—a thing unknown in previous times.

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

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

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

So they were bound in all their official robes and insignia of office and cast immediately into the burning fiery furnace; and the heat thereof

was so great that the men who cast them in themselves died from the flames and heat to which they had perforce exposed themselves.

The furnace was probably one that was normally used for the smelting of iron or copper from crude ore, differing very little from a modern blast furnace. The extraction and working of metals goes back very far in the history of man, the Bible telling us that it was practised by the antediluvians, for Tubal-cain, of the race of Cain, in the eighth generation from Adam was the first man to work in copper and iron (Gen. 4.22). The blast furnace, in which metallic ore is smelted by intense heat in order to extract the pure metal, is a very old invention and relics of such furnaces dating back two, three or four thousand years have been found in Mesopotamia and India, and were evidently in use in Egypt, for they are depicted on certain tomb wall paintings there. Reference to Egyptian blast furnaces is made in three places in the Old Testament (Deut. 4.20, I Kings 8.51, Jer. 11.4).

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

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

The accuracy of the narrative is very striking here. The furnace was heated to seven times its usual heat. One can picture the bellows men straining at their levers and blowing up the white-hot mass to a temperature far exceeding the usual. From the top of the furnace, probably fifteen or twenty feet above the ground, the flames streamed out with a deafening blast. The Scripture says "they fell down bound into the midst of the furnace." They were carried up to the

platform around the top and thrown into the yawning opening, falling down to the bed of burning fuel beneath. But, say our translators rather quaintly, "because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men" who cast them in. Either they were overcome by the excessive heat at the furnace mouth, and fell in after their victims and were destroyed, or, what is perhaps more likely, the flames streaming out ignited their clothing and they were burned to death before help could be brought.

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

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

How the story must have run like wildfire through the Jewish communities in Babylon and at Tel-Abib, fifty miles to the south, where the prophet Ezekiel was conducting his own mission. What a wave of renewed confidence must have swept over the exiles as this great manifestation of the power of their God was added to the signs

and wonders which had gone before. The king's decree must have followed very quickly, proclaiming penalties upon any who spoke against the Most High God, the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, for, said the decree somewhat wonderingly "there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (vs 29).

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

There is a New Testament parallel to this story. It is enshrined in the imagery of the Book of Revelation, where the seer tells of the whole world united in the worship of another image, the "Image of the Beast". All who do not worship the image, he hears, are to be put to death. The only ones to refrain from such worship are the "servants of God," who have been "sealed in their foreheads". In the outcome, as in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, there is intervention from Heaven. A Rider upon a white horse comes forth and gives battle to all the powers of evil, and the Image, now branded a False Prophet in the eyes of all men (compare Rev. 13. 14-18 with Rev. 19:20) is cast into the fiery lake and destroyed. There are various detailed interpretations of all this symbolism but the main tenor of the vision is commonly agreed. In the end of the Age there will arise to challenge the incoming Kingdom of God a final and supreme system of power to which nearly all the world will ignorantly give support, the only exceptions being those who have been "sealed" with an intelligent understanding of the Divine Plan, particularly as regards the significance of these events, and who are earnest and devoted disciples of the Master. These will pass through fiery experiences and may suffer loss and even death but even so will emerge spiritually unscathed.

And in the next scene they are shown as riding forth behind their Leader and Captain to establish upon the ruins of that system of which the Image has been the head a new one based upon love and righteousness, speaking peace to the people and ruling the nations with a shepherding rod. The final defeat of the enemies of righteousness at the end of this Age is shown here, and we can as readily accept the assurance of Divine intervention in the world's extremity at this time as the fact of Divine intervention on that momentous day at the time of King Nebuchadnezzar.

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

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

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.

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

Lessons from the life of a stalwart man of God

D. Nadal

4. Holiness unto the Lord

In fifty-two days the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt because "the people had a mind to work". How much can be accomplished when those who labour do so willingly, joyfully and purposely. It must have been a wonderful moment when the last brick was laid, the doors were all hung and the city could once more resume its function as the centre of national life. Good though it was for God's people to dwell in safety within the city wall, and delightful as that wall was to look upon, Nehemiah's great work did not stop at that point. It now remained to be seen whether the zeal and co-operation engendered by patriotism for their national heritage could be carried over into everyday life.

Jerusalem was the city of worship, and its restoration meant that the voice of prayer and praise could once again be heard in the holy place. The greater work of restoring the ancient faith of their fathers now began. Israel had to be reconciled to the Lord if they were to enjoy His blessing under their covenant with Him. They had to understand and keep His law if they wished to have His care and protection. So Nehemiah, having completed the first phase of his work, called upon his colleague, Ezra the scribe, to read and teach the Jews from their holy Scriptures. The Levitical priesthood was reinstated amongst the people, their method of worship as instructed by Moses was again operative and the Hebrew way of life was re-established in the city of peace. Thus prosperity began to return to this God-fearing remnant in Israel.

Not infrequently servants of God in our own day become so engrossed in the service of God that the vital need for prayer and the reading of His Word is forgotten. No great work can be accomplished for our Heavenly Father unless we are in close touch with Him. Whatever outward success there may be in our labours of love, the deeper issues of our faith must be kept well to the forefront. Serving the Lord and knowing about His purposes are valuable assets in the Christian life but they can never become substitutes for prayer and worship. We shall in fact be quite unprepared spiritually for our tasks for the Lord unless we spend much time at the Throne of Grace. Natural talent cannot make up for genuine spiritual power received at God's own hand. Nehemiah accomplished his great work because the driving force of his life was derived from communion

with God and not from self gratification. It was quite natural for him to turn to religious reform after the outward material essentials had been restored.

Nehemiah's cleansing of the priesthood and people from the surrounding nations is not to be interpreted as an act of snobbery. The interlopers in the recently built city and reconstituted nation were not the friends of Israel nor lovers of her God. They had for the most part been the very ones who had tried to hinder the rebuilding scheme and had sought to bring disgrace upon Nehemiah. Having failed in one direction they now planned to wreck God's people by mixing their own heathen blood with that of Judah. There was only one way into the nation of Israel by Gentiles—and that had been specifically laid down in their law. Haphazard inter-breeding on the part of the Hebrews would have quickly reduced them as a nation to the depravity of other nations. Rigid separation from the language, customs and worship of their national neighbours was the only solution to their strength and holiness before the Lord.

Once again the parallel between Israel and the Christian Church reflects how the same conditions have brought subsequent spiritual prosperity or bankruptcy. Thus we must turn the light of God's Word upon our own consciences to see if in truth we too have "separated ourselves from the people of the land". This in no way signifies a "holier than thou" attitude, into which Judaism finally developed, nor does it prevent us being sufficiently in the world to let our light shine. On the contrary, God's commission to Israel is to be found in the words of the prophet Isaiah "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49. 6.). Israel failed in her day of opportunity and the light of ancient Jerusalem was snuffed out by ritualism and base gain.

Paul therefore declares to the people of Antioch in Pisidia that this privilege of bearing witness to the light of God's truth had fallen to the followers of Jesus (Acts 13. 7). Darkness yet abounds in the world. Without compromising with that darkness let us shine forth as the children of our Heavenly Father, in preparation for

the day when the New Jerusalem shall descend from Heaven as a bride prepared for her husband.

May God help us to bestir ourselves and continue the work of past ages and generations. It is no use sitting down and expecting miracles to happen to fulfil God's work. Nehemiah when assured of his work undertook it in a spirit of zeal and perseverance which shows up in marked contrast to the inertia of the twentieth century Christian Church. God awaits our co-operation and is ready to place within our hands the cre-

dentials of service such as we frail mortals can do, but only in His strength, and by His Spirit. "Without God, we cannot: without us, God, will not." So ends a remarkable book by Mildred Cable, who did so much for spiritual Zion in central Asia.

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen and Amen"
The End

LEICESTER CONVENTION, 1956

The General Convention held annually at Whitsuntide in the Midlands has for many years been an event of increasing interest and inspiration. This year's gathering was no exception. For two happy days a rather old fashioned school building was transformed into the sanctuary of the Lord. But although it is not palatial in appearance, the St. Nicholas School in Great Central Street, Leicester, has adequate space for our present needs. Sunshine streaming through the windows, together with a fine display of flowers, gave a very pleasant background to the radiant faces of the many friends who attended the convention.

It was a very profitable week-end, for here brethren could unite in worship and fellowship. *Disregarding the minor differences of viewpoint*, we were able to concentrate upon the "eternal verities" which bring us nearer to God. This was the note struck by the chairman, Brother Derrick Nadal (*Melton Mowbray*) in his warm welcome to all present.

"*True Liberty*" was the title of the first address and was given by Brother J. Lardent (*Birkenhead*). Tracing the story of the human race from its beginning in Eden, he showed that liberty was a fundamental principle of God's creation. Emphasis was laid upon "liberty in Christ" specially relating to conscience as explained by Paul in 1 Cor. 8. Illustrating the law of liberty, we considered the freedom of a dog. Firstly, the stray dog whose liberty is really license. Secondly, the dog whose liberty extends to five feet of chain; and finally the well trained dog who has no chain but obediently remains at his master's heel controlled by the law of love. In conclusion, our thoughts were directed to the perfect freedom which will be the heritage of all men in Christ's Kingdom on earth.

In characteristic fashion, Brother H. Chrimes (*Altrincham*) spoke on the text "*All things are yours*" from 1 Cor. 3. 21-23. After reminding us of those blessings of Nature which are ours, a

warning was given that what belongs to our neighbour is not ours and we should be foolish to act as if it were. Paul's words were clarified by observing the context and we saw that the "all things" referred to the ministers which God has given to the Church for the upbuilding and perfecting of the saints. All through the ages men have been inspired for service to assist God's people but often these gifts from the Father have been neglected by His children. God speaks to us in many ways and we do well to take heed to his instruction and warning whatever method He chooses to convey them. We are spiritually the poorer if we confine ourselves to one or two of His servants. These means of grace may not always be with us for He sometimes removes such blessings to assist our growth. The eagle, with tenderest care, builds her nest and rears her young, but the day comes when the sticks and feathers are scattered to the wind, in order to compel the eaglets to fly. All things are ours, not for possession but to help us to grow spiritually and may even include things in the world around us or the heart-breaking death of a loved one. *These, and many more, are preparing us for that Kingdom, which, because we are Christ's, will be ours also.*

The theme of unity in worship continued on the Sunday morning when Brother J. Callaghan (*Wallasey*) led a session of praise and devotion. This included a Bible reading from Ephesians together with comments from the Scripture Union notes.

Brother S. H. French (*Forest Gate*) addressed the convention on the subject of "*The Coronation of the Redeemer*". Reference was made to Israel's rejection of God as their King in 2 Sam. 8. 7-18, and then we saw some of the contrasting features in the life of Jesus, culminating in his death at the hands of his own people. We noted his poverty in material things and riches of his grace in the spirit. This wealth had been made

available in the power to the disciples at Pentecost, and had endowed his Church through its nineteen hundred years of history. It was emphasised that access to that power was through prayer. A picture was sketched; the Throne scene in Revelation 5, and the exaltation of the Lamb unto whom was given all might and dominion. We were exhorted to be diligent in our calling that we might share with the Lamb in his great work of the Millennial Age.

It has become customary on these occasions for the young brethren to be represented in the first talk on the Sunday afternoon and Brother Kenneth Guard (*Forest Gate*) filled that role this year with an interesting discourse on "As in the days of Lot". From the story of Abraham's nephew he drew several important lessons for our Christian life. Lot chose to live in the prosperous Jordan plain, near to the wicked city of Sodom rather than the apparently not so fertile Canaan where temptations to sinfulness would have been very much less. He afterwards became a resident in that doomed metropolis but seems to have borne no witness concerning the righteous and merciful God. Finally, even when afforded an opportunity to escape calamity he lingered, loath to leave the wealth of this world which perishes.

During an interlude of Praise, conducted by Brother Peter Couling (*Rugby*) we enjoyed that lovely aria from Mendelssohn's "Elijah"—"O rest in the Lord," beautifully sung by Sister Pamela Fegg (*Atherstone*). We also derived further pleasure from singing some of our favourite hymns. As this session closed the children adjourned to another part of the building for their Sunday School. Here they were able to worship God in a manner best suited to their age, which they greatly enjoyed.

In a fine sermon on "Worshipping the Lord," Brother P. A. Morte (*Ossett*) brought to our attention a subject that has received too little attention in the past. He dealt with the joy of the Heavenly Father in the praise and adoration of His children. He showed too, the value of worship to ourselves underlining the fact that we could not afford to skimp or dispense with this aspect of Christian service. To do so was not only to deprive ourselves of a very necessary means of grace but we were robbing God of that which is due to Him. Our acts of worship in prayer, praise and Bible reading, are as important as Bible study and discourse. Accumulation of knowledge is insufficient, for in songs and thanksgiving our hearts grow towards God.

Brother G. Chilvers (*Atherstone*) was our chairman for the evening which began with a short prelude of the praise. During this period, Brother Nainby (*Australia*) gave us a warm message of

love and greetings from those of kindred faith "down-under". It is appropriate to mention here that the brethren assembled in convention at Leicester selected the three following texts to accompany their message of love to be conveyed by visiting brethren; Deut. 33. 27 (first part); 1 Cor. 15. 58; 2 Thess. 2. 16, 17.

The final address was given by Brother A. D. Kirkwood (*Glasgow*) and was entitled "The glory of God". Taking 2 Cor. 4. 6 as his text our brother quoted many instances from the Master's life where the glory of God had been revealed, and often in a manner with which the men of his day were not familiar. The love and mercy of our Heavenly Father were most truly exemplified in the Lord Jesus as he moved among the sick and sinful children of men. Human hearts were very dark at Jesus' First Advent and there seemed little hope of deliverance. But in his faultless life He showed men a new living way. The light of his life penetrated into the hidden thoughts and secret lives of men, and showed them the way back to God. That light of God, so manifest in the words and works of Jesus, must be reflected in his followers also. By continuing to bear the light of the Gospel the Lord's disciples are being transformed into the image of God (1 Cor. 3. 18). The gentle forbearance of Jesus in word and deed showed to mankind the infinite love of the Father, and set before us an example to follow.

The convention ended as many another has done by singing the familiar hymn "God be with you till we meet again". As we parted we pondered and lingered a moment to say "thank-you" to those who had toiled so unsparingly on our behalf: the stewards at the door who had watched the comfort of the brethren and the helpers at the bookstall who had attended a small but useful display of literature; appreciation was certainly due to the catering department, which worked so efficiently in providing most pleasing meals. Some were prominent, others laboured behind the scenes, working, like our brother-secretary, for many months beforehand to prepare for the gathering. Most of all, our gratitude and loving response should ascend to our Heavenly Father, who provided spiritually and materially for our every need, to make this yet another of those happy events, long to be remembered for its pleasure and profit.

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.

"AS THE LIGHTNING COMETH OUT OF THE EAST"

A study in the manner of the Second Advent

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

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

Which view is correct?

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

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

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

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

to any bright or intense display of light, and the question as to whether lightning or other form was concerned has to be decided by the nature of the allusion, or by the context.

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

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

From the New Testament.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From the Old Testament.

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

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

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

From the Apocrypha.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TWO SIMONS

The story of
an opportunity

The last few days of Jesus' earthly life were full of mental and physical strain. Luke says (21. 37-38) "*And in the day time He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple, for to hear Him.*" Following this came the last Passover and a long talk, then the Garden with its anguish and agony. An armed company came to take one defenceless man. He was betrayed by a kiss, bound and led away to trial. Mocked, humiliated, insulted, scourged and crowned with thorns Jesus began His journey to Calvary. He, bearing His cross for Himself, went forth to die. (John 19. 17, R.V.).

When the journey began Jesus was "led" forth carrying the cross but before the place called Calvary was reached and probably at a point just outside the north gate of the city (for note "as they came out" in Matt. 27. 32) it was necessary to transfer the heavy cross to someone else's

shoulders. Moreover whereas at the beginning of the journey He was "led," at the close of it, such was His physical exhaustion, that He was "brought" or "borne along." (Mark 15. 20 and 22). Even His sinless body had its limits of endurance and they were reached that day. For three and a half years He had daily poured out His soul unto death, giving forth His vitality and strength, but like the Psalmist (Psa. 73. 26), He could say, "My flesh and my heart faileth but God is the strength of My heart and my portion for ever." His faith never faltered though His steps might.

A passer by was "impressed" by the Centurion in charge, one Simon, a Cyrenian, and he walked behind Jesus bearing the cross. Perhaps he was one of the "scattered abroad" Jews mentioned by Peter, come up to keep the Passover and obliged to lodge outside the city. Suddenly he found himself compelled under the law of Rome to carry a burden laid upon him by the

Roman soldiers. The unlooked for happened and he found himself with his day's programme changed, walking in a direction opposite to that he had intended, following a Person with whom he had never thought to be associated and bearing a burden he had never dreamed of carrying! How came it that the moment at which Simon met the procession was the very one at which the Centurion decided that somebody was wanted who could carry a cross? *If* Simon had been a little earlier or later, *if* he had entered by another gate, *if* the Centurion's eye had looked in another direction; but there are no *ifs* in the outworking of God's purposes. Behind apparently chance circumstances lies the planning of the wise God, that was why Simon's name that day found a place on the page of Scripture. Nothing happens by chance where God's providences are concerned. It is not likely that Simon welcomed the interruption of his day's programme but it was God's way of bringing him into touch with Jesus.

It must have happened like that in thousands of cases since; some trivial circumstance, some slight incident, some strange turn of event has made all the difference in the life. Sickness, sorrow, loss, the breaking up of a cherished plan, these and a host of other unwelcome happenings have resulted in bringing many into touch with the Lord Jesus.

Peter, the leading Apostle; how was it he was not carrying his Master's cross at that great moment? If he had been as good as his word and had lived up to his boast he would have been so close to Jesus that morning that it would have been impossible for any other to be chosen to carry the cross. A few hours previously Peter had said, "I am ready to go with Thee, to prison and death" and when somebody was really needed to go with Him to the place of death Peter was not there. He was afar off hiding his tears and his shame, far off with that last look his Master gave him burning into his tortured mind. The echo of his own denials and curses was still in his ears, so Simon Peter lost the opportunity that could never come back. Never again was the Son of God to walk that sorrowful way of the cross and because Peter was not there he lost the right to carry the cross for his Lord and go step by step with Him to Calvary. Think of it! Their Lord and Master who had shown such willingness to serve them in the most menial of tasks—washing their feet—was needing such a service at such a moment and not one of His own disciples was at hand to render it, so that to a stranger the undying honour must needs fall.

Simon the Cyrenian in a very real sense took Simon Peter's place that day. How glad we are that the grace of God restored Peter to his place, for he

was in peril of losing, not only his opportunity of service in carrying the cross after Jesus but also his crown, "Let no man take thy crown."

The sight of a man carrying his cross was quite familiar in Jerusalem. Our Lord had chosen the figure of a cross bearer as an illustration of a true disciple and added the paradox concerning losing life by saving it and saving life by losing it. Everyone seeing a man carrying his cross saw one whose life here was ended. So it is with one who sets out to carry his cross, he is severing his connection with old pursuits belonging to the old life, and following Christ into the new life. Simon the Cyrenian had this signal honour; alone of all the characters of Scriptures he was the embodiment of our Lord's own illustration of a true disciple—a man carrying a cross after Christ! See him associated with Jesus in His shame, all his strength devoted to the carrying of a cross, walking pace for pace behind the Lord Himself, but with this difference—Simon carried Christ's cross: the disciple carries his own. The disciple's cross is Christ's only in the sense that he bears it voluntarily, gladly, "for My sake." (Mark 8. 35). Paul is our example. He was always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 4. 10) and filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. (Col. 1. 24). He counted all things but loss and dross that he might win Christ and be found in Him.

We may suppose that Simon the Cyrenian never forgot that morning's burden carrying nor the after incidents. If the Centurion who laid the cross on him was constrained before the day was out to say "truly this was the Son of God," we may believe that Simon's heart was reached.

Simon is mentioned in Mark 15. 21 as being the father of two sons, Alexander and Rufus. These two men were evidently well known Christians at the time Mark's Gospel came to be written, for the evangelist doubtless mentioned them by name because they were known to those Christians to whom he was writing. This in itself is strongly in favour of the assumption that Simon was so moved by his experiences on that eventful day that he became a follower in the deeper and spiritual sense of Him whose cross he bore and trained his boys to do the same.

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."

WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The words in question are not original to the Book of Joshua—they are quoted from the "Book of Jasher" (see vs. 13). The account of the battle occupies vs. 10 and 11, and the thread of the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consider your calling, brethren, for ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood to offer sacrifices acceptable to God; a holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The very object of our being called into this light is that we may let it shine. If we do not let it shine we are unworthy of it, and the treasure will be taken away and we will be left in darkness.

* * *

In these days of haste it is good to remember that if we are too busy to pray, we are busier than the Heavenly Father wants us to be.

GATHERED GRAIN

Gems from
previous issues

It is sweet and precious, in many senses of the word, to be privileged to participate in the sufferings of Christ, in any sacrifices or services for the Lord and His cause. The sweet mingles freely with the bitter. But the Lord promises that in the future the cup of new wine in the Kingdom shall more than compensate for any bitterness of the present time. Our cup is full, but we would not wish it one drop less. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." How precious the thought—God's goodness, God's mercy, with all those who are truly His in Christ—following us day by day, moment by moment, and according to the Scriptures making all things work together for our good. How true it is that "I shall dwell in the House of the Lord for ever." It is a cup of association, of oneness with Christ, an earnest of that which is to be.

* * *

Then what of those who could have been faithful under-shepherds, watching for the flock as those who must give an account, but instead can only look back on a life-time spent in exalting their own personality and outlook at the sacrifice of that spontaneous sharing with others in the work of the ministry which is the hall-mark of the true disciple. What of those who have scattered the flock instead of gathering them, who "have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord?" Where will they stand when their eloquent voices, and flowing pens, and magnetic personality exploited to the utmost to draw disciples after them, have vanished into nothingness and the Master they honoured with their lips looks for the fruitage of their ministry? Of what use then to say "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." Sadly, regretfully, come the irrevocable words "I never knew you. Depart from Me."

* * *

All that is beautiful in human relationship or tender in human affection or gentle in human intercourse, all that is lovable and precious in the movements of the human heart from its lowest depth to its uppermost surface, is wrapped up in the one name of family. For close knit bonds, for steadfast faithfulness in love, for depth of sympathy, for endurance in trial and danger, where shall we find anything that can be compared with the story of earth's family circle? The many streams of human affection empty themselves into or flow out of it for the fertility and gladness

of earth. We are not to wonder then that this name should be chosen as one of the church's peculiar names. God delights in it as the name by which his company of chosen ones is to be specially called. The Family of God; that is the church's name. As such he dwells in the midst of it, cares for it and watches over it. His dealings with it are those of a Father, fond yet strict, loving yet wise, sitting among his children and having his eye on each and ordering in his gracious wisdom all the concerns of his household. His heart is there.

* * *

Some day we shall understand that God has a reason in every "No" which He speaks to us through life. How often, when His people are perplexing themselves thinking their prayers are not being answered, is God answering them in a far richer way than they think. Oh for the faith that does not make haste, but waits patiently for the Lord, waits for the explanation that shall come in the end, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. When did God take anything from a man without giving him manifold more in return? Suppose that the return is not made immediately manifest, what then? Is to-day the limit of God's working time? Has He no provinces beyond this little world? Does the door of the grave open upon nothing but infinite darkness and eternal silence?

Yet even confining the judgment within the hour of this life, it is true that God never touches the heart with a trial without also bringing upon it some grander gift, some tenderer benediction. He has attained to a high degree of Christian faith who knows how to wait.

At the present time we have available for free distribution the following issues:

No. 21. The Bible—the Book for To-day.

No. 22. The Dawn of a New Era.

No. 23. The Sure Word of Prophecy.

No. 24. The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand.

No. 151. World Conversion—When?

Friends are invited to apply for these in small quantities for judicious distribution—larger quantities can be supplied by arrangement.

The free literature service is carried on by means of voluntary donations given for the purpose and the scope of this work depends entirely upon the funds available. It is hoped to publish several more new numbers and to reprint some of the old favourites in the near future and suggestions as to the titles or types most favoured will be welcomed. Address such suggestions to Bro. A. O. Hudson at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.



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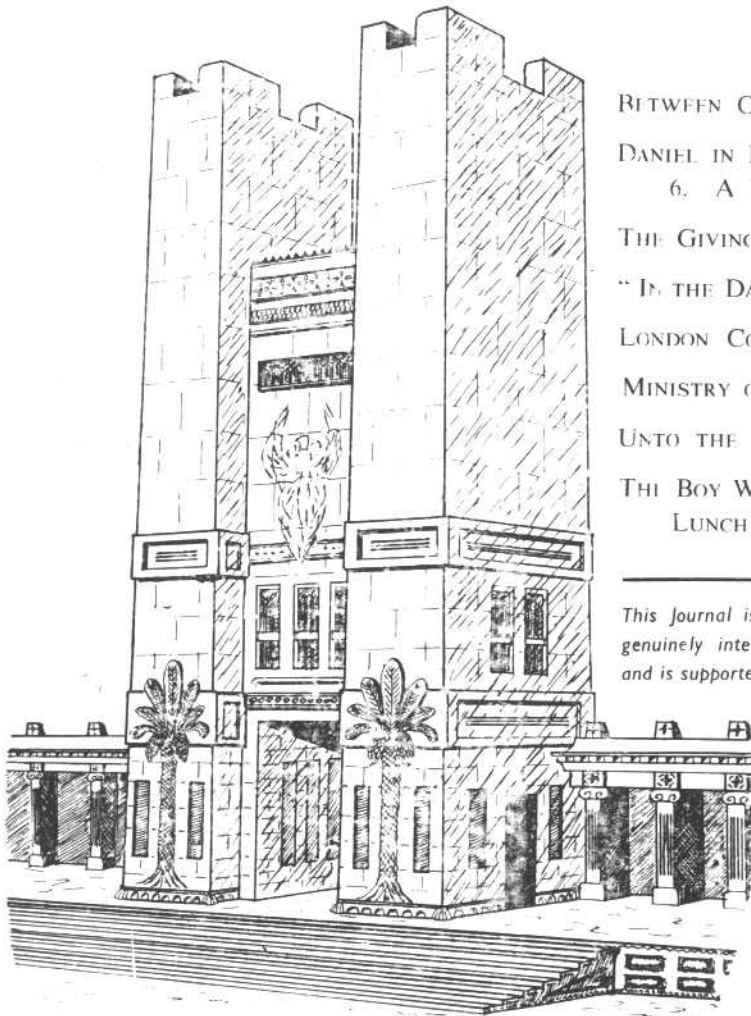
Next issue December 1st

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

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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

Benevolent Fund

At this season of the year it is meet to mention that the Benevolent Fund is still in existence and that the custodian, Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, will be pleased to receive such gifts as brethren feel led to donate for this purpose, and also to have details of cases of need known to any of the friends.

1956 Calendar

We are advised that Bro. F. Lardent, 174 Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, is able to supply the well-known "Christian Home Calendar" again this year as in former times. There is a sheet for each month with Scriptural picture in full colour and text for each day. The price is 3/- each post free and friends are specially desired to send all orders direct to Bro. Lardent and not to us.

Film Service

On Saturday, October 20th at 7.0 p.m., the Forest Gate friends have arranged a film service at the Bowling Green Pavilion, Aldersbrook Road, Wanstead. The film to be shown is entitled "The Shield of Faith," and tells how the sterling faith of a saintly Christian Pastor in the face of tragedy and death eventually overcomes the agnosticism of a militant unbeliever. The story is based on fact and the scene is set in the Welsh valleys, the film itself being an English production.

The accompanying address will take the film as the basis for a proclamation of our message; the meeting is to be publicly advertised and all friends who would like to attend will be very welcome.

Tune Book

The Midlands friends responsible for publishing

the tune edition of the "Bible Students Hymnal" are still able to supply copies at 16s. 6d. each post free and friends who have not yet secured copies and would like them are invited to apply to Bro. G. E. Chilvers, The Haven, Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warwicks. The small printed supplement containing words only of the new hymns added to the tune edition, for inserting in the old "words" edition, is also still available at 6d. each.

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- No. 151. World Conversion—When?

Friends are invited to apply for these in small quantities for judicious distribution—larger quantities can be supplied by arrangement.

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Gone from us

Bro. J. W. Carrington (Leeds)

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

A. O. Hudson

6. A King's Madness

King Nebuchadnezzar was now at the zenith of his glory. The "head of gold" had become the conqueror of the nations. He had seen three successive Pharaohs of Egypt, the rival nation, pass into death—two of them struck down by his own hand. Pharaoh-Necho died at the time of Jerusalem's downfall in Zedekiah's day. His successor, Psamatik II, (not mentioned by name in the Bible) was slain when the Babylonians invaded Egypt in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year (Jer. 52.30 and 43.1,13). Pharaoh-Hophra had just perished, also at the hands of the victorious king, and his successor, Amasis, held the throne of the Pharaohs only as a tributary to Babylon. Egypt had become, as Ezekiel said it would become (Ezek. 29.14.) a "base kingdom"—and in actual fact it never regained its former greatness. The proud city of Tyre, after a siege of thirteen years, had been forced to capitulate. The Assyrians were no more, and their mighty city of Nineveh was a mass of broken down ruins. The Ten Tribes were scattered in the wilds of Armenia, spreading slowly outwards, and the remnants of Judah dwelt to the south of Babylon. The Holy Land lay a desolate waste.

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

Picture him now, a little above sixty years of

age, in his own domestic circle, with the Median wife whom the historian says he dearly loved, and their family, Avil-Marduk (who succeeded him as king—the Evil-Merodach of Jer. 52.31,) Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar (Dan. 5.10) and another daughter whose name is not recorded. Daniel, on his frequent visits to the great palace beside the river must often have talked with the queen and her children, and as he talked he would notice with growing apprehension the changing disposition of the king—the feverish exultation and pride in his achievements, forgetfulness of the great miracles wrought by the God of Heaven Whom he had once been so ready to acknowledge, his increasing devotion to the service of Bel, the deity of Babylon. The incident of the fiery furnace was some ten years in the past; the dream of the great image more than thirty years; and the visible evidence of his work, crowned by the mighty temple which his own enthusiasm had done so much to complete, was steadily driving the nobler impulses from his mind. Daniel knew what the inevitable end must be, and without doubt he talked to his sovereign upon many occasions with warnings of the inevitable fall that follows great pride.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is in the 19th verse that we have evidence of something almost approaching affection in Nebuchadnezzar's feeling for Daniel. Observing his faithful Minister's distress, he exclaimed "*Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee*". He was prepared to forego the explanation in order to save his friend distress of mind. This is a very different aspect of the man from that displayed when as a ruthless autocrat he ordered three men to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, and signed an order for the execution of all the wise men of Babylon on a momentary impulse. Even in the midst of that haughtiness and pride which was rapidly driving him to madness, this proud monarch cherished feelings of respect and concern for Daniel. How profound must the influence have been which the latter's integrity and loyalty had exerted upon the heart of this pagan king through the years!

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

"*All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking upon (see margin) the great palace.*" It would seem from the use of that word "upon" that this scene took place in the park which has become known as the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon", one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Because Nebuchadnezzar's queen missed the forests and mountains of her native Media, the king had caused to be built within the palace precincts a miniature stretch of wooded hills. Three successive tiers of brick arches, built like

three great viaducts piled one on top of another, were erected and covered with earth, so disposed as to make hills and valleys. Upon this foundation the park was laid out, with grass, shrubs and trees, pathways and terraces, and artificial streams which were supplied from the River Euphrates far below by means of some kind of water-raising device. Reared up high above the roof of the palace, commanding a magnificent view of the city, this park with its tree clad hills appeared from a distance to be suspended between heaven and earth, from which fact it has become known as the "Hanging Gardens". There was no more likely place than this in which the king might be walking when the dread calamity came upon him.

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

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

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

frantic haste to summon assistance?

It might have been Daniel. It might have been Queen Amytis. There is a familiarity about the usage of the king's name in verse 33 which seems more fitting coming from the queen than from Daniel. It might well be that this most interesting document enshrines the testimony of three people, and that verses 28 to 33 are from the hand of the Babylonian queen.

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

Nebuchadnezzar continued in this state for seven years. It is true that secular historians do not make any reference to this happening. Berosus, the Babylonian historian who was a priest in the Temple of Bel at Babylon some two and a half centuries later, and who had access to all the records when writing his history, does refer vaguely to some strange mystery connected with the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. One or two other cryptic allusions are met with in the works of other writers, but nothing that can reasonably be said to confirm the Bible account. Nor is this surprising. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a member of the secret caste, the Chaldeans. The whole episode, if generally known, was likely to bring the fraternity into disrepute. Even although the priests may have exploited it within the king's family circle to warn the youthful Avil-Marduk against his father's predilection for the Hebrew's God, they would be anxious to suppress the general circulation of the story, and since the historical records of the nation were in the charge of the priests, it is tolerably certain that they took good care to keep private anything of a derogatory nature.

The story as we have it in Daniel 4 bears all the evidences of truth. There is the king's own account of the dream which predicted the disaster, vs 1-18, to which is added the testimony of his Minister as to their subsequent conversation. Next to this comes the account of the actual happenings, by an eye witness (28-33) probably Queen Amytis, and finally the king's own acknowledgment of the justice of the infliction and of the omnipotence of God (34-37). It is highly probable that we have here an official document, prepared by the king after his recovery, and intended to place on record for all time his consciousness of his great sin and the mercy of God.

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

So long as the king lived, even although impotent, no move could be made to replace him.

The queen probably governed as regent, with the aid of Daniel as Chief Minister. Berossus plainly states that in fact she did do so, assisted by her counsellors. The affliction was looked upon as from the gods and their will must not be interfered with. The kingdom must needs wait, either for the king's recovery or his death. Upon the return of his reason, therefore, he was quickly re-established in his accustomed place, restored to the circle of his family, presiding once again over affairs of state, wielding once more the majestic power of the "head of gold".

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

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

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

To be continued.

Special Notice: A farewell meeting to Brothers Dawson and Hollister, and Sister Walmsley, on the eve of their return to the United States, has been arranged for Tuesday, 16th October, at 6.30 p.m. at Conway Hall (Small Hall), Red Lion Square, Holborn, London. The proceedings will be arranged so that brethren unable to be present at

the commencement may be able to join the assembly without disturbance at such later times as they can manage. A very warm welcome is extended to any who would like to bid our departing brethren Godspeed.

The chair will be taken by Bro. Hudson at 6.30 prompt

THE GIVING OF THE MANNA

*A story of a very
wonderful
happening*

The giving of manna to serve the children of Israel for food was an outstanding feature of the Exodus. The imagination of generation upon generation, first of Hebrews and then of Christians, has been stirred by this inexplicable provision of food for a multitude in the otherwise barren wilderness. It is true that modern discovery has established that Sinai in the days of the Exodus was by no means so barren and desolate as the popular expositors conceived it, or as it is now; but even so the marvellous story has lost none of its appeal, and the wonder of it has passed into the language of every day so that "manna from heaven" has become an expression denoting any unexpected and beneficial gift. It was no less so in Old Testament days, for the Psalmist (78, 24-25) sings exultantly "He . . . rained down manna for them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food, he sent them meat to the full". The language is poetic; the Psalmist did not mean to convey that this white substance "like hoar frost upon the ground" is literally eaten in heaven by the glorious angels who in their perfection of spiritual life do always behold the face of the Father. Rather does the Psalmist, in a flight of poetic fervour, attribute the provision and the qualities of the manna to the direct intervention of Heaven at a time of sore necessity, and quite naturally speaks of God as sending down food from His own table to meet the need of His people on earth.

Let the narrative be examined in the light of all that the twentieth century can tell us regarding the district in which this thing happened and the circumstances under which it took place. The wonder of the story will be by no means lessened and our reverence for the Divine power which brought this about just at the time when it was needed will be immeasurably increased.

"And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another "It is manna" for they wist not what it was . . . And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted . . . And it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." (Exod. 16 14-35.)

It was at Elim, just after the passage of the Red Sea, that the manna first appeared (Exod. 16, 1) and at Gilgal, following the crossing of Jordan, forty years later, that it ceased (Josh. 5, 12). During the whole of the intervening period, throughout the length and breadth of Sinai, wherever the people wandered, there was the manna, ready for gathering, fresh every morning, *except on the Sabbath*. When they dwelt in Egypt, manna was unknown; after they settled in Canaan it was seen no more; the phenomenon was confined entirely to the Sinai peninsula and the green hills of Edom and Maab, but so integral a part of the whole account is this story of the manna that unless we accept the fact that this thing really did happen we must reject the historical trustworthiness of the entire Exodus narrative.

The story never died. Long after the strings of the Psalmist's harp were stilled Nehemiah encouraged his brethren by telling them of the "bread from heaven" (Neh. 9, 15). Jesus, in His teaching, reminded His hearers that their fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, "and are dead" (John 6, 49). The Psalmist's "angels' food" was not able to arrest the processes of death at work in the bodies of the Israelites, and their daily gathering sufficed only to sustain life for another day. Jesus turned their minds to Himself, "the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6, 51) and talked to them about those things without which no man can enter into life. So, in words intended for His disciples of this Age, the consecrated members of the Church of Christ on earth, the resurrected Lord promises (Rev. 2, 17) to give to "him that overcometh to eat of the hidden manna"—that spiritual quality, immortality, the Divine nature—of which the earthly manna of the Exodus was but a symbol.

The same truth is taught in the fact that a vessel of the literal manna, miraculously preserved, was laid up and preserved in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle throughout Israel's national existence (Exod. 16, 30-34; Heb. 9, 4). There, where the supernatural Shekinah glory blazed out over the mercy-seat, where the presence of God in His Heaven was symbolised, stood the sacred vessel, century after century, its contents the incorruptible symbol of that "life-in-itself" which is to be the inheritance of those who are "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2, 10).

Now what is there known about this manna? Can it be identified to-day? Did Sinai's hills and valleys no more receive the "bread from heaven" after Israel's hosts had travelled that way and departed? Or was it that God did take hold of something in Nature to meet the needs of the occasion?

Through the centuries it has been commonly reported that the manna of the Exodus was still to be seen in Sinai. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century, said that it never disappeared but was even then to be found in the places where Israel gathered it. In the fifteenth century, a traveller, Breidenbach, declared that manna was common in the valleys surrounding Mount Sinai, hanging in drops on twigs and grass and stones, sweet as honey, and sticky. Since then various travellers have reported finding this substance and have hazarded various theories as to its origin. It is established that the Sinai Arabs have known and collected it for centuries, and in the sixteenth century it could be found on sale in Cairo. In the eighteenth century it was observed that the substance is connected with, and found upon the tamarisk tree, and Burckhardt, the eighteenth century traveller, describes it thus:—

"In the month of June it drops from the thorns of the tamarisk upon the fallen twigs, leaves and stones which always cover the ground beneath that tree in its natural state. The manna is collected before sunrise, when it is coagulated, but it dissolves as soon as the sun shines upon it. The Arabs clear away the leaves and dirt which adhere to it, boil it, strain it through a coarse piece of cloth, and put it into leathern skins. In this way they preserve it until the following year, and use it as they do honey, to pour over their unleavened bread, or to dip their bread into. I could not learn that they ever make it into cakes and loaves. The manna is found only in years when copious rains have fallen; sometimes it is not produced at all."

The Arabic name for this substance is "manu" and this has been its name so far back as it can be traced. The writer of Exodus says that the children of Israel called it "manna" "for they wist not what it was". The Hebrew word is *man hu*—"What is this?"

Appropriately enough, however, it is the glory of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem finally to have cleared up the question of manna. Dr. Bodenheimer, of that University, has investigated the problem upon the spot and published a book on the subject, illustrated by photographs. The manna, it is definitely established, is produced by two insects which feed upon the tamarisk tree. They bear the somewhat terrifying names of

Trabutina mannipara and *majococcus serpentinus minor*. Just as bees visit flowers to produce honey, so do these insects live on the tree and from its sweet juices manufacture manna. Dr. Bodenheimer has photographed them in actual process of producing manna in beads varying in size from pinheads to peas ("like coriander seed, white"). At first the beads are transparent as glass and later they crystallise, becoming milk-white to yellow-brown. They are found all over the leaves and twigs on the ground, and are soon carried off by ants. The modern counterpart of Moses' golden vessel of manna is now in the University, where glass vials of the "bread from heaven" are preserved.

But in thus indentifying the manna we have not disposed of Divine intervention and reduced this wonderful story to the mere level of a commonplace happening which might be repeated any day. The scanty amount of manna which Sinai produces at the present time would not feed a hundredth part of Israel's multitudes. We need the fruits of research in other directions fully to illuminate this wonderful story.

The first chapter of Numbers gives the number of men of twenty years and upwards, able to go to war, as being 603,550. The twenty-sixth chapter gives the number at the entering into the land, forty years later, as 601,730. These figures are confirmed by the numbers accredited to each tribe and it makes nonsense of the record to assert, as do some modern scholars, that the word translated "thousands" properly means "families" and that actually there were merely six hundred families that went out of Egypt. According to a leading present-day economist, Colin Clark, in "The Economics of 1960" (1942), the proportion of males between the ages of 20 and 60 to the whole population can be taken as averaging 1 to 4. On this basis, and allowing for the tribe of Levi, there would be about two and a half millions of men, women and children in that long trek through the wilderness. One might say, hastily, that all of Sinai would not produce manna enough for such a multitude.

The Scripture itself gives us the data necessary for a calculation. The ration for each person was to be one omer per day (Exod. 16, 16-18). An omer is roughly equivalent to three pints, as far as Hebrew measures are at present understood. A little less than a million gallons or 150,000 cubic feet of manna, therefore, would be required daily to satisfy the terms of the Bible account. It has been shown that the manna, or rather the insects producing it, depend upon rainy years and the presence of the tamarisk tree. It is known that in former times Sinai was thickly forested

with tamarisk and acacia (the latter is the "shitim wood" of which the Tabernacle was constructed). Much of this forest lingered until the nineteenth century, but during that century there was a great burning of the trees by the Arabs for the sake of producing charcoal, which was carried into Egypt, a great trade in this being conducted resulting in Sinai becoming almost completely deforested and transformed into the sterile barren waste that it is now. It was only in 1944 that the Egyptian Government decided to undertake the systematic afforestation of Sinai to restore its ancient productiveness.

It was shown, some years ago, in a paper "*Climatic changes since the Ice Age*" read before the Victoria Institute, that the world in general experienced a period of intense wet weather round about the time of the Exodus and on to the ninth century B.C. Several features of the ten plagues on the Egyptians confirm the thought that the time of Moses was one of plentiful rainfall. We have evidence therefore that the two factors necessary to the production of manna, viz., trees and rainfall, were present to an unusual degree and with the assurance we have that Divine control over the powers of nature is constantly being exercised in the interests of God's Plan we may be certain that this was of design. Given the climatic conditions indicated above, the quantity of manna just mentioned could be produced, and gathered, over an area of no more than two square miles. The host of Israel, with all the tents and impedimenta required for camping would be spread, at any one time, over an area of fifteen square miles, the size of a British city such as Coventry.

It need not be thought incredible then, that such a vast host should be able to find a sufficiency of manna for their needs, gathered day by day on either side of the line of march.

But the wonder of the miracle remains. Men of science may reveal to us the nature of this mystic food, showing that God laid hold of that which the wilderness already brought forth. They can bear unwitting witness to the unerring foresight of God for His people's needs and His control of natural forces when they tell us that the climatic conditions at that period were unusually favourable to the satisfaction of those needs. But they cannot explain why it is that for forty long years those myriads of busy insects worked unceasingly for six days in every week—and *rested on the remaining day!* For when the Israelites looked out of their tents on every Sabbath morning, there was no manna on the ground! They must needs gather on the sixth day enough for two days. That mysterious cessation of the natural course on one day in every week has a regularity which is not of Nature unaided—it is of God. Only the One Who rules the universe from above could so command and restrain the labours of His creatures that they rested every sixth day so that there might be no manna on the seventh. Therein is the hand of God revealed, as it is revealed throughout the whole of this wonderful account, taking up the ordinary, insignificant things of earth, bending them to His purpose, and in that totally inexplicable fashion which men call "miraculous" using them to fulfil a vital need in the execution of His Plans.

“ IN THE DAYS OF THESE KINGS ”

“ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” (Dan. 2.44.)

The dream of the great image and the prophet Daniel's interpretation, as recorded in the second chapter of Daniel, is very familiar to all students of Bible prophecy. This forty-fourth verse is the focal point of the prophecy: the stone cut out of the mountain which first struck the feet of the image and reduced the whole structure to powder, and afterwards became a great mountain that filled the whole earth, is a symbol of the Kingdom of God which first destroys all man-made systems of

government and then takes their place as the long-promised earthly kingdom of Messiah under whose beneficent reign the power of evil is finally to be broken and all nations of the earth be blessed.

There is one element in this verse which is sometimes the cause of misunderstanding. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom" were the words of Daniel, inspired, we may be sure, by the Holy Spirit and therefore words whose veracity and importance cannot be minimised. On the basis of this expression it has been argued by some that before the present age comes to its end, and whilst the great powers of earth pictured by the four metals of the image are still in active operation, the King-

dom of the next Age will be established in power, in some sense, so that it may be truly said that the Kingdom has been set up and the work of Christ begun while as yet the Kingdoms of this world retain their own power. Since it is perfectly evident that the Millennial kingdom has not been established in an outwardly and physically manifest sense and that Satan is still without any doubt the god of this world the suggestion is made that the Kingdom is set in power in the "heavens"—the sphere of spiritual control—of the earth, and that this meets the requirements of the statement in Dan. 2.44.

This short note will endeavour to put forward a much more logical and easy-to-grasp explanation. Let it be noted that Daniel did not say the kingdom would be set up in Millennial splendour and power "in the days of these kings"; only that it would be "set up." In the vision itself the stone did not become a great mountain which filled the whole earth until after it had overthrown the image and scattered the residue until nothing of it was left. The Book of Revelation makes it clear that the enemies of the kingdom must be overthrown before the reign of the saints can commence, and the whole of the New Testament bears confirmatory witness. There is no sense in which the Church reigns in glory and power: whilst still in the flesh, and it is unthinkable to conceive our Lord commencing His reign without His bride by His side. The wedding feast must precede the shining forth of the saints in the Kingdom of their Father.

The key to Daniel's words lies in Matt. 12.28 "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" and even more definitely in Luke 16.16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The Kingdom is dual in its nature; it has an earthly aspect and an heavenly aspect. The earthly aspect is not yet established; it will be so when the second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ has reached that phase in which it is openly manifest to all men and the rulership of the world has passed into the hands of his representatives. The heavenly aspect commenced at the First Advent, with the preaching of the Kingdom and the "bringing of life and immortality to light through the gospel" which was characteristic of that Advent.

The more spectacular establishment of the earthly Kingdom at the end of the Gospel Age has tended to overshadow the no less important—in fact much more important—introduction of the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom at the beginning of the Age. The burden of the message preached

by Jesus and the Apostles was "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Those who heard and responded were urged to come into the Kingdom then and there. The Apostle Paul in Col. 1.13 plainly declares that we who are the Lord's consecrated followers have already been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Son. When the Pharisees in Luke 17.21 demanded of Jesus a statement on when the Kingdom of God should come—and the kingdom they looked for was of course an outwardly manifest Kingdom of Israel in power over the nations—He told them that the Kingdom was not coming in an outwardly perceptible fashion; men would not point here, or there, to show their fellows the Kingdom in power, for said Jesus "the Kingdom of God is within you." It is well-known that one translation, the Emphatic Diaglott, renders this phrase "God's royal majesty is among you" in order to avoid the implication that the Kingdom was in being there and then, but the variation is not justified. "Basileia" means kingdom, and never "king" or any substitute implying personality. The words in the A.V. accurately represent the Greek text and what Jesus meant the Pharisees to understand is clearly that in their looking for the Kingdom they were not to expect, *then*, an outward Kingdom but an inward one, in their own hearts and lives. It was their failure to appreciate his meaning which led them to miss the opportunity for which their whole nation had been trained during the previous fourteen hundred years.

When therefore the writer to the Hebrews exhorts us "... wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably." (Heb. 12.28.) he refers to a Kingdom which was a real thing even although it existed as yet only among the believers and in their hearts. Entrance into the "Covenant by sacrifice" has been entrance into the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God has truly been "set up" "in the days of these kings" in the sense that God has called into His Covenant a body of men and women, the consecrated followers of Christ from Pentecost until now, who have been delivered from the power and authority of the god of this world and constituted members of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is true that each such disciple is in the position of being a kind of advance outpost of the new Kingdom in enemy territory, for we live our lives still in the midst of a world system which is opposed to the things for which we stand and with which we have little in common. But the work of the Kingdom is going on, in the hearts of those whom Jesus on one occasion called "the children of the Kingdom."

LONDON CONVENTION 1956

The annual August London Convention has been an institution amongst us for nearly a generation. Of the various regular seasonal conventions now held in various parts of the country it is the oldest established and in many ways remains the truly representative annual "get-together" of the friends in Britain. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, has become a well-known rallying place and many are the pleasant recollections which cluster around that comparatively quiet retreat in the heart of bustling London.

The gathering arranged for this year was unique in that three U.S.A. brothers appeared on the platform—never before have we achieved more than two such visitors at one convention and the fact that their intentions to visit this country were not known until after the programme had been arranged and printed gave opportunity for a re-arrangement of the sessions by which three speakers' times were cut by half in order to introduce opportunities for the ministry of our three visitors. So the privileges were spread over a larger number and in all ten brethren addressed the main convention.

The first session opened on Saturday afternoon with an address of welcome by Bro. S. H. French (*Forest Gate*) in which all visiting friends were warmly received by their London hosts, and everyone present reminded of the privileges and responsibilities of those who thus gather in "holy convocation."

With minds thus prepared, the assembly settled to hear Bro. T. Watson (*Aldersbrook*) discourse on the text "*Is anything too hard for the Lord*" (Gen. 18.14.) That, said Bro. Watson, is one of God's unanswered questions, unless we can take the words of Jeremiah in 32.17 "Nothing is too hard for thee" in God's dealings with the children of men. God is a Spirit, and the Creator of spiritual beings, and He Who alone hath immortality is above all spiritual beings and is the instigator of life. Our doubts are due to our failure to realise the majesty of the One Who is the Father of those who dedicate their lives unto Him. How small are men and how great is God! That realisation is set forth most expressively in the Book of Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Then who are we to set a limit to God's power? Job's mind was filled with that knowledge. "I know that thou canst do everything." This question, Is

anything too hard for the Lord, was propounded by one who lived with the Father, as it were in His bosom. As it was in the case of the birth of John the Baptist "With God nothing shall be impossible." God has called us; by and with His help we shall make our calling and election sure. The attitude of true faith is to count on the power of God to perform all his promise. The mighty power of God, which raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead and set him above all things, that is the measureless measure of his power to usward who believe.

The first talk at the evening session was given by Brother Robert Hollister, of Dayton, U.S.A. Our brother was in England, accompanied by Sister Hollister, for the second time; the first time was very nearly fifty years ago. He prefaced his discourse by a little relation of the circumstances surrounding that first visit, how he came charged with a mission to arrange for the publication of Brother Russell's sermons in the newspapers of this country, a type of witness to our message which is unknown to us to-day and to many of our younger brethren must seem a most unlikely avenue of service. In those days it reached quite considerable proportions. Brother Hollister's theme was "*Kept by the power of God*"; perhaps his preliminary remarks were intended as an illustration of that theme, for he certainly stood before us a living testimony to the integrity of that word: a lifetime spent in the faith, hope and certainty of a vision that came in early youth and remained unshaken throughout life. In bringing greetings to the London Convention from the Pastoral Bible Institute, the Dawn, the Pittsburgh brethren, and many others, our brother stressed the bond of union which this faith weaves around those of us who esteem aright the value of those great deeds of past days. For over forty years, he said, the Lord, has been shaking the heavens and the earth, and the evidences have been multiplying through all that time to assure us of the accuracy of our expectations. It would seem that everything that can be shaken is being shaken, and at the end of it all only the unshakeable things will remain. We, and the faith that is ours, are of those unshakeable things. It is true that many have left their first love and the faith of some has failed them, but for all that the Lord looks upon those who have remained stalwart and kept to the course, and brings them through triumphantly at the end.

The second Saturday evening session was ministered by Bro. W. F. Fox (*Yeovil*) with a typical subject "*The Ministry of Divine Preparation.*" Taking as his basic foundation the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, Brother Fox expounded the majestic development of the creative purpose of God in bringing to the forefront the personification of His own wisdom to be the active agent of, and the driving force behind, all His works of creation. With those mighty achievements of Divine energy resulting eventually into the coming into existence of this ordered material creation out of a state of chaos our brother associated the thesis of Psalm 139: 15 "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth . . . in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." There is a cryptic allusion to the Divine preparation for the coming of all that is associated with the Advent of Jesus Christ, made known at last to men upon earth first in the glowing words of the prophet Malachi: "Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in" and then later by John the Baptist

who came as a voice proclaiming "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." John prepared the way for Jesus, Jesus the Messiah prepared the way for his heavenly Father. The Father in turn has prepared the way for all who are to be of his family, joint-heirs with Christ; He has prepared a feast and told his servants to "go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in." Many, we are told, are bidden, not many are found worthy. But the ministry of Divine preparation continues, and will continue among the Lord's disciples all the time that the work of this age continues. It persists, too, not only among the Church in the flesh, in this life, but also in heaven in readiness for that which is future, for our Lord, leaving his disciples, declared "I go to prepare a place for you." It is in the preparation of that place and the ensuing gathering together, beyond the Vail, of the "Church of the Firstborns, whose names are written in heaven" that the Ministry of Divine preparation reaches its climax in the Divine purpose for Christ and His Church.

So ended the first day of the Convention and the friends parted with high hopes of further stimulating ministries and encouraging fellowship together on the morrow.

To be continued.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

"My flesh I will give for the life of the world!"

Often do we interpret these words in terms of His crucifixion and death. But Jesus did also consciously fulfil the prevision of Isaiah: "He poured out his life unto death." For three and a half years the life of Jesus was given, in every possible sense, that the world might have more life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

This is the call of the Church now, and in this Age. Our mission holds something more than a study of Divine philosophy, a growth in the knowledge of Scripture history and prophecy, a waiting for future glory and felicity. It is to give life that others might have life. It is to offer life *now*, as Jesus offered life *then*. True, we cannot heal diseases by a wave of the hand, produce food from

stones wherewith to feed the hungry, drive out demons of hate, fear and all evil by verbal command—but, stay—is it true that we cannot do these things? Is there nothing that we can do for a sick or suffering one that will ease their lot and perchance assist them in their recovery; no power at all to relieve some little part of the hardship on those who suffer physical want in this unfriendly world; no word that can be fitly spoken to lift the mind of someone bound in the "bonds of iniquity" to higher and nobler ideals, and thus at least commence to cast out the demons that possess them? If we can do any of these things, in however little degree, we shall be doing, in our own small way, that to which our Lord Jesus devoted a great part of His life. And we are on safe ground when we find that "as He was, so are we, in this world."

Let us serve Him faithfully as our Master. Let us obey Him loyally as our King. Let us study His teaching as our Prophet. Let us walk diligently after Him as our Example. Let us look anxiously for Him as our coming Redeemer. But

above all, let us prize Him as our Sacrifice, and rest our whole weight on His death as an atonement for sin . . . Whatever else we glory in about Christ, let us never fail to glory in His Cross.

UNTO THE PERFECT DAY

A word of
exhortation

"The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

That verse was once the watchword of the brethren. Forty years ago in what was then called "Present Truth" it was fervently believed that the radiance of dispensational truth, coming upon all truly dedicated Christians in this, the closing era of the Age, was destined to increase in brilliancy and clarity until it merges at last in the greater glory of the established Kingdom. The gloom and obscurity of the Dark Ages, the doubt and confusion of old-time orthodox belief, was gone for ever, and now the Church in the flesh could look forward to a constantly expanding and clarifying understanding of Divine truth such as had been the lot of no generation since the days of the Early Church. "Truth now due to the Household of Faith" had become a catchword, and in the enthusiasm and certainty of that conviction there was initiated and carried through a work of Kingdom proclamation of a nature never before known and never since equalled. Coming, as it did, upon the crest of the tide of Second Advent expectation which pervaded the Christian world almost throughout the nineteenth century, and deriving its impelling force from a practically unanimous belief that the days of the Second Advent had already begun, it was easy to accept the parable of Luke 12:36 in which the lord of the servants, having returned, girds himself to serve them with food, as picturing the feast of truth now being dispensed by the returned Lord. Many Christians there were, at that time, outside this fellowship, preaching the imminence of the Second Advent and exhorting to watchfulness "for his appearing": within the fellowship the cry was "He is come". Many Christians there were, outside this fellowship, preaching the coming of an earthly Millennial Kingdom and reign of Christ over the nations, but only for the benefit of those living at the time of its establishment, and even then without the abolition of death. Within the fellowship there was a deeper appreciation of the object of our Lord's return, the establishment of a Millennial reign which was for the benefit of all, the dead and the living, a reign which would abolish death and bring in everlasting life to "whosoever will". Is it to be wondered at that there was such enthusiasm and joy in the proclamation of such a glorious gospel?

Now, forty years later, the question must be

asked: was this position justified? Has the light indeed shone more and more as we approach the perfect day? Has the certainty and enlightenment of those halcyon days hardened into even greater certainty and even more radiant light? Have we as a fellowship travelled steadily along the shining pathway which stretched so alluringly before us in those early days when it all seemed so simple and so plain?

The answer, of course, has to be "No". The early impetus of the fellowship has spent itself. The passage of years, the non-fulfilment of expectations and not least development of mind in the cases of those who were young in years when first they accepted this understanding of the Divine purposes and are now forty years older, all have brought doubt and uncertainty, and with it, the waxing cold of the love of many. Some have changed their minds as to the value of the evidences upon which so many claims were built and have gone back to an acceptance of Christian dogma formerly discarded; some have developed a bigoted grasp of the mere form and letter of the truths then learned and refused to progress any farther; some frankly confess that they "do not know" which is right, this or that: the fellowship holds together on the basis of a common acceptance of fundamental belief on the Lord Jesus Christ and in the veracity of the Scriptures, and of an association together in worship and service which has subsisted over so many years. There are many features contributing to the extent to which our fellowship still holds together, but a jointly agreed and harmonious view of the unfolding Divine purpose which alone would justify the words of Prov. 4:18 if interpreted in a community sense, is not one of them.

"If interpreted in a community sense"! Do we do right in expecting Prov. 4:18 to be so interpreted? Our Lord is not interested so much in communities as in individuals. We tend to forget that. We are so apt to be dazzled by the sight or thought of some spectacular work being carried on by an assembly or organisation of zealous and dedicated Christians that we fail to remember the ultimate purpose of such things. The community, the society, the organisation, or whatever it may be, is only useful to our Lord as a nursery for His disciples and in every case it is discarded when it has served its purpose. None of our organised arrangements, useful and helpful as they may have been here on earth, will be carried

into Heaven with us at the end. Just as surely as flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, just so surely must all the imperfect creations of our hands, means of grace though they may be now, be forbidden entrance to that celestial world where the whole conception of worship, of service and activity, of growth in knowledge, must be on a totally different plane. So we need not mourn the passing of an old order which no longer has the power to enthuse and inspire as it did of yore. Neither do we well to spend time and energy endeavouring to recreate or resuscitate a system of service or of instruction which can never do again what it did at the first. For its work had been done, and well done, in the hearts and lives of those, who having once seen the golden vision by the ministry of that work, have retained the radiance in their own hearts, yea, and will retain it until the end of their days. The organisation may be no more, the fellowship may seem to be in process of dissolving, but the individuals who are the true fruitage of such a work are progressing still in the light of that vision "unto the perfect day".

So Proverbs 4.18 is in the singular, not in the plural. The path of the just man, not of the just society, is to shine more and more unto the perfect day. Whatever may be the wealth or the paucity of the outward means of grace, of fellowships, of church communions, of joint activities—even of personal friendships within the circle of believers—in the long run each disciple follows his own pathway to the stars and receives his own illumination from on high.

Standing on the seaside promenade at night, one sees the path of the moonlight across the waters, ending right at one's feet. Twenty yards farther along, one's companion also sees the moon-track, also pointing straightly towards his own self. No two observers ever see the same pathway in the waters; yet it is the same moon light and from whatever vantage point leads still to the same moon. So every disciple follows in the same way to the end of the path where, like Jacob's ladder set up from earth to heaven, God waits. In the selection of those to whom He is to entrust the work of the next Age He is exercising infinite care and patience, and each one receives individual treatment. There is no such thing as mass production in the Almighty's methods.

This is where another catch-phrase, familiar to many, comes to mind: "*a people for a purpose*". That expression is the key to much of the apparent mystery in God's dealing with man. Why is He so long in dealing with evil? Why is the Kingdom so tardy in its appearance? If Jesus

died for man two thousand years ago, why is it that the world still groans and suffers, waiting for that which Jesus died to give them? The answer lies in this phrase, God is developing, during this Age, a people to serve His purpose in the next. And so our whole conception of our calling and our life in Christ must be set against the background of our place in the Divine purpose. The way in which we walk and the light which shines upon that way are both contributory to the ultimate execution of that purpose.

Away in the Central American country of Yucatan there lie the remains of a great ceremonial road built by an ancient people, the Maya, something like two thousand years ago. Along that road there passed, in olden time, youths and maidens who had dedicated themselves and their lives to the sun-god. Leaving all the hopes and aspirations and ambitions of life behind them, they pressed along the road, day after day, until at length they entered a gloomy tunnel leading down into the bowels of the earth. That tunnel took them into an underground cavern deep below the Temple of the God, and in the middle of the cavern, a yawning abyss at the bottom of which was a deep subterranean lake. As each one of those youths and maidens reached the edge of that gaping pit they unhesitatingly threw themselves in, a willing sacrifice to the god they served. And of what avail was it: a useless waste of young life that might have been put to some good purpose?

Some Christian lives to-day are spent like that: a gloomy, morbid and sometimes ultra-sanctimonious outlook which takes no account of the element of purpose in God's requirements with us. Given only to the maintenance of a pious mind and abhorrence of sin, there is nothing positive, nothing active, nothing that recognises the need for qualification for future work of service. Some lives like that, truly dedicated to God, are nevertheless as much wasted in his sight as were those of the Maya youngsters of long ago.

On the sandy plains of Mesopotamia, when Babylon flourished and Daniel administered affairs of State, there existed a road of another kind. The "Processional Way" it was called, and it traversed the principal districts of the city of Babylon from the gates of the Temple of Bel, past the king's palace, to the river. Once in every year there was a great festal occasion. The image of the god was brought out of his place in the Temple, placed upon a conveyance, and taken in solemn state along that Processional Way amid the cheers and admiration of the populace. Making gracious acknowledgements to the temples of the lesser gods as he passed them,

accepting the homage of the king before the entrance to the palace, and paying his respects to the goddess Queen of Heaven as he went through the great gateway dedicated to her honour, he eventually arrived at the river Euphrates, was placed in the state barge, and continued his journey by river. He eventually arrived back at his own temple from the opposite direction, was duly landed and restored to his accustomed position where he remained for another year. He had a most interesting journey, saw a lot of interesting sights and met a great many interesting people. But at the end he was back where he started; he never got any further.

Too many Christian lives are like that too. They start out on the road that is to lead them to the heavenly kingdom but again the realisation of purpose is lacking. They learn a great many things and they see a great many things and they do a great many things, but at the end it has all added up to nothing so far as their own fitness for a future Divine purpose is concerned. From God's standpoint they have just gone round in circles and got nowhere at all.

"A people for a purpose". We want to remember that. The road we are treading will continue

to shine more and more brightly until the perfect day if we remember all the time that we are called for a definite purpose which awaits the next Age for its full accomplishment. There is a goal toward which we are pressing and it is not attained in this life. The road we travel commences in darkness but it ends in light; that, after all, is the principle of God's creation. In Genesis the earth is without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep; but in Revelation the holy city is all radiant in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb, and there is no night there. Isaiah told of the people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, upon whom a great light shined, and John announces the Lord Jesus as that light of the world which shone in darkness and the darkness could not contain it, and so the darkness was overpowered and swallowed up by it. So it will with us if we resolutely press forward along this path of the just upon which our feet were once upon a time firmly planted, secure in the knowledge that no matter what may befall us in our earthly circumstances or our earthly fellowship, the light will continue to shine for us more and more brightly, "unto the perfect day".

THE BOY WHO REMEMBERED HIS LUNCH

A talk given by the Editor to a Church Bible Class of 12 year old "Crusaders."

This is the story of a boy who went out for the day to hear a famous preacher and found himself in front of a crowd of five thousand people. It all goes to show how the most unexpected things can happen and when we have gone out to see or do something in which the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned then the unexpected thing can be a very wonderful thing also. This boy had heard that Jesus was declaring the good tidings of the Kingdom of God up in the hills outside the town, and healing sick people, and that thousands of people were flocking out of town to see and hear Him; and he decided he would go too and listen to Jesus. He knew it would be an all-day affair and there were no shops or places to get food away in the hills, and so he took his lunch with him. And up the road he went, out of the town and past all the houses, through the vegetable gardens where the townsmen grew their daily food, until at last he came to a great stretch of grass where were crowds of people gathered together to listen to Jesus.

Right up at the front he could see Jesus with

his twelve disciples round him, moving about as he healed first one and then another sick or crippled man or woman, stopping at times to talk to the people looking on, telling them of the need to repent of their sins because sin is a greater evil even than being sick or crippled, and he wanted to heal them of sin as well as of sickness. Now we do not know what the boy's name was because the Bible does not tell us, so we will call him John; that is a good Bible name and this boy's name is as likely to have been John as anything else.

Well then, John got amongst the crowd and very speedily, as boys do, he had got to the front where Jesus was, so that he could see and hear all that was going on. We may be sure that he listened very intently to all that Jesus was saying about being honest and straightforward and living a life of helpfulness to other people, and although there must have been many things in what Jesus said that he could not fully understand, seeing that he was only a boy after all, yet he was thrilled to hear of the coming time

when the Kingdom of God would come to earth and all men would love and do good to their neighbours instead of doing them harm as they do now. And when some men brought a cripple to Jesus, and Jesus healed the cripple so that he went away leaping into the air and praising God, well, John's eyes nearly popped out of his head with astonishment and excitement, so that he quite forgot to eat his lunch and never even noticed that he was getting hungry.

Now that is where John really came into the picture, because it was getting on well into the afternoon and Jesus' disciples thought it was time to have something to eat themselves and then they realised they had nothing with them. So they asked Jesus if they should tell all the people to go home and get something to eat because it would soon be sunset and dark. "Oh no" said Jesus "you give them something to eat where they are". "But how can we" answered the disciples. "We haven't got anything here, and if we had a hundred pounds to spend it wouldn't buy enough bread for all this great crowd of people" Jesus just looked at them in his usual calm way and said "Well, what have you got?" at the very moment John, realising at last he was hungry, was getting his lunch out of his little bag. One of the disciples—Andrew it was—looking around rather helplessly, saw him do it and came over to see what he had got. John showed him—five little flat barley cakes and two small roasted fishes. Andrew went back to Jesus rather disconsolately and said "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

John held his precious loaves tightly, fearing they were going to be taken away from him, but just then a wonderful thing happened. Jesus looked up and smiled at him, smiled so sweetly and understandingly that all of a sudden John felt he would do anything for Jesus, even to going without his lunch if need be, and straight away he went up and put his precious lunch bag on the ground in front of Jesus.

"Tell everybody to sit down" commanded Jesus, and off went the disciples to see about it. Then something happened which John never forgot to his dying day. Jesus took the little barley cakes out of John's bag and gave thanks to God for the good food, and then began breaking them in half, and dividing the two fishes in half, and putting the pieces on the grass before him; but as fast as he did so he still seemed to have them in his hands unbroken. Before long there was a great pile of broken cakes and fish and John was kept busy as he knew how piling up more of them

as fast as Jesus was breaking them. He was so busy that he hardly had time to feel astonished, although he had never seen anything like it before. As for the disciples, when they came back from telling everybody to sit down they just couldn't make it out at all; and then Jesus quietly told them to get busy taking the food to all the people who were sitting on the grass waiting for it.

Now the important thing about this story is that if John had not been practical enough to think of his lunch when setting out in the morning nothing of this would have happened. All the grown-up people went out to see and hear Jesus without thinking of the fact that before the day was out they would need food. John went out just as eager to see and hear Jesus but he remembered and made provision for his earthly needs as well. And because of that he became the only one in all that great crowd of five thousand people whom Jesus could use for his miracle of making food for them all out of five loaves and two small fishes.

In our daily lives we need to be practical while we serve the Lord Jesus and listen to him. We want to remember the needs of those around us and be ready to have the Lord use us in helping other people as well as spend our time praising him or reading about Him. We need to put into practice the things we learn from Jesus so that, as the Scripture puts it, men may take notice that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. We should not get our heads so much in the clouds that we fail to keep our feet on the earth. That does not mean that we should forget the things of God and spend all our time looking after our earthly needs. The Scripture does say that we should not spend all our time looking after our food and clothes and homes; rather we are to seek the Kingdom of God chiefly and these other things will come in their proper place. But we must give them their right amount of attention and the Lord will do the rest. John did not busy himself trying to bring enough food for all the people. He just brought enough for himself and the Lord took it and made it enough for five thousand.

Beloved in the Lord, let no teaching beguile you from the purpose of your calling. You were called not merely to know Jesus as your Saviour, but as your Prince-Leader to Heavenly Glory. Accord Him therefore, the privilege not only of reaching down to your level in order to save you from sin, but of leading you up to His level of Glory, Honour and Immortality.



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

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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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It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

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

At this season of the year it is meet to mention that the Benevolent Fund is still in existence and that the custodian, Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, will be pleased to receive such gifts as brethren feel led to donate for this purpose, and also to have details of cases of need known to any of the friends.

* * *

We are advised that Bro. F. Lardent, 174 Forest Hill Road, London, S.E. 23, is able to supply the well-known "*Christian Home Calendar*" again this year as in former times. There is a sheet for each month with the Scriptural picture in full colour and text for each day. The price is 3s. each post free and friends are specially desired to send all orders direct to Bro. Lardent and not to us.

* * *

The Midlands friends responsible for publishing the tune edition of the "*Bible Students Hymnal*" are still able to supply copies at 16s. 6d. each post free and friends who have not yet secured copies and would like them are invited to apply to Bro. G. E. Chilvers, The Haven, Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warwicks. The small printed supplement containing words only of the new hymns added to the tune edition, for inserting in the old "words" edition, is also still available at 6d. each.

* * *

At the present time we have available for free distribution the following issues:

- No. 21. The Bible—the Book for To-day.
- No. 22. The Dawn of a New Era.
- No. 23. The Sure Word of Prophecy.
- No. 24. The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand.
- No. 151. World Conversion—When?

Friends are invited to apply for these in small quantities for judicious distribution—larger quantities can be supplied by arrangement.

The free literature service is carried on by means of voluntary donations given for the purpose and the scope of this work depends entirely upon the funds available. It is hoped to publish several more new numbers and to reprint some of the old favourites in the near future and sug-

gestions as to the titles or types most favoured will be welcomed. Address such suggestions to Bro. A. O. Hudson at 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

* * *

In the early part of the year friends were invited to indicate their interest in the proposal to issue a new edition of the "*Bible Students Hymnal*" words edition, which was first published in 1939. Enquiries have been made in various quarters and sufficient time has been allowed for all individual brethren interested to advise their wishes. It is with some regret that we now announce that the potential outlets for the proposed new edition are so few that it is not feasible, from the cost point of view, to consider proceeding with the project. The printing of a book such as this is an expensive proposition; to produce it at a reasonable price it would be necessary to print, and dispose of, at least four thousand copies and there is no indication that anything like that number would be required even over a term of many years hence. The book would have to be produced by a reputable firm such as the one that was responsible for the original edition and the cost would be something in the region of £600, an investment which could not possibly be justified. We are sorry for the disappointment of those who were hoping for this work to go forward but would not ourselves recommend to the friends a project which is thus inherently unsound.

NEW YEAR CONVENTION

The usual New Year Convention in Manchester is being arranged for the week-end of 5-6 January. Full details from Bro. E. Halton, 13 Harrow Drive, Brooklands, Sale, Ches.

Gone from us

Sister R. Parsons (Orpington)

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

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

7. Historical Interlude

Three years after Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his seven years' insanity, his long reign of forty-three years reached its end. He died at probably about seventy-five years of age, and with his death came the change in Daniel's circumstances which marks the division in the narrative. Up to Chapter 4 the story is set entirely in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, during which time Daniel was Chief man in the kingdom. Now, at about sixty-three years of age, Daniel stood by while his royal master's son, Avil-Marduk, ascended the throne, and from that point until the accession of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, the Book of Daniel is silent. When the narrative is resumed, in the first year of Belshazzar, with Daniel's dream of the four great beasts and the coming of the Ancient of Days in Judgment (Daniel Chap.7) the prophet is no longer chief political Minister of State. He is a private citizen and, as evidenced by the story of Belshazzar's feast, practically unknown to the king and probably to the leading men of the realm. Daniel spent forty years in the limelight, ruling the affairs of the empire of Babylon; then he spent nearly forty years more in measurable obscurity, his good works for the nation forgotten, his wisdom and counsel ignored. But it was during that latter forty years that he had those wonderful revelations from on high which have given the book which bears his name the title of "the Revelation of the Old Testament." The second half of Daniel's life, spent in obscurity, has meant far more to succeeding generations than the first half, stirring though the events of those earlier days are to us as we read them.

In order to fill in this gap in the Biblical narrative we turn for a moment to the records of the tablets. So many thousands of these tablets have been unearthed, many of them dated, that the history of Daniel's Babylon is better known to scholars than that of England in the days of King Alfred. There are dated tablets in the British Museum for every year of the reigns of every king from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar so that the chronology of the period is no longer a matter of dispute.

The great king's son, Avil-Marduk, by all accounts a weak-willed man of no principles, reigned only two years, his reign being characterised by lawlessness and impiety. Jeremiah men-

tions him once, when in Jer. 52.31-34 he says that in the thirty-seventh year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, "Evil-Merodach (the Hebrew form of Avil-Marduk) King of Babylon in the first year of his reign" released him from prison and dealt kindly with him. But at the end of two years, one of Nebuchadnezzar's military commanders, Neriglissar, husband of Nebuchadnezzar's eldest daughter, murdered Avil-Marduk and on the basis of his own royal marriage ascended the throne.

Neriglissar (a Greek form of the name) is mentioned in Jer. 39 under the native spelling, Nergal-Sharezer, as having been present at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah. At that time, according to the Jeremiah account, he occupied the position of Rab-Mag, or master of the magicians, a title which the Book of Daniel indicates afterwards passed to Daniel. Neriglissar reigned three years only, was not particularly conspicuous, and died peacefully at Babylon. He left one daughter, Gigitum, whose marriage contract to a high Court official, Nabushum-ukin, now reposes in a glass case at the British Museum, and a youthful son, Labasi-Marduk, who succeeded him on the throne and after nine months was killed in a palace insurrection.

By this time it is probable that Jehoiachin was dead, but somewhere in Babylon there must have lived his grandson Zerubbabel, the child who at the time of the Return from Exile, now only about twenty years distant, was destined to be the officially appointed Governor of the new Judean state. Zerubbabel figures prominently in the books of Ezra and Zechariah. He was the man who wielded civil power among the people re-gathered to Zion without a king. And somewhere in Babylon there played also another child, Joshua the son of Jehozadek, the legal High Priest of Israel during the captivity, a High Priest without sacrifices, for the sacrifices could be offered only at Jerusalem. Joshua became the first High Priest of regathered Israel, and he too figures prominently in the books of Ezra and Zechariah. So in the time of obscurity which lies between the early and the latter parts of the Captivity, between Daniel the Statesman and Daniel the Seer, we discern dim shadows of those who were to lead God's people after Daniel and all his generation

had passed away. That of itself ought to be a sobering thought to us. We experience our own day of service for God and serve with our might while we have strength and opportunity; and then sometimes make frantic efforts to perpetuate the work we have commenced. All the time there is no need; God makes His own arrangements for the continuation of His work, and while our own generation is beginning to lower the torch He is already preparing, perhaps in another place that we wot not of, those who are to do His work in the next generation.

That of itself does not justify our relaxing our efforts in the vineyard we have tended maybe all our lives. Sometimes the new work and old work must progress side by side for a space. "He must increase, but I must decrease" said John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus and the new, greater work He was to do. A goodly company of God's stalwarts have seen their sphere of activity diminish as life draws on, and happy are those who can continue in unabated certainty and confidence despite the decreasing response, all the time that they can find a hearing ear or reverent heart anywhere. Daniel stayed in Babylon and saw visions which have enlightened every generation of the Church, even whilst his younger compatriots, Zerubbabel and Joshua, were actively engaged, away in Jerusalem, laying the foundations of the restored Jewish state.

Returning to Babylon and its Palace intrigues, so like those of any court in any country, then or since; the death of Labasi-Marduk left the way to the throne open to Nabonidus the husband of Nebuchadnezzar's younger daughter Nitocris. Nabonidus was a son of the High Priest of the Moon-god at Haran, the city in the north to which Terah emigrated with his family from Ur of the Chaldees, and from which Abraham set out "not knowing whither he went" to go to Canaan. Nabonidus as a youth had been brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar at about the same time as Daniel himself, and was one of those with Daniel intended to be trained in the wisdom of the Chaldeans. As such he would be included in the young men mentioned in the first chapter of Daniel. The two must have been well acquainted at the start and must have been well known to each other throughout life. When one remembers the high favour in which Daniel had stood with the great king, the fact that his fellow-exile Nabonidus married into the king's family evokes the surmise that Daniel himself might quite likely have had the opportunity, in earlier years, of becoming joined to the royal family by marriage and so eventually ascending the throne of Babylon. He would obviously have been the

king's first choice in preference to Nabonidus. If such a proposal ever was made in fact, another evidence of Daniel's sterling allegiance to God is afforded. He would serve faithfully in the place where God had placed him but he would make *no alliance with the "people of the land"*. We can well imagine that to be his attitude.

Nabonidus was a better archaeologist than king; his devouring passion was the collecting of relics of the civilisations that were as much older than his own time as his time is older than ours. After reigning five years, the growing aggressiveness of the Persians under Cyrus demanded a younger man—Nabonidus, like Daniel, was about seventy-five years old by now—and that led him to associate with himself his son Belshazzar as joint king. This event marks what the Book of Daniel calls the "*first year of Belshazzar the King*". Nabonidus retired to his museums and archaeological studies, his daughter Bel-shalti-nannar was appointed High Priestess of the Moon-god's Temple at Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace, and Belshazzar, at probably *little more than twenty years of age*, became the real ruler of Babylon. At this point the Book of Daniel takes up the story again, after a silence of some twenty-five years.

No longer, though, do we see the stage set with the glory and pomp of the royal court, Daniel the statesman, the king's right hand man, administering and ruling the kingdom. No longer do we hear of mighty acts of faith and noteworthy miracles attesting to all beholders the all-powerful sovereignty of God. There is a difference. We see a darkened stage, the serene light of the moon *shining through a window on the form of an old man, head buried in prayer, eyes poring over books, a recumbent form in the quietude of sleep seeing visions of God*. We hear messages from another world telling of great events yet to transpire. We glimpse angels coming and going, *bearing revelations and mysteries which that same old man is to be the means of leaving on record for all those who in after days would know the things which God is planning to do in the world of men*. So it came about that in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, fifty-six years after *Daniel first entered the city in which he was to spend his life-time of exile, this faithful servant of God, who had walked step-by-step with God during all those fifty-six years, began to experience the series of revelations which crowned his life's work*. Like John on Patmos two and a half *millenniums later, he saw and recorded "things which must shortly come to pass"* to the abiding blessing of all who were to come after.

To be continued.

JOSEPH SEISS ON THE SECOND ADVENT

One of the most vital developments in Christian understanding of the manner of the Second Advent took place exactly one hundred years ago. It was in the year 1856 that the famous Lutheran minister, Dr. Joseph Seiss, of Philadelphia, declared his belief that the first phase of the Second Advent would be invisible to mankind; that the Church would be gathered without beholding her Lord with the natural eyesight and that not until the Lord with His Church is revealed in glory to the world, will mankind realise that anything unusual is afoot. That pronouncement came before there was any systematised idea that the Second Coming of Christ was not only for judgment on this world but also for the purpose of initiating the world-wide reconciliation of man to God, but it was a most important step toward that further understanding of the Divine Plan. Dr. Seiss never saw the Bible teaching respecting the "two salvations" and he did not have that clear knowledge of the distinction between human and spiritual natures, between bodies terrestrial and celestial bodies, which came later in the century. But what he did see and proclaim undoubtedly helped to prepare for the clearer light of twenty years or so afterwards.

Dr. Seiss was the Editor of the "*Prophetic Times*" of his own day, and a man who looked for the pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. The following quotation from his writings, under date 1856, show that what has been called by some, rather disparagingly, it has to be feared, the "doctrine of the invisible presence", goes back a lot farther than many of us may have supposed. It was not, as has been suggested on some occasions, "invented" to account for an apparent failure of chronological expectations; it was a logical development of Christian thought and understanding and it was bound to come when men's understanding of the nature of the spiritual world compelled them to discard the old mediæval idea of Christ standing on the right hand of God in a body of human flesh. We understand better now—at least we ought to understand with the light that has been given to us—how it is that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God". Whatever may be the nature of the manifestation of the Lord Christ in the glory of His Kingdom when that Kingdom is established in actual power in the earth,

there can be no doubt that at His coming for His Church He is unseen by mortal eyes. It follows therefore that those who are watching and waiting for His appearing must expect to realise His Advent and receive evidence of His Advent by means other than the five physical senses. Dr. Seiss wrote:

"How does a thief come? He not only comes stealthily, and at such an hour as we think not, but he is already on the premises, in the house and doing his work, before we are aware of his presence. And so shall it be with the coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. He will be here judging the nations before we know it.

"Of this one thing I am fully assured, that the stupendous occurrences of the Day of Judgment will glide in upon the world as by stealth, and before a great number of even pious people shall be aware that these great scenes have commenced; whilst the great mass of worldlings and politicians will not believe to the very last. 'As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away'. Perhaps it had rained a month before those wicked scoffers began to feel any alarm. Perhaps many of them beheld the Ark taken up by the swelling waters, and yet stood upon the hill-tops laughing at the old preacher's folly. Though the valleys were all covered and the waters rose higher and higher every hour, 'they knew not' until all were swept away by the shoreless waves. And so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. The nations shall be undergoing their judgment, the sainted dead shall be raised, the sainted living shall be translated, and the whole earth shall heave with the throes of judgment already present; and yet multitudes will go on as before, and refuse to believe what is transpiring. Nations in their desperation will continue to declare war, and make treaties, and form alliances, and join their armies, and gather together their warriors against the Lamb and His people, until at last . . . the Son of Man will appear with His sainted host.

"If it is not to be so, why have Peter and Paul told us that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night? If it is not to be so, why has the Saviour told us so earnestly to watch, and

pointed out so many signs by which we are to be guided, and so repeatedly admonished us to take heed lest that day come upon us unawares? All these things prove that the Day of Judgment will come upon the world unknown except to the devoutest and most watchful of the children of men. How important, therefore, that we should study with the profoundest care what the inspired Prophets have written upon this subject for our

learning. With what absorbing interest should we ponder the given signs by which we are to know when the great Day of the Lord shall come. Would it not be an awful calamity for the Church, which professes to be waiting for Christ, to be plunged into the midst of the scenes of that great Day, without so much as knowing that that Day has come?"

LILIES IN THE VALLEY

*The poems of
Rebecca F. Doney*

Christmas Bells

Oh, Christmas bells, ye ring and ring:
I hear your music pealing.
To me there's mockery in your tones,
As on the air you're stealing.
For Peace is but an empty name;
Goodwill: ah, who can find it?
The god of greed stalks o'er the earth,
And misery walks behind it.

Oh, Christmas bells, there's other sounds
That fill the air with sighing.
The earth brings forth enough for all,
But men for bread are crying.
Though they may give them Christmas cheer,
And think to banish sorrow,
Yet while they fill their hungry mouths,
They're shivering o'er to-morrow.

All round the world is heard the sound
Of busy hammers ringing,
Where hands are forging guns for war
While lips of peace are singing.
Gigantic vessels sail the seas,
All fitted out for killing,
And man with hatred in his heart,
His brother's blood is spilling.

Oh bells, the curse is over all
And Adam's children languish.
Back there at Eden's gate began
Six thousand years of anguish.
For God's wrath rested on the race,
The marks are all about us.
Go look, go search the whole wide earth,
And see what sin has brought us.

On every hand disease holds sway,
How pitiful the moaning.
You cannot cover up the truth:
The whole creation's groaning.
Vice, crime and evil prey on man,
And death fills up the measure.
You're ringing o'er ten billion graves,
How can ye ring of pleasure?

Oh bells, don't ring of empty joys,
That vanish with the morrow.
Ring out the Plan our God has formed
To drive away all sorrow.
Tell earth the song the angels sang,
Is yet to have fulfilling.
That God will give eternal joys
To all who shall be willing.

Bells, say to man salvation waits
Upon the Lord's returning.
That blessed truth, which they in turn
Seem to delight in spurning.
They think, and teach that when they die,
Their souls soar straight to heaven:
Although in all the blessed Word
There's no such promise given.

Except to those who, called by God,
Their solemn vows have taken
To follow Christ, though they should be
By dearest friends forsaken.
They're sacrificing with their Lord,
Their all is on the altar;
And though the way leads down to death,
They never faint or falter.

Oh Bells, ring out the prospect grand
To reign with Christ in power,
Bestowing blessings on mankind,
In that triumphant hour.
Tell all the world the time is near
And daily drawing nearer,
And whether they forbear, or hear,
Just ring it louder, clearer.

Tell them, oh bells, their long lost dead
Shall all come back from prison,
And if they ask you for your proof,
Tell them the Lord has risen,
And has the keys of death and hell,
And power to wake the sleeping,
And raise them up to perfect life,
And end earth's night of weeping.

But the proud world won't hear your tale;
 They'll say you're only dreaming;
 That they are fit to rule themselves
 By their own plans and scheming.
 So God will bring them to the dust,
 The sentence has been spoken.
 Dark clouds of wrath shall o'er them roll,
 Until their hearts are broken.

And when the world is on its knees,
 In that dark bitter hour,
 With human pride for ever gone,
 Then bells, ring out in power,
 Poor man will surely need some hope,
 In that dark time of sorrow,
 Tell them the night is almost past,
 And joy comes with the morrow.

For Christ will wipe away all tears,
 And give them songs for sighing,
 And never more in all the earth
 Shall come the sound of crying.
 Oh, bells, if all should realise
 The blessings just before us
 "Thy Kingdom Come" from earth would rise
 In one grand, mighty chorus.

A perfect race, a perfect earth,
 And love each one adorning.
 Oh bells, I don't know how to wait
 For Christ's Millennial morning.
 And when you see the earth made new
 With not a trace of sadness,
 Then, bells, I really think that you
 Will almost burst with gladness

GATHERED GRAIN

Gems from
 previous issues

"WANTING NO GOOD THING"

Psalm 34, 10 says: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Though we know that the good thing intended here is what is spoken of in verse 22, "none shall be desolated," or in John 14, 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"—for this is a good thing indeed—yet that which most readily comes to the mind in reading these words is some earthly good thing which we may desire. We can think of some of the Lord's dear ones who are greatly burdened with trials and difficulties, and who seem to have far more than their share of illness and suffering, and it would indeed be hard to make unbelievers realise these were "not in want of any good thing." Though this is not easy to explain by cold logic, yet the testimony of the poorest and most destitute brother or sister in Christ is: "I have wanted no good thing." The following, by Alexander Peden, dated 1682, surely explains this position:—

"I remember, as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell. The callous soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had: 'we will leave thee nothing,' said they, 'either to put in thee or on thee.' 'I care not,' said she, 'I will not want as long as

God is in the Heavens.'"

It is most important to note the difference between "deadness" to feeling and the "repression" of feeling. To "feel" angry or anxious, and to repress the expression of the feeling is to court physical trouble. Indeed, much physical trouble can be accounted for by repression of some part of our nature. Many truly Christian people do violence to themselves by self-limitation of thought and feeling; they think it wrong to let their love go out fully and freely; they fear to indulge their longing for beauty or give their creative instincts free play. If the "whole" man is to be "healthy" we must open wide all channels of our nature, at all its varying levels, and let the Divine creative life pour free through them and uplift and transfigure them. There must be some right outlet for every God-given instinct, and if we desire the perfection of our whole being as a witness to our Maker, opportunities for the use of all our powers will surely present themselves as we are fitted to make use of them. Those who make the service of the Master their first joy in life find it offers possibilities in them which they had never suspected they possessed. But that service must be undertaken in the free joyous child-spirit of dependence on the Heavenly Father not with the burdened sense of personal responsibility. We are always "workers together with God" and God only gives us to do what it is possible for us to accomplish. All else we can leave trustfully in His hands.

GODS OF EGYPT

An
Exhortation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We go forward, then, not behind the panoply of the gods of Egypt, borne each upon their bearers' shoulders, as Isaiah so caustically remarked "because they cannot go", but behind the guiding cloud which rises aloft and goes always in front of the host, leading onward and upward, away from Egypt and all its materialism,

away from the standards and methods of this earth, away from the mechanistic organisations of men, on, ever on, towards the Promised Land and the realisation of all the golden promises made to our fathers and inherited by us. If we can only transform our fellowship into a compact family, held together, not by creeds and regulations, rules of faith, synods and presbyteries, but

by the vital power of the Holy Spirit, operating in each heart and mind, leading to a spontaneous co-operation together in every good work, then, and only then, will our witness go forth so effectively that men, even in this day of intellectuality and science, will stop, and take heed, and say one to another "They are ignorant, and unlearned, men, but—whence have they *this* knowledge?"

LONDON CONVENTION 1956

Part II—
Sunday

Sunday morning dawned reasonably clear and fine, and it was not long before brethren were gathering again at Conway Hall to take up their fellowship where they left it on Saturday evening. The preliminary morning session for prayer and praise was conducted by Bro. A. Gayton (*Nuneaton*) and then Bro. R. B. Hartley (*Burnley*) addressed the Convention under the theme "*Thy will be Done.*" Our brother directed our attention to the spiritual power inherent in a full realisation of the meaning of Scriptures such as "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." We do not experience next week's trouble to-day; we do well not to anticipate it but take each day as it comes. There is good training in this, too, for us as the Time of Trouble bears more and more heavily upon us, training that is vital in the purpose for which God intends us at the end. And it is important to realise that we know more about God's will than anyone else on earth, all the time that we are following the One Who said "*I delight to do thy Will, O God.*" It was because of that submission to His Will that God said of the Son "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Jesus is set before us a precious stone, a sure foundation. In the next Age, the Millennial Age, when Christ reigns over the earth, that sure foundation will be very much in evidence as the entire human race returns from the grave to have recited to them what is the Will of God concerning them. "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is only when they have come to that full knowledge that the final judgment is passed as to worthiness of life or of death. Some critics say they cannot imagine how all who have ever lived can come back and find living room on the earth. We may not be able to demonstrate just how it can be, but God never makes any mistakes and just so surely as He has declared that the earth shall cast out her dead and the sea yield up the dead which are in her so surely will it come to pass. All who are in their graves will

hear the voice of the Son of God and will come forth to stand before the great white throne. That throne is white because it is a righteous throne, and it is in righteousness that God will judge mankind. That Age will be an Age of peace and blessing because it is an Age in which God's Will is being done. The trouble is at this end of the Millennial Age and not at the other end and although there are many things now being done which are not God's Will we can depend upon it that by the time that Age reaches its end, God's Will is being done on earth as it now is being done in heaven.

During the morning session a baptismal service was being held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, *Walthamstow*, by kind co-operation of the minister of that Church, and several brethren symbolised their consecration to God at that time, afterwards returning to Conway Hall to continue their participation in the Convention.

The afternoon session was addressed by Bro. A. Kirkwood (*Glasgow*) on the subject "*The Lord's Own Prayer*" which, said Bro. Kirkwood, was recorded for us in that well-known chapter, John 17. This chapter, he went on, is the Mount Everest of the Scriptures, the highest peak of Christian truth. That scene of our Lord in deep communion with his Father is not one to be rushed into, but to be approached on tiptoe. It was at that solemn moment our Lord declared "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" and thereby set an example for all of his disciples of all time to follow. The question comes to each one of us "Can I say I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do?" And even if so, there is more for us to do beyond the Vail, when the love of God reaches out to reconcile whosoever will of redeemed humanity. Our work *now* is a training for our work *then*, and that is why we must needs be well instructed in those Divine laws which will operate in that Age. Mankind is to be brought

back to God by the law of love and not by the law of force. The Prodigal Son was not brought back to his Father by a policeman. And so God commences this training in the law of love with the Church. He gave the Church to our Lord thus to learn of his ways and grow up in this law, and Jesus was able to say of those who had been nearest to him in his earthly life "These are they which have continued with me in my temptations." How well the lesson of his headship and his mission was learned is demonstrated by the answer of Peter to the Lord's question "Whom say ye that I am?" and Peter answered promptly "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That answer must have gladdened the Lord's heart: he saw evidence that his work was bearing fruit. And we in our time, if we are equally sincere and loyal, then just as Peter was kept from falling despite his weaknesses and his defection, so we will be kept by the power of God unto salvation. It is difficult sometimes to realise from what dangers and disasters we have been kept. Satan has many times desired to have us but the Lord has seen to it that our faith fails not. But there is much that we must do. If we are to be saved then we must have the Word of Christ burning in us richly. It is only by that zealous and all consuming spirit of utter consecration to God and continual attention to the precepts of His Word that we shall be "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

During the afternoon session a parallel meeting for the children was held in another room at the hall, at which Bro. D. Parker (*Windsor*) told a Bible story illustrated by flannelgraph, a method of Bible teaching for the young which has come much to the fore in recent years. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with this technique, it may be said that a flannelgraph is a large prepared background to which cut-out felt figures and objects readily adhere. As the story is told, the various characters in the narrative are put on or taken off, or moved about, to illustrate what is being said, thus providing a focal point of visual interest which readily appeals to the children.

After tea the friends gathered again in the Convention Hall to hear Bro. A. Guy (*Forest Gate*) speak on the text "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life." Prior to the address, a fifteen minute prelude of sacred song was given by the choir, and with this preparation for quietness and reverence the brethren settled down to hear the speaker. These words, embodied in Peter's discourse in the second chapter of Acts, are taken from the sixteenth Psalm, which, said Bro. Guy, is well known as what is called a

Messianic Psalm, pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ. We conclude therefore that here is a path which in the first place is being shown to the Lord Jesus Christ—a way to be followed in the execution of the Divine Plan. In the past the path of life had been lost. Man, created perfect and sinless, had fallen into sin and had been expelled from the way of life. Somehow or other the way back had to be found. The people of Israel had one interpretation and understanding of the way back to the path of life—"This do, and thou shalt live." But they very soon found that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." The path they thought would lead them to life in the end only led them to death again. Another way had to be found. So there came, in the fulness of time, the way Christ himself taught—"This *be*, and thou shalt live." Jesus knew that to be the only way when in the wilderness he quietly contemplated the Plan of God as it involved his own mission. Later on the rich young ruler came to him and wanted to know the secret of eternal life. "What good thing shall I do?"—again it was emphasis on works. The answer was hardly what he had expected. Sell that thou hast—mark, this was not "squander." He was not to make himself a pauper overnight. He was to use his possessions for the glory of God and the welfare of others. "Give to the poor; take up thy cross; follow me." Jesus asked of the rich young ruler exactly what the Father had asked of the Son. "He, who was rich, for our sakes became poor." So with us; the giving of ourselves is the greatest giving of all. Our Lord set the example "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life shall find it unto life eternal." Giving, all the time, is the secret, hidden for so long but now revealed to us. So it was revealed to Jesus by the Father that the paths of life are the paths of self-sacrifice, even unto death. The paths of life meant death to Jesus and they mean death to you and me, but just as he rose from the dead so we rise as well, into newness of Christian life. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Thus our Lord is teaching us the ways of life, ways that will eventually lead us straight into the Divine Presence.

So the day ended, and with consciousness of a stimulating and encouraging time of fellowship and exhortation, the friends separated to await the coming of the morrow, the final day of the Convention.

To be concluded.

THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS

A reflection and an anticipation

Christmas comes at the end of the year, after the harvest has been gathered in and men's labours have measurably ceased, after all the activities of summer days, all the outworkings of plans and schemes, all the planting and building, have reached their climax and attained their object. Christmas is a time for casting the mind back upon the events and achievements of twelve months, and for rejoicing in that which has been done. The work of the year is complete, and Christmas crowns that work.

The Jews began their New Year in the Autumn, after the fruits of their labours had been gathered in and the work of sowing for next year's crops was about to commence. It was then that they observed their Feast of Tabernacles, and in the fiftieth year sounded the Trumpet of Jubilee which proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, calling every man to enter once more upon his inheritance: an inheritance which, perchance, he had lost many years before by reason of sin or misfortune. The Feast of Tabernacles was to the Jews what Christmas is to us—the glory of achievement for one year's work, the anticipation of another year of sowing and reaping and building and sitting down under the vine and fig tree; of release from past disabilities and freedom to make a fresh start. Small wonder that the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of rejoicing. Small wonder that our God, in His wisdom, chose this season of the year for the birth upon earth of His dearly-loved Son—for we know that Christmas the traditional birthday of Jesus, was not actually the time of that event. It was Autumn when He came, Autumn, the time of beginning again, the time for a fresh start in the things of men, and the things of God. But because we in our state of civilisation are more accustomed to think of the turn of the sun to longer and brighter days as being the beginning of better things; because we look longingly for the "shortest day" and then say one to another "the evenings will soon be drawing out again", it is appropriate that we look upon Christmas as did the Jews upon the Feast of Tabernacles, and celebrate with our friends and neighbours the birth of Jesus, the dawn of new hope for the world, and a guarantee that there shall be a beginning again.

To-day we can look back on ten years of free-

dom from war in this land in this light. We cannot celebrate the end of war. The fighting has not ceased in the world. In that day when the conscience of the whole civilised world was, for a moment, jolted and stunned by one previously unknown word, "Hiroshima", there was no mystic influence that in an instant made wars cease to the end of the earth. Although Japan surrendered, war went on, in Indonesia, India, Persia, China, Greece. The statesmen of the world still grope their way unseeingly, feeling for peace, and finding it not, because the way of peace is not in their hearts. The shadow of war still hangs over us. The menace of rivalry between America and Russia glowers at us from the darkness. Distrust is rampant everywhere. Food shortage and housing shortage is world-wide. There seems, on the surface, little enough reason for man to look up to God and say "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness".

And the reason is not far to seek. It is because the shadow of sin still lies over mankind. There is to be a day when God will "destroy the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25, 7) but that day is not yet. We look for the coming of a Kingdom that will remove sin from the hearts of men and then all these evils from which the world now suffers will take flight and be gone, but that Kingdom is not yet here, and we must take heed of the present. It is a great and glorious part of our commission to tell men of the coming Age with its rule of righteousness and its opportunities of blessing and advancement toward human perfection. It is good that we comfort weary hearts with the golden promises of the golden future, with its shimmering vistas of a world at peace, a world in which disease and pain, sorrow and crying are done away. All this is part of the Christian gospel. But there is another part which is terribly important because it is related so closely to things that are around us every day. It speaks, not of health, but of pain; not of peace, but of war; not of good, but of evil, and it points to the fact that the cause of all these things is sin and that sin must be removed and that sin cannot be removed until there is first repentance, and conversion, and a coming to Jesus in full surrender of life to be moulded by Him into the fashion of that new life of the future Age. And although it is true

that the great day of this work is the future day, the Millennial Age, it is also true that the gospel we preach now is the same gospel that will be preached then, and we too, in this our day, must call men, as Peter called men two thousand years ago, to repentance and conversion, before they can properly appreciate the glorious promises of the Age.

We as a people tend to come short in this. We are too apt to assume a Christian standing in those to whom we witness, and endeavour to convert them to our own understanding of the Divine Plan before we are sure that they are already converted to Christ. We think, perhaps, rather too much in terms of adding adherents to our fellowship and not enough of adding believers to Christ. Do we, one wonders, need to take to heart, more seriously than we have done, the words of Jesus "*Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and . . .*"? In this dark day of the world's distress surely we need above all things to establish the faith of men in Christ the Lord, and on that basis begin to instruct them in things concerning His Kingdom.

Another thing we tend to forget is that we cannot convert others until we have converted ourselves. We cannot lead other men into a Kingdom into which we ourselves have not yet entered. And there is a very real sense in which we, who have "come in" to Christ, are called to enter His Kingdom here and now. Have we done so? Is it true of us that "the Kingdom of God is within you"? Have we "entered into rest" (Heb. 4. 3) or are we like those of old who failed to enter in "because of unbelief"? Men will ask us concerning our faith and hope for the future, and the way of life which we declare that men will be called upon to follow in that day, "Does it work?" Unless we can show that it *does* work, and *has* worked, in our own lives now, how can we expect them to heed our witness regarding the future? There is danger of spiritual complacency. We are so sure of our own personal salvation—and it is a good thing to be sure—but that very certainty tends to beget a carelessness with regard to others, and when, as at the present time, men are generally indifferent to the message of Truth there is a tendency to leave the world to its sin and unbelief and take refuge in the consciousness of personal acceptance with the Lord. Evangelical fervour is dulled by apathy, and the final result is seen in those little companies—not unknown even in our own fellowship—who have frankly and avowedly abandoned the Christian commission to preach the gospel and are waiting in quietude and seclusion until they are carried away to heavenly glory.

And all of this is because we have been unable to "endure to the end". It is only when the end has come that we can expect to see the fruition of our work, and only by patient continuance in well-doing that we shall receive the prize of immortality (Rom. 2. 7.) It is noteworthy how often the Scripture stresses this fact. "The Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and *then shall the end come.*" (Matt. 24. 14) "Go thou thy way *till the end be*" ((Dan. 12. 13) "Receiving the *end of your faith*" (1 Pet. 1. 9) "*At the end* it shall speak, and not lie" (Hab. 2. 3). "*Then cometh the end*, when He . . . shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power" (1 Cor. 15. 24.) It is at the *end* that we shall realise the fruitage of our sowing and reaping.

We can therefore read a new meaning into the Psalmist's words, putting emphasis on "crownest" instead of on "goodness" "Thou *crownest* the year with thy goodness!" It is not until the *end* of things that God as it were puts the topstone on His structure and His goodness stands revealed to all men. It is not until the *end* of this present evil world that the light of the glory of the Kingdom shines at length to all men; not until the *end* of the Church's career in the flesh that she shines forth "as the sun" in the Kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13. 43).

So Christmas becomes to us a symbol and an earnest of the end that shall come, even though the past and present be dark and discouraging. We enter upon its familiar customs with knowledge that a greater and more glorious time of festivity and gladness awaits the world "at the time of the end". The short passage in Psa. 65 in which this phrase occurs is quite evidently framed to fit Millennial conditions. If not a direct prophecy of the coming Age, it certainly is a wonderful illustration and the "crowning" of that Age with God's goodness the natural climax. "*They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy tokens*" (signs—Heb.) says the Psalmist in verse 8. Surely he here takes his stand during the great Time of Trouble which is concluding this present Age and "present evil world". Men are admittedly afraid at His signs—the signs of the long-promised *parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Men's hearts failing them for fear." "They shall seek the dens and caves of the rocks." We are quite familiar with many such Scriptures and their manifest fulfilment in this our day. "*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*" The "outgoing of the morning" is the sunrising, and that of the evening the moonrising. Both these signs are to be witnessed at this time, the dawn of the Millen-

nial Age. The sunrising is the manifestation of Jesus at His Second Advent—"as the *bright shining*, (the sunrise), cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24. 27). "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4. 2.) And the moonrising is the restoration of God's ancient people Israel to their own land to be a missionary people and to declare His salvation to the end of the earth (Isa. 49. 6.) "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee (Isa. 60. 1.). Here the sunrise is associated with the moonrise which shines by reflected glory from the sun. So, Israel in that day will reflect the glory of the returned Lord to mankind. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." That river of God is the Church, complete and ready for her task of bringing life to the nations: "full of water". "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." (Psa. 46. 4.) "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." All things being ready, the pure sustenance of Millennial teaching, of missionary endeavour, of "life from the dead" is prepared for and offered to mankind, "corn" that will give them everlasting life. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6. 51). "Except a

corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12. 24). "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly. Thou settiest the furrows thereof. Thou makest it soft with showers. Thou blessest the springing thereof." Could language better describe the work of God with man during the next Age? "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations (Isa. 61. 11). So we come to the climax of that glorious Age when "thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness". In the mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isa. 25. 6).

This is the hope we have for mankind. Surely as we approach this Christmas season we can take fresh heart of courage, remembering that there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, and that just as now we look forward to the ending of this year and the hope of better things in the next, so in this end of this present evil world, dark and fearsome though it may be, there is the sure and certain knowledge of a new and better world "wherein dwelleth righteousness".

RHODA

A young believer
— who believed

It was an unusually important prayer meeting, and Rhoda was there. Although she was only a fifteen-year-old she was as earnest as any of them and just as aware of the calamity that had overtaken them. She sat near the door, at the back of the room, next to sixteen-year-old John, whose mother's house it was in which they were meeting, and bowed her head in reverence as the strong voice of the elder John, leading the meeting, was upraised in supplication. Prayer was being made of the church unceasingly on behalf of Peter, cast into prison by King Herod and in imminent danger of death.

One of the appealing figures of New Testament history is this Rhoda, appearing on the stage with the dancing steps of a child and as quickly tripping off again. That she was barely out of her childhood is apparent from the word used to describe her, "damsel" (*paidiske*) which denotes a girl in late childhood or early youth, but not later. A different word altogether is used in the

New Testament for young women of marriageable age. We meet her just for a moment at the memorable prayer meeting held in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark. Mary's house was the first centre of the church at Jerusalem and it was in that house that the first believers began to make progress in their new-found faith. Now the little community was faced with a crisis and the brethren had gathered together to make effectual fervent prayer. Whether Rhoda was the daughter of one of the believers and was herself just beginning to make the faith her own, or whether she had come in contact with the preaching of the Apostles independently and was attending the meetings on her own account we have no means of knowing; all we do know is that on this fateful night this young girl, hardly out of her childhood and necessarily quite new to the faith, became the means of impressing upon her elder brethren, at that meeting, and no less upon us, reading the story, several

important lessons.

According to Acts 12 Peter, upon being miraculously released from prison in the dead of night by the angel, found himself standing in the darkened streets of Jerusalem. What he had thought, whilst it was happening, to have been a dream, he now found to be reality. It is probable that the intense coldness of the Judean night air quickly demonstrated to the somewhat lightly clad Apostle that it was no dream. The city was, of course, deserted at that time of night except perhaps for an occasional watchman. The immediate question for Peter was: What next?

Perhaps this is the first lesson we should take from the incident, one that is not connected with the damsel Rhoda, "When he had considered" Peter turned his steps to the house of Mary, (which is traditionally believed to have been just outside the city wall on the south side of Jerusalem.) He did so being tolerably certain to find brethren gathered there and that is our first lesson. We do well to be where we can associate with the Lord's disciples, fellow-Christians in the Narrow Way. In seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness we will best advance our spiritual interests by finding our associations, our friendships and companionships, our activities and interests, among those who like us are consecrated to the service of God and are fellow-heirs in the High Calling. The first thing Peter did upon his release, even although it was twelve o'clock at night, was to make his way to the place where he knew there was always open house for the brethren.

It was really a rare compliment that Peter paid Mary in so doing. He might have surmised, but could hardly have definitely known, that there was a prayer meeting in progress at the time of his release, but he evidently had confidence that his welcome at Mary's house would be full and free even in the middle of the night.

So it came about that Peter was presently standing at the gate in the outer wall of the premises, knocking for admittance, and this is where Rhoda comes into the story. Perhaps the entire meeting heard the knocking on the outer gate, maybe only Rhoda heard and slipped out to investigate; in either case, for all her youthful eagerness, it must have been with a certain amount of trepidation that she crossed the courtyard and stood behind the gate, resounding with the thunderous blows which it was very probably suffering under the hands of the impetuous and not always too patient Peter. For all that Rhoda and the others knew, the knocking might be the harbinger of Herod's officers, seeking someone else, or even all of them, to be taken to prison.

Peter, however, on the other side of the gate, was probably reasoning that the sooner he got out of the public street and into the cover of the house the better.

So Rhoda's clear young voice, possessing a confidence she probably only partly felt, ringing out on the still night air, "Who's there" was answered by a gruff and well-remembered but at the moment decidedly impatient response "Peter, of course. Let me in." In her relief from apprehension, and joy that their prayers had been answered, Rhoda most inconsequently left him standing there and ran indoors to tell the others. One can almost imagine the lordly air of John Mark, from all the superiority of his twelve months' or so advantage in age, remarking "Just like a girl" when it was all over and the explanations were being made.

Now here comes the most intriguing part of this story. The assembled brethren did not believe Rhoda. "Peter at the gate: Rubbish" they said "You must be mad." They knew perfectly well that Peter was in prison and people didn't get out of Herod's prisons so easily as that. The girl was imagining things; whoever it was, it couldn't be Peter. They had been praying unceasingly for Peter's release, and now they were told he was standing at the gate they refused to believe it. One is really justified in wondering how much of faith was mingled with their prayers. Perhaps though it might be more charitable, and maybe nearer the truth, to assume that these immature and inexperienced Christians had not yet appreciated the true power of prayer. After all, the authority of Herod must have been a very immediate real thing to their minds. They certainly took a lot of persuading. "*Thou art mad*" they told her. "*But she constantly affirmed that it was even so.*" One can imagine the young girl trying by every artifice of reiteration and emphasis to induce the stubborn grown-ups around her to take her seriously. It would seem from that last expression that the argument went on for some time—evidently the prayer meeting had been temporarily abandoned. Peter, of course, was still knocking but nobody took any notice of that. Finding it impossible to dissuade Rhoda, and being, it would seem, reluctant to test the truth of her news by sending someone else to the gate, the brethren decided that if there was anybody there at all it must be Peter's guardian angel—speaking apparently with Peter's voice. "*Then said they, it is his angel.*" The early Christians had a very intense and definite belief in the existence of guardian angels for each of the Lord's disciples, though why they should expect an angel to stand out in the street knocking for admittance does not readily appear.

"But Peter continued knocking"—probably definitely thunderous knocking by now, so that at last for very shame's sake they had to open the door: "and when they saw him, they were astonished." This is the only place in all the Scriptures where a company of believers joining in prayer for something are stated to have been astonished at receiving the object of their petition.

So Peter took charge of the assembly, and what had started as a prayer meeting ended in a stirring exhortation from the one who by his very presence there evidenced how God can deal with the devices and plans of evil men in His own way and deliver His own people when it is His Will.

The meeting broke up; Peter, a free man, went his way; and Rhoda drops out of the story. The New Testament does not mention her again. Whether she held to the faith and in after years became one of the noble matrons who graced the Christian Church with their labours of love and good works, we do not know. Whether she lived

the remainder of her days in Jerusalem and perhaps was one of the Christian community which witnessed the fall of the city when Titus besieged it some forty years later, or in later life found herself at Antioch, at Ephesus, or maybe at Alexandria in Egypt with John Mark who we know ended his days as Elder of the Church in that city, we have no idea. All we know of Rhoda is that she was the only one in that prayer meeting quick-witted enough to realise that the united fervent and unceasing prayer had been answered, and having given us that one brief glimpse of unquestioning simple faith she moves off the stage and is lost. But what we have seen is perhaps enough to give rise to some hope and expectation that in a day yet to be to each of us, when we shall in turn enter into that which is within the Vail, and realise that we have become citizens of the celestial land, among all those whom we shall meet and recognise as our fore-runners in the Narrow Way, having made their calling and election sure, we shall come face to face with "a damsel called Rhoda."

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