



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 37, No. 1

JAN./FEB., 1960

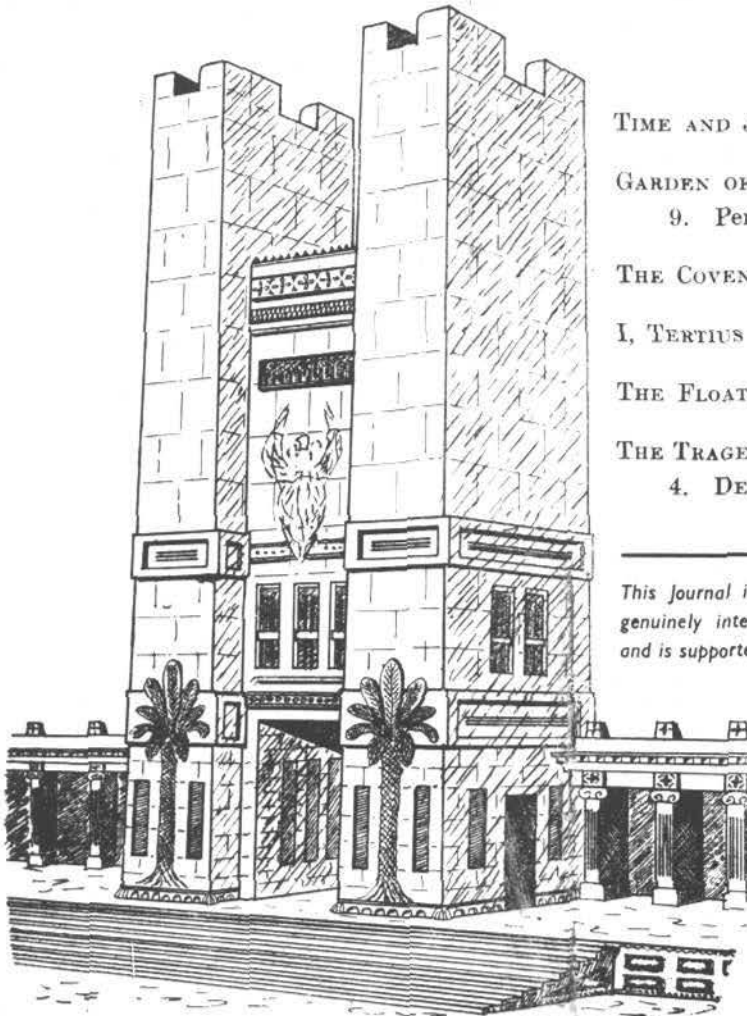
Published January 15th

Next issue March 1st

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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.*

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

FOR NEW READERS—

Back numbers of the "Monthly" containing the first three instalments of "The Tragedy of

Samson" are available and will be sent upon request to anyone interested in reading the series from the commencement.

TIME AND JUDGMENT

A discourse for
the month

"Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him." (Eccl. 8. 6).

Men can neither judge their times nor time their judgments; God can do both. It is because He can do so that those who believe in God's fixed intention to lead mankind into a life of everlasting peace can rejoice and be exceeding glad at a time when the misery of man is so great upon him that it almost invariably shows itself plainly in his face. Man is notoriously incapable in his handling both of time and judgment. He has been endowed with a brain of so complex a structure, and mental and intellectual faculties of so high an order, that God can say to him, as He did once through the prophet Isaiah, "Come, let us reason together". At any rate, those faculties are more than sufficient for the intelligent planning of human life on earth so that all may take their fill of earth's bounty and live in the full and unrestrained acceptance and enjoyment of all that God has provided for their happiness. But man's judgment is so much at fault that he finds himself ploughing back into the land the food he has grown, instead of consuming it; throwing back into the sea the fish he has caught, instead of eating that; going to war to preserve his freedom but accepting in order to do so a bondage from which he finds he cannot escape when the war is over, and in a hundred ways demonstrating to the observer's satisfaction if not his own that the misery that is great upon him is very largely his own fault. The continued degeneration of the human race in conse-

quence of its unrestrained use—or abuse—of its own powers of judgment is equalled only by the progressive deterioration and despoiling of this planet on which it lives, and that is another consequence of the same cause.

Neither has man made any better use of time. Historical records go back five thousand years. Bible history goes farther. The Bible is more candid about the results than is ordinary history, but the consequences to-day are getting plain enough for all to see. Throughout this long span of man's time, man has succeeded in doing nothing except make tolerably certain that his time has about come to an end, and that if anything is to follow at all it must be God's time. Men have had plenty of opportunity to try out their judgment on how the world ought to be run and society conducted, and all they have to show for the outcome is that the misery of man is great upon him. The only apparent fruitage of man's experiment with time appears to be that, unless God intervenes, this twentieth century will see the end of the experiment, and time, together with man, and so far as man is concerned, be no more.

But Solomon was not thinking about human manifestations and use of time and judgment when he uttered his famous dictum. He was thinking of time and judgment of a higher order, of that associated with God. Solomon knew, what so many to-day do not know, that the centre of all things both in space and time is God, and that whatever is, is by his permission if not of his direct interposition. No one who has any real understanding of the

character of God would accredit him with responsibility for the entrance of sin and evil into the world, or suggest other than that God hates evil with all the vehemence of his Divine purity; that same understanding should guarantee an appreciation that the fact that evil is still with us after these many thousands of years does not by any means indicate that God has lost either interest or control. The whole point is that God is bringing two great influences to bear upon mankind. The one is time, and the other judgment. When both have done their work God will have achieved his great intention, an intention that has never altered, and man will have achieved his destiny. And if one should cavil at the suffering experienced by man while the process is being worked out, it may very reasonably be asked—*what about God?* Is He not affected also? Man has at most seventy or eighty years of life in which to experience his greatness of misery; God has been watching the unbelief, the perversity, the wickedness of man, the oppression, the injustice, the devilry, for a hundred times as long. And who of mankind can hope to understand the grief of the One who created this fair earth a garden and placed upon it a creature made in his own image and likeness, compelled then to watch his creation reduced to a shambles and his creature transformed into the image and likeness of the Devil? For full five thousand years the love of God was held in leash until his judgment decreed the time ripe to intervene in human affairs by sending his Son to show mankind the way out. Not until then was the "fulness of time"; not until then had the development of mankind progressed to that point at which the message could do its work; not until then could He inspire the sublime words "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"!

Men rejected him; their judgment at fault again. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life." Time had not run its full course; men in general were not yet ready to listen to the voice that spoke from heaven. Judgment came upon that generation but still they did not repent. For two thousand years longer man has set his face determinedly away from God; and still is his misery great upon him.

But the end of even the longest day comes at last, and all the signs now are that the time of man's dominion has nearly expired; God is

about to take over. The world is very evidently entering into judgment; the imminent collapse of the present world order will affect all nations and races of men on the face of the earth, for all now are dependent one upon another. The collapse is due to the selfishness and greed of men and their refusal to abide by the standards and laws of God; it is therefore the judgment of God upon them even although it is at the same time the natural and inevitable sequel to their own wrongful course. But when it is over men will be ready to listen to God; they will have to, for there will be no other in a position to speak with any confidence or authority. So time and judgment come to their climax together and God is able at last to talk to mankind with some prospect of being heard.

Now this is just for what the disciples of Christ have been waiting for hundreds of years. It is foretold that "the saints shall judge the world". The sublime promise given through Isaiah was that that the consecrated people of the Lord would be employed in opening the blind eyes, bringing out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sat in darkness out of the prison house. The net result of their ministrations would be that every man should sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none make them afraid. The prospect of so desirable a consummation to the message and work of Christianity is of itself so attractive that the danger is—we forget there is something to be done first.

That something is the training and the qualifying of the teachers and leaders.

One reason that time and judgment has had to delay the introduction of this long hoped for future Age of universal wellbeing has been that God, in his inscrutable wisdom, decreed that the teachers and leaders of men in that Age must themselves have been drawn from the ranks of men, and must be trained and fitted for their future work by the manner in which they make use of life's experiences now, and the knowledge of human frailty and sin that they gain now. Until the teachers are thus qualified God is not ready to make a start. Time and judgment, therefore, is operative in a special sense towards the disciples of Christ at this day and hour. Time, because God is working to a time-table and the opportunity to join with him in the work of restoring mankind to righteousness must eventually close, and judgment, because the calling to which we are called is a serious and important one and there must be a decision at the end as to whether we are really fitted for

the duties to be required of us. In the parable there were many who said "Lord, lord, in thy name we have done many wonderful works . . . we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets" but He has to say, nevertheless, "I never knew you; depart from me". Whatever they may ultimately become fitted for, they have not become fitted for the work of administering the affairs of the Kingdom of Christ in the Millennial Age.

A very natural but a very tragic mistake on the part of those who would "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" even to association with him in the conduct of Millennial affairs is the conclusion that a life of extreme piety and much acquiring of Christian doctrinal knowledge, together with considerable withdrawal from contact with the world and its affairs, is the life to which God is calling. If the Lord should be looking for inmates to staff a celestial monastery in the hereafter there might be something in the suggestion, but He is not. He is looking for workers, for men and women who will be able to go out into the Millennial highways and byways and bring the lost and dying to the warmth and light of Christ's fold. He is looking for those who will be like the Lord himself, merciful and sympathetic administrators; merciful and sympathetic, because they have learned mercy and sympathy in their experiences with their fellowmen in life before. So that while piety is very necessary, and knowledge very useful, in the formation of that mature Christian character without which no one will make his "calling and election sure", it must be the piety and the knowledge which is acquired in conjunction with the world and with some very first hand knowledge of its problems. The religion which will at the end be stamped with the hall-mark of Divine approval will be that which was branded by the Lord's own half brother, James, as "true religion and undefiled before God", the religion that not only keeps its professor unspotted from the world but also visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. On the memorable day when Jesus began his life's work by preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth He took the book of the prophet Isaiah and read these words "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised". And for ever after that day He

interpreted that commission in terms of going about doing good—preaching the gospel of the kingdom, yes, but at the same time accompanying that preaching by acts of goodness and benevolence, so that little children ran toward him and the afflicted and sorrowing brought their troubles to him. That is the example we are bidden to follow, and although it is not within our power to work the miracles that He worked, it is by all means well within our power to manifest his spirit of kindness and benevolence toward all who are in affliction and sorrow, and do what we can to lighten the weariness of the way for those who begin to find life well nigh intolerable. There are plenty such now, and there are going to be plenty more in the very near future. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren" says the king at the last "ye have done it unto me!" That parable relates to humankind in the next age, but the principle is equally applicable to us in this Age and day. The sincerity of our desire to help and lead mankind into the way of peace in the Age when we have all power is attested by the degree to which we try to do it in this Age, when we have little or no power. Until the fulness of time has come the misery of man must remain great upon him. Until the judgment of God upon a dying world order has been executed the misery of man must remain great upon him. But while these two factors continue to hinder the emergence of mankind into the life and light of the Millennial kingdom there is much that we can do to alleviate the lot of some, if only a few, of earth's children, and so demonstrate that we have indeed partaken of the spirit of our Father which is in heaven.

"We all suffer from spiritual inertia, and are anxious to discover respectable reasons for remaining as we are."—Rev. Percy Sowerby

* * *

"Intolerance has had a very successful career, and it looks like having a brilliant future, but it has nothing to do with Christianity."—Rev. "Dick" Sheppard

* * *

There are great truths that pitch their shining tents
Outside our walls, and though but dimly seen
In the grey dawn, they will be manifest
When the light widens into perfect day.

GARDEN OF EDEN**9.—Penalty of Sin**

An Examination
of the Story of
Adam and Eve

Slowly the majestic Presence turned, and gazed upon the stricken pair. They knew, now, that they must pay the penalty of their sin. The one who had deceived them and seduced them from their loyalty had himself been sentenced and had disappeared from the scene. They saw him no more. They stood before the One whom they had known in times past only as a Benefactor; now they saw in His face the lineaments of a Judge. The trial had been held; there was no valid defence; it remained only to await the passing of sentence.

Strangely enough, what has often been called the sentence on the woman savours really more of hope than of despair. Against a background of pain and sorrow it promises new life. The human race was not to be suffered to die out; the death sentence was not to be executed immediately. There were to be children born; that promise, when as yet Eve had no child, must of itself have been wonderfully comforting. The situation was dark, but it was not altogether hopeless. Even though they themselves must go into death—and there is no way of discerning to what extent, if any, the idea of a resurrection from the dead had entered their minds—there would be some born of their own bodies, made in their own image and likeness, to carry on the story and perchance see rectified the evil that had been wrought.

So the strange words were spoken *"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* (vs. 16). Perhaps a more careful rendering would be "In multiplying I will multiply thy pain and thy conceiving; with sorrow thou shalt bear sons, because thy longing shall be for thy husband; therefore he shall rule over thee." The original commission given to Adam and Eve was to multiply and fill the earth; here Eve is given the assurance that the commission was not withdrawn; she with her husband were still to multiply and fill the earth, but with a difference. In that process of multiplying God would increase her pain and frequency of conception, and she would bear her sons with sorrow instead of joy. Later on she was to know the bitterness of that destiny. One son murdered, another a murderer, exiled and

outcast from his family. For the rest of a long life she was to witness the slow spreading of evil through the multiplying human family and hug to her heart the anguish of knowing that it was by her own deliberate act all this had come about. Perhaps in that sad life which was Eve's after the tragedy of Cain and Abel, true repentance for her sin did come to her and she rested her trust in the Lord. There is evidence that she did, in after days, come back to God. At the birth of Seth, apparently the third to be born to them, his mother gave him a name (*Sheth* in the Hebrew, not *Seth* as in the A.V.) which means one raised up or appointed to a place *"for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew"*. It is fairly obvious that Cain and Abel were grown men at the time of Cain's crime, so that Eve would have had quite a few years in which the lesson of the Fall and its consequences could sink in. The fact that she is thus found, at Seth's birth, in a reverential attitude towards God, and moreover still trusting in the promise of the "seed", casts a bright light over the sombre story. With the birth of Cain she had believed the Lord was fulfilling his promise to undo the work of the serpent; that confidence was shattered by the tragic event which followed, but now at the birth of a third son hope revived and Eve is found believing that God would be faithful, and that is a great thing to know.

Now it was Adam's turn. This time the voice of the Divine Presence did not speak of life, as it did to Eve; it spoke of death. This indeed was the passing of sentence, a sentence which was to involve Eve because she owed her life and form to the man and, although physically separate, was still a part of the man. *"Unto the man (Heb. Ha-adam, "the man", not Adam as a proper name) he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* (ch.3, vs.

17-19).

It was a fearful sentence. It must have struck despair into both their hearts. There had been nothing said to Eve about expulsion from the Garden; nothing about toil and weariness and pain in the uncultivated world outside. Even in apprehension of that death penalty which they knew to be the consequences of their sin, they probably expected its execution to be within the confines of the Garden. They may well have reconciled themselves to the idea of death, but they could have had *no conception whatever of what life was to involve before death came.* Now they heard the dread words. They were to be banished for ever from the Garden, dragging out weary lives darkened by the necessity of constant labour in a land not yet really ready for human habitation, seeking desperately to maintain life, if not for their own sakes, at least for the sakes of their unborn children through whom alone the promise could be fulfilled, ere death should overtake them, and put an end to all further effort.

Was there something in the infinite wisdom of God which saw that only in some such way could fallen man begin to demonstrate the sincerity of his remorse, by his efforts to leave behind him beings in his own image through whom at length God could work to achieve his purpose? It almost seems so. When at last the sword fell, and the two parents of the human race passed into death, they left behind them children, descendants too, perhaps, the seventh or eighth generation, who had a love for God. True, there were evil men and evil things; but there were also good men and good things. In every generation there were to be found godly men and women who took care to preserve the story of the olden time when God made man upon the earth, and the coming of sin, and death, and the promise that one day sin and death would be overcome and be no more. We are able to read these things in the first four chapters of Genesis today only because Adam and Eve, in sad and humble yet confident faith, instructed their children in that knowledge of God which they themselves possessed, and because some of those children profited by that instruction.

So Adam, with bowed head, listened to the details of his doom. "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*" (on thy account) "*Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*". It has sometimes been thought that God at this time imposed a special curse upon the ground the result of which was the appearance for the

first time of thorns and thistles. That cannot be quite right. Thorns and thistles existed long before man and their fossil remains have been found along with those of other plants. There were apparently no thorns and thistles in Eden but there were probably plenty outside. Is it possible that the curse consisted very largely, not in any sudden and miraculous change of the condition of the ground outside Eden, but in the impossibility of one pair doing anything practical toward making so vast a territory of wild uncultivated country sufficiently productive to afford them a reasonably comfortable living. If in fact, as suggested earlier in this treatise, the Garden of Eden extended throughout the extensive valley which is now the Persian Gulf, there would have been room there for many generations of men to find their sustenance, without need to venture into the outside world. When at last increasing numbers rendered migration imperative, the population would have been sufficiently numerous to render the systematic and progressive subjugation of the uncultivated world a practical proposition, involving no hardship to any one individual. But that would be on the assumption that sin had not entered, that all men were perfect and virile and ever-living, as was Adam at his creation. As the matter turned out, Adam and his wife found themselves faced with the problem of gaining a livelihood in an unfriendly and mostly hostile world, without knowledge, without materials, without tools, without anything with which to set about their task. Small wonder the ground brought forth thorns and thistles; the real wonder is that they did not starve to death in the first few months.

Many centuries later Lamech the father of Noah spoke of "*the ground which the Lord hath cursed*" (Gen. 5. 29). The human race apparently were still finding it a matter of toil and labour to wrest a living out of the ground. And the curse still persists. Forests disappear, lakes and rivers dry up, deserts grow and swallow up productive ground, and man seems unable to do much to stop it. The fear of world famine is abroad in the earth, even though all the wonders of modern discovery are at men's beck and call. And the cause of it all is sin—human sin, selfishness and greed, which prevents men co-operating together and working together as they should for the preservation and the right development of this wonderful planet on which we live. "*Cursed is the ground on thy account*"; surely when God uttered those words He was looking

into the future and saw what havoc would be created by fallen man in the fair earth of his creating. One has to remember that when God created the earth He saw that all He had made was "very good". It is man who has despoiled God's handiwork, through the centuries, and that surely is an important factor in the curse which rests upon the ground.

Now comes a more personal word. "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the dust, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*" Here it is, a clear definition of the nature of death. "*In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*". Adam, formed of the dust of the ground, vivified by the breath of life from God, became a living, conscious being, a living soul, a personality having his own distinct individual existence and yet utterly dependent upon God for continued life. When, because of sin and in accord with His own decree, God withdrew that vivifying life, when He gathered to himself his Spirit and breath (Job 34. 14) then the physical frame fell apart and returned to its dust, and the man was no more. How could he know conscious life again unless there be a resurrection from the dead, a re-creation of physical frame, a gathering together of the dust of the ground and once again the bestowal by God of the breath of life? Is that why Isaiah, seeing in vision the day of God's rising up to fulfil his promise of deliverance, sang "*Thy dead shall live . . . awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, . . . and the earth shall cast out the dead*" (Isa. 26. 19). If God could once, as He did, create a man in his own image and likeness, it must be a very easy thing for God to re-create a man in the image and likeness, mental as well as physical, which that man possessed before death claimed him and his body was absorbed again into the dust from which it was made. Logically such a man would take up the thread of conscious existence from the point where he dropped it in death, as a man does upon awaking out of sleep. Be all this as it may, there is no doubt that the Christian faith is built solidly upon two fundamental theses, one, that man is a fallen being, under sentence of death because of sin, and must surely die physically; and two, that the promised future life guaranteed by Christ comes by means of a resurrection from the dead, a reversal of the death state by re-creation and re-vivifying to a new life.

But all of this was hidden from Adam. He saw before him the dreary prospect of a life

of toil and hardship, terminated only by death. Such a hope or confidence, if ever he did possess such, must have come later. In the sweat of his face must he eat bread until he returned to the dust from which he was taken.

It is at this point we have a strange little interlude. "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them*" (vs. 21). For what purpose were these "coats" and what was their nature? Some commentators, looking for a theological symbol in every action of the Eden story, have suggested that by this means God sought to teach Adam that a covering for sin involving the shedding of blood was the only means whereby his guilt could be purged, it being assumed that the Lord God could only obtain the material for the coats by slaying suitable beasts. Thus, it is said, the death of Christ upon the cross was foreshown. It is questionable whether Adam was in a suitable condition of mind to appreciate such a lesson at that moment, even though the fitness of the symbol be admitted. It might well be, though, that there is something in this provision of covering for the exiles which has a closer connection with their immediate problems. The word for "coats" in this verse is not the usual Hebrew word for garments, "*begeg*," which occurs nearly two hundred times, but a much more unusual word, "*kothenoth*". This word *kothenoth* is the name of an inner garment made of woven material and worn next to the skin. And here is an amazing thing. The *kothenoth* was a garment denoting ceremonial cleanliness, and when used in connection with Divine things, a cleanliness in God's sight. This fact can be easily verified by noting all the uses of *kothenoth* in the Old Testament.

- First: the linen "coats" of the Aaronic priesthood, denoting their purity in the sight of God. In the case of the High Priest this was covered over by the ornate outer robe. See Exodus 28. 4, 39, 40; 29. 5, 8; 39. 27; 40. 14; Lev. 8. 7, 13; 10. 5; 16. 4; Ezra 2. 69; Neh. 7. 70, 72.
- Second: The "coat of many colours" Jacob made for his son Joseph. See Gen. 37. 3, 23, 32-33.
- Third: The "garment of divers colours" worn by Tamar the daughter of King David, in token of her virginity and royal station. See 2 Sam. 13. 18-19.
- Fourth: The robe which betokened the high position and Divine calling of Eliakim, the one appointed of God to

administer Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah. (Isa. 22. 21).

Fifth: The virgin girl in the "Song of Solomon", awakened from sleep by her beloved's knocking at the house door, says (Cant. 5. 3) "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on". "Coat" here is *kothenth*.

There is only one other example. Job in his discourses refers to his wearing a *kothenth* (Job 30. 18). As an Arab ruler of high rank he was probably accustomed to wear this garment on the same basis as Eliakim mentioned above.

If this then is the garment with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve a totally new avenue of thought is opened up. The *kothenth* was never made of animal skins or hides; it was always of woven linen or flax—the same word in Syriac denotes linen or flax,—and it was usually beautifully decorated, as was Joseph's coat and Tamar's robe. The old idea that God had to conduct a slaughtering operation in the Garden of Eden to provide material for the "coats" has to be abandoned. And this is made evident by a closer study of the actual words in Genesis. The A.V., together with most translations, renders "coats of skins", but in actual fact in the Hebrew, while "coats" is plural, "skin" is in the singular. The expression really means "coats-of-the-skin" i.e. coats worn next to the skin, the distinguishing feature of the *kothenth*. Dr. Moffatt, unusually, seems to be the only translator who has noticed this; he renders "And God the Eternal made skin tunics for the man and his wife, and clothed them".

Why then did God provide these two with woven garments preparatory to expelling them from the Garden. Adam was not, as was Aaron later, holy in the sight of God and dedicated to him in priestly service. Eve was no king's daughter like Tamar, serene and confident in her royal station; no would-be bride like the virgin in the Song of Solomon, waiting and looking for her beloved. These two had deliberately and voluntarily rebelled against God and repudiated him, and had tried to hide from him when He came to find them. Why then, after all that, did He give them the ceremonial garment of honour and privilege?

Can it be, after all that has been said about the gravity of Adamic sin and the stern justice of offended Deity, the heinousness of eating forbidden fruit and the imperative necessity of immediate condemnation; can it be, despite all this, that in reality the Almighty Father

knew perfectly well that this tragic lapse on man's part was not irremediable, that man was not intrinsically evil, that after sin had worked itself out righteousness would come into its own? Was it perhaps that God did not intend to let Adam go into exile completely without hope, that although He must of necessity allow the fruit of sin to be reaped by those who had sown sin, they should not go into the wilderness without some indication that the love of God was going with them? They were to be banished from Eden, separated from the presence of God, but they were to take with them an indication that God still cared, that He would not forget them, and that one day, in some wonderful fashion they could not at present be expected to visualise or comprehend, they would come back to him again and the old relationship be restored. So God gently took away from them the pitiful coverings of fig leaves with which they had thought to hide themselves from his sight, and gave them instead woven garments of glory and beauty, fabricated by the hand of God just so surely as the Law at Sinai was written on the tablets of stone by the finger of God, and so sent them forth.

The question naturally arises, how would Adam understand the significance of the garments. In later days the use of the *kothenth* was well understood and taken as a matter of course. Tamar wore her robe because she was a king's daughter and it was the privilege of king's daughters. Aaron donned his ceremonial garment because it was so laid down in the ritual and he knew that thus arrayed he was ceremonially clean in the Divine sight. But nothing of this had developed at the time of the Fall. What was there in the bestowal of these woven "coats" to give ground for hope to Adam and Eve?

Perhaps we can find the answer by going back a little. "Ye shall be as gods"—celestial ones—"knowing good and evil" was the alluring temptation which led them into this trouble. But instead of coming thus into closer relationship with the celestials and with the place of God's Throne they were farther away and about to be completely cut off. Instead of becoming more like the glorious beings from another world with whom they had talked they had become more conscious of their own nakedness and weakness. They had received many gifts from God in past time, and because of their own folly and sin had lost them all. Now they found that of themselves they had nothing, nothing wherewith to cover themselves or feed them-

selves. And at that point God brought them a gift—the first gift and the only gift they had from him since their rebellion against him.

That in itself must have been a great thing. God was not so angry with them that He would turn his back upon them completely. He was sending them away but He gave them a gift to take with them. And the nature of the gift could well have given Adam and Eve the first dim hope that after all they might one day become like the celestials, knowing good and evil, but this time in God's way. For these garments, unlike their former ones of fig-leaves, had come from God; they were garments as it were of the other world, and with those they were differentiated at once from all other living creatures on the earth. They had a connection with heaven.

The idea of a body covering of any kind was probably quite a new one to Adam and Eve. They had not felt the need of anything of that nature. But they may have been accustomed to some such idea with respect to their celestial visitants. It is probable that the Father talked with Adam before his sin in the person of the Son, appearing in visible form on earth. He may have sent angelic messengers as was certainly the case in later Old Testament days, and without doubt Satan appeared to Eve in visible form. It has already been shown that those appearances probably gave rise to the later beliefs among men of the "seraphim" and Isaiah describes

the seraphim as he saw them in vision. Each one had six wings, he said, using two with which to fly and four with which to cover the body. If this is an accurate picture of early man's recollection of the full story of Eden handed down from generation to generation, we might be justified in thinking of the angelic visitors to Adam and Eve appearing before them as though clothed in their wings. If then, Adam, receiving this garment of beauty at the hand of God, remembered that the angels he had seen were similarly arrayed in a covering of enshrouding wings, he might very well have taken this gift as an indication that God intended him, after all, one day to be, like the citizens of Heaven, restored to favour and fellowship with Him.

So they turned their faces toward the unknown outer world, with sorrow and foreboding, but their despair lightening a little as they felt the soft pressure of the unaccustomed garments against their flesh, and reflected that these were God's parting gifts. He was not utterly wroth with them; He had not utterly cast them off; and these garments, the only possession they had to remind them of their lost Eden, would be an ever-present reminder to them that one day they would find the way back, and eventually, like the wing-clad celestials, be clothed with the garments of righteousness in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(To be concluded)

THE COVENANT OF NOAH

*God's promise
to the earth*

The Covenant made between God Most High and the patriarch Noah immediately after the Flood is noteworthy as being the first of a series of covenants entered into by the Creator on the one hand and his creatures on the other. In a very important although restricted sense it is the basis upon which the three great Covenants of the Bible, the Abrahamic, the Law, and the New, have their standing. Without the carrying into effect of the provisions of the Noachic Covenant the other three would not have been possible of fulfilment. The ninth chapter of Genesis, which records the making of this covenant, is therefore a most important document for the story of doctrinal truth.

Take a glance, first, at the "background" of the narrative, the conditions existing at the time. The great Deluge, darkly prophesied by the saintly Enoch several centuries earlier and

plainly preached by Noah for a hundred and twenty years, had come and gone. A wide expanse of the earth's surface—how wide we do not definitely know, but certainly including all the lands surrounding what is now the Persian Gulf and the lands of the Middle East—had been completely desolated by that mighty convulsion of Nature. In all the vast area affected, no animal life and no human life had survived, save those few who, drifting in the Ark, at the mercy of the waters, found themselves at length in the fastnesses of the Armenian mountains. They came out to a new world, a world from which, at least, the shadow of fear had flown. The *Nephilim*, those terrible oppressors of men, were no more. The angels of Lucifer, who had misused their celestial powers for rapine and cruelty and murder, had been overthrown in the spiritual sphere at the same time as Divine

judgment was executed on this material world, and were no more able to interfere with the normal lives of human beings upon earth. The catastrophe had effected a complete elimination of evil and evil-doers from the earth, and restored the remaining human family to something like the position obtaining at the time of man's creation. But as Noah and his sons looked down from mountain slopes upon the ruined and devastated earth which they must perforce rebuild and restore if life was to continue, the thought must have come to them; at what terrible cost had the deliverance been achieved! We in our day know little of conditions in antediluvian times; probably the population of the world was small in comparison to that of to-day. That a high order of civilisation, of knowledge of the arts and sciences, existed we must conclude from the evidence that we have, scanty as it is. And all that, all the material achievement of something like two thousand years, had been swept away in one irrevocable act that blotted out all that men had created upon the earth as though it had never been. The thought must have come to Noah, musing upon the desolation before him; will it always be thus, and must God periodically blot out all earth's achievements and make a fresh start in order to preserve righteousness and truth from absolute extinction in the earth? And if so, what becomes of the promise, made to mother Eve and cherished through the centuries in the family of which Noah himself was an honoured descendant, that the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head? What guarantee could there ever be, after this, that all the striving after righteousness and godliness, all the worship of an Enos or the walking with God of an Enoch, all the quiet faith of a Lamech or the militant evangelism of a Noah, would not be nullified and made of no avail in another general destruction which must from its very nature blot out the victories of righteousness in the world at the same time as the works of evil?

It was to answer questions such as these, and to commence the definition of God's gracious purposes, and the principles of his Plan, that the covenant with Noah was promulgated and concluded.

The covenant with Noah is like the Abrahamic Covenant which followed it a thousand years later; it is an unconditional covenant. It is an expression of something that God undertakes to do without attaching an "if" as in the case of the Law Covenant at Sinai. It was made with Noah as the chief opposite

contracting party not on account of anything he undertook to do in the future, but on account of the faith and loyalty he had manifested in the past, just as in the case of Abraham. The great difference is that whereas the Abrahamic Covenant is the formal guarantee of God's intention to bring into being a "seed" and through that seed to bless all the families of the earth, the Noachic Covenant is the formal guarantee of his intention to preserve the earth and all its processes and amenities from any further destruction in order that it may remain to all perpetuity a suitable and fitting scene for the operations of that "seed" and a home for the blessed families of the earth. The fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant requires a perpetually fertile and replete earth for those blessed under the Covenant. The Noachic Covenant guarantees such an everlasting earth. The Scriptural basis for the belief that the earth "abideth forever" is rooted in this ninth chapter of Genesis and this covenant with Noah. The surest argument we have against the mediæval idea that the earth is to be destroyed and burned up is founded upon it also; this too ought to weigh as a powerful consideration with those who, normally in general agreement with Millennial hopes, tend in consequence of recent developments in atomic science to think that, after all, there may be some kind of literal annihilation in store for the order of things on this earth, before the Kingdom of God shall come. Any such belief is really a retrogression to the "crack of doom" theology of the Dark Ages and is by no means a "walking in the light". The Covenant with Noah, rightly understood, defines for us the physical principles upon which "this present evil world" will pass into and become "the world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness".

Now it was when Noah, after his safe deliverance from the destruction that had engulfed the world, built an altar and offered burnt offerings upon it that God enunciated and ratified the Covenant. It was a solemn and important occasion, for a new world was about to be born, a world that was to witness all the strange events associated with the Divine Plan of salvation, and the whole future of that world rested with those four men gathered around that altar.

"And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying

'And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you;

And with your seed after you;

And with every living creature that is with you;
Of the fowl,
Of the cattle
And of every beast of the earth with you;
From all that go out of the ark;
To every beast of the earth'." (Gen. 9. 9-10).

Note especially that this covenant is made, not only with Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their children, but with the lower creation also. The great God and Creator of all things here pledged faith with the birds of the air, the cattle of the pasture land and the wild beasts of the jungle. It is a sobering thought; God has respect to, and regard for, the dumb animals which his own hand made and this covenant contains a promise to them. This is not the only place in the Bible where Divine care for the animal life of the earth is declared. All Christians are familiar with the words of Jesus about the sparrows. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" (Luke 12. 6). Jesus may have had this very covenant in mind when He spoke those words. Jonah, sitting sulkily under his booth outside Nineveh, heard the Lord say "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons . . . AND ALSO MUCH CATTLE?" (Jon. 4. 11). Surely God must have remembered his Covenant with Noah at that moment! Fourteen verses of the one hundred and fourth Psalm are given to a rhapsody on God's care for the animals and the fact of their dependence upon him for life. It is an important thing to notice, therefore, that this covenant is made between God and all earthly creatures, of whatsoever kind they be.

What was its purpose? The Covenant of Noah was established to record in formal fashion the Divine pledge that never again would the earth be destroyed. Man and beast alike might go about their respective commissions, to multiply and fill the earth, make use of its bounty, and fulfil their places in creation without fear that their activities would be brought to an untimely end by another universal catastrophe. Here are the terms of the pledge; they might well be said to constitute the charter of the Millennial earth. On the basis of these words rests the whole fabric of Millennial belief. "I will not again curse (destroy) the ground any more for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again

smite any more everything living, as I have done.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

"I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth.

"This is . . . the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. And I will . . . remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 8. 21-22 and 9. 11-16).

In these present dark days, when the hearts of men are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth (Luke 21. 26), and the world's leading men are proclaiming their belief that atomic warfare will lead eventually to the extinction of the human race and the desolation and perhaps annihilation of the planet itself, it is comforting to remember God's Covenant with Noah. Here is Divine assurance that such a dreadful climax to human history will never be reached; God will not allow his creation to be hopelessly marred. In his own due time and in the exercise of his supreme power He will intervene and restrain the forces of evil before they can destroy humanity and the earth. "Except those days be shortened" said Jesus, speaking of this same time "there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24. 22).

For a long time must Noah and his sons have knelt around that altar, listening to the voice of God. The terms of the covenant had been recited and the little group had accepted their commission, marked out for them in the Divine Plan, to be the progenitors of a new race of men out from whom should be taken, in after days, the future ministers of reconciliation between God and men. But that could not be until a later and greater covenant, the Abrahamic, had been made. The smoke of the sacrifice curled lazily upward, symbol of God's acceptance of the four men gathered around the offering, and as their eyes followed it up into the heavens, their gaze fell upon the sign!

In order that future generations should not be without witness of this first of all covenants, God appointed a sign, a token, of his faithfulness, a sign that should be observed in times of rain and give assurance. The graceful arch of the rainbow gleamed down upon

them from heaven. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make . . . I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth . . . and the bow shall be in the cloud; I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant . . ." (Gen. 9. 12-16).

The impression made on the minds of those watchers must have been tremendous, for not only the Genesis record, but every mutilated and distorted tradition of the Flood, lingering among all peoples of the earth, gives prominence to the incident of the rainbow. As men divided and spread over the face of the earth, despite their increasing forgetfulness of God and apostasy from his ways, they took with them the fixed idea that the rainbow was the sign and assurance of security and of faithfulness. Without any doubt it has become the symbol of Divine faithfulness and deliverance in the Scriptures. "Thy faithfulness" says the Psalmist "shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psa. 89. 2). It is difficult to resist the conclusion that David was thinking of the rainbow and the covenant of Noah when he uttered that sentiment. Isaiah, later on, caught a word from the Lord, when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried, a spokesman for God "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For . . . my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord." (Isa. 54. 9-10). In all such words there is an evident connection of thought between the covenant made with Noah and the much later fulfilment of Divine promises in the protection and salvation of his people.

Ezekiel, beholding the glory of God advancing to the deliverance of his people captive in Babylon, saw the sign of the rainbow again. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was . . . the likeness of the glory of the Lord." (Ezek. 1. 28). There was yet much tribulation for Israel to undergo, but protection was theirs, and deliverance in due time; and Ezekiel saw at the end the glorious vision of the restored Temple. Centuries later, John the Apostle, filling in New Testament days the position that Ezekiel occupied in the Old Testament, saw also the vision of God upon his throne, and of the Divine Plan about to move into action, as it were, for the overthrow of evil, and once again there was the rainbow, the sign (Rev. 4. 3). More gloriously still, at the last, the great Deliverer comes to earth finally

to deliver the whole creation from the bondage of corruption and usher them into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and John sees him as One having a rainbow upon his head. (Rev. 10. 1). The mighty angel comes down from heaven, enshrouded with clouds, unseen of men, but the eye of faith perceives the rainbow and takes courage, knowing, as did Noah so many millenniums ago that the word of God is sure and that what He has promised will surely come to pass. Says Ferrar Fenton, translating Gen. 9. 16, "the rainbow shall be in the cloud, and appear as an eternal record of the covenant between God and all animal life existing upon the earth."

The Covenant of Noah has no place in the arrangements whereby God is developing the instruments of his purpose for the reconciliation of man and the cancellation of sin. That was left to later times, the time of Abraham and his Covenant, and of Moses and his Covenant, and of Christ and the Covenant of which He is Mediator and under which mankind in the next Age will have their hearts of stone converted into hearts of flesh. But the Covenant with Noah was a necessary preliminary. It provided the necessary guarantee that this good earth, with all its wealth of mineral and vegetable and animal life, is to continue uninterruptedly upon its course into the perpetual ages of glory of the infinite future. All who give themselves to God, whether in this Age under the Abrahamic Covenant or in the next Age under the New Covenant, can do so in full assurance that their whole-hearted devotion and consecration to the Divine ways will not be lost, that having become reconciled to God they will go on into all eternity resting in the faithfulness of God and the integrity of his eternal purpose.

What a home ours would be if Christ were actually dwelling in it, interesting Himself in all our affairs, sympathising both in our sorrows and in our joys, directing us in all our difficulties, speaking to us, too, of things transcending this life, telling us of the heavenly inheritance for which He is preparing us, and bidding us to be of good cheer? What an atmosphere of heaven would pervade our homes! What holy strength would come to us from that Divine companionship! What peace His presence there would bring, and what a separation from all earthly things, and how heavenly minded we would become! What a hushing there would be of all those tones of anger, irritation, selfishness, and uncharitableness!

I, TERTIUS

*A little-known disciple
who wrought a great work*

"I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." (Rom. 16. 22).

That is all that we know about Tertius, this first century Greek Christian of Corinth who was Paul's scribe for the writing of the Epistle to the Romans. Nowhere else in the whole of the Scriptures is he mentioned. He looks in at the door, as it were, introduces himself as the one who wrote at Paul's dictation, conveys his greetings to us—and shuts the door again. We have a brief glimpse of—possibly—dark hair, grey eyes, finely modelled features and a pleasing smile, and then he is gone. This is Tertius, whose hand first traced on parchment or papyrus the words of that immortal epistle which the English poet Coleridge declared to be "the most profound work in existence" and Luther "the masterpiece of the New Testament, the purest gospel". Admiration of this epistle has been expressed in many a glowing phrase from the lips and pens of Christian leaders, from reformers and theologians alike. Many in our midst echo their sentiments, and the Epistle to the Romans is a favourite subject for class study. In our thought we naturally see the outstanding figure of Paul, the master-mind whose creation it is; but when we think of the stalwart and indomitable Apostle of the Gentiles laying bare his soul in this his exposition of Christian doctrine, an exposition that has profoundly influenced the lives of Christians in all ages since his day, we do well to grant a fleeting thought also to the zealous and devoted penman who sat so constantly at his side taking down the burning words, filling sheet after sheet with the cogent arguments, at the end adding those salutations in which his own name appears, and then pasting the sheets together to form the long roll which was the original copy of the Book of Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans was written at Corinth in Greece probably during the course of Paul's third and last visit to the Church in that city, and not long before the final journey to Jerusalem which resulted in his being carried a prisoner to Rome, there to be martyred. The Corinthian Church had been founded by Paul about the year 52, nearly thirty years after the Crucifixion, and the Epistle was written, probably, about six years later. Two years more and Paul himself was in Rome, having followed his epistle thence.

Tertius was one of the Corinthian converts and might very well have known the truth for six years, but could not have known it longer, when he was privileged to render this act of service to the Apostle and the Church, and in consequence had his name inscribed, to be preserved for ever, on the pages of the New Testament. Tertius would not have dreamed at the time that his work would have such far-reaching consequences or that the simple, fervent mention of his own name would resound through the world and throughout the centuries, to lands and peoples of whose existence he had no conception, as it has done. He was probably a young man, or at least in middle age, perhaps a scribe or clerk by profession, and an earnest member of the little Christian community at Corinth. When it became known that Paul was minded to send a long and important letter to the Christians at Rome, and because of his own weak eyesight required an assistant to write at his dictation, someone would quickly respond "Why, Tertius. He will appreciate the privilege and he will do the work well".

In the great day of the Bible commentators, nearly a century ago now, it used to be suggested that Tertius was possibly the same as Silas, who figures several times in New Testament narratives and on one occasion—at Philippi—was imprisoned with Paul, an imprisonment that gave birth to the Philippian Church (Acts 16). There is no foundation for the suggestion; it was made on account of the fact that "Tertius" is the Latin for "third" and that the Hebrew consonants SLS found in the name Silas are those forming the Hebrew word for the numeral "three". In point of fact, Silas is the Greek abbreviation for the Latin name Silvanus, which in turn denotes a forestry worker or woodman (compare our English word "sylvan" as applied to woodlands and the like). We are still left therefore with that picture of the young man who puts his head in at the door and says, "I, Tertius, . . . salute you" and is gone.

The Corinthian Church was a remarkable church. It seems that it consisted almost entirely of Gentiles—Greeks. Paul's first work at Corinth had been with the Jews but they had rejected him and sought to have him expelled from the city (Acts 18). The dispute came before the notice of the Roman pro-

consul of the city, Lucius Junius Gallio (called Gallio in the Book of Acts), a man described by secular historians as a just and cultured man, of a genial and even lovable disposition. Something of his judicious and impartial administration can be sensed in the story in Acts, where it is apparent that he quickly saw through the Jews' trumped-up accusations against Paul and contemptuously dismissed the charges and acquitted Paul. It was following this that Paul found a hearing ear among the Greeks, and the Corinthian Church began its ordered existence in the house of Justus. It was a church that had many undesirable features, for Corinth was in more than one respect an undesirable city, and the Christians had been born and brought up in that environment and educated in those standards and customs. But it was a church that was very dear to the heart of Paul, and although he had on more than one occasion to be utterly scathing in his condemnation of their shortcomings and their failings, there was evidently much there that he dearly loved. Probably Tertius was one of those whom he held in high esteem, not only for his works' sake but for his Christian integrity and sincerity. Even if Tertius did not realise the importance of this epistle he was writing, it is certain that Paul did, and that he knew it was going to be a text book of Christian instruction and belief, not only for the Roman Christians to whom it was addressed, not only for the scattered Christian churches of his own day, but for all Christians in all ages everywhere to the end of time. Knowing this, he would not be likely to choose other than a clean vessel to enjoy the honour of being the scribe of this Epistle.

We may take it, then, that Tertius was zealous, sincere, full of faith and anxious to serve in whatever way he could be of service. There were others, of course, in the fellowship, of whom Paul speaks approvingly and who sent their greetings also to the brethren at Rome. "*Timotheus my workfellow*" he says—we all know Timothy and the sterling service he rendered in after days as elder of the Church at Ephesus—". . . and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. Gaius mine host, Erastus the treasurer of the city, and Quartus a brother". Erastus must have been an important man in Corinth; he was the city treasurer and Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities of the Empire. But he was a Christian. Quartus was, maybe, a brother in a much more humble and obscure walk of life; he might even have been a slave;

but he also was a Christian. And they were all one in Jesus Christ, these men who with the womenfolk met for praise and worship and fellowship in the house of Justus. It is a picture quite at variance with that of the Church of Corinth drawn in other parts of the New Testament, where that church is pictured as being in many respects anything but a model of Christian behaviour and conduct and witness. Perhaps however, the Apostle's oft reproofs had had their effect and there had been, by the time of this his last visit, some repentance and reformation. We do not know; in any case the Church at Corinth never became noted for Christian fervour and example as did, for example, those at Ephesus and Colosse and Berea.

Nevertheless, it is probably true that even in its darkest days the Corinthian assembly had a minority of earnest ones who did not countenance or endorse the behaviour of the majority and who on that account were drawn together more into a little spiritual fellowship of their own. Perhaps these whose names appear here in this salutation at the end of the Epistle to the Romans were such. We have seen the same kind of thing happen in our own day—most true Christians have in every century—and perhaps we can understand and appreciate the position.

What happened to Tertius after the Epistle had been dispatched and Paul had left Corinth for Jerusalem, never to return? We do not know. He is unknown to history. Perhaps in after years he left Corinth on some kind of missionary work, emulating in some small degree the Apostle he had once served in so signal a fashion. Perhaps he remained at Corinth, serving as a faithful minister, through all the vicissitudes of a life spent in a fellowship that was both light and dark, that savoured much of this world even although it professed much of the next. We like to think that he did remain faithful, that the vessel chosen to do Paul's work in the days of his presence remained a chosen vessel to the end of the way. If such was indeed the case, we can picture him growing older with the passing years, ministering faithfully and consistently, never weary of reminding the brethren of the exhortations left by the founder of their church, Paul the minister of God to the Gentiles. He would have heard, in time, of Paul's death in far away Rome, and with that news would have felt suddenly older. There would be the parting with Timothy, gone to assist the failing John in the administration of the Church at Ephesus and all the comun-

ities in Western Asia who looked to Ephesus as a centre. Then perhaps the slow lapse of twenty or thirty years; news comes to Corinth of the death of John, the last of the Apostles. No one is left now who saw the Lord in the flesh; very few remember anything of the early struggles of the infant Church and the herculean labours of its founders. A new generation had grown up around Tertius, and—who can doubt it—he saw, rapidly increasing and flourishing unchecked, more of those evils against which his beloved mentor Paul had spoken and written so many years ago. But now there was no Paul with his forthrightness and fiery eloquence, to bring into the assembly that sense of shame that in times past had brought godly repentance and a great cleansing. Perhaps in the interim Tertius himself had acquired something of Paul's ability and could himself induce a reformation in the Church; perhaps not. Perhaps he could only pray and intercede for the erring ones in the solitude of his own home, or endeavour by quiet word and remonstrance to turn this one or that one from the error of his ways. Perhaps, at the end, and in spite of all his faithful service, he was ignominiously turned out from the apostate assembly and his name branded as one to be avoided and spurned.

We do not know. We only know that all these things have happened to faithful servants of Christ in church after church, century after century, and that such experiences have often befallen those who have sought consistently and persistently to "warn their brethren night and day with tears" (Acts 20. 31). It would not be a strange thing if it had happened at Corinth to Tertius.

But we also know something else. We know that to every sincere disciple of Christ who has been true to his Master and true to himself, and has not denied his Master's Name, there comes at the end a reflection that must have come at the end to Tertius too, in whatever state he encountered that end. It is the reflection that came to Paul himself and which he expressed in fervent words, confident words, immortal words, saying them on our behalf as well as his own, that we may take fresh courage in anticipation of the coming of such a time. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4. 18).

One may picture Tertius, in that day, at the time of the fulfilment of the promise, approaching towards the glory of the Throne, around which the triumphant hosts of heaven are standing, beholding the ones he had known and loved in life before, his loved master Paul among them. The weight of earthly years falls away and vanishes, and he steps forward in the wonder and the glory of his resurrection life to greet his long-lost brethren, brethren with whom he had borne the heat and burden of the day back there in the First Century at Corinth in Greece. And as he sees them, at last, face to face in the image of the Master, enshrouded in that radiant glory which is the inheritance of all who have been raised to live with Christ, perchance there comes again, unbidden, to his lips, those words penned so long ago, "I, Tertius . . . salute thee".

THE FLOATING AXE-HEAD

An Old
Testament Story

One of the minor incidents of the Old Testament has been elevated to the position of a miracle largely on account of inadequate translation in the A.V. The prophet Elisha, about eight hundred years before Christ, living with his students at Gilgal, north of Jerusalem, was induced by them to seek a more commodious living space near the River Jordan. The account in 2 Kings 6 tells how they went together to the chosen place and commenced to fell timber wherewith to build themselves a house. During this operation one of them, apparently working close to the

river's brink, had the misfortune to lose the head of his axe in the water. In some distress he sought his tutor, Elisha, for help. "Alas, master" he said "it was borrowed". For that reason, obviously, the question of its recovery was doubly urgent.

"And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place." Then, says the narrative, Elisha "cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim".

Ever ready to seize upon the miraculous, past generations of commentators have called this the miracle of the swimming axe-head;

more than one volume of Bible Study helps lists this incident under the heading of "Old Testament Miracles". There seems singularly little purpose in such a miracle. No great lesson is expounded or public demonstration of Divine sovereignty given. A careless youth had his lost axe-head returned to him in the sight of half a dozen companions and that is all. The incident is related in a casual, matter-of-fact fashion as though it was not a matter of any great importance and then the historian goes on to talk of something else.

The Jordan near Gilgal is between sixty and a hundred feet wide and varies in depth between four and six feet, with a well defined channel flanked by level terraces on which, more particularly in ancient times, there grew an abundance of trees, canes, shrubs and reeds. The water was too deep to retrieve the axe-head easily and yet not so deep that a little ingenuity would not solve the problem. Elisha "cut down a stick" according to the A.V. "Cut down"—"*qatsab*"—means to form or shape, as with a tool of some kind. An example is 1 Kings 6. 25 and 7. 37 "... cherubims of one measure and *size*" where "*size*" stands for "*shape*". The two olive wood cherubims in the Temple were both of the same sculptured shape. Another example is Cant. 4. 2 "Like a flock of sheep that are *shorn*"; the paring of the wool from the sheep is likened to the paring down of wood that is shaped. "Stick" in the text is "*ets*" which denotes a tree, a branch or any piece of wood, shaped or unshaped, indiscriminately. Elisha took a piece of growing timber and shaped it to his purpose; probably made it into the form of a flat plank. He then "cast it in . . . and the iron did swim". "Cast" can mean equally cast, throw, thrust or put, and "swim" denotes the ideas either of swimming or floating. This latter word is in the Hebrew grammatical form known as Hiphil, signifying the causative "*he caused it to float*", giving a different slant on the matter than that indicated by the A.V., which has it as though the iron did swim of its own volition. The true rendering is shown in several translations such as RSV "*and made the iron float*", Fenton "... *thrust it (the stick) there and floated the iron*", and the Septuagint "... *threw (the stick) in there and the iron came to the surface*".

The axe-head was evidently five or six feet down in the water and too far from the bank to be fished out easily. Elisha seems to have shaped a long pole to a roughly flat form and thrust the pole into the water in such a

fashion as to insert its end underneath the axe-head as it lay on the river bed. He had only to let go his own end of the pole to have it rise to the surface, bearing upon its farther extremity the lost implement. The relieved youth had then only to reach out for the floating timber, bring it carefully to the bank, and recover his axe-head. This is precisely what the narrative says "*And he put out his hand, and took it*".

Why so trivial an incident is recorded at all is a bit of a puzzle. The historical books of the kingdom of Israel were compiled by many generations of historians over a period of five hundred years or so and this little interlude, 2 Kings 6. 1-7, might well have been written down in the first place by the youth who lost the axe, a memory of the manner in which the great prophet of Israel came to his aid in a relatively trivial personal problem. Those responsible later on for compiling this part of the Book of Kings might have considered the incident worthy of record as illustrating how Elisha in all his greatness did not abstain from quite minor deeds of helpfulness when the occasion came before him. But we need not only ask why the compilers included such a narrative; they were guided by the Holy Spirit and we also have to ask why the Holy Spirit saw to it that this story was included. There must be a reason, for "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3. 16). Maybe it is that an admittedly learned and devoted man of God who might easily be charged with being a mystic and out of touch with the affairs of daily life is here shown, despite his piety and "other-worldliness", to be of a practical mind and definitely aware of the troubles and needs of his fellows. When the lad was in trouble Elisha came to the rescue with a business-like application of elementary mechanics and his pupil was duly grateful. We too, with all our knowledge of and insight into the things of the next world, do well if we can, when occasion arises, render practical assistance to those of our fellows who have become involved in some everyday trouble. To that extent the story has certainly been given for our example and instruction in righteousness.

"Lord, we pray that the thought of the country towards which we are travelling may make us forgetful of the weariness of the journey."
Jeremy Taylor

THE TRAGEDY OF SAMSON

*The story of
a great failure***4. Delilah**

Samson had now exercised rulership over Israel for twenty years without having made any contribution to the moral or religious progress of his people. The period was one of stagnation. Israel remained uneasily under the yoke of her Philistine masters, although it is very probable that while Samson lived the Philistines left them more or less alone, probably contenting themselves with the exacting of a certain amount of tribute in kind—wheat, olives, grapes, cattle, and so on. It was probably not as heavy a bondage as they had known in earlier times, and for that the credit went to Samson. It was not a time of religious revival; Israel in the main went on worshipping other gods and no voice was raised in the land calling them back to the God of their fathers.

The blame for this has to be laid at the door of the ruler. Samson had every possible advantage fitting him for the role of a national religious leader as well as political ruler. His Nazarite upbringing and early training coupled with unusual physical attributes could have marked him out as a leader whom all would follow. Had the power of God been behind him he would have been irresistible; but God can work only through men who are utterly and sincerely devoted to him, and Samson was not. He was too much a slave to his own fleshly desires and passions. It is impossible to read the story without realising that the women in Samson's life were the cause of his undoing and his failure to achieve what otherwise would have been a memorable destiny. Now after twenty years of unchallenged rule we find him entangled with yet another woman, Delilah of Sorek in Judah, forty miles from his home village of Zorah and not far from Etam where he had taken refuge from the pursuing Philistines twenty years earlier.

The nationality of Delilah is not known. She was not necessarily a Philistine—living in Judah so far from Philistine territory it is in fact unlikely that she was a member of that race. It has been thought that she was probably an Israelite, but there is something that does not ring true in the idea of any Israelite woman, however abandoned, betraying the hero of her nation to the unbelieving Philistines. It is perhaps more likely that she was an Amorite, a daughter of the people which

inhabited Canaan when the children of Israel first entered the land, and whom Israel never succeeded in completely driving out. Traces of Amorite descent still linger in even the present inhabitants of the land. The Amorites, like the Philistines, were exceptionally tall and well built, usually having fair hair and blue eyes; it is quite possible that Samson, himself a giant among his fellows, would feel a natural preference for the tall Amorite and Philistine women as against the more slightly built Hebrews. At any rate, we are told quite frankly and brutally that "*Samson loved a woman in the vale of Sorek named Delilah*". There is no intimation that he was married to her or had any intention of marrying her. The setting of the story lends colour to the supposition that he visited her whenever he saw fit and interspersed such times of dalliance between periods of attention to such of his duties as ruler in Israel that he chose to discharge. He had long ago given up any apprehension that he stood in any danger from the Philistines; twenty years' confidence in what men would to-day call his "good luck", and reliance on his personal strength and agility, had built that impression firmly in his mind. As for the things of God, it is evident that he never gave them a thought.

Samson's infatuation for this woman did not go unnoticed. Such things rarely do. In this case it proved the subject of interested discussion in very high quarters indeed—no less than the councils of the five "lords of the Philistines". This word "lords" is the Hebrew "*seren*", describing an official rank amongst the Philistines which denoted a member of the quinvirate, or ruling executive of five, which governed affairs in the Philistine colony in Canaan. Samson had proved too elusive for all their efforts of twenty years past but they still wanted to get him in their power. His personal prowess had hitherto defied their schemes; could they get at him through this woman? Samson was neither the first man or the last to be brought to ruin that way.

The upshot of all this was a visit to Delilah by duly accredited representatives of the five rulers. For information leading to successful apprehension of the hero they would each contribute the sum of eleven hundred *keseph* ("pieces of silver" in the Authorised Version).

Five thousand five hundred silver *keseph* amounted to a sum which would have the purchasing power of about six thousand pounds sterling, or seventeen thousand dollars, in our day. Such a sum of money must have represented a big temptation. True, no scope for spending it or even a fraction of it could possibly have existed in the primitive villages of Judah, but the emissaries would not have been slow to point out that life could be very different in any of the five Philistine cities, Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Lachish or Gath, all on or near the seacoast and replete with all the luxuries, the pleasures, and the vices also, of the Cretan civilisation from which they had sprung. A smart girl like Delilah, they might well have pointed out, was wasted in a backwoods village like Sorek and upon a country-bred Hebrew like Samson, when with her looks and money she could enjoy life and see life to the uttermost in the Philistine cities or even, perhaps, travel to Crete and move in the highest of Cretan society. There is nothing fantastic or impossible in all this, for human nature is much the same in all ages, and these arguments have been advanced, and accepted, in similar circumstances a myriad times in the world's history.

Delilah accepted the proposition. She agreed to betray the man who, for all his faults, trusted her, and to learn from him the secret of his great strength and how that strength could be nullified. One incidental evidence which might indicate that Delilah was not of Samson's own people is the fact that a Hebrew woman, unless profoundly and improbably ignorant of the Mosaic Law, would have known the Nazarite secret without having to worm it out of the man.

One would have thought that Samson, after a similar disastrous experience at his marriage twenty years earlier, would have been proof against a repetition. He would by now be at least in his early forties and, presumably, wiser in the ways of men, and women, than he had been in those past days. But there is no indication that he was any wiser, or at any rate more discreet. Perhaps the guileless blue eyes of the fair-haired Amoritish damsel persuaded him that she was incapable of the villainy once perpetrated by his dark-eyed Philistine love. More likely it is that he had become reckless in the conviction that he was invulnerable, and that come what may, the Philistines could never capture him, so that whilst fully aware of the danger of revealing his secret he was prepared to "play with fire"

in a spirit of bravado, purely to torment the Philistines with false hopes which would not be realised. So to Delilah's tearful entreaties he responded with an entirely fictitious story, to the effect that if he could be bound with seven green withs (the stem of a rush-like plant) that had never been dried, his strength would go from him and he would become like any ordinary man. Delilah, being after all, only a simple country girl, believed him, and next time Samson visited her she had a suitable party of Philistines concealed in the chamber where she waited to receive him. Samson probably had a shrewd idea they were there, especially when Delilah proposed a pretty little piece of play-acting in which she would bind him with seven green withs just to see if his strength really would go from him. The giant probably assisted in adjusting his bonds, and stood there laughing as Delilah, believing that her fifty five hundred *keseph* were as good as in her purse, called out the pre-arranged signal "*the Philistines be upon thee, Samson*". Even as his would-be captors burst forth from their hiding-place he had snapped his bonds "*like a thread of tow in the fire*" and was gone, laughing uproariously at the joke.

It was not long before the moth was again fluttering around the candle, to be met by more tears and reproaches. There was probably a certain amount of comforting to be done, and in order completely to restore friendly relations Samson indicated to Delilah that the real trouble was that the green withs had snapped unexpectedly. What were actually needed were two new ropes that had never been stretched. This sounded reasonable enough; it may be imagined that Delilah, in consultation with her advisers, took a few lessons in knot tying. It was not desired that the fiasco of the last occasion be repeated. It was then necessary to wait until Samson's next visit was due; it does not seem however that he allowed affairs of State to interfere too much with pleasure, so that before very long the Philistines again lay concealed in Delilah's room—but with no better result than before.

This was discouraging. Delilah would have a hard time explaining to the Philistines that all this was not her fault; she was doing her best. She was probably told she had got to do better; there may even have been threats of possible unpleasant consequences in the event of failure. At any rate, perhaps with some misgiving, she approached her admirer once again.

Samson was getting reckless. Mischievously, as his eyes fell upon the loom standing in the corner of the room—a loom was a very necessary implement to every woman in those days—he suggested that an effective method of curbing his strength would be to weave his long hair in with the web of the partly made cloth even then standing on the loom. Delilah would look at the loom too, appraisingly, and realise, as Samson most likely intended her to realise, that a man whose hair was woven in with the cross-threads to make as it were a piece of cloth, tightly stretched on the loom, would be quite unable to break free unless he scalped himself. The more Delilah considered the idea the more foolproof she felt it to be. The loom was a heavy timber construction and once securely fastened to that a man's enemies could easily make short work of him.

The next step was to persuade Samson to act the part he had facetiously suggested. He may or may not have demurred a little. Some thought may have crossed his mind that he could conceivably tempt his good fortune too far. Perhaps Delilah intimated to him that the continued granting of her favours would be dependent upon compliance with her wishes, and he, infatuated man that he was, would comply rather than risk losing the object of his desires.

So it came about that on a set night the hopeful captors crouched in their hiding place while the loom creaked and turned as Delilah steadily wove her lover's luxuriant hair with her balls of yarn into the strangest cloth ever woven by an Amorite woman. When it was finished the weaving lay wound tightly around the roller (the "beam" of the Authorised Version narrative) which Delilah thoughtfully locked with the "pin" to avoid any possibility of unrolling. Samson must have presented a pitiable and undignified sight with his head drawn close up to the roller, around which his hair was now wound, and his body sprawled across the woodwork of the loom. What more fitting a picture could there be of a man who had become a complete slave to his own weaknesses? Could the writer of the Book of Proverbs, a couple of centuries later, want any better inspiration for his picture of any man caught in the same kind of snare? *"With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dark strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it*

is for his life" (Prov. 7. 21-23).

So, for the third time, the Philistines sprang out expecting this time that there could be no escape. But they had still under-estimated their quarry's strength. With one mighty heave Samson wrecked the loom, tearing free the roller with its roll of cloth into which his hair had been woven, together with the broken pin and such parts of the loom as could not be detached from the cloth, and was away. The account does not record how, on arrival home, he explained the peculiar condition of his hair and perhaps beard, ostensibly sacred to God, but now inexplicably and inextricably woven in with some woman's weaving material. Neither does it say how many women of Samson's household laboured, and for how long, to disentangle the yarn from the hair and restore his flowing locks to their usual luxuriance. In any case Samson's own people must by now have become well used to his eccentricities and only a few of the older ones who had regard for the God of Israel and remembered the circumstances of Samson's birth, would shake their heads sadly and look hopelessly at one another.

Here in this story is enshrined all the tragedy of a man who flirts with temptation and whose successive escapes from serious consequences only encourage him to live even more dangerously. In a sense it is the story of mankind, fallen into sin. Only utter disaster and heartbreak at the end brings him to a consciousness of his own folly and the true means of reformation and eventual happiness. So it was with Samson; so it is with all men who tread this way.

At this stage the Philistines apparently lost interest and went home. The attempt to capture Samson with the help of Delilah was written off. But Delilah had no intention of giving up so easily. The promised reward still dazzled her. So she resumed her efforts with Samson and began to wear down his resistance. He was apparently seeing a great deal of her now, for *"it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart . . ."* Wearing by her importunity, and lacking strength of character to resist, he at length imparted the fatal secret. *"There hath not come a razor upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my birth"*.

With that admission Samson signed his own death warrant. Delilah's instinct told her that this time he had revealed the truth. Maybe

she waited a while to lull any suspicion on Samson's part that she might make use of the information; his utter blindness to possible consequences is almost incomprehensible except on the supposition that he relied again on his own physical ability to extricate himself from any difficulty into which Delilah might seek to involve him. But he was now altogether entrapped in the snare of his own folly and he could not escape. Delilah was clever enough and unscrupulous enough to know how to hold and keep him. The expression in Judges 16. 19, "*she made him sleep upon her knees*" is almost identical with an ancient Sumerian allusion which would indicate that Delilah held him in an intimate embrace from which he had neither strength nor will to loose himself. Devoid of all feelings of modesty or shame, she held him thus fast whilst her confederate deftly shaved the luxuriant tresses from the head of the unheeding giant, oblivious to all but his passion. The task completed, triumphantly and cruelly she jerked him back into consciousness with the familiar words "*The Philistines be upon thee, Samson*".

This tragic highlight to the story demands more careful consideration than any other part of the narrative. Samson, shorn of his locks, found himself suddenly bereft of the mighty strength which had so long been his and in which he had trusted. He himself had apparently believed that the secret of his strength lay in his standing as a Nazarite, the symbol of which was his long hair. And the symbol meant more to him than the reality. It would seem that he could break every law of God and every aspect of his vow without considering his status as a Nazarite imperilled but he must retain his long hair. Samson's tragedy was to hold to the symbol whilst rejecting the reality behind the symbol, and that has been the tragedy of a great many Christians and has led them into excesses as great, or greater, than those of Samson.

Must it then be assumed that the removal of the hero's "seven locks of hair" was in fact the actual cause of his loss of vital strength? As a medical or physical reason the idea is absurd. It has also to be noted that nowhere in the story of Samson, or elsewhere in the Bible, is unusual physical strength said to be inherent in the Nazarite's long hair. Samuel was a Nazarite but no indication is given that he was of other than ordinary physique. The idea that the strength was in his hair rests entirely on Samson's own testimony and represents only his own belief.

If then Samson's physical strength was not affected by the shaving of his head, to what must be attributed the fact that at this moment his strength evidently did desert him and at last he fell into the power of his enemies? What was it that happened in the instant he said "*I will go out and shake myself, as at other times before. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*"?

He had betrayed his God! . . . That was the terrible realisation which smote Samson with all the force of a sledge-hammer blow as he leapt up and realised that the hair in which he had taken such pride was gone. He was no longer a Nazarite and God was departed from him. It had been so long since he had given any thought to the things of God that he had become quite unable to distinguish between the reality and the symbol. Whilst he kept his unshaven locks he gloried in the strength which he believed they conferred on him and cared not one jot about the remainder of God's commands. Now he had lost that which had been his glory and in one moment of acute self perception he saw himself as he was, a man whose persistent self indulgence had separated him from God and blinded him to the calling of God and at the end had betrayed him into the hands of the enemies of God. The bitterness of that moment deprived him of all power to resist, and as his exultant enemies led him away securely bound, he went with them passively, helplessly, a broken-hearted and despairing man. His own foolishness and wickedness had led to the loss of that which made him a man of God and with that loss he had lost all. God had departed from him and he would never again possess strength with which to outwit and overcome his enemies. Those were the bitter thoughts which possessed his mind as he trudged wearily into Gaza and through the cheering crowds, come to gloat over the capture of the man who had been their scourge for twenty years.

(To be continued)

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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 37, No. 2

MARCH, 1960

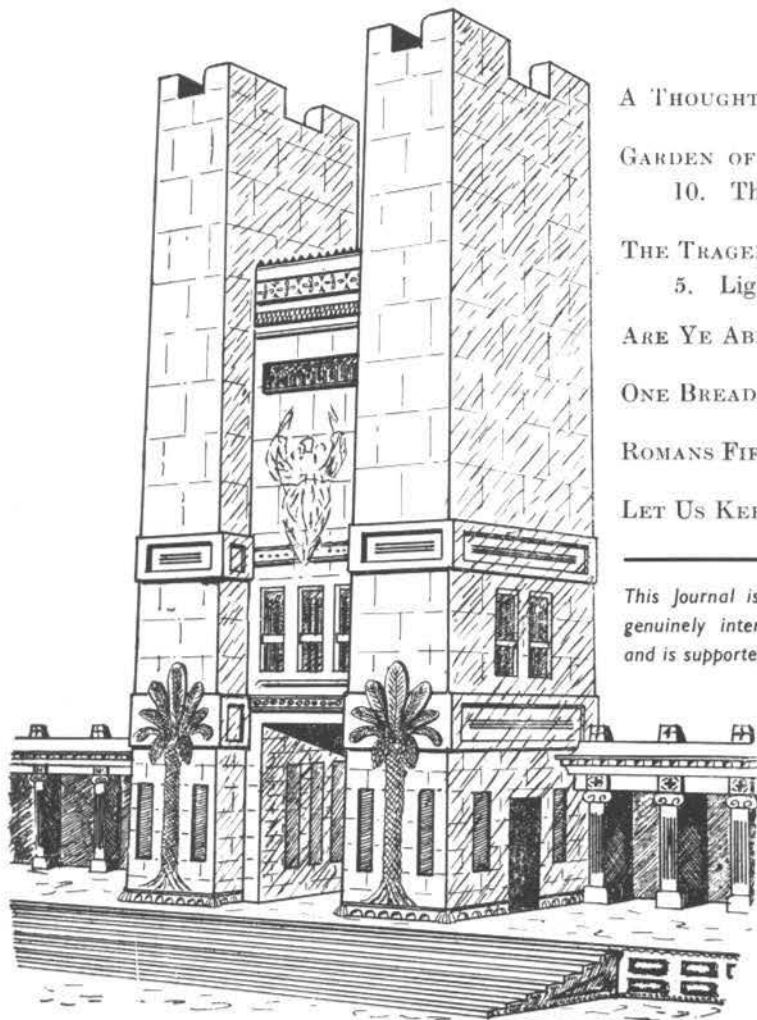
Published March 1st

Next issue April 15th

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This Journal is sent free of charge to all who are genuinely interested, on request renewable annually and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways; they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." (Nah. 2. 4).

There is a curiously modern ring about the burning words of Nahum the Elkoshite as he stood and surveyed the frantic haste in the streets of ancient Nineveh. Our cities to-day display much the same phenomenon as was seen in the capital of Assyria just before its fall—bigger and better buildings, soaring up into the sky; a turmoil of haste and speed, a frantic race to achieve all that life held out and acquire all the material wealth that offered itself in that marvellous era of world history. Historians have remarked that the period of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. was one in which it appeared as though the human spirit was about to break through the trammels Nature had imposed and men at last rise to undreamed-of heights of discovery and invention. But they did not attain their goal; their busy streets became deserted and silent, their buildings thrown to the ground and burned with fire, their arts and inventions lost and forgotten, and Nineveh the proud city which would dominate the world become so utterly lost that only two centuries later Xenophon the Greek marched his army across its site without knowing that the legendary city of the ancients lay buried in the sand beneath his feet.

The same doom awaits this modern world of ours and for the same reason. The Assyrians deliberately rejected the higher things of life and lived only for self and the present. Of all ancient peoples they were the most fiendishly cruel and the most materialistic. The Babylonians and the Egyptians, despite their paganism, cherished a belief in higher things and to some extent infused thoughts of the spiritual into affairs of daily life. Not so their northern neighbour. Asshur the national deity was as much the embodiment of greed, selfishness and inconsiderate-

ness of the rights and welfare of others as are the international gods of to-day. To quote the trenchant words with which the great Assyriologist, Zenaide Ragozin, concluded his history of Assyria many years ago *"And thus, with his own weight, with his own wickedness and folly, Asshur fell. It was a grievous fall, and an utter fall."* That can be a fitting epitaph too when the same fate overtakes this corrupt civilisation of ours which displays so much of the same characteristics. For there is no hope that man will ever come to his senses before he has utterly wrecked all that his hands have built just as the Assyrians wrecked theirs.

It will be then, when the streets are silent and the buildings have crashed, that a new sound will be heard in the world amongst men. Nahum called attention to it in his day and instructed Christians ought to call attention to it in our day. *"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth good."* He looked down upon the street with its frantically speeding chariots and rushing crowds, his eye followed the outlines of the buildings so soon to fall, and then he turned and pointed to the distant mountains upon the tops of which he saw by the eye of faith the heralds of a new era, a new world, a new King. That is the mission of Christians to-day. Another prophet, Isaiah the golden-tongued, saw the same vision. *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."* It is a creditable thing for well-meaning but unregenerate men to bolster up this collapsing world order; they know no better. But it displays lack of spiritual insight when Christians try to do so, for God has provided something better, and they of all people should be aware of that.

GARDEN OF EDEN

10.—The Flaming Sword

An Examination
of the Story of
Adam and Eve

And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Gen. 3. 22-23).

This verse requires very careful examination, for as it stands in the A.V. it tends to convey an entirely wrong impression. The prevailing understanding is that Adam, having now become a sinner, must be expelled from the garden to prevent him having access to the tree of life and in consequence living for ever—even though a sinner. Now it is self-evident that such interpretation cannot possibly be true. The Divine instruction to him in the first place was that the eating of the forbidden fruit would result in death. After the sin Divine judgment was given and the sentence of death re-affirmed. To say that if Adam continued to eat of the tree of life he could escape the death penalty is making a mockery of the whole story. Tree of Life or no Tree of Life, the Divine principle remains that the wages of sin is death. In all of God's creation there is no way by which any of his creatures can escape the operation of that law. In whatever manner we understand this verse, that fact must be realised and upheld.

So the statement needs analysis, and the very first item is this expression "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" as though this was the effect of eating the forbidden fruit. Once again a small incursion into elementary Hebrew grammar is necessary. The word "is become"—"hayah"—is in the preterite tense, and the primary meaning of the preterite is past time. Two examples in the same narrative are Gen. 1. 2 "The earth was without form, and void", and Gen. 3. 1 "The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field". In the one case the preterite marks the formless condition of the earth in past time, before God began to fashion terrestrial things; in the other it marks the time of the happenings in Eden relative to that in which the narrator was writing, some thousands of years later. Likewise in this case God is speaking of the past, of the condition of man before sin and sentence entered the picture, before the moment in which He

uttered these particular words. The word rendered "to know" means to have knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intelligence. The entire sentence is best translated "The man was like one of us to understand good and evil". That was God's reflection on man's condition before sin entered. The Devil lied to Eve in suggesting that she would understand good and evil only by partaking of the forbidden fruit; in actual fact man, made in the image and likeness of God, preserving his uprightness and loyalty inviolate, would have come to understand good and evil in God's own way, and much more comfortably. But sin had entered and man was no longer "like one of us".

Now comes the next clause "and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life . . ." The Hebrew copulative has to be translated "and" or "but" according to the requirements of the context. In this case there is a contrast between the former state of man "one of us" and his present state which because of sin has produced an opposite condition; the copulative should therefore be rendered "but". The man was sinless, but now the position has changed. This word "now" means literally "now this" or "this being so". It contrasts the past sinless with the present sinful condition of man in explanation of the action that is to follow, his banishment from the tree of life. The next word is "lest", Hebrew "pen". This word is translated in a number of different ways in the Old Testament. Its primary meaning is that of prohibition or dissuasion, as in Job 32. 13 "none of you convinced Job, lest ye should say, we have found out wisdom" where the inference is that having failed to convince Job they could not now claim to have found out wisdom. The same word "pen" appears when in Gen. 24. 6 Abraham says to Eleazar "Beware that thou bring not (pen) my son hither again". In the same way "lest" here means that now, this being so, sin having entered, man cannot or shall not put forth his hand and take of the Tree of Life; it is an impossibility. So the entire verse should read something like this "The man was like one of us to understand good and evil. But now, this (the sin) being so, he shall not put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. So the Lord God sent him forth

from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken." In his originally created state, in the image of God and sinless, man had the capacity to understand good and evil, and had access to the Tree of Life, the power and privilege of communion with God and the deriving of continued everlasting life from God. But now, now that sin had entered, the whole position was changed. No longer could he enter into that communion with God which is the privilege only of those who stand justified in the sight of God. No longer could he draw supplies of enduring, lasting life from the source of all life, for sin stood between him and God. It was sin, and not an arbitrary fiat of the Almighty, which barred Adam from the Tree of Life, and sin which bars his descendants from the same. Not until sin is eradicated may any return to the Tree of Life. The last Book in the Bible makes that clear. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22. 14). There is nothing to bar the converted redeemed from the Tree of Life; that is why Jesus said "Whosoever believeth in me hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day". Only the minority have such access now, for only the minority have thus accepted Christ. The time has yet to come when "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it" (the Holy City—Rev. 21. 24) and the visions of Revelation 21 and 22 be fulfilled.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (vs. 24).

More than one mediæval painting has depicted the stern-faced guardians at the gate of the garden, wielding the many-pointed sword of fire whereby man was finally debarred from the delights of the garden. Within remained light and happiness; outside all was darkness and despair. But what was really the physical nature of this closing scene in the history of man's fall? The Cherubim; the flaming sword; what was the true nature of the barrier which henceforth separated Adam and his wife from the garden of delight for the rest of their days?

The form of the Cherubim, as understood by Israel in later days, was that of four-headed creatures, four in number; their function was to surround and guard the Throne of God. Ezekiel saw them in vision and, after describing what he saw "I knew" he said "that they were the cherubims" (Ezek.

10. 20. See ch. 1 and 10). Each cherub (cherubim is the plural form) possessed the heads of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle. Each cherub had four wings and two human arms, but their legs and feet were those of cattle. The winged human-headed lions and bulls of Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture, which used to stand at the entrances to palaces and temples, were of much the same pattern and in the native languages were called by the same name, *kirub*. It is evident that the origin of the cherubim goes back a long way earlier than the days of Ezekiel, and that their form was already well known. The likenesses of the cherubim were woven on the tapestries of the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the wilderness; it is noteworthy that the Divine instructions did not include a description of the creatures. Here again all Israel evidently knew quite well what they looked like. It is worthy of notice also that the four "beasts"—more accurately "living creatures" in the Throne scene of Revelation 4 are quite evidently Cherubim and that John saw in vision substantially what Ezekiel had seen five centuries previously.

This does not mean that the guardians of Eden were necessarily replicas of the symbolic beings described by Ezekiel and John as attending on the heavenly Throne of God. It is absurd to think that such grotesque creatures really do have an objective existence in the spiritual world; they exist, evidently, only as symbolic descriptions seen in vision and in order to convey certain spiritual truths. The term "cherubim" itself, whether in Hebrew or Assyrian or Babylonian, is synonymous with guardians of Temple portals and it must have been in that sense that the writer of Genesis 3 used the term. God placed—caused to dwell, is the meaning of the Hebrew verb—at the east, or in front (same thing in Hebrew) of the garden, heavenly guardians for the purpose of forbidding passage into the garden. It is reasonable to suppose that there were such visible guards appointed; perhaps they took the form already familiar to Adam and his wife, the form of the seraphim, radiantly glorious wing-clad figures, standing sentinel-like at the boundary which man might not henceforth cross.

There was also the flaming sword, one which turned every way. A sword of flame is fairly easy to visualise and for the artist to draw; one which in addition turned every way has proved quite a problem in religious art. The resultant effort has usually presented

the effect either of a bundle of forked lightning darting in all directions from a clenched fist or an apparition something like a gigantic Catherine wheel. But since the effective range of either as a deterrent is necessarily limited, and the Garden of Eden was an extensive place with in all probability means of access at many points it might well be asked whether the "flaming sword which turned every way" might not have been something much more far-reaching, and to test this hypothesis it is necessary to look more closely at the text.

The word for "flaming" is a substantive standing before a noun and it means just what it says—flaming. Whatever the agency used to bar man from the tree of life its principal characteristic was fire.

"Sword" needs a little more consideration. The word "*chereb*" is not only rendered "sword" but is applied to other cutting instruments as knife, dagger, graving tool, axe; see Josh. 5. 2, Jud. 3. 16, Exod. 20. 25, Ezek. 5. 1 and 26. 9. The idea behind the word is that of a destroying weapon or force, and it comes from a root meaning to desolate or dry up. In this sense it is used nearly fifty times to denote the land being laid waste, as for example:

Isa. 42. 15 "I will *make waste* mountains and hills."

Ezek. 36. 35 "And the *waste* and desolate and ruined."

Lev. 26. 33 "Your land shall be desolate and your cities *waste*."

Ezek. 29. 9 "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and *waste*."

Isa. 34. 10 "From generation to generation it shall lie *waste*."

Other uses of the word illustrate its range of meaning:

Isa. 50. 2 "At my rebuke I *dry up* the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness."

Jer. 25. 11 "This whole land shall be a *desolation*."

Hag. 1. 11 "And I called for a *drought* upon the land."

Isa. 25. 4 "A refuge from the *heat* when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

The flaming sword, then, could well be something that caused widespread desolation and destruction, "turning every way". This latter phrase has the meaning of turning aside, turning upside down, overthrowing or overturning. It is only in this text that it is translated "turn every way". Elsewhere it intensifies the idea of destruction, as for

example:

Joel 2. 31 "The sun shall be *turned* into darkness."

Isa. 34. 9 "The streams thereof shall be *turned* into pitch."

Psa. 105. 29 "He *turned* the water into blood."

Isa. 29. 16 "Surely your *turning of things upside down* shall be esteemed as the potter's clay."

Job 28. 9 "He *overturneth* the mountains by the roots."

Jon. 3. 4 "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be *overthrown*."

Amos 4. 11 "I have *overthrown* you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

Gen. 19. 9 "Sent Lot out of the midst of the *overthrow*."

Gen. 19. 25 "Then the Lord *overthrew* those cities, and all the plain."

Those last three texts are significant. The word used to describe the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, is the same which in Genesis describes the operation of the flaming sword in Eden. To this day the Arabic name for that district around the Dead Sea where the cities stood is this same word—"the overthrow". And it is when one recalls the physical circumstances which brought about the destruction of those notorious five cities that a possible clue to the meaning of the "flaming sword which turned every way" is found.

"A *flaming destruction, which laid waste and overthrew in every direction*." That is a literal definition of the flaming sword when once the basic meaning of the term has been searched out. That is a good definition also of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now the destruction of those cities is known to have been due to the release by earthquake or subterranean explosion of long pent-up natural gases and oils which ignited upon reaching the surface and soared flaming into the heavens to return to the earth in a rain of fire; sulphur, bitumen, oil, all descending in a flaming cascade which burned up and desolated the entire region. That was the end of the Cities of the Plain. For four thousand years after that the district lay barren and desolate; only since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is some effort being made to establish a holiday resort on the empty shore.

Is it possible then that the Garden of Eden was not preserved through the centuries, supernaturally inaccessible to human beings

until it was destroyed in the Flood, which has been the general assumption of those who believe in the literal truth of the Eden story, but rather that it was on the contrary destroyed by a great natural cataclysm similar to that which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? All the natural agents necessary were, and still are, there. The area of the Persian Gulf, under whose waters it has already been shown probably lies the site of the lost Garden, is one of the great oil-producing areas of the world. Oil and bitumen exists under the sea-bed as in the surrounding countries. The combination of a powerful earthquake, driving deep crevasses into the ground, with a violent tropical storm of thunder and lightning, would have been all that was needed to start a conflagration which would produce the same result which Abraham saw on the day that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. "And Abraham got up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord" (on the mountain top) "and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." (Gen. 19 28). Adam and his wife might well have had that same experience and thus known of a surety that Eden was lost to them for ever.

But not really for ever. The flaming destruction may have desolated the fair terrain Adam had known, and blasted the trees beyond recall, but it was a preserving influence as well as a destroying one. It overthrew as it did overthrow, "to keep the way of the tree of life". Those are the concluding words of the story of Eden and they are words of hope. The word "keep" here means to keep safe and to preserve. The "way" is a path leading to a known destination. In the infinite wisdom of God Eden was destroyed that the road to the Tree of Life might be preserved. Man was not yet ready to tread that path, not yet fit to put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eating, live for ever. But man's failure to prove himself fit has not nullified God's purpose. It will yet be true that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess in the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Yet will be realised the Divine declaration "As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory". Eden was destroyed that one day the whole earth shall become as Eden. Adam went into death that one day the whole human race shall enter into life. The

Devil was allowed to proceed with the deception of our first parents in order that man may hereafter be proof against deception to all eternity. God suffered, and suffers, disloyalty and disobedience for a time that He might eventually enjoy loyalty and obedience for ever. Here is the whole reason for the permission of evil and the full explanation of God's apparent inactivity in the face of evil through the ages.

The story of Eden has no meaning unless it enshrines three fundamental things—the origin of man upon earth; the reason for his present unhappy and unsatisfactory condition; the nature of the hope and destiny that is before him. A right understanding of these fundamentals is necessary to intelligent Christian faith and the maintenance of that hope in the eventual overthrow of evil and establishment of everlasting righteousness without which the Christian faith would be a hollow mockery.

Like Adam, the human race is still outside Eden, toiling in the sweat of its brow for the bare essentials of existence. The fact that a relatively small proportion of men, chiefly among the white races, enjoys what is called a high standard of living and at least gets enough to eat does not alter the fact that on more than three-quarters of the world's population the curse still rests as heavily as it did in the days of Adam. And the favoured one quarter pays the penalty of its higher living standards in stress and strain, nervous and mental disease, and general dissatisfaction with life. The whole of the human race still need, as desperately as Adam and Eve needed it, the advent of the Messianic Kingdom of prophecy. When it comes under the rulership of the Son of God the world will be led into better ways and the earth itself yield its increase. "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

THE END

A few complete sets of back numbers containing the whole of the "Garden of Eden" series are still available and will be gladly sent on request to anyone who has not seen the earlier instalments.

THE TRAGEDY OF SAMSON

The story of
a great failure

5. Light at Eventide

There, in the prison house at Gaza, Samson found God. There is really not much doubt about that. Blinded, in chains, condemned to spend the rest of his life trudging round and round a circular path pushing the bar of a heavy cornmill, work that was normally performed by animals, he had time to think. Not now for him the admiration of the multitudes, the excitement of skirmishes and battles of wits with the Philistines, the indulgence of his tastes and desires. Men and women alike had deserted him and he was left entirely alone, alone to reflect on his past life and his failure to accomplish that mission which had been his from birth. What passed between Samson and his God during those dark hours is not known to any man; all we do know is that at their close Samson is found supplicating God in a manner which is entirely alien to his former attitude. That is the evidence that in prison Samson became a changed man. There he saw himself in his true light; there he repented; and there God, who desires not that any should die, but would that they turn from their wickedness, and live, accepted that repentance, and wiped Samson's slate clean. And something happened in prison which must have been an outward evidence to Samson of God's acceptance of his repentance. His hair began to grow again!

The Philistines had apparently overlooked that contingency. The thick, long tresses began to fall around the shoulders of the poor slave labouring at the mill, and as they grew Samson began to flex his muscles and discover to his surprise that he still possessed his tremendous physical strength. It is perhaps understandable if he concluded that there was a connection between the growth of his Nazarite locks and the re-discovery of his physical powers. But this time there is no attempt to deliver himself. It does begin to look as though now he is waiting upon God. The recovery of his long hair became a sign to him that God had forgiven. But he made no attempt to escape; submissively he waited God's leading and God's time.

So it came about that on a set day when all Gaza was gathered together for some particular celebration of which a feature was acknowledgment to their god for delivering Samson into their hands, the blinded giant was led out of prison and into the arena to be

made a public spectacle. The five lords of the Philistines were there and all the appropriate nobility and gentry, and on the roof of the building some three thousand of the proletariat, shouting themselves hoarse. It is said that Samson was brought forward and compelled to "make sport" for them; it is not very clear what this implies. The word means "to play", and it is probable that in his blindness he was baited in various ways to the vindictive delight of the barbarous crowd which formed his audience. Tiring perhaps of this after a while, the people looked on interestedly as the lad appointed to guide Samson's steps, began, at his request, to lead him toward "*the two pillars upon which the house was built and whereby it was held up*". What was he going to do next?

There is a well-known painting of this scene in which Samson is depicted with his arms claspng two solid stone columns each about three feet in diameter, in the act of pulling them down by main force. In fact, of course, no man, not even one of Samson's reputed powers, could dislodge massive stone structures of that nature. It is necessary to visualise the type of building which was probably concerned in order correctly to appreciate the story.

This function was apparently a public celebration and a public holiday, not a religious proceeding. The building concerned was not the Temple; more probably it was the local games stadium. There would almost certainly be an open-air arena in which the players performed, with a kind of "grandstand" of which the interior was reserved for people of importance and the roof thrown open to the public. A clue to the size of the building is given by the intimation that there were three thousand people standing on the roof. To accommodate such a crowd, even if closely packed as at a modern football Cup Final, would demand a structure something like eighty feet long by thirty from front to back. Both the interior seats and the standing space on the roof would be sloping upward from front to back so that all could see. If made like modern grandstands the front of the building would be open throughout its length and the roof supported along the open front by light wooden posts, perhaps little more than slender poles, with a balustrade along

the roof to keep the excited crowd from falling off. The five lords of the Philistines would of course be seated in the middle of the interior in the best seats, surrounded by the nobility and gentry of Gaza.

Upon arriving at the pavilion, Samson can be imagined as taking his stand between the two centre pillars, grasping them in his strong arms. There then follows one of the most tragically pathetic prayers of the Old Testament, a prayer noble in its utter dependence upon the power of God. Samson had never prayed like this before; he had always relied on and exulted in his own strength. Now when that strength, misused, had brought him to this sorry state, he prayed God that he might do at least one deed of valour, though it should be the last deed of his life, in the strength and power of God instead of his own. *"O Lord God" he prayed "remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."* And so saying he bore with all his might on the two posts around which his strong arms were braced.

Jostling humanity to a total weight of something like two hundred tons occupied that roof. Samson had for the moment disappeared from sight just under its front. Human nature being what it is, there was undoubtedly a movement of people to the extreme edge of the roof in the endeavour to look over and see what he was doing. The distribution of weight on the roof was altered and a strain imposed on the front portion and the front pillars which they were never designed to take.

It is a fundamental mechanical property of any long thin column supporting a superstructure that its power of support decreases rapidly so soon as it is bent or bowed from its normally straight position. When bowed beyond a certain point it will tend to collapse without any additional strain being applied. This is evidently what happened in this case. The excited crowd of people crowding to the front of the roof and craning over the edge had already increased the load on the front pillars to danger point. Then Samson voiced his prayer, braced himself against the two columns—they would be of wood probably no more than four or five inches in diameter, and already creaking and bowing under the undue strain—and heaved with all his might. The more he was able to bend the columns out of the perpendicular, the greater would be the crippling effect of the human load above,

until at length he reached the "point of no return" after which the roof would begin perceptibly to sag, the milling crowd above start to shout their apprehension, and the sardonically smiling nobility under the roof jump up in sudden alarm at the reality of what a few seconds earlier had seemed but a foolhardy gesture of the blind captive.

At this point the wooden pillars would have to fracture under the tremendous strain, and then, with a rending and cracking of heavy timbers accompanied by cries and shrieks from above, the entire roof cave in and fall forward, with its three thousand occupants, upon the seated audience below. The heaviest casualties would be among those nobility, crushed and buried beneath a tangled mass of timber and struggling survivors. The story infers that when at last the wreckage was cleared away and the victims extricated, more than one third of the people in the building were dead. Among them lay the body of the Nazarite. True to his nature he had the last word with the Philistines after all.

"So the dead which he slew at his death were more than those which he slew in his life." It is not a particularly creditable epitaph, but it is spoken of a man who despite twenty years of failure to live up to his calling repented at last in time to justify the angel's original prediction. In life an apostate, in death Samson was a true Nazarite, in communion with God, putting his trust in God, and invoking the power of God. His was a wasted life, but before his death he saw the light.

The disaster must have shaken the Philistines, for without interference *"his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying place of Manoah his father."* It is evident that his parents were already dead. They were spared the final heart-break of seeing him captive to the Philistines. He judged Israel twenty years, the chronicler says, but he never delivered Israel as did the other judges. He shook the Philistine power but he did not destroy it. If, as is very probable, the five lords of the Philistines perished in the catastrophe at Gaza, there would be a period of political uncertainty in the country which would help to explain the evident decay of Philistine power over Israel in the time of Samuel, which was only a generation or so later. Samson, the Nazarite who failed his commission, was the one judge who wrought no deliverance in Israel. He did

at least "begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines".

It might reasonably be wondered why the name of Samson appears in the gallery of "heroes of faith" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. His life was not one of service to God; he had nothing of the faith of Abraham, the loyalty of Moses, the devotion of Samuel. There is nothing in his story to hold up to emulation or to glorify as an example to be followed. He does not appear as a leader of the type that will be wanted in the next Age when the law of the Lord goes out from Zion and there will be princes of God established to direct and lead men in the ways of God. Yet his name is included as one of those who having "received a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us" (the Christian Church) "that they without us should not be made perfect." Is it possible that God, who knows the secrets of all men's hearts, saw something in Samson's character that the story, written by onlookers, does not reveal and that we cannot see? Could it be that the lad Samson up to, say twenty years of age or so was sincere and devout in his profession of God's service, that he was swept off his feet by the attractions of the woman he wanted for his wife and thereafter floundered twenty years without God, basking in the light of popular admiration and flattery, and that the final tragedy of blindness, captivity and neglect brought him to his senses so that, like the prodigal son in the parable he said to himself "I will arise and go to my Father"—In such case we know the Father would go out to meet him and bring him home. In such case, although the consequences of those twenty years of folly could not be avoided, the Father put them behind his back and they were no more seen. Might it not be that the character of Samson while in the Gaza prison was purified and ennobled by this sequel to his life's experiences so that in the future, whether he lived or died, he would forever be God's man? If this be so, then he suffered physical blindness and death in order that he might receive spiritual sight and eventual life. So it might well be that Samson, at the end, in the all-embracing sight of God, was after all seen worthy and suitable for a place in the procession of "Old Testament Saints" or "Ancient Worthies" as they are variously called, who will occupy positions of influence in the new Kingdom when Christ reigns on earth. If such be the case we can only praise God who alone can produce characters of

sterling worth from such weak clay.

As a pictorial representation of the entire history of man the story of Samson is very apt. Mankind, in the persons of our first parents, was created for the Divine purposes to fulfil a Divine commission, and endowed with every possible blessing and advantage. Like Samson, mankind turned away from God and into paths of self-indulgence, dissipating the marvellous powers given by God in unworthy ways. At the end mankind's own wilful course leads him to utter ruin, as is evident when we look at the world around us today and realise that we are now face to face with that ruin. But after the wreck of all that his own hand has created mankind will find God, and "whosoever will" become reconciled to God. For God has appointed a day, the coming Messianic Age, in which men, chastened by their experience of sin, will be led in better ways and brought face to face with the ultimate choice between good and evil. The salvation of Samson at the eleventh hour is our guarantee that God will never let go of the sinner whilst there is any hope whatever of his seeing the error of his ways, coming to Christ in sincere repentance and acceptance of him, and so being reconciled to God and becoming a citizen of God's world. That is why in the wisdom of God there is an Age appointed to follow "this present evil world", an Age in which Satan is to be bound that he might deceive the nations no more, and Christ reign as King over the restored and perfected earth. In that Age the entire human race will continue their lives' experience with full opportunity to compare the equitable administration of the Kingdom of righteousness with the darkness and injustice of this present world of sin. Only after that final lesson in God's school will the ultimate choice be demanded; the incorrigibly unregenerate reap the inevitable wages of sin and the regenerate be received, like Samson, into full fellowship with God and into eternal life. That is the gospel of the Kingdom, the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. That is the sublime truth which lies behind the words of Jesus "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". And it will always be gloriously true that "there is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

THE END

"ARE YE ABLE?"

A Momentous
Question

Some little while prior to the 'hour' appointed by God for his decease, Jesus left the scenes of his usual activities in Galilee, and took his disciples along into the region of Cæsarea Philippi—a town in the Northern district of Palestine, near the foot of Mount Hermon. In the quietness of this countryside retreat, Jesus, for the first time, began to tell his followers of his approaching death (Matt. 16. 21. Mark 9. 31). During this period of retirement Jesus passed through his wonderful transfiguration experience in the Holy Mount, during which the chosen 'three' disciples saw 'his Glory' and heard the other two participants in that 'Glory scene' talk with Jesus of the "decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9. 31). Descending from the 'high mountain' to the other waiting disciples, Jesus charged the favoured 'witnesses' to tell no man about what they had seen "till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." Matt. 17. 9.

From that time on, as Jesus returned to Galilee, and then left for the last time those cities wherein his mightiest works had been done to go up to Jerusalem, reference to his approaching death and resurrection fell much more frequently from his lips (Mark 9. 30-32). In spite, however of these repeated assertions, though at times they questioned among themselves what it might portend, the disciples failed entirely to comprehend what He meant. These frequent references by Jesus, however, show us that the purpose for which He had come into the world was beginning to lie heavily upon his own heart and mind. The 'hour' of his Life's mission was fast approaching, but, for all the sorrow it might entail, it was in no fearful mood He set out to meet it (Luke 9. 51). A very graphic picture is given by Mark (10. 32) of the bearing and reaction, both of Jesus and his followers, as they set out on the last stage of that fateful journey, to the mighty events that were to befall during the next few eventful days. "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them . . . and as they followed they were afraid". Fear made them hesitant, so that they lagged behind their Master—But He, for whom these moments were so fraught with destiny, "set his face to go up" without hesitation to that ungrateful City which realised not that its own fateful hour also was fast approaching.

The shadow of the Cross lay athwart the life of the Man of Sorrows, from that moment of 'Glory on Hermon's slopes', till He hung twixt heaven and earth 'outside the gate' and gave, meantime, solemn depth to all his words and eager expectation to his consecrated thoughts. Evidently the disciples could feel the force of this deeper solemnity and eager expectation, for Mark says "they were amazed" as Jesus led them in the way.

While in this exalted mood, there came one—a rich young ruler—to ask Jesus by what means he could attain to eternal life. "Cross-bearing" and self-renunciation had been Jesus' constant theme during all this southward journey from Hermon to Judea. Hence, when this young man, so apparently in earnest, asked so direct a question, Jesus gave him no less direct an answer. "Sell all"—and "surrender all", said Jesus, who was now on the threshold of giving his "all" in death, that others might live.

The young man turned sorrowfully away, unable to esteem 'treasure in heaven' as riches preferable to his great wealth. Inwardly sighing as the young man went his way, Jesus said "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God"—in other words, How difficult it is for any man to make the best of both worlds!

Hearing this remark, Peter says, in effect, "Lord, how does this statement affect our position? We have not hesitated to leave all, and follow Thee—What shall we have therefore, when the Kingdom, which we preach, is established?" To Peter and his brethren, Jesus then makes reply "No man who has left all—father, mother, wife, children, houses and lands, for my sake, shall lose by his sacrifice—he shall get a hundredfold in return, and such an one shall most certainly inherit eternal life! Moreover ye which have followed me, in that day of regeneration, when I, as the Son of Man, sit on the Throne of my Glory, shall also each sit upon his throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, they, who like the young ruler, have been 'first' in this present order, if, entering at all, shall be 'last' in the honours of my kingdom, and you that have been 'last' (and least) shall then be 'first'.

This word of assurance must have been very encouraging and comforting to his little band of followers. Here was something they

could readily grasp and understand. It was not enigmatic and baffling, like the references to his death and resurrection had been. And presumably they talked this matter over, both among themselves and also more privately. Most likely it was the topic of an earnest conversation beneath Zebedee's roof, and as James and John told the story of Jesus and the ruler, a fond and doting mother resolved to ask for her sons a place and position they scarcely have dared to ask for themselves.

Threading her way, one day, through the little group of disciples, accompanied by her two sons, and with some show of respect and deference, she desired the privilege of speaking with Jesus perhaps more privately. "What is your request" asks Jesus. "*Grant that these my two sons, may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left in Thy kingdom.*" (Matt. 20. 21).

Taking the question as the agreed utterance of sons as well as mother, Jesus looks them straight in the face, and through that to the heart, and says, "Ye know not what ye ask! You do not know or realise what is implied or involved in this request! You may have followed me about in Galilee, and in Judea; and you may have left your boats and employment for my sake, but following me means more than all this! As I have of recent days been telling you of my death, and that I have come not merely to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but to die—to suffer at the hands of cruel men; I ask you now, are you prepared to follow me in all this? Are you able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? Are you able to be baptised with the baptism that I have already been baptised with? Will you follow me through death and humiliation—and rejection, and be cut off from your people and kindred?"

"We will follow you even there—we are able!" they replied, thus expressing a deep fidelity to him, and his mission in life. "Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup—ye shall be baptised with my baptism, but even then, I cannot grant your request to sit one on either side of Me—that is not my gift. It is my Father's prerogative to give those positions to those for whom they have been prepared by Him" replied Jesus.

"Will you follow me, not knowing what place or position you will get? Will you drink of my Cup, and leave all else to the Father? Can you step out, not minding what your reward will be, only that as you share my Cup of suffering you will also share my Cup of Joy?"

No more penetrating or illuminating words, prior to the moment of this conversation, had anywhere fallen from the lips of Jesus. Up in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, some short time before, after Peter had made his memorable, God-given confession 'Thou art the Christ' Jesus had gone on to say "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me" implying that every faithful follower should be accorded the privilege of 'cross-bearing', but never before had He linked his followers with himself in quite the same close, intimate way. "Are YE able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?" Can ye drink, as I am about to drink of a Cup which my Father shall pour?"

There is no mistaking the implication here. Jesus was reaching (and eagerly anticipating) the crucial hour, and the accomplishment of the specific purpose for which He had come into this world. At a later time as the weight of tragedy and sorrow pressed more heavily on his sensitive heart, we hear him say, in the very shadows of Gethsemane . . . " . . . the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" There is no mistaking what He meant in these decisive words (John 18. 11). Not Peter's sword, nor resistance, nor flight was the 'way out' for him in this 'hour of darkness'. He had come into the world for 'this hour'. He had lived his spotless life, He had faithfully taught the Truth of God and raised the hostility of demons and men—and this was 'their hour and the power of darkness'. But not from them did Jesus accept the issues of that dark hour.

"The Cup which my Father has given me"—that was Jesus' view. There were no secondary causes in his life, either in his ingress or egress from this world. And yet again, when the fuller extent of the shame and humiliation that awaited him was opening up before him, in the hour of his sanguinary sweat, we hear the same truth, and the same whole-hearted submission to the over-ruling hand of a Fatherly providence. "O Father, if it be possible, let this Cup . . . pass . . . from me, nevertheless . . . not as I will". Here the bitter cup was at his lips—and He was drinking it to its dregs. This was 'the cup that I shall drink'. Jesus had lived in the shadow of this hour more particularly from his transfiguration onward, and under its solemnising power he had come by stages to Jerusalem and Gethsemane.

Knowing then, in his own mind, the ordeal which awaited him, when his hour should be fully come, we must not fail to note what his

question to James and John implies. He had a Cup to drink, which was to be given him by his Father;—and with the deepening sense of

all this experience weighing heavier upon him, He asks, "Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink?"

ONE BREAD — ONE BODY

*A doctrinal
question*

"For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10. 17).

In these words, fraught with deep spiritual meaning, the faithful Apostle strengthens his appeal to the Corinthian Christians and through them to us. We, like them, are so prone to idolatry, so easily led into ways which cannot be reconciled with the fellowship that is ours in Christ. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved" Paul pleads "flee from idolatry" (vs. 14). That was a very real danger in those days, and to those early Corinthian believers, living in the most notoriously depraved and paganised city of the then known world, it was a very necessary exhortation. But it was not merely that Paul would wean them from the worship and service of false deities, "gods many and lords many"; he knew that such service and such worship involved, not only fellowship with pagan men and women, but also common-union, joint participation, with demoniac intelligences behind the veil. He understood only too well the corrupting influence of those debased and debasing ceremonies and sacrifices; that they had nothing in common with the things of Christ; and with all his heart he strove to turn his brethren away from them and toward the infinitely purer and nobler faith of which he was himself a minister.

The whole burden of Paul's message in this chapter is that comparison between the pagan's fellowship with idols and demons and the Christian's fellowship with Christ. Just as the believers' union in worship and offering was not merely an association together for the mutual acknowledgment of God's supremacy, but in deed and in truth a fellowship and communion with the risen Christ beyond the Veil, and the experiencing of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, so was the worship and sacrificing of the pagans an actual fellowship with demons, "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies". "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice" he warned them earnestly "they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons". This

danger of being associated with the enemies of Christ was a very real one in the Apostle's mind; doubtless he saw in mental vision the last great conflict at the end of this Age when these same evil powers are arrayed, with all their human dupes, to give battle against the rider on the white horse, coming forth from heaven in righteousness to judge and make war (Rev. 19. 11). He knew that the saints must not be hesitant in the slightest degree about their allegiance. They may in no wise have any interest in common with these powers of evil which with all their followers will be overthrown and deprived of all power before the Millennial Kingdom is set up, and so in all earnestness he reminds them "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of demons".

With what emphasis does this call to utter separation to the fellowship and communion of Christ come to us at this season! Now, more than at any other time during the year, we are mindful of our Master's willing, steadfast consecration to his Father's Will, even unto death. For him there was no compromise and no hesitancy. Just previously He had "set" his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that death awaited him there. The people had flattered him, had received him as king; the disciples had pleaded with him to set up his Kingdom there and then and give the world the blessings it so sadly needed; to all their suggestions He had turned a deaf ear, walking resolutely along that path which, even although it led to suffering and death and the apparent failure of all his work, He knew to be the only one that could end in the consummation for which He had come into the world.

This same consciousness of a mission and this same inflexible resolution in carrying out the terms of that mission is what Paul seeks to impress upon his readers, and now that the season for more than usually earnest thought about these things is upon us we do well to take from his exhortation all that it can give us of inspiration and encouragement.

"Behold Israel after the flesh" he commands, and his command carries a question.

"Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (vs. 18). Participants with the altar; that is Paul's thought. The priests upon whom fell the obligation to eat of the sacrifices were holy unto the Lord and could never be the same as ordinary men again. In partaking of the sacrifices of the altar they had become holy like the altar and were in a very real sense in fellowship or communion with the altar, and through that with God. And so are we. Because we have eaten of the offering, made it a part of ourselves, we have become identified with the Altar which is Christ, and have become joint-participants with him, not only in the power of future blessing for which the altar stands—for more than anything else in the typical Tabernacle the Brasen Altar stood for justification by faith, and only through justification by faith in Christ will man receive blessing in the next Age—but also in the power of present suffering which the same altar symbolises. And it is the power of that present suffering, a suffering in which we participate with our Lord, that is going to mean so much to men redeemed from death by the Ransom given once for all at Calvary nineteen centuries ago.

So the Apostle comes to the central feature of his theme when he takes up this question of suffering. "*The bread which we break*" he urges "*is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*" There is a vital difference between the cup and the bread. "*This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26. 28), Jesus had told them on the Memorial night. Remembering that the first Covenant was itself made legal and binding by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9. 18) the disciples must quickly have realised that this New Covenant which was to succeed where the old one had failed was to be made sure by the death of Jesus himself, by the shed blood of Him who "gave himself a ransom for all" (1. Tim. 2. 6). His death provided the Ransom and we are redeemed by his blood; the New Testament is positive enough on that central truth. Why such a ransom was necessary; why Divine justice required such an offering before the dead in Adam could be released; in what way Justice is satisfied by the death of Jesus on the Cross; all these are questions which have been asked and answered with varying degrees of spiritual insight throughout the Gospel Age. Independent of all the philosophy and theology that has been built up around the doctrine of the Atonement, the one fact

stands out that whether we understand it or not, the death of Jesus *was* essential to man's salvation, and that without faith in him and a definite and personal acceptance of his sacrifice made for us there can be no release from sin and no entrance into life. "*There is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved.*" (Acts 4. 12).

It has been well said that the Ransom does not *give* men everlasting life. It does guarantee to every man a full and fair opportunity to attain everlasting life. That "life for the world" which is symbolised by the "poured-out blood" of Christ is life as Adam enjoyed it before he sinned, a life which would have made it possible for him to enter upon his eternal inheritance provided he observed the conditions. Much the same is true of mankind in the Millennial Age. All, without a single exception, will come back from the grave, as Jesus foretold (Jno. 5. 28), awaking to conscious life and recollection in bodies free from the effects of inherited sin. Thus will the Ransom become of all effect to all men. But unless those awakened ones are persuaded so to order their lives in harmony with Divine principles that they do attain full perfection, morally as well as mentally and physically the blood of Christ will, so far as such are concerned, be of no avail. If under the favourable conditions of that blessed day the heart of any one of the sons of men remains fully set in him to do evil, his blood-bought life can again only end in death, and this time without remedy. "*Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.*" Since it is clear that the risen masses will require something more than the gift of conscious life in a new body, great and marvellous as is that gift, it follows that there is another aspect to the doctrine of the Atonement parallel to that which is symbolised by the shed blood.

That aspect is pictured by Jesus as the breaking of his body, a body which, thus broken, becomes food for the life of the world. This eating of the mystic bread which is his body is not the *giving of new life*, which is symbolised by the blood, the cup, but it is the *continued sustenance of a life already given*. The blood is poured out once for all; the bread is to be partaken of into eternity. Jesus died on the Cross, once, and that act is never to be repeated. The one act was sufficient to give all men, Church and world alike, new life. But He "ever lives" to sustain men's everlasting lives by that which He gives them, his body. Is that why the people desired Him on one

occasion "Lord, *evermore* give us this bread!" (Jno. 6. 34)? "The bread that I will give is my flesh" He had said "which I will give for the life of the world" (Jno. 6. 54).

Neither is this bread a free gift in the sense in which the cup is a free gift. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the benefits of the ransom, are awarded to all men irrespective of personal merits or personal action. All are to receive freedom from Adamic condemnation and reversal of the Adamic death sentence. All who exercise faith in Christ, whether in this Gospel Age or in the incoming Millennial Age, whether of the Church or the world, will receive the free gift of justification and have their past sin, no matter how heinous, no longer counted against them. All who received life from the first Adam will receive life again from the Second Adam. But in order to maintain that life they must partake of the mystic bread, and that, translated into plain language, means to live their lives in exactly the same way that Jesus lived his. It means that no man can live everlastingly except he live in full harmony with God's laws and God's ways. He must, as it were, live "in tune" with God, for as Paul said to the Athenians "*In him* we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17. 28). In order that he might learn how to live that life, man must have an example, an exemplar, to show him the way. There has only been one such example, Christ Jesus himself, who came to earth for that purpose. For three and a half years He was the perfect example of how a man should live, and the consequence of his steadfast setting of that example was that his body was broken. He had to show mankind that perfection is only attained through suffering. "*Himself took our infirmities and bare our sickness*" (Matt. 8. 17). "*For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*" (Heb. 2. 18). It is the example of that life that will be man's inspiration in the next Age and in that sense they will "eat of the flesh of the Son of Man" and live forever.

In exactly the same way do we his disciples of this Age, partake of his flesh, this bread. We too, no less than mankind in the Millennial Age, are to order our lives after that perfect example if we would enter into immortality. We too must learn that only by suffering, endurance, the willing laying down of life upon behalf of others, can we ourselves be perfected. "*He that loseth his life shall find it.*" And to us is granted a privilege that can never come to the sons of men in the future

Age, for we, who have pledged ourselves to be followers of our Lord to the end of time, who have been "buried with him by baptism into his death", are privileged to have our own lives used as examples for the future Age; our own experience and character-development employed in the instruction and conversion of men in that Day. We too are to be made merciful and faithful priests of the future if we are rightly exercised by our experiences in the Christian life now. But the degree of our fitness for holding forth the Word of Life *then*, and in that sense becoming living bread for the world *then*, is entirely dependent upon the degree to which we partake of the living bread ourselves *now*. Unless *we* eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, we have no life in us; and a lifeless corpse can never become the medium of new life to a resurrected world.

This, then, is our fellowship, a fellowship in Christ which is also a participation with Christ, a common-union with him. This is why we cannot have fellowship or union with the world and its demons. We have been "baptised for the dead" (1 Cor. 15. 29) and it is only by participation with our risen Lord that we shall make that baptism effective and, in receiving and partaking of the living bread, become the means of giving life to others. "*And the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. And let him that heareth say 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" That grand climax to God's dealings with men on the earth can only come to pass when we who are the first-fruits unto God have first entered into our privilege and obligation of renouncing the world and all that is in it, and joined in full communion with Christ our Lord and with each other as a family apart. "*The bread which we eat, is it not the common-union of the body of Christ?*" "Lord, *evermore* give us that bread!"

The time will come when many who are highly esteemed amongst men for their wisdom will be seen to have been foolish, and many who are now esteemed fools for Christ's sake and for the Gospel's sake, will be seen to have been truly wise in choosing the heavenly things, and in being willing to surrender the earthly things for the attainment of the heavenly; because it is impossible to serve God and Mammon.

ROMANS FIFTEEN; FOUR

An
exhortation

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Usually the apostle Paul wrote his epistles to Christians with whom he was already acquainted, and that knowledge aided him when he wrote to them and heard of their difficulties, their failings, their gains and their hopes. The position was quite different when he wrote to the church at Rome, for though he may have personally met one or two, he had not met them as a community and had to rely on reports he had heard of them. He had heard well of them, for their faith was spoken of throughout the world (Rom. 1. 8), and it may have been that having heard of their faith he wished to meet them face to face. Being a Roman it was to be expected that Paul desired to visit the metropolis of the world, but that was not the reason why he wanted to *"preach the gospel to you that are at Rome"* (Rom. 1. 15). A close bond of unity tied Paul to the Roman church even before they had met, so that he longed to see them (Rom. 1. 11) and purposed to visit them after he had once more seen the brethren at Jerusalem (Acts 19. 21, Rom. 15. 24/25). We can readily imagine how this unity had been made. Some strangers of Rome had been present on that memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2. 10) and would return to their home city with the truly wonderful news. And later they would hear of the great persecution against the church at Jerusalem with which Saul was actively connected (Acts 8. 1). Then they would hear of Paul preaching the faith which once he destroyed. And later, Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome (Acts 18. 2), and that decree "worked together for good" for it resulted in the meeting of Paul with Aquila who would no doubt tell Paul about the brethren at Rome. But a year or two elapsed before they met and at times it seemed unlikely that Paul would ever reach Rome; but a greater power than civil Rome or Satanic opponents of Christianity was at work. On his journey to Jerusalem for the last time, Paul called at Ephesus and told the church there that he went *"bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there."* On arrival there he was gladly received by the church, but

was promptly apprehended by the Jews. And yet, while they were conspiring his death, the Lord told Paul that he would bear witness at Rome. So that, throughout the protracted proceedings at Jerusalem and Cæsarea he knew that he would surely see the church at Rome before he had finished his mission, and that may have been in his mind when he ended his examination before Festus by appealing to Cæsar. And Festus unwittingly furthered the cause of Christianity by answering *"Unto Cæsar shalt thou go"* (Acts 21. 12).

We may therefore assume that the letter which Paul wrote to them at Rome contained many things which he hoped later to be able to deliver in person, and naturally he hopes that the epistle will stir up their minds and give encouragement in the meantime. In all probability the ecclesia at Rome comprised both Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles predominating due to the edict of Claudius. With that in mind it may appear that the words of the heading *"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* is far too sweeping an assertion, for many Christians have been taught that the Old Testament is mainly for the children of Israel and that only such fragments of prophecy and the Psalms which have the approval of the established churches should be held as applicable to the Christian church. At least these words of Paul have disposed for all time of that notion: but even allowing that there is much more for Christians in the Old Testament than was at first supposed, can it be that *"whatsoever written aforetime"* is for us? Yes, it is even so; and Paul gives an example of this in 1 Cor. 9. 9/10 where he reasons that an item of the Mosaic law relative to the care of lower animals was in fact full of teaching for us and that the law concerning animals is secondary to its Gospel age application! And in this Roman letter Paul is as good as his word, for when writing this letter he makes copious reference to the Old Testament, and all with the object that we who were Gentiles might obtain HOPE. True, not all quotations speak of hope, (some, indeed, tell of condemnation) but all are made so that the cumulative teaching re-

moves all uncertainty of mind and gives eternal hope and comfort, being built upon that solid rock of truth, the Word of God. We who are not of Jacob may well be astonished that the law, the prophets, and the psalms, written by holy men of God and guarded so jealously through the centuries by the Jews find their primary fulfilment in promoting hope within us who once were aliens from the covenants of promise. And yet it is not so surprising, if we recall that to those very prophetic writers was revealed that they were ministering those things to us (1 Pet. 1. 12); and that when such faithful men as Daniel asked for further enlightenment upon the visions they were recording, it was said to them that the vision was for an appointed time and that at the end it would speak; or that it was sealed till the time of the end. In agreement with this our Lord said to the disciples that many prophets and righteous men had desired to see the things which the disciples saw and had not seen them (Matt. 13. 16/17). Blessed were the eyes which saw at and since the First Advent; blessed because the One in whom so much prophecy centred had come; blessed because further additions to the Word of God confirming and amplifying the old writings were to be made; and blessed because the opening up of the prophetic word would give hope and joy to many hearts. Our Lord began his earthly ministry by quoting some words of Isaiah and adding "*this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*". Further prophecies were fulfilled during his life and by his death; and thus He laid the foundation for Paul later to say that "*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we . . . might have hope*".

With this introduction in mind, let us proceed, not in detail, through the Roman epistle noting how by Paul's references to supposedly Jewish Scriptures, the Gentiles as well as Israel obtain enduring hope, remembering that other words of Paul (Eph. 2. 12) mention that the Gentiles were void of hope in the days when Israel had the promises and blessings of God. To us, void of hope, Paul reveals a prospect beyond our dreams; and to those Jews who also accept Messiah he gives a far better hope than was generally held by that nation. By his quotation of and reasoning upon the Old Testament he gave to us the comfort of the Scriptures—an essential ingredient of hope—and to Jewish believers he gave proof that what they might have thought was new and doubtful had in fact

ample support in their old prophecies. And then, what Jew would ever be able to say that the Christian doctrines are man-made if they prove themselves to be of God by quotation from the Old Testament?

The early chapters of Romans are not so full as the later in quotation from the Old Testament and such as are made do not in themselves give ground for hope, for after the customary Pauline introduction he gives a deplorable picture of Gentile degradation and surety of coming judgment. But one verse from the prophet Habakkuk gives a ray of encouragement and is a foundation of Paul's gospel. The words "the just shall live by faith" which when made by the prophet were prophetic, find their best application in the Christian age, and whilst not in themselves conducive of hope suggest to us that there is in spite of the depravity to which man has fallen, a path along which we may all travel to life, and thus faith becomes the basis of things hoped for. (Heb. 11. 1). The words of condemnation in the section of the epistle ending at ch. 2. 16 are mainly descriptive of those outside Israel and on the whole the Jewish reader would agree with the apostle's observations; but, proceeding further we note that the section which seems to end at ch. 3. 20 is largely condemnatory of the Jew. We see even that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through the Jew (which Paul proves by words from the prophet), and the section reaches its culmination in words from the Psalms that "*there is none righteous, no not one*" and that all the world has become guilty before God. And so Paul answers his own question "Are we better than they" by showing all, whether Jew or Gentile, to be under sin and therefore under condemnation. And in all this reasoning the Jew who boasts himself in his law and the prophets cannot raise remonstrance because Paul confirms his thoughts by quotations from their own writings! We might think from the apostle's letter so far, that very little has been said that gives either Jew or Gentile the hope they need. However the epistle does not end there, nor do the quotations; but Paul has certainly relieved us of any hope we had in ourselves. And thus having no standing before God we must perforce look to him trusting that in mercy He will provide the way of escape. And now "that every mouth is stopped" we can the better listen, and providing that we do listen to the words of the apostle and the supporting words from the prophets we shall find our God willing to give the ground for

hope that we need. Paul then introduces a new factor in his train of thought—the righteousness of God; and upon it rest the hopes of all creatures to his mercy. All no doubt realise that God was by no means obligated to grant benefits to a world which his own justice had condemned because of its sin; but providentially for us all He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth but is anxious that they should turn from their wickedness and live; and being true his mercy can intervene when his law condemns. This may be seen in the section of the epistle beginning at ch. 3. 21, where the righteousness of God without (or apart from) the law is manifest, and (as we expect to find in this epistle) is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Yes, his mercy has provided the way of escape. He has declared his own righteousness in mercy without abrogating or circumventing his own law, by regarding as justified the sinner who has faith in Jesus. The having of faith is not a ground of claim to justification—it is simply that it pleases him to justify him who believes. And this, says Rom. 3. 21, exhibits the righteousness of God—his own eternal righteousness and goodness in providing this grace for believers; and that righteousness which is ours in justification. And Paul attests that this is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Is justification, then, to be found in the Old Testament? It most certainly is—let it never be said that it was first revealed by Paul! In the chapter which follows, Paul refers to two great men of the past, Abraham and David; dissimilar but both men of faith. Before the enactment of the Mosaic law, it was said that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen. 15. 6). If it be suggested that Abraham lived a pastoral life miles apart from the turmoil of life and was always near to God and that therefore his case is not a suitable example to those of active life living among men of the world, Paul gives another example of justification in David whose life was fraught with all the dangers and snares of life. Many times had David fallen; just as many had he risen again with regrets for his failings. Thus he knew the gracious gift of God in a different way to that of Abraham. We should hardly expect Abraham to say, but it rings Davidic, that "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*". (Rom. 4. 7, cited from Psalm 32). Not all Christians will readily follow Paul's reasoning in the fourth chapter of Romans, but they

will note that though the early chapters speak of condemnation, it holds out a prospect of release through the righteousness of God. All may know the blessedness of sins forgiven, for so is the grace of God; and that blessed knowledge will prompt hope within. And thus Paul is working towards one of the objects of his letter to those he had not met; and already can be surmised the questions he will meet when at last he reaches Rome; and possibly he is anticipating the points that could arise in their discussions when he pens the succeeding chapters.

The next four chapters contain but few quotations from the Old Testament, but are the steps we tread in pursuing the apostolic argument toward full hope in Christ. Within the fifth chapter is the fundamental truth that all descendants of Adam were condemned in him and all are covered by the death of Christ, and that when we were without strength and unable to help ourselves God commended his love towards us in that Christ died for us. And from this gift will be seen that the love of God encompasses all, and so we who have obtained hope for ourselves ensuing on justification will note with gratitude that there is hope also for all mankind in that Divine provision. Much of the sixth chapter is in the form of question and answer—just the sort of question the Roman church will ask among themselves when they read the early chapters. The freedom from condemnation which we Christians enjoy does not give liberty to live unrestrained, and Paul finds great cause for thankfulness in that, free from Adamic condemnation we became servants, even slaves, of righteousness; thus concluding within ourselves that because God has graciously justified us, the least we can do is to become his servants. Still further reasons for hope and joy are found, in that becoming servants of righteousness we find that it leads unto holiness, and that the outcome of righteousness is everlasting life. Thus the righteousness imputed to us, is not only a starting point but also a goal; and all due to the grace of God. This gives hope indeed—what else can result from such cogent reason of the great apostle! But another query will be made by the Jewish Christians in Rome and Paul must dispose of that—how could they be free from the condemnation of the Mosaic law under which as Jews they were bound. Paul himself had been, as touching the law, a Pharisee; and he answers the question by supposing his own struggles to keep the law and his failure in spite of all. He proves

the law to be good, but himself and therefore others to be sold (just like a slave) under sin. If there were no conclusive answer to his question in ch. 7. 24 there would be no hope even for the best of striving men; but the answer of v: 25 completely disposes of the question and leads to further hope and exultation in the eighth chapter. This chapter, though giving few confirmatory words from the Old Testament is full of hope—the new hope, the complete hope of the gospel church. In previous chapters Paul has said very little about the work of the Holy Spirit within the church, but having answered problems of law and sin, and established the righteousness of God, he can proclaim those church truths he revels in. When at long last he meets the church at Rome he will declare to them their standing in Christ, their sonship, their election and their hope; and this chapter is a foretaste of what he will then proclaim more fully. What discussion this chapter will have among them! What hope and joy and confidence will be theirs in the meantime, and what points he will have to amplify when he comes! Most Christians are acquainted with the closing verses of chapter eight, though they may not comprehend the fulness of the unanswered questions—“*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” until they understand and value the earlier verses concerning sonship.

This transcendent chapter ended, Paul reverts to thoughts of his own nation—he has great heaviness of heart because they do not appreciate these glorious hopes. Much of the chapter is in question and answer form—just the sort of questions a critical Jew would ask about election and the entry of the Gentiles into the special purpose of God. To deal with such Paul makes abundant reference to Hebrew scriptures, and he knows no Jew can gainsay them. Israel's faltering is still before him in chapters ten and eleven, and again he quotes from their own writings. The crux of Israel's backwardness may well be expressed in the words of Rom. 10. 3, and is related to the righteousness of God which Paul had mentioned earlier. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God, and were occupied in the hopeless task of establishing their own righteousness. Had they but received the truth of Rom. 10. 4, that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, their useless struggles would have ended and they would have fully enjoyed the

hopes and promises of chapter eight. Paul revealed to them the greatest of hopes, but they seem unable to yield their old standing in Jacob, their legal standing in Moses and the belief (true in time past) that they were the only chosen people of God. Paul ends his appeal to his own nation in the eleventh chapter by an ascription of praise to that God who in wisdom and love had devised all this wonderful purpose embracing all Jews and all others; and then further appeals to all to surrender (Rom. 12. 1/2) whatever advantages they have for the new prospects in Christ. It was far easier for the Gentile to yield to this appeal, for he had so little in which he could glory; but the Jew was in a great predicament, for he was called upon to surrender his hold on the favours of God in Jacob and Moses, for the favour of God in Christ.

The apostle having almost finished his doctrinal teaching, in the closing chapters adds sundry admonitions whereby all, now that they have a new hope, may know how to live within and without the church. None of these commandments will be found to be grievous; many of them seem to be rules of conduct restated from the Mosaic law and therefore will be approved by the Jewish members of the church. But noticeable in the fourteenth chapter is the care with which the Christian must consider the weakness of fellow-members even in small things and even when he knows that his own position is correct and theirs weak. Thus the new relationship in one body is emphasised by the members having the same care one for the other. All have the one great hope in Christ—God has received the weak as well as the strong. The strong cannot forge ahead without the weak; and he himself lags behind if he thinks he can. In fact, the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, not pleasing themselves, (Rom. 15. 1); thus proving themselves to be joint holders of the hope. Then follows the one example of Him who pleased not himself, which introduces us to the words with which we began and on to further quotations from the Old Testament to repeat that all Gentiles, though they may not be embraced in the special purpose of God, will nevertheless join in the praise to God, and under the reign of the root of Jesse return to peace with God in the earthly kingdom. And so within this message to the Roman brethren Paul has completely revealed that the plans of God cover all mankind and that there was ample proof of this in the old writings which the

Jew had treasured. Thus does he commend the new Christian message to all in Rome whom as yet he had not seen. And until he reaches Rome, he urges that the God of hope will fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they abound in hope. (Rom.

15. 13). This epistle, complete in itself, gave to the Roman friends a grand foretaste of what they will hear, when in the words of v: 29 "*I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ*".

LET US KEEP THE FEAST

*A timely
discussion*

Once more the hour of remembrance draws near in which those who love the Lord will draw aside from the cares and duties of this life in order to show to each other their deep regard for his death, and all that it stands for in the believer's own life. Another year of Divine watch-care lies behind us—a year of intense strain and conflict, but withal a year of vital contact and communion with the things that make for peace; with God, with Jesus, and with much sanctifying truth.

Each and all of us have lived away another measured round of time, and have grown one year older in the way of the Lord. Our days have gone from us never to return; their opportunities have passed away beyond recall, and we stand to-day another year's march nearer home. The wool on the skein is shorter to-day than when we last took the cup; its thread has been woven into the pattern of life, or else clipped off and cast away unused; some of the warp may have run faultily into the woof, but it is too late now to correct the mistakes. The loom passes on—it cannot be stopped. What is done is forever done; if it has been well done we can rejoice; if it has been ill done we may repent, and propose that we will do better in the years to come.

It is no light thing to realise that life's moments are flitting away with every setting sun, and with each evening prayer something has passed right over the stage into our increasing yesterdays. There is an increasing accumulation behind, with a constantly decreasing amount before, and nothing we do can redress the disparity between what has already been and what has yet to be ere the journey's end is reached.

But there is no need to repine because Father Time cuts swathe after swathe of our days and years, if so be we are walking with the Lord. Even though there was smut on the corn, or if it was short in the straw, because our souls were dry, we need not despair. And if, instead of tilling the soil of our hearts purposely, we lazed away our time, allowing weeds and thistles to smother up the grain, even then we need not sink into despondency.

And if, moreover, we failed through irresolution to maintain the fences of our mind, and destructive trespassers broke in and ate up our unripe corn, there is still no need to sink down and drown in the quagmire of distress. And though all these faults—and many more—were found in every swathe of yester-year's sowings and growings, the child of God can still take heart and look up to the skies. The God of grace and comfort foreknew and foresaw the handicap of all such frailties and perversities, and made provision to meet them all. Unerring Wisdom understood how extensively sin could sap the morale and determination of the human heart, and made its own plans to meet that need. God knew that weeds could choke the corn, that scorching adversity, and even sunny prosperity, could dry out the soil and that the grain might wither as it grew; and then because He knew and understood all the hindrances, the wealth of grace outflowing from His heart devised the means to counteract them all.

If then the year behind us has such failures to record, the evening of remembrance can open out a clean new page for each and all. As we obey the Master's word, and seek access to the table of the Lord, we can bethink us of that dark night, and that solemn scene, where on the threshold of Gethsemane and Calvary, our beloved Lord told his scarcely-heeding followers what He was about to do. Sincere reflections concerning the price He paid in suffering, pain and death, during those dark hours, surely cannot fail to unlock the flood-gates of the heart and cause the fountain of repentant tears to flow—if so be repentance is the key to restored fellowship. But if instead of such apathy, our conscience has been keen and quick, and every lapse from rectitude at once confessed, even then we need the gifts of grace, and must approach the tokens of his sacrifice with humility and self-abnegation, seeing that with so little to give we have so much to receive at his hand. The very frequency and magnitude of our blunderings, together with the utter stupidity of our occasional waywardness,

even for the most alert and conscientious souls in our company, are reasons more than enough for humbling us to the dust, what time we venture forth to seek communion with such unsullied holiness. Even if by his grace there have been days and weeks, and even months of conquest in the good fight of faith, or of unwearied labour when accorded the privilege to serve him and his; and if to our own thinking we have brought armfuls of fair sheaves to show for our husbandry, still have we need to approach humbly to the table of the Lord. We have not repaid the debt we owe—we are still servants without profit to the "Cause." Our standing is still a debit one—we still have need to receive a grant of righteousness from him, and realise that were it not for him we would never stand approved before the all-seeing eye. Seeing, then, we all need His righteousness, let us draw near to this special hour of deeper fellowship with keen desire, greatly chastened by our sense of need, yet, always the while deeply assured by a keen sensibility of his power to meet that need, and that in these moments of intense expectation, and of ardent up-reaching desire, He does meet that need; and bestows satisfaction, full and deep upon every seeking soul.

Then, having received the gifts He has to bestow, we may have reached the mood to heed attentively what He then asks us to give up to him. Having surrendered all for us, He asks our "all" for himself, and looks and waits expectantly till we have renewed our vows to be "dead with Him". Can any consecrated child of God, who knows, of old, the sacred hush of this solemn hour (and who, believing that highest Heaven is bending down to this sad earth to bless this trysting hour), not long with strong desire to take again the "remembrance tokens" of his death and be thus linked up again with the unseen things of that higher world? Here the Christian breathes his native air; here he enters the holy place; here he takes the Bread of Life; here he walks in the Spirit's light—for him these exclusive things have been prepared, and for the enjoyment of these exclusive things he too has been made.

Here, in this exalted state, spiritual things give vitalising energy to the spiritual man, and they who begin the hour in weakened weariness may go forth therefrom, made strong and resolute to live and walk each coming day with Christ.

Jesus died, and his sacrificial death threw open wide the way to God. His sinless body broken for our sake is to us the token of life-giving Bread—of a new Loaf, to be broken to satisfy our need. His moral excellence (his blood—his life) we take as transferred from him to us, and because of our mystic union the life that was in him we believe is now in us. This is the mainspring and source of a new life for us—our new life, native to a loftier sphere.

But the new life is in a fallen human receptacle, which tends to blunt and dull its sensitivity to its own higher destiny, and leads it, betimes, to neglect and overlook its heavenly interests for those of this lower plane. That is why our field is often but ill-cultivated; and why the corn is short in the straw, and parched before it is full grown; and why the weeds abound profusely, and why the fences are broken down, and open to all vagrant intruders.

Of course we see these things in our lives all through the year, and any time is the right time to repent and confess our frailties in the kindly ear of God. This we should do morning, noon or night when the uneasy consciousness of such a state is brought home to our mind. But this one night is a special night because of what it commemorates, and because of the simple ceremonial which the dear Lord himself appointed for a "remembrancer" and because sincere observance of the Lord's desire brings such satisfaction to the deeper needs of the inner man that they who drink deep thereof can never thereafter forget.

Let us come together again, therefore, to remember him—to remember his unique super-excellence as a man; to think of his incomparable essential sacrifice as the Man of Sorrows—as the "perfect" Man, and as we ponder and reflect say "*He loved me, and gave himself for me*".

Gone from us

Bro. T. W. Allen (*Leicester*)
 Bro. W. J. Bailey (*Ipswich*)
 Sis. L. A. Forscey (*Ramsgate*)
 Bro. J. Humphrey (*Cambridge*)
 Sis. P. Schofield (*Manchester*)
 Sis. Weicht (*Ilford*)

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



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 37, No. 3

APRIL/MAY, 1960

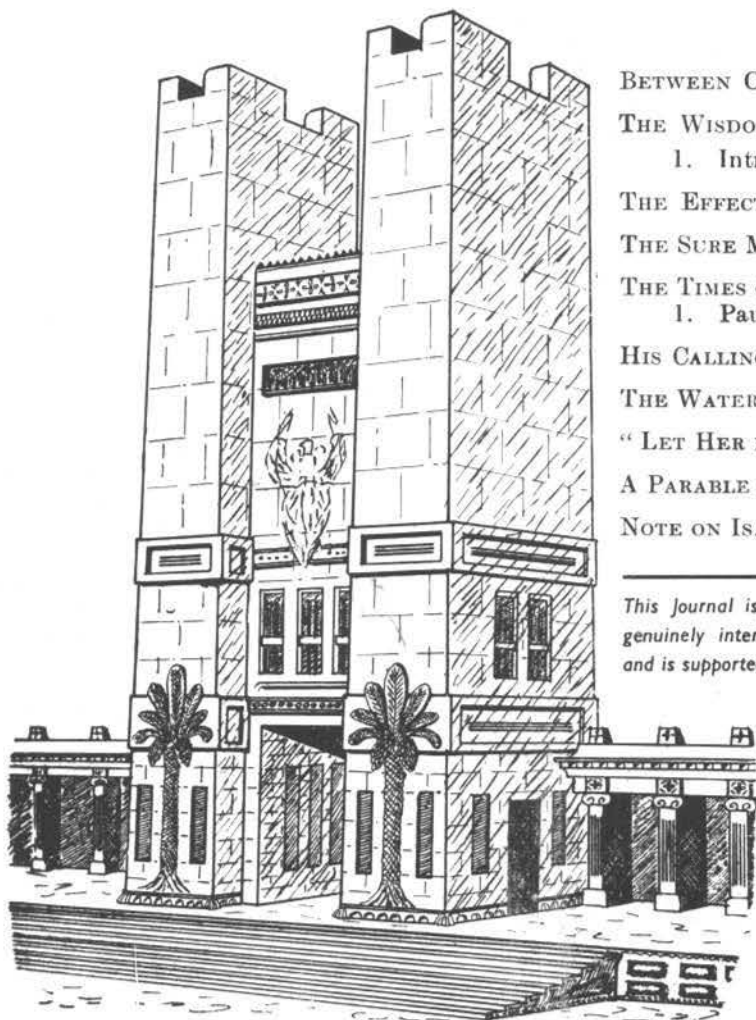
Published April 15th

Next issue June 1st

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This Journal is sent free of charge to all who are genuinely interested, on request renewable annually and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers



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

Published by

Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A new series "*The Wisdom of Elihu*" commences in this issue. The Book of Job has a fascination that is unique to itself, but it was not written merely to fascinate. It has been preserved for a purpose and there is to be found in its chapters Christian instruction of the highest order. Elihu, the young man who sat quietly at the feet of his elders whilst they discoursed from the stores of their experience, has a very human appeal when at last his impetuosity and impatience gets the better of him and he voices his own understanding to the astonishment and possibly indignation of the three wisemen who for all their years of experience still had failed to find the solution of Job's problem. But Elihu proves also to be a young man of deep insight and reverential mind; he has walked and talked with God and from the inward conviction that results from that walking and talking he is able to find the answer where the older men have failed.

"*The Times of this Ignorance*" is another series commencing this month, taking up some of the implications of St. Paul's famous address to the philosophers of Athens, recorded in Acts 17. Why was the world left alone so long before Christ came with his message of salvation? What is the position of those who lived and died before that message was preached? When did God first command men to repent and when does the time during which repentance will be of avail terminate? These are the questions that will be discussed in "*The Times of this Ignorance*".

The four groups of London friends who normally co-operate in holding the August Convention in London are arranging for the usual gathering this year on similar lines to previous occasions. The Convention will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,

Holborn, from Saturday afternoon to Monday afternoon, July 30 to August 1. For details and information write the Convention Secretary, Bro. D. Walton, 25 Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Herts.

* * *

Bro. F. A. Essler, representing the Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, U.S.A., is expected to visit this country during the coming summer and will visit any groups or meetings who so desire. He plans to arrive about May and leave about October. Requests for inclusion in the itinerary which is being planned should be addressed to Bro. Gordon Chilvers, 3 Morland Close, Bulkington, Nuneaton.

For dates fixed so far see page 48.

* * *

"*The Herald of Christ's Kingdom*" is a Biblical and devotional monthly magazine published by the Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, U.S.A., who have for many years acted as American correspondents for the "*Bible Study Monthly*", a Christian service which we deeply appreciate. Many of our readers are familiar with the "*Herald*"; there will be others who are not. Those who are readers bear witness to its high spiritual tone and consistent stand for the right of personal judgment in the study of the Scriptures. The P.B.I. agent in this country is Bro. Edwin Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, who will be pleased to send a free sample copy of the "*Herald*" to any who request the same. The postal subscription is 7/- per year, to Bro. Allbon.

Gone from us

Sis. R. Ford (*Luton*)
Sis. L. Tibbles (*Leicester*)

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

1. Introduction

The discourse of Elihu on the supremacy and character of God occupies six chapters in the Book of Job, six chapters of the most remarkably cogent reasoning. It stands in marked contrast to the materialistic philosophies of Job's other three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Twenty eight chapters of the book are taken up with the to-and-fro debates of these three with Job, hazarding theory after theory to account for this enigma before them, the spectacle of a righteous man suffering adversity without apparent justification. None of them satisfied Job; "*miserable comforters are ye all*" was his bitter comment. It would seem that every possible philosophy had been advanced, every school of thought had its thesis put forward, but none of them furnished the answer. Then, and only then, did the younger man Elihu, who up to that point had played the part of a silent listener to the discussion, break into the conversation with his contribution. The distinguishing feature of that contribution is that Elihu brings in the relationship of God to Job and his adversity, and contends mightily for the fixed principle that God is all-wise, all-just, all-loving, all-powerful, working to a set purpose, and doeth all things well. His argument is not a fatalistic one, not a plea for passive acceptance because it is impossible to do anything else. It is rather a call to cooperation with God and a willing participation in what God is doing to the extent that human powers will allow, in recognition that even though much of the conditions and affairs of life are mysterious and difficult to understand, the fact that God is in control and pursuing his intended course is a guarantee that all will eventually be well.

The importance of all this to the Christian lies in the fact that the entire Book of Job is intended to be a dramatic representation of the human race, submerged in pain and suffering, afflicted by the many aspects of sin and wickedness which exist in the world, despairing in face of the apparent indifference of God and without hope that things will ever be any better. The philosophies of the three friends represent all that human philosophy has to offer by way of explanation or comfort; the insight of Elihu pictures the evangel which comes from God by the ministry of

those who are the servants and messengers of God. If only for that reason, these six chapters of the Book of Job constitute a study of absorbing interest.

The setting of the Book of Job is in patriarchal times, somewhere between those of Abraham and Moses. The land of Uz was that indeterminate terrain, now desert, then fertile country, lying between the Jordan and Euphrates, where Arab peoples, the descendants of Shem, roamed and mingled as nomadic tribes. Eliphaz the Temanite was a descendant of Abraham through Esau; Bildad the Shuhite through Abraham's wife Keturah. Of Job himself no indication of ancestry is given but he was evidently of the same general stock. Elihu could trace his line back to Nahor the brother of Abraham. We are given therefore a picture of Semitic tribesmen who had passed from the nomadic to the settled pastoral way of life at the time the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and as yet hardly conscious of their own future exalted destiny, and therefore somewhere about sixteen centuries before Christ.

There is every reason for thinking that Elihu was an historic personage, that he did live at about the time above indicated and that the conversations recorded in the Book of Job actually took place. It is possible—even probable—that the entire Book was written by Elihu. The only place in the book in which the first person is used, apart from quotation speeches, is in Chapter 32. 16, where Elihu speaks of himself to the reader. Since he was the one who did the most listening throughout the discussions he was probably the best qualified to report what was said. And the fact, asserted by scholars, that the words of Elihu are more strongly marked by Aramaic forms of speech than those of any of the other speakers is strong incidental evidence that the book does describe actual happenings, as Elihu, a descendant of Nahor the ancestor of the Aramaic people would certainly speak a dialect distinctive in that respect from the others. A few centuries later the languages merged; the same difference would not have obtained had the book been composed as a philosophic treatise five or six centuries before Christ as the so-called modern scholarship is apt to claim.

So Elihu embarks upon his discourse. At

first, in chapter 32, he commences by introducing himself and justifying his intervention (verses 1 to 14) then goes on to remark the astonishment of his seniors at his temerity in proceeding with his explanation (verses 15 to 22). After this his discourse falls naturally into four sections, each clearly marked by an opening phrase inviting attention. Chapter 33 speaks of the *Wisdom* of God, wisdom exemplified in Creation (verses 1 to 7), revelation of himself to man, (verses 8 to 18), that although the curse of sin must lead to death God has provided a means of escape from death (verses 19 to 28) so that the original Divine ideal and purpose is achieved at last; Job must take heed to this fact (verses 29 to 33). Chapter 34 describes the *Justice* of God, and in 1 to 4 Elihu appeals for justice in our thinking, that while Job insisted on his own virtue (5 to 9) Elihu must insist on the inherent justice of God's ways (10 to 12) governing righteously, judging impartially and swiftly (13 - 37). From this he passes to the *Love* of God in chapters 35 and 36 up to verse 21. God has infinite patience with men (35. 1 - 16) men are disciplined now by his love but are ultimately to inherit fullness of joy (36. 1 - 12), even although those who are impervious to Divine love must suffer the wages of their sin (13 - 14). Job therefore is exhorted to trust in God's love rather than in his own appeal to God for justice (15 - 21). Finally comes Elihu's eulogy on the *Power* of God, in chapter 36. 22 - 33 and chapter 37. He

stresses the insignificance of man compared with Divine greatness (22 - 26) and launches upon a description of the powers of Nature as illustrative of the power of God (37. 10 - 12). But these agents of his power are themselves agents of his work for mankind and have some direct bearing upon man's relation to God (13 - 18), so man is speechless before God; he can only bow his head and accept the revelation that God is perfect in power, in wisdom, in justice, and in love; for this reason men reverence him (19 - 24).

So Elihu supersedes all the explanations offered by the three friends with the categorical assertion that there is no explanation. Job's adversity can only be seen against the background of God's eternal purpose and Job must accept the fact that whatever God has permitted is an integral part of that purpose and will eventually be seen in complete harmony with the wisdom, the justice, the love and the power of God. In a very real sense Elihu anticipated the Apostle Paul when he said "*now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known*". Perhaps the ensuing more detailed consideration of Elihu's words in these six chapters of Job will show in even clearer fashion how Elihu in the Old Testament, just like Paul in the New, had attained a very clear understanding of the "whole counsel of God".

(To be continued)

THE EFFECT OF EVERY VISION

A discourse for
the month

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

In those few words, beautiful even in their pessimism, there is summed up all the despair and all the hopelessness of a generation that had lost its youthful enthusiasm. In the early flush of youth they had eagerly embraced all the good promises of the prophets and looked forward with earnest longing to the day when those golden words would be fulfilled in dazzling reality. They had dreamed dreams and seen visions, and in all those dreams and all those visions they had pictured themselves as the favourites of God, called and chosen by him to be his associates in the days upon which He would arise to rule the nations. They ardently desired a rule of righteousness

upon earth and the overthrow of evil. They loved the Name of the Lord and they wanted to see that beloved Name cleared of the misunderstandings and false charges that had clustered about it. They had given themselves to God and He had accepted them for his own, to be a covenant people and a light to the nations, and life had become a different thing to them. Of course it was unthinkable that they should ever change their attitude! They had but to wait in the joy of this new-found relationship and when the day of deliverance dawned their dearest hopes would be gratified.

But the years went by and a new and unknown factor emerged. Life was found to contain so much more than was imagined in those early days when the plans and promises

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

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

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

Perhaps it was inevitable. How impossible it would have been in those early days to describe the world as it is now, a world of travel and radio and atomic energy; a world where less than five per cent of the people go to places of worship; a world where science—cold, passionless and inhuman—has been enthroned as God and Lord! How difficult it would have been to outline in detail the many events that must needs occur, the process of

development that has had to take place in the affairs of the nations before the Kingdom can come! Surely it was Divine Love as well as Divine Wisdom that kept closed a portion of the veil concealing the future, though revealing enough to inspire the minds and awaken the enthusiasm of those who were to go out as heralds of the Kingdom; that withheld from their minds a mass of detail which could not in any case become a live issue for another two generations.

The prophets have not failed us. The Holy Spirit is still active in the work of God, quickening the minds of his people and showing them visions of things yet to come as the time becomes due for those things to be understood. The drama of world history has stepped up its pace many times over in these last years; the succession of events is more rapid, the significance of each world crisis of greater moment, the possibilities of each situation more far-reaching. We see with our own eyes that of which our fathers in the faith told us, the breaking-up of a world order preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son. We see the progressive lining up of all world forces under the banners of one or other of two great powers. We see the land of promise and prophecy slowly becoming caught between the spheres of influence of those two Powers as in a pair of giant pincers. We see the developments in the Land of Promise as Jacob takes to himself his ancient inheritance. We perceive these things and we know what they portend. When the faint hearted children of Israel came to Ezekiel with their complaint "*the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth*" the Lord gave him a word for them. We can take that word to heart, for history has repeated itself. "*Tell them therefore, thus saith the Lord God, THE DAYS ARE AT HAND, AND THE EFFECT OF EVERY VISION.*" Let us give more earnest heed to the sure word of prophecy, for now, in the world's Saturday night, it speaks with clear voice of the things that are yet to be, and as we see those things unfold on the screen of world history, we shall know of a surety that our faith has been well founded and that to us belongs the word "*He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*".

Peace of the heart is that tranquillity of the spirit which lends a halo to everything. The consummation and crown of life, it is the blessing above all others to be sought and won.

THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID

A Study in
Divine Purposes

"Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isa. 55. 3).

What are the "sure mercies of David"? They are the subject of a promise of considerable importance, for the offer is to those who will incline their ears to God, and so find life eternal. This fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah is a Messianic chapter; there is not much doubt about that, but just because the Messianic Age is the one in which all the good purposes of our God converge together toward their glorious conclusion, it is only meet that we give it our earnest attention, for here there must surely be good and sound doctrine for our own hearts and minds.

This expression, the "sure mercies of David", is evidently either a synonym for the "everlasting covenant" of the same sentence, or something intimately associated with that covenant. This everlasting covenant is very clearly the covenant under which Messianic work is to be conducted; that much is plain from the intimate association of this verse with the remainder of the chapter, which deals with the evangelising work of the Messianic Age. That is the covenant which in Jeremiah is referred to as the New Covenant, the one under which men's hearts are to be changed from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, and none will need to ask his neighbour if he knows the Lord, because all, from the least unto the greatest, will know Him. (Jer. 31. 34). Only in the Messianic Age will that be true. Now David had nothing to do with the making of the New Covenant. It is true that God did make a covenant with David but it was rather a re-affirmation of the original Abrahamic Covenant than one having direct application to the reconciliation work of the Millennium. We cannot say therefore that the "sure mercies of David" are one and the same with the "everlasting covenant". Rather are they the characteristic features of the arrangement by which the everlasting covenant will be carried into effect, and those characteristic features are all pre-figured by David and his reign back there in the days of Israel.

Let David himself tell us of this. He has enshrined the truths of this matter in the 89th Psalm, and in that Psalm David tells of the

promises that God made to him, promises that were fulfilled only to a very limited degree in his earthly life but will be fulfilled in their glorious entirety in days yet to come. *"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever"* he cries (verse 1) *"With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations"*. These "mercies of the Lord" are the things of which we are now thinking. The word itself means "loving kindness" and when the adjective "sure" (*aman*, faithful, steadfast) is prefixed we have the "faithful loving kindness" which the Lord has promised David, and through him, the whole world. In this introductory verse David is telling us that the loving kindness and faithfulness of God is to be made known for ever, proclaimed to all generations, an apt way of saying that what he has to tell is intended not only for his own day and people, but also, and much more urgently, for the people of "the Age" the Day of reconciliation which even now is still future. Here in this Psalm is the record of the Covenant God made with David, a covenant so very like the Abrahamic promise in its phraseology that we ought clearly to see that it is but a re-affirmation of the kingly phase of that great Covenant. *"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations"*. (verse 3-4). In ecstasy of this revelation of the Divine purposes David goes on to speak of the glory and power of God and the absolute righteousness of his rule. *"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face"* (verse 14). So he goes up, step by step, to the lofty height from which he views the "sure mercies", the "faithful loving kindnesses" which are to constitute the salient features of the Messianic Age. A King, reigning in righteousness! An Administration, ruling in righteousness! A Kingdom built upon righteousness! These are the sure mercies of David and these are to be "given" to those who hear and respond to Isaiah's call; those who, thirsting, come to the waters where they may drink and buy wine and milk without money and without price. The kings and the administrations and the kingdoms of this world demand money and sacrifices from the people their subjects. There is nothing to

be had "without money and without price"; all must be paid for and oft-times the price is a heavy one. Jeremiah says in another place of the inhabitants of Babylon "the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary" (Jer. 51. 58). Those who receive this inestimable gift, the "sure mercies of David" will not be weary, for they are to "go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 52. 12). Small wonder that David was joyful when he composed the 89th Psalm.

't is in verse 19 that he rises to this theme of the "sure mercies". "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep with him for ever more, and my covenant shall stand fast with him" (vss: 19-28). This is clearly intended to refer much more definitely to David's great antitype, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in his office as earth's King, than ever it could to David himself. David, the man, great as was his faith and loyal as was his heart, time and again showed himself a man of like passions with other men, guilty of grievous offences against God's holiness. Only in an illustrative sense can he ever be said to have fulfilled these glowing prophecies. We who look back upon the words from the standpoint of the Christian dispensation see here a vivid word-picture of the future, of the day when Jesus, whose right it is, takes the throne of earth and rules, as Isaiah said He would rule, a King in righteousness. That is the first and the principal of the sure mercies of David.

The Apostle Paul saw this very clearly. When he came to Antioch of Pisidia in company with Barnabas and preached in the synagogue there he associated the fulfilment of this promise with the resurrection of our Lord. "As concerning that he (God) raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise 'I will give you the sure mercies of David' " (Acts 13. 34). Christ must needs rise again in the power of an endless life if He is to be given to mankind at his Second Advent to be their righteous and everlasting King in conformity with the terms

of this promise. Without the risen Christ the prophecy could not even begin to be fulfilled.

The Divine Plan provides for some to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in his kingly work of the next Age. The promise is given to his faithful disciples of this present Age that they shall live and reign with him the thousand years of the Millennium (Rev. 20. 4). The New Testament is so full of this theme, the future work and privilege of the Church of Christ, glorified and joined to him "beyond the Veil", that there is no shadow of doubt and no uncertainty about the matter. The work of the Church, under the direction and guidance of the Lord, will be the teaching and converting and reconciling of mankind. They will come to humanity as benefactors and helpers. They too, then, must be included in the "sure mercies of David". The Church is the promised Administration by means of which the Millennial blessings will reach the people. And Divine promise guarantees that they will be ready for their work when the time comes. There is no possibility of failure; that elect company which God foreknew will have been justified and sanctified and glorified in good time for the commencement of its great work (Rom. 8. 29-30). So is it promised in Psalm 89. "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven Once have I sworn in my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed . . . and his throne . . . shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Verses 29-37). Notice here how the "seed" and the "throne" are associated together. That is only to be expected, for the faithful in Christ Jesus, the "seed", are to sit with him in his throne (Rev. 3. 21) and both seed and throne are to continue eternally "as a faithful witness in heaven". What rare word of comfort and encouragement is this for the loving hearts who are tenaciously maintaining their loyalty and love for the Lord in the face of discouragement and opposition and persecution to-day. They will be to all eternity "a faithful witness in heaven" testifying to the mighty power and the tender love of our God who has wrought such wonderful things out of such unpromising material.

This is where the Psalm leaves the future. Verses 38 to 51 have no parallel in the future, no place in the prophecy. They voice David's own bitter realisation that the outworking in his own day was not reaching up to the full measure of the prophecy. And the reason is not far to seek. David himself had proved un-

worthy. As a type and a picture of his Lord Who was yet to come he filled the requirements and pointed the way for us to follow and observe, but in actual literal truth the glowing words did not attain the limited fulfilment they could have attained in his own day had he himself been more faithful to the principles of righteousness and the duties of kingship. This part of the Psalm does not concern us therefore; we have a King, who although tempted and proved in all points like as we are and like as David was, endured it all without sin, and attained to his Kingship in the triumph of absolute righteousness. We do not need to end our Psalm, as David did his, on a despondent note. We can finish at verse 37 and hold before our mental vision the glorious prospect of the Church, faithful and triumphant, joined with the Lord, an eternal and faithful witness in Heaven. The Church is, to mankind, the second of the "sure mercies of David".

What of the third? It is Solomon, the son and successor of David, dedicating the Temple that David himself was not allowed to build, who touches upon the sublime truth that underlies the third. This Kingdom of righteousness which is also included in the offer "without money and without price" to mankind in "that Day" is the Kingdom of which the Temple of God is the centre, and that is why it is going to be so great a blessing to mankind. Ezekiel saw the same in vision, the Messianic Kingdom built around and depending upon the Temple of God as its centre. Out of the Temple is to flow the River of Life and from the Temple comes all the light that illuminates mankind in the Day of Blessing. So Solomon, standing and dedicating the Temple he had built, which prefigured the dwelling of God with men in the day when all tears shall be wiped away, (Rev. 21. 3-4), was moved by the Holy Spirit to associate what he was doing with the promise of God to his father. "O Lord God" he entreated "turn not away from the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant" (2 Chron. 6. 42).

Just as that Temple became a place where God could meet his people, hear their prayers, accept their offerings, pronounce them clean and justified in his sight, and hold them in continuing covenant relationship with himself, so in the future Kingdom for which we look God will do all these things in much more real a fashion than He could do in those far-off days of types and ceremonies. There was no lasting validity in what was done then,

for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats shall take away sin; in the future day men may accept for themselves the ransom-sacrifice of Christ, and repent, and turn to him, and be justified by faith in him, and so be reconciled to God and enter into everlasting life. All these things that Kingdom will achieve, and the whole earth become as it were a golden city dominated by the abiding presence of the Father and the Son, jointly the life and the light thereof (Rev. 21. 23). So the Kingdom is the third of the "sure mercies of David", an abiding evidence of the faithful loving-kindness of our God. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all at end of day, for there will be no night there; and they who enter into it are they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Entrancing prospect! Is there not here great incentive for us, that we gird up the loins of our minds and resolve to run our race with a greater determination and more constant zeal than ever before, knowing that it is upon the completion of our course that the blessings of this coming Kingdom are waiting. Is it not true that the "earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19)? Then let us press forward in hope and expectation that at the completion of our Master's work in us we shall become part of that inestimable blessing which God is preparing for the sons of men, and has promised to give them, saying to them "I will give you — the sure mercies of David."

We must always remember that the ministry of light does not terminate in us. The blessing of light upon us is given that it may shine through us. Every sunbeam calls attention to the mighty source from whence it springs; every moment that it shines the sun is magnified.

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| | | Bro. F. A. Essler |
| May | 29 | Nottingham |
| " | 31 | Derby |
| June | 2 | Atherstone |
| " | 4-5 | Blaby |
| " | 11 | Lutterworth |
| " | 12 | Blaby & Leicester |

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

A Study in
Divine Purposes

I. Paul and the Athenians

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold or silver or stone, engraved by art or man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked) but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17. 30).

The times of Divine action in the outworking of his plans are several and varied. The Scripture speaks of "Times of Restitution"; in these days we have come to realise the significance of that expression and to look forward to the promised restoration. They speak also of "Times of the Gentiles"; for many years past earnest students of the Holy Word have traced the course of those times through human history, and watched and waited for their end. Now the Apostle Paul, speaking to the wise men of this world, the philosophers and thinkers and debaters of the glory that was Greece, speaks of "times of ignorance". Times of ignorance! Was it a mere figure of speech, a flowery embellishment with which to round off his discourse, a polished antithesis to mark in sharp relief the knowledge that he was bringing them from God, the knowledge of Jesus and the Resurrection? By no means, for these "times of ignorance", says Paul, span a period and are to have an end, an end which is marked by the cessation of God's tolerance of the condition of "no-knowledge", and a universal command to repent, that the light of the knowledge of God's Plan might begin to overspread the earth until it covers the land as the waters cover the great sea. There were definite causes that had produced those "times of ignorance", and they had occupied a definite place in the Divine Plan, but now their end had come and another and totally different work for mankind on the part of the Most High was to take their place.

The unhappy translation "winked at" does not convey a true impression of Paul's exposition here. God did not by any means condone or ignore the conduct of man or the darkness of this world. The Greek word used is one that signifies the looking over and beyond a thing, as though God, surveying these times of ignorance from the standpoint of his great knowledge, looked beyond them to another time when men would hear the call to repent and come to the light that then would be

shining, and in coming, find salvation and life. The word does not mean that God "overlooked" in the sense of "letting bygones be bygones". There is a law of retribution in the Divine dealings with man which will apply to all men everywhere and in all ages. God "looked beyond" the "times of ignorance", and guided the destinies of this world meantime, not according to man's present deserts, but in the light of his future possibilities.

These few words of Paul, spoken to the intellectual pagans of his own day, throw a flood of light upon this very important aspect of God's dealings with man. It has been the usual custom to ignore the long millenniums that stretched between Creation and Christ as though they had no particular usefulness or importance, except for the relatively short span during which Israel was receiving its national training under the Law. But a close examination of Acts 17 reveals a clear understanding, on Paul's part, of the vital place those ages occupy in the Divine scheme of things. They were years in which man, though ignorant, was making his way more or less blindly towards the light; until he had arrived at a certain stage in that progress the revelation of Christ could not be made to man because none would be found able to understand; but when in the fulness of time some could appreciate him in the way He must come, and accept him and set their lives to carrying on his work, then, and at once, the times of ignorance must come to an end, and God could, with complete confidence, set in motion the great forces which were destined to complete his plan for humanity. As a first step in that proceeding, He called upon men in a fashion He had not called and could not call before, to repent.

"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship" said Paul to his listeners, *"him declare I unto you"*. The Greeks had built up a complete pantheon of deities, descriptive of all the attributes of God and all the outward manifestations of his working which they could perceive; but they were not satisfied. There was still something about God that they did not understand, an understanding of his ways to which they had not attained. The elaborate mythologies and philosophical speculations which they had formulated and in which they indulged still failed to satisfy the more

reflective among them, and so in blind groping for more light they had erected, among all their shrines and images, this altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD", and trusted that one day He would reveal himself to them.

So they listened as Paul told them how that far away, in the days of Creation, the Unknown God had made the world, and all that is in it, and placed man upon it, and in full anticipation of the Fall and all that it would entail of man's ignorance and blindness concerning himself, had ordered the course of the nations in history, and their geographical distribution over the earth (*"hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation"* vs. 26) that they might struggle in their blindness to a position from which some of them at least could receive Christ and become his instruments of blessing to all the rest. *"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from any one of us"* (vs. 27). There is progression here, a progress from utter ignorance to a measure of knowledge, and then, when the call to repent has been sounded, and heard, and heeded, onward still into that full knowledge which is the prized possession of the sons of God.

The "times of this ignorance" of Paul's address, then, commenced at, or soon after, the Fall, and they ended with Christ. It was Paul's object to convince the Greeks of the significance of the times in which they lived. A great step forward in the Plan of God had been taken. Whereas, in the past, men had struggled blindly towards the light, and the highest and best of their conclusions had been enshrined in the Greek philosophies which Paul was now dismissing as ignorance itself, God, having looked beyond man's failure to know and understand him aright, was now revealing a complete and satisfying message of life in the person and work of his Son. The solution of all the questions and speculations, the searching and questionings, of the past, was expressed in the simple exhortation "Repent—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—and thou shalt be saved".

So the Times of Ignorance were brought to an end on the Day of Pentecost by God's command to men to repent. There can be no disputing the meaning of the words. They stand, clear and unmistakable. From the dawn of history God had looked upon his creatures' endeavours to understand the mysteries of life and death, of good and evil, and in the knowledge of his own future plans had

allowed their errors and mistakes and wanderings in devious and dark ways. He knew that all this experimental striving, as it were, was necessary to prepare men's minds to receive the great revelation He planned to give them. It would not have done to reveal Christ at the time of Abraham, nor yet at the time of Moses. Human minds were altogether unprepared to receive the truths He must bring, too undeveloped by far to understand the High Calling and the principles of the Millennial reign. But by the time that Cæsar Augustus ruled the world there were some who could understand and who would respond, and it was at that point that God changed his attitude and his course of dealing, and commanded all men, everywhere, to repent. And that call to repentance is intimately connected, as we know full well, with the onset of world judgment—the judgment and retribution that must come upon the world for its evil—and the further development of God's plans for world conversion during the Messianic Age.

At Pentecost, then, there came a great change in the possibility of men's understanding of God. That change brought with it responsibility. The hearing of the message could no longer be flouted. Men would now be expected to understand and begin to weigh up for themselves the implications of this new word of authority which had come into their lives.

The exhortation to repent was not a request: it was a command. It was a command having the same force as the other command given to man at the time of the first creation. *"Of the tree . . . that is in the midst of the garden, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"*. Failure to heed and obey this command to repent will have the same result: there is for the unrepentant, after full opportunity, nothing but death, the cessation of that existence which God has given but of which the recipient will not make rightful use. Neither was the command addressed to a select few, nor to an arbitrarily chosen small number. It was to all men. *"Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent"*. That fact has to be taken into account in our understanding of the work of the Age that commenced at Pentecost.

Perhaps there has been a tendency to differentiate too sharply between the works of the Christian and Messianic Ages. Often it has been said that God is not dealing with the world at present: He is dealing exclusively with the Church, and the turn of the world

will come in the next Age. That is true in measure, but it is not a complete expression of the truth. From the point of view of Paul, speaking at Athens, making a difference between man's helpless striving after the light before Pentecost, and the work of human reconciliation to God which has been progressing since Pentecost and will progress until it is complete in the Millennium, this whole period, from Pentecost to the end of the Messianic Age, is one great span of time during which the work of reconciliation progresses to its logical fulfilment. The command to repent goes out at the beginning of the Age and applies to all men: all men do not hear the command at first: for many of them the word will not come until after the Kingdom is established. The heralds of the Kingdom, the messengers of God, must first take up the proclamation and bear it through the earth. *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Judea, and Jerusalem, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth"*. During the first two thousand years the command is being heard and responded to by a comparatively small number of people; from these are drawn those disciples who by reason of their experiences as "his witnesses" in this life will be equipped and qualified to carry on the work in greater power in the next Age, so that all men, even the resurrected millions who themselves lived during the "Times of Ignorance" may hear the command to repent and, if they will, obey.

It is on this basis that missionary zeal must

be based. The plain fact is that God, at Pentecost, commenced to reconcile the world to himself in Christ. There are two great stages in that work of reconciliation, the first of which is the selection and preparation of the company through whom the major portion of the work is to be done, but it is one great work as a whole, and it was at Pentecost that the Father looked down upon a blinded and ignorant world and, as it were, said "it is enough: behold the way of salvation: turn and repent, and come to Me". From that time forward it has been the privilege and commission of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus to herald far and wide the cry that must continue yet for another thousand years before it has achieved its full purpose: *"Repent — believe the gospel — and live"*.

That is why the Christian faith is, and always has been, and always will be, a missionary faith. That is why the church or sect or group that loses its missionary zeal and ceases to proclaim abroad the faith that is in it must inevitably perish. With Paul, we must say *"Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel"*—The times of ignorance have ended, and we who are God's ambassadors are sent forth to bear his message, a message that will not cease to be preached until all of earth's millions have heard and made their final decision.

For God now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.

(To be continued)

CHRISTIANS

After describing degenerate conditions in Antioch, Dean Farrar writes, "It is the darkest just before the dawn. When mankind has sunk into hopeless scepticism, the help of God is often very nigh at hand. 'Bitter with weariness and sick with sin', there were many at any rate, even among the giddy and voluptuous Antiochenes, who, in despair of all sweetness and nobleness, were ready to hail with rapture the preaching of a new faith which promised forgiveness for the past, and brought ennoblement to the present. (Acts 13. 38). The work grew and prospered, and for a whole year the Apostles laboured in brotherly union and amid constant encouragement. The success of their labours was most decisively marked by the coinage of a new word, destined to a glorious immortality—the disciples were first called CHRISTIANS at Antioch."

GOD TURNS A LEAF

Have you not noticed that in the history of this planet God turns a leaf about every two thousand years?

God turned a leaf, and this world was fitted for human residence. About two thousand more years passed along and God turned another leaf, and it was the Deluge. About two thousand more years passed on and it was the appearance of Christ. Almost two thousand more years have passed by, and He will probably soon turn another leaf. What it shall be I cannot say. It may be the demolition of all these monstrosities of turpitude, and the establishment of righteousness in all the earth. He can do it, and He will do it. I am as confident as if it were already accomplished.

(Talmadge).

HIS CALLING

*An Exhortation from the
Epistle to the Ephesians*

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

judge and protector—in fact, all that we revere in the word God; but beginning with our Lord, the Holy Spirit reveals him as the heavenly Father. And it is because He is the Father of the Church, and they his sons as shown in the N.T. that we may know that in the highest sense it is HIS calling. Hence his personal interest in the welfare of his sons. And that is why Paul when planning such words as Romans 8 and the first four chapters of Ephesians speaks in such exultant tones. It was this new aspect of relationship to God in our Lord's words about his Father and our Father (seen particularly in John's gospel) that caused Philip to exclaim "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us". The answer to Philip and to us all who make the same request is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church dispensation, and the answer does suffice, does satisfy us that "the Father himself loveth you". Only by the knowledge that it is HIS calling can we fathom and accept the fatherhood and love of God.

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

by God's provision, Christ "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and deliverance" and thus we may know that our deficiencies are supplied by his gifts. Let us believe with James that God hath chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith, for by doing this we shall assure ourselves that it is OUR calling.

When writing to the Hebrews (ch: 3. 1) he describes it as being a HEAVENLY calling. It is heavenly in origin and in prospect. We who once were Gentiles may believe and hold the church promises in this epistle, but should remember that primarily it was written to those who had long been the favoured people of God. As children of Jacob they had promised heavenly in origin but not in prospect. They had blessings of which, like the Church later, they were not worthy, but nothing in these promises gave any hope that even the great men of Israel would ever reap heavenly reward. And, they had already been called; called out of Egypt; chosen by the Lord God to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deut. 7. 6-8). On Mount Sinai, Moses, as near to heaven as it was possible for man to be, had received the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and by the giving of the law with its provision of sacrifice and priesthood; and given a fair land in which to dwell, with promises of blessing, in basket and store, they were ranked above the surrounding nations. It was to this favoured people that the HEAVENLY call first is made, being at first thought, the people most likely to accept the new appeal. On the other hand knowing themselves to be the chosen people with ample proof of Divine blessing, they might question any new offer purporting to come from their own God of Israel. And so the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the heavenly prospect of the call as distinct from the best of earthly promises which they had enjoyed. He was offering something far better, something heavenly, based upon a better sacrifice. In the second chapter of Hebrews he expresses this new and heavenly call as bringing many sons to glory, and that the chief Son Who had been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death was now crowned with glory and honour, which in a later chapter he shows to be at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. And from the words of our Lord himself we know that He has gone to prepare a place for these sons of glory and that on his coming again He would receive them unto himself; that where He was

there they would be also.

When Paul writes to the Philippian church he refers to it as a HIGH calling, and again the context tells why in that connection he so speaks. The heavenly calling is of course a high calling as to destination, yet he speaks of the HIGH calling as to rank. Think of the rank to which Paul had been born as a Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law, a Pharisee. (Phil. 3. 4-5). His standing was so high that he could have boasted that if any man thought he had whereof he could trust in the flesh, he had more. But those things which were gain he counted loss for Christ. His high rank as a Jew he renounced most gladly for the hope of his calling, "the HIGH calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 14). Called in his youth and taught in the perfect manner of the law at the feet of Gamaliel; called while on the Damascus road to be an apostle; there was another call to which all his powers were centred and he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the HIGH calling. Thus he was able to forget those things which were behind, honourable though they were and reach forth unto those things which were before, knowing that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3. 4).

Writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 1. 9) he speaks of the HOLY calling—a reminder that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14). A call to be like him who issued the invitation. "*As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1. 15/16). Here Peter quotes from words addressed to the nation which had been called out of Egypt to be a holy nation unto himself. God's method of forming them into a holy people was to separate them from the surrounding nations and bless them. He blessed them so abundantly that He appealed to them in later times through the prophet Isaiah, saying "*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*" That they failed to be worthy of their status is too well-known to need noting now, providing that those who now are called with the HOLY calling profit by their failings. For again the call is issued to us to be a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The call of to-day will also be separate (though not isolated) from the world by the Father's answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17. 15 "I

pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil". The sons of God may confidently know that He Who kept Israel, never slumbering or sleeping, will also keep them; it being understood that the sons will walk

worthy of the calling wherewith they are called.

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

THE WATERS OF SHILOAH

*Spiritual truth based
on a natural fact*

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord will bring up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks." (Isa. 8. 6-7).

Deep down beneath Jerusalem there is a strata of hard, impervious rock, sloping very gently towards the south-east. All the rain that falls upon the city and percolates into the ground gathers at last upon that unyielding shelf and forms underground streams which emerge at length as springs upon the hillsides outside the city. By far the most important of these springs is that known as the Virgin's fountain, halfway down the steep sides of the valley of Jehoshaphat. This spring never fails; the underground reservoirs feed it constantly and from time immemorial it has formed Jerusalem's most reliable water supply. The Jebusites, long before Joshua invaded the Promised Land with his hosts, had bored a tunnel from the fountain into the mountainous mass upon which their stronghold was built and had then made a vertical shaft to the surface so that they could descend and draw water in times of siege without having to venture outside their walls. In much later times the Israelites—probably in the period between David and Ahaz—had built a covered aqueduct just under the ground to convey the water from the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam, with the same purpose in mind. When Sennacherib invaded Judah in the reign of Hezekiah the son of Ahaz it would seem that this aqueduct had been blocked up and knowledge of its course lost, for Hezekiah set to work and excavated another tunnel through the mountain to convey the water to the Pool of Siloam, which was by then inside the city walls. In our days both Hezekiah's tunnel and the remains of the earlier aqueduct have been found, the latter buried far underneath the soil and rubbish which has accumulated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat

since the days of Isaiah.

It was this lost aqueduct to which Isaiah referred in the text. That overflowing water coming out from the heart of the mountain below the city and the Temple, never failing, always fresh and clear, was a very real Divine provision for the people. It was a kind of literal counterpart of the spiritual provision—sustenance, refreshment, protection—which God had made for his chosen. Quietly, unobtrusively, safe from all attack by enemies, the waters of Shiloah "flowed softly" to meet the needs of dwellers in the city, and in just the same way God's provision for his people was always there and always effective to meet all their needs and shield them from all harm, provided they would but exercise the faith necessary to avail themselves of its benefits.

But the people would not. They turned away from the gentle, pure, life-giving stream and fastened their covetous eyes upon other waters, waters that were outwardly more spectacular and more pleasing to the natural senses: but waters that, had they but realised the fact, were not waters of life at all. They were waters which in the end brought trouble and disaster and death.

Away across the desert, in the land of Assyria, there was a mighty river. Men to-day call it the Tigris, but the Assyrians gave it a name which meant "shining water". They had built their capital city of Nineveh upon that river and from there they had set out to conquer the world. The Assyrians are known chiefly to students of the Old Testament for their military skill and their ruthlessness, but they were also an industrious and an artistic people, and they had harnessed their great river so that it became the principal support of their economy. The river and its tributaries had been dammed at various places to create artificial lakes, great reservoirs which stored up the water that came down from the highlands in abundance in springtime, when the winter snows melted. From these lakes they had cut canals, leading in every direction

through the desert, and irrigated the soil so that it became one of the most fertile countries in the world. The children of Israel knew of this lovely country, so different from their own rugged, austere Judea—many of them visited Assyria as merchants and brought back tales of its grandeur; Jonah had preached in Nineveh only a century or so before Isaiah's day—and as they compared the earthly beauty and the man-made efficiency of that widespread network of rivers and canals with their own modest, quiet, hidden stream of Shiloah, they turned away from the living waters and gave preference to the waters of the great river. They forgot that their own stream had never failed them and had always sufficed for their needs, and turned instead to embrace the appeal of a worldly creation the continuance of which depended upon the will and the whim of imperfect men.

To-day, the great dams are in ruins, the canals choked up with silt and sand, the one-time fertile fields returned to desert. The river, once alive with boats and teeming with activity, now winds sluggishly through marshes choked with reeds and rushes. The work of man has utterly failed and all the glories of yesterday have become as a fading flower. But the waters of Shiloah flow still, as abundant and as fresh and pure as in the days of Isaiah. The women of Jerusalem still draw water from the Pool, and the gardens around the south-east corner of the city are still watered from its overflow.

Assyria was the undoing of Israel eventually. Because the people had refused the waters of Shiloah, God told the prophet, He himself would bring upon them the waters of the great river to overflow and submerge them in a great destruction. And so it came to pass. In the midst of their unbelief and wilfulness and apostasy the Assyrian hosts overran their land and took them away into captivity. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord "I will bring upon them the waters of the river, even the king of Assyria and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks" That is always the fate of the people that turns away from the Lord's guidance and leading and permits itself to be dazzled by the more spectacular attraction of worldly things and methods. Doubtless the scientifically arranged canals of Assyria were technically much more efficient in watering the land than that quietly flowing underground stream emerging from the rocky hillside outside Jerusalem, but those canals could

only be kept in operation by a prodigious amount of labour, and when the labour failed, as all human effort and organisation must eventually fail, the wonderful channels with their sluice gates and regulators and mechanical contrivances quickly went out of action and the water ceased to flow and the land dried up and became a desert. The stream that was the river of God has always remained full of water and has always made glad the city of God. Jeremiah saw this very clearly, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried out aloud "*My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*" (Jer. 2. 13). How often, in the days that have passed since Jeremiah, have God's people repeated that tragic mistake! And it is not as though there had been no warning, no entreaty. "*O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments*" comes the voice of the Most High, regretful, sad, pleading. "*Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.*" (Isa. 48. 18). Impossible not to see in that eloquent appeal the picture of the waters of Shiloah, flowing softly, quietly, steadily, surely, through their narrow channel, to supply all the needs of the people of God in the holy city. We may enjoy those waters, in a spiritual sense, if we but rely upon them and turn our backs upon the shining waters that have been gathered together and remain held together by the mind and power of man. David in the twenty-third psalm sings of his being led by the Lord beside the still waters, where his soul became restored and where he found the quiet pathways of righteousness. Perhaps he too had followed the course of that crystal stream and seen in it a fit symbol of the Divine sustenance which he knew his soul needed.

This is a great truth, enshrined in this vivid picture. Divine provision for all our needs! The lesson is as necessary to us as it was to Israel after the flesh—perhaps more so, for we live in a day that offers far more in the way of distraction and attraction. There are more theories abroad, more subtle reasonings that tend to turn our minds away from the "truth as it is in Jesus". Especially is it so in this latter day, the day of the world's trouble and world's judgment, when the keenest and brightest of human minds are busy devising plans and schemes to restore the balance of the world without calling upon the aid of God, and the constantly deferred expectations of the "saints" tempt more than a few to give

some ear to the alternatives suggested by man. Is that why the forty-sixth Psalm, in the midst of its description of world judgment, reminds us once more of the river of God that will supply all our needs? "Though the earth be removed . . . though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . though the waters thereof rage and swell . . . though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof . . ." Yet, for all this . . . "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." In the midst of the din and clash of earth's kingdoms, locked in deadly conflict, falling and disintegrating into irretrievable ruin, the waters of Shiloah flow softly still, yielding refreshment and strength to all who continue to put their faith in them. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

It is only to be expected that this Divine provision for the people of God should evoke a response of praise to God. That at any rate is the theme of the Psalmist's words in the sixty-fifth psalm. The whole psalm is one of praise. It opens with the well-known words "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed" and in verses 9 and 10 the singer seems clearly to have brought the underground "river of God" into the scope of his song, "Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water". Now this could be a poetic phrase with no intentional application to any particular river, just a rapturous acknowledgment of the blessings of rain and water wherewith the land could bring forth its increase. On the other hand, the expression "the river of God" is significant, and the phraseology of the next verse does seem to indicate that David had the waters of Shiloah very specially in mind when he composed this noble psalm. "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof." The word for "furrow" is *geled*, meaning a man-made channel or a mechanical excavation. It is used to describe the aqueducts which were made all over the land to convey the precious water without risking its loss by evaporation. "Settlest" means to descend, to go down, or to deepen. There is the thought here of the life-giving water descending or flowing down an excavation in the course of its beneficent work, an apt description of the stream from the Virgin's Fountain flowing through the underground aqueduct to the Pool of Shiloah. In his joy at the continued providence of God thus manifested David cries "thou crownest

the year with thy goodness . . . the valleys are covered over with corn, they shout for joy, they also sing." A continuous song of praise is pictured as rising to God from all things in the land, animate and inanimate, because the living water is flowing and does not fail.

In a spiritual sense our lives should be like that. In all our circumstances and in all our activities the background of praise should always be evident. We may not at all times see the river flowing; our ears may not continuously hear the murmur of its waters; the outward evidence of its presence may become for a while hard to discern or appreciate, but the river is always there. The waters of Shiloah will never fail, they can never fail, for they come forth from God. And while the waters flow our welfare is assured and we can—and should—continue to give praise to God. Like the sunlit valleys in David's psalm, we can shout for joy; we can also sing!

Isaiah, too, rises to this high plane of praise for the blessings of the river of God, but true to his character he wants to bring all men into the picture and extend his view far beyond the Gospel Age and the Church, into the Messianic Age and the world of men. Neither has he yet finished with those Assyrian canals on which he poured such scorn previously, even though knowing, and declaring, that the great river would triumph temporarily over the river of God insofar as unfaithful Israel was concerned. But Isaiah knew that the great river would be rolled back and the river of God come into its own again, in due time, and by a bold reversal of imagery he sees the quiet waters of Shiloah expand and increase and invade the territory of the great river and reach, with its life giving waters, all the world.

"Look upon Zion" he cries "the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." (Isa. 33. 20-21). These "broad rivers and streams" are the ship canals and irrigation channels of Assyria, intersecting the level fields of that almost completely flat country in all directions, used both for agriculture and the transport of men and goods. Shipping of all kinds, from tiny coracles made of wickerwork and covered with bitumen, to boats capable of carrying a hundred tons of goods,

crowded those waterways continually. Isaiah looked at all that in the spirit of his mind, then at the quiet little stream bubbling out of the hillside below the Temple, and said, in effect: "In that day when Jerusalem is pronounced holy to the Lord, He will cause those quiet waters of Shiloah to become great rivers and canals overspreading all the land and bringing life wheresoever they come. But there will be no ships"; the "galleys with oars" and "gallant ships" were the merchant vessels and the war vessels, for the Assyrians had battleships suited to their day and age; and Isaiah made it plain then and there that the evils of commercialism and militarism will have no place in that new land of living waters which the Lord God is to introduce when the "broken cisterns" of men have passed away.

The waters of Shiloah will not always flow in secret, hidden from sight, disesteemed of men and precious only in the sight of God and those who trust in God. Men will not always look to the shining waters of Assyria for their needs and put their trust in that which is man-made to the ignoring of that which is God-made. The waters of Shiloah will one day flow forth to meet the needs of all the world. It is Ezekiel who makes that so very plain. In his vision of the Millennial Temple he sees waters emerging from underneath the sanctuary, at the south side of the altar, flowing eastward and emerging again under the outer wall at the south side of the east gate. It is an interesting fact that the literal stream that has its source in some undiscovered subterranean recess deep down below the place where Solomon's Temple stood does emerge below the city wall, half way down the side of the valley, on the south of the Eastern Gate, from thence flowing into the Virgin's Fountain and onward to the Pool of Siloam. Ezekiel's description is really a poetic replica of the stream that actually exists at Jerusalem. It is impossible to avoid the thought that he had that well-known stream in mind when he saw the vision. And he saw it going outward into the country, growing wider and deeper all the time, until at last as a mighty torrent it reached the eastern sea, the Dead Sea, and healed those salt-laden waters so that they too became fresh and pure. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh" he said. (Ezek. 47. 9). And as he looked, he saw trees, trees on both sides, growing rapidly and coming to maturity, evergreen trees whose leaves never faded and whose fruit was borne continually. That fruit, he said, was to be for

the food of man, and those leaves for medicine, for the healing of the nations, and the source of the virtue that resided in both fruit and leaves was the river of life in which the trees were rooted, a mighty flood that will encompass all the world and will reach every man, the waters of Shiloah, flowing out from the sanctuary, becoming a river of water of life to which all are invited to come, and of which all are urged to partake. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22. 17).

The waters of Shiloah will flow to all eternity, for life can only be sustained by the continuing power of God. Through all the long cycles of the endless ages of glory, man will depend upon God for life and will look to him for life, and that life will come ceaselessly, surely, enduringly, out of the sanctuary where God dwells, and reach to the farthest bounds of his material creation. The waters will never cease, for man himself will never cease to be. In God, the Father of all, men will live, and move, and have their being.

Every spiritual movement, awakening and stirring up faith in its hearers, subsides after a time, often in a few decades. The waves become smaller, the activity gradually lessens and finally ceases. The Pool of Bethesda is again quiet and motionless as before. High hopes which led to sacrifice and work of self-denying love have lost their force. Enthusiasm wanes, the joy of service tires and soon faith itself weakens. Only a few remain in the joy of their first love.

Any artificial agitation of the waters, by the will or work of man, can never lead to anything. It must be an angel or messenger of God who comes to bring movement to the waters. Once such a movement has been exhausted, those who are blind or lame or paralysed must simply wait until another movement comes to bring anew the hope of healing.

(Jerusalem)

* * *

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

"LET HER BE COVERED"

A comment on
1 Cor. Chap. 2

"Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven . . . Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? . . . For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels"

(1 Cor. 11. 5, 13, 10).

The Apostle Paul was of course not referring to hats, which were not in use by women in his day. He was talking about the long veils, or mantles, with which Eastern women enshrouded themselves when in the open air or in any place of public resort. These veils completely covered the face and head with the exception of the eyes, and it is this complete concealment of the features to which Paul refers. There were two definite reasons for the prohibition, neither of which have any application in this twentieth century. It will be remembered that the Christian church was gaining a footing in a pagan world, and sought to show by the purer and holier lives of its adherents the power which resided in the faith of Jesus Christ. To this end the Apostles were careful to counsel the avoidance of any custom or practice which might bring reproach upon the body of believers.

It was usual for women devotees of paganism to throw off their veils and dishevel their hair when under the stress of strong emotion in their worship. This practice was sometimes carried to extreme lengths, and the woman would relapse into a trance, and exhibit all the symptoms of demon obsession. The damsel who brought much gain to her masters by soothsaying, and who, meeting Paul and Silas, called out: "*These men be the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation*" (Acts 16. 17) was one such example. It would be in the highest degree undesirable that any suspicion of such practices should rest upon the Christian assemblies, and hence Paul's instruction that the Christian women remain veiled. He said that to be unveiled was equivalent to being shorn or shaved, a reference to the fact that priestesses at the pagan altars usually had their heads shaven; the reputation of these priestesses was such that Paul found it necessary to dispel any impression that the Christians had similar priestesses associated with their worship. In the

background hovered the sinister forces of demonism, and it is this fact which explains Paul's allusion to the woman having "power" on her head "*because of the angels*". He was referring to the fallen angels, the "wicked spirits in high places" of Eph. 6. 12, "angels that sinned" of 2 Pet. 2. 4, whom the Lord himself recognised as demons. It was a Rabbinic belief that the wearing of the veil by a woman was a safeguard against evil spirits, who, as in the days of Genesis 6, still sought to ensnare "*those whom they chose*". And although Paul should not be understood as necessarily endorsing Rabbinic teaching, it is evident that he perceived a connection between the pagan religion and demoniac forces and would have no suspicion entertained by any that the Christians had any such association. The word rendered "power" is *exousia*, which means "authority"; Paul's meaning here seems to be that the wearing of the veil by the woman became a sign of her submission to the authority of Christ, and there should be no suspicion on the part of neighbours or strangers that she had any part or lot in the practices for which the pagan women were notorious. Paul's use of the word "power" to denote the veil reveals his familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures, for the Old Testament word for "veil" or "mantle" is *radid*, which comes from the idea of spreading out or prostrating on the ground, hence introducing the idea of submission. In the Old Testament, therefore, the wearing of the veil involved the thought of submission, the woman subject to the authority of her husband, or if unmarried, to her father or the menfolk of her house. In Paul's epistle, this thought is carried to a higher plane, and the veil is made a symbol of submission to Christ,—for woman stands on an equal footing with man "in Christ", where there is neither male nor female, bond or free, Jew nor Greek, but all are one in him.

It is obvious that these pagan considerations have not now applied for many centuries, and that St Paul's prohibitions in this chapter no longer have any force and should not be invoked as the basis of modern customs. Nevertheless, whilst rejoicing in the liberty which is ours as Christian believers in these things, we need to remember that the spirit of Paul's injunction still holds good. It was to

avoid the behaviour of Christian believers and their assemblies falling into disrepute that he, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, established the rule. In our own day we should regard this as still important, and if in some particular assembly the abandonment of a custom which has the sanctity of centuries would lead to misunderstanding and reproach it is our Christian privilege to maintain the tradition, not of necessity but that the faith

may not be lightly spoken of. That is not often the case nowadays; it is seventeen years since the then Archbishop of Canterbury ruled that the wearing of hats or head coverings in church need not be considered obligatory, but it may well be that an explanation of the true reasons for St Paul's words on the subject would lead some to feel easier in mind on the matter.

A PARABLE IN ACTION

It was a summer evening. Several friends sat watching two small boys busily engaged digging themselves a paddling pool at the edge of the sea. With youthful enthusiasm they excavated a shallow depression and banked it round with walls of sand; then came the task of making a channel to lead the waters of the incoming tide to their excavation. The work was at length finished, and with excited shouts the two youngsters splashed and paddled as the sea came rushing into their pool, a swirling, muddy stream. For a while their contentment was complete, but then with alarm one noticed that the rising tide was threatening their walls. The sand was giving way—there was danger of all their work being ruined; and so with tremendous energy they sought to repair the damage with fresh shovelfuls of sand. To no avail, the remorseless sea came on. Then, with the necessity for desperate measures becoming evident, they brought great stones, dug out of the beach, to reinforce the bulwarks. Still the waves battered down the defences, washing over the sandy rocks and leaving them clean and white, until at length, with cries of defeat, the two small boys abandoned their stronghold and made for the wider spaces of the open sea.

The watchers looked again, and now there was nothing to be seen of the fenced pool with its muddy water, but in its place a broad expanse of billowing waves sweeping ever forward and upward.

A parable in action! How many a time and oft have the angels looked down upon just such a scene as this. We who come to the feet of him to learn stand in awe before the limitless expanse of the sea of Divine Truth, and in our littleness feel driven to build ourselves a little enclosure where the revelation of Truth can be kept within bounds and the waters be calm and still; and in our inexperience we discern not and care not that those imprisoned waters cannot but be muddied

with some effects of human tradition and misconceptions inherited from the past. And perhaps it may well be that in such a placid and circumscribed place we are enabled as babes in Christ to learn to keep our balance in the water and become adapted to this strange new medium of life . . . It is when the onward sweep of "Truth now due" demands that the "traditions of men" be swept away and we enter into a "cleansed sanctuary" that fear comes in to say we have not confidence or strength to receive this Divine revelation; or love for the work of our hands proves stronger than our love for the Truth which it was built to serve. And then with impetuous haste there comes that frantic effort to build up the walls in order to keep out that very life-giving influence which they were first erected to admit and retain. Even as the small boys dug rocks from the sand to reinforce their structure so do some worthy souls resurrect the partial truths of past ages to buttress their already tottering defences, not realising that the light of Present Truth sweeps over and reveals those same teachings in nobler guise.

And it is all of no avail. As soon endeavour to emulate King Canute and command the tide to come no farther than to try and stem the power of Divine Truth. All our little castles, our mediums of service and organisations, can be only used in the service of God whilst they are acting as inlets for the waters of Truth.

The scope of the Divine Plan and depth of its teaching are, like the sea, immeasurable. We do well to build with our hands booths, temporary abiding places, where in quietness and fellowship we can learn of each other—but we must expect the pillar of fire to be lifted up ever and again from the Tabernacle, that we may proceed stage upon stage in our journey, ever through new experiences, that we may at last, appear before God in Zion.

NOTE ON ISA. 61. 4-6

"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. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." (Isa. 41. 4-6).

From Isaiah's 40th chapter onward the prophet develops the theme of what has been called the "suffering servant". The whole burden of those magnificent prophecies is that God is developing a people for his purpose of world conversion in the next Age. This people is accepted for its future work because of its utter and complete consecration to God and his service, thus becoming his "servant". It is qualified for that future work by its willing acceptance of hardship and suffering now, thus earning the title "suffering servant" although that precise expression does not occur in Isaiah. What is made very plain as one studies these chapters is that "Israel after the flesh", the natural descendants of Abraham, are to have an important place in this work of administering the new Kingdom and bringing Divine blessings to the nations, so that in some measure they may be regarded as part of the "servant", although in its primary sense the title belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described from this viewpoint in the celebrated 53rd chapter. The essential principle is that the people described in Isaiah 61 are wholly consecrated to God and qualified by reason of past suffering and hardship endured in his Name to take up the glorious work described in that chapter. That cannot be said either of the nation now gathering into Israel nor yet of any considerable party among them. They do not manifest one single element of the characteristics which must mark out the earthly Seed of Abraham, the holy people of God, in the Last Days. They are organised as one of the "kingdoms of this world", with civil administration, army, navy and air force, and everything else, modelled after the pattern of the world around them. As such, that nation as now organised would share in the ruin that will come upon all the kingdoms of the world when our Lord takes to himself his great

power and commences his reign.

What do present events indicate, then, in prophecy? Certainly they indicate that the land is being prepared in a physical sense for the coming of that people. The foretold prosperity is on the way and the territory is being reclaimed from the grasp of the nations and developed for the habitation of that holy people that shall eventually inherit it. Very possibly many of those now living there will experience a change of heart by reason of some great happening that we cannot as yet foresee, and Israel's blindness begin to be turned away. But the fact must be stressed that the people who will hail the coming of the Kingdom in that land, and who will be in control when the Word of the Lord begins to go forth from Jerusalem, will be composed of individuals prepared beforehand for their mission and will come to the scene ready for the work. Chief among them will be the "Ancient Worthies", the faithful prophets and other mighty men of God of past ages, restored from the grave to take control of affairs in the new world.

The verse "*Ye shall be called the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God*" need not be taken in too "theological" a sense. Isaiah was not necessarily thinking either of the Melchisedek or the Aaronic priesthoods when he spoke those words. His point was that the mission of the holy people in the Holy Land in the Millennial Age will be to act as priests to mankind—dispensers of Divine favour. Men will look upon them as their ministers, the ones to explain to them the things of God. The Aaronic Priesthood will have passed away for ever; that priesthood belonged to the Age of Sacrifice and in the Millennium sacrifice of that kind will find no place. The true sacrifice for sin, our Lord's death, will be fully efficacious for "every man that cometh into the world". The figure of the Melchisedek Priesthood is fulfilled in the rulership of Christ and his Church over the world, ruling as kings and priests, like Melchisedek himself in the days of Canaan. There is no Scriptural suggestion that the earthly people in the Holy Land are pictured in the symbol of the Melchisedek priesthood. But so far as mankind in general are concerned, they will be the visible representatives of that priesthood and men will acknowledge them as such.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 37, No. 4

JUNE, 1960

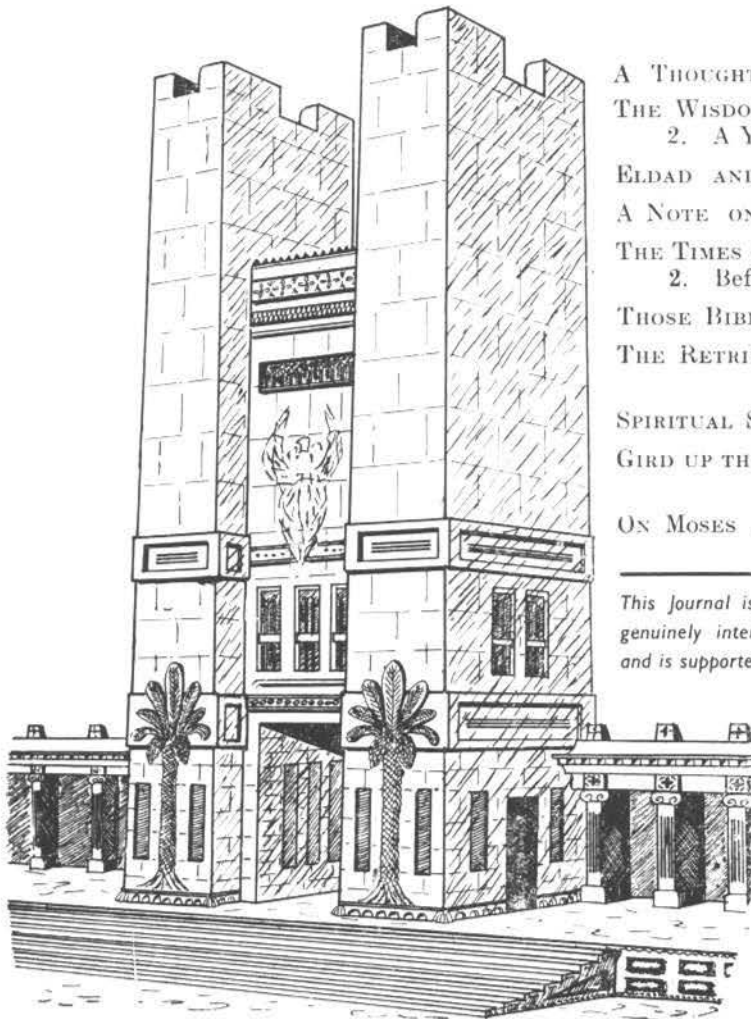
Published June 1st

Next issue July 15th

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*This Journal is sent free of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on request renewable annually
and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers*



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. 22. 1).

The daily Press tells us that modern medical research is tending more and more to the serious investigation of so-called "old wives' remedies", those preparations of herbs and roots which for so many centuries in human history played their part in the alleviation of pains and ills. For a long time now it has been the fashion to decry reliance upon the products of Nature when synthetic drugs can be so cheaply produced in the chemical laboratories of big manufacturing concerns. The underlying assumption has been, as in so many spheres of human achievement, that the material things of the earth were all very well when men were at an immature stage of development but now that we have so complete a knowledge of the structure of matter and the ability to produce chemical combinations and artificially made materials of almost any kind we wish, men can beat Nature at her own game and invent something better than Nature ever produced.

In all of which, of course, men are grievously wrong. Nature is not a blind force, a mere meaningless jumble of spontaneously existent atoms moving round each other and entering into purely chance combinations without rhyme or reason, plan or design. Modern man in his arrogance likes to think so but modern man is really a rather ignorant, and certainly puny, weak creature, puffed up by his own conceit, ambitious to ride to the stars yet incapable of prolonging his own conscious existence for more than the most infinitesimal fraction of time measured by the revolution of the smallest of those stars. When men despise Nature they despise God, for behind Nature stands God, and all the wonderful phenomena of plant life upon which the continuance of human life absolutely depends

has been designed and ordered by God.

In that much-to-be-desired order of things which is to be established on earth at the coming again of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ there will assuredly be a great reversal of thought. Under the benevolent but firm rule of Christ and his Church men will be caused to learn how God has provided for the needs of man to be met, and well met, by that which the earth brings forth. The great laboratory of Nature in which the sun and the rain, air and water, light and darkness, all play their parts will be shown capable of bringing forth not only food to sustain men in health but all that is necessary to restore to health that which has been ravaged by disease. It is not for nothing that the prophet Ezekiel, in his vision of the coming kingdom, sees a river of life flowing from the sanctuary and out to the Dead Sea, and, says he, *"the waters shall be healed"*. It is on the banks of that river of life that he sees the trees of life, bringing forth their fruit every month, fruit which he says *"shall be for meat"* (food) — *"and the leaf thereof for medicine"*. (Ezek. 47. 12). Men will realise then that the Divine way is best after all.

Summer visitors to the Torquay - Paignton district are invited to write or contact Bro. E. G. Roberts, 35a Cedar Road, Preston, Paignton, Devon, for details of a regular Bible discussion meeting which is held in Paignton.

Gone from us

Bro. A. Kirkwood (Glasgow)

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

2. A Young Man Speaks

With scarcely concealed impatience the younger man waited until his elders had finished speaking. The three of them, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, had spent a long time advancing their theories as to the reason for their friend Job's disastrous afflictions, but had succeeded in convincing neither Job nor themselves. "They had found no answer" says the narrative "yet had condemned Job" (32. 3). Elihu's indignation was kindled against them in consequence, but not against them only. His resentment was directed also to Job himself, because in his complaint he "justified himself rather than God" (32. 2). It is clear that Elihu was profoundly dissatisfied with the result—or perhaps, rather, lack of result,—of the discussions, and felt that he must put his own point of view before them even although, in that day and age, such intrusion by a young man upon the deliberations of the aged and mature would undoubtedly be considered the height of impertinence.

Elihu nevertheless observed the courtesies. "Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then was his wrath kindled" (32. 4. 5). He was indignant, finding that these men who by reason of age and experience could reasonably be expected to understand and express the relation of God and God's purposes to the immediate problem before them should prove woefully ignorant when put to the test. "I am young" he said "and ye are very old; wherefore" (as the Septuagint has it) "I was fearing to declare to you my own knowledge. I said 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'" (32. 6. 7). That was the young man's expectation; perhaps, for all we may know, this Elihu had sat at the feet of the older men for many years past, esteeming their instruction and precepts as wisdom indeed. Now in a moment he finds that mere accession of years does not of itself confer true wisdom, and length of days is not necessarily a qualification for dispensing the word of life to those who need it. There is something else, something far more vital, that does not depend necessarily upon the attainment of a goodly tale of years. "It is the spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, which giveth them understanding" (32. 8 Leiser). Here is a truth which is not fully

recognised in many quarters to-day. All too often it is assumed that the wisdom and understanding which God imparts to men relates exclusively to matters theological, to the elements of the good life. That is simply not true. Just as the life of man depends upon God, so does the whole of man's intellectual power and mental perception derive from God and can only be eternally sustained by the maintenance of a link with God. The wise men of to-day, exulting in the marvellously rapid increase in scientific achievement characteristic of this century, do not stop to reflect that the discovery and formulation of those physical and mechanical and electrical laws and principles upon which their achievements are based was the work of intellectual giants among men, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who themselves were for the most part sincere and avowed believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ. From Sir Isaac Newton onwards, these men pursued their work in the belief that they were working hand in hand with God, uncovering his secrets for the benefit of humanity. The impetus of those centuries may carry us forward a few more generations, increasingly without God, but the penalty will ultimately be paid. Already medical men are beginning to notice and remark that despite the apparently greater knowledge and ability of to-day, the level of average intelligence is beginning to fall. The average man is tending to get less brainy than his forebears suggest some observers.

So Elihu gives voice to the scathing rebuke which is in his heart. "Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged (necessarily) understand judgment" (32. 9). From the dawn of history the aged in years have arrogated to themselves the prerogatives and powers of rulership and direction, claiming that by virtue of their longer experience they are the best fitted to rule and direct; the younger in each generation have chafed and complained, impotent to alter matters until they in their turn, have behaved in precisely the same fashion toward the next generation following them. So it has been and is; so it will be, until the weak, vacillating rule of man gives place to the administration of our Lord Christ who will not only render to every man according to his deeds but will also give each man,

young or old, full scope for the useful employment of the ability and knowledge he possesses. But that lies still in the future; Elihu, more than three millenniums before our own time, is left still fulminating against the elderly men whose pretensions to wisdom and knowledge of God he had exposed for the hollow shams that they were.

So Elihu takes the situation into his own hands and demands their attention to him. *"Therefore I said, Harken to me; I also will shew mine opinion"* (32. 10). That opinion is extended over the next five chapters; it is evident that Elihu has thought long and earnestly over the problem of Job's adversity. Unlike the three friends, he is in no doubt as to the right answer. There is no pseudo-philosophical reasoning, no sententious discourse, no high-sounding speech, as with them. His words are straightforward and to the point, the utterances of a man who knows whereof he speaks and is not afraid to voice his knowledge. But before doing so he lashes the three older men with words which leave no room for doubt as to the contempt in which he holds their failure to achieve their object, that of satisfying Job with the answer to his problem. *"Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say"*—one can sense the bitter irony of his voice in that last phrase, eloquently defining the floundering of the would-be comforters as they desperately sought for a satisfactory exposition of the case from the stores of their own philosophies—*"yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words; (so that ye cannot say) we have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man"* (32. 11-13). There is the indictment; after all the portentous speeches and flowery language, extending as it does over some twenty seven chapters of the book, Elihu's pungent comment brands with failure the entire session. None had explained the mystery, none solved the problem, none satisfied Job. The position remained as it was at the beginning.

The answer was so simple, after all. Expressed in few words, it was, *"God thrusteth him down, not man"*. The source and meaning of all Job's adversity was to be found in the inscrutable purpose of God, and it was there that the three wise men had not thought to look. The expression *"lest ye should say"* in verse 13 is based on the Hebrew word *"pen"* which is difficult to translate lucidly but carries the meaning of an opposing alterna-

tive. Because the wise men had espoused a philosophy which was a false one, they were automatically precluded from discerning or expounding the true, without hesitation or equivocation. Elihu tells them that notwithstanding their superior age and claim to consequent wisdom, they simply did not know what they were talking about. So in verse 14 he makes plain that he has no intention of endorsing their standpoint or repeating any of the arguments they have used. *"He (Job) hath not engaged with me in debate; neither will I answer him with your reasonings"* (32. 14).

It is at this point the narrator passes from speaking in the third person to the first person. Up to verse 14 the writer records the speech of Elihu, referring to him in the third person *"Elihu had waited . . . Elihu saw . . . Elihu said 'I am young'"* etc. But now in verse 15 to 17 there is a change and the writer indicates that he himself is the Elihu of whom he speaks. It is this short passage which seems to mark Elihu himself as the writer of these chapters and probably the entire Book of Job. Having finished the record of his introductory speech, which runs from verse 6 to 14, he comments of the three older men *"they were amazed, they answered no more, they left off speaking"* (32.15). Astonished at his temerity, the three men abruptly broke off the discussion and, probably, looked at Elihu with some indignation. There must have been more than indignation though; something of the inward conviction that Elihu possessed, in consequence of his deeper knowledge of God, told them that here was a factor with which they had not reckoned. Here was a man who saw through their shallow reasoning and outworn platitudes and would brook nothing but a clear statement of truth based upon the revelation of the wisdom of God. Where the three had relied upon human intellect and worldly-wise reasoning this man looked for, and experienced, the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Like a far more sublime figure yet to come into the world, he spoke as one having authority, and these three who in that ancient world partook much of the character and outlook of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's day became suddenly conscious that one stood in their midst whom they had not previously known. They were suddenly silent, for in the presence of that burning sincerity of conviction they had nothing to say.

"When I had waited" says Elihu *"(for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no*

more) *I said, I also will show mine opinion. For I am full of discourse; the spirit in my bosom presseth me in*" (32. 16-18). That latter sentence is Rotherham's rendering. It expresses, so much more succinctly than the Authorised Version "*I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me*", the burning vehemence with which Elihu felt he must deliver his message. At all costs he must say those things which he felt God had given him to say and which nobody else seemed either able or willing to say. Like Jeremiah a few centuries later, "his word was a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay". Elihu felt like that; he must overthrow all the accepted customs of convention and decorum, outrage the respectability of his elders and cry defiance at all their philosophies, heedless alike of the effect upon them or the consequence to himself, if only he might unburden himself of the word which glowed within him like an imprisoned light. Many a modern evangelist has felt like that and many a modern evangelistic message has battered against surprised society with the same shattering impact.

The crudeness of verse 19 in the Authorised Version "*my belly is as wine which hath no vent*", a crudeness to the twentieth century but quite normal English when the Authorised Version was prepared four hundred years ago, is best softened by adopting Rotherham's translation "*Lo! my bosom is like wine not opened. Like new wineskins it will burst. I will speak, that I may freely breathe. I will open my lips and respond.*" (32. 19-20). Only by the delivery of his message could the young prophet feel at ease again. How he had chafed against the restraint imposed by his submission to listening to the debate; how experienced the frustration of knowing that his own knowledge of God told him better than these men knew, and yet they would not heed. There is no evidence, of course, that they ever did heed. The silence which fell upon the company when Elihu made his impassioned outburst at the start was apparently continued after he had finished, for there is no record of any reply or refutation on the part of the three. When Elihu has finished speaking it is the Almighty who intervenes to conclude the discussion. So Elihu was like any other young man who is filled with a consuming desire to put his elders right on matters in which he is certain they grievously err, but with the difference that whereas in many cases the

young man is himself inexperienced and immature, and his exhortation is characterised more by zeal than by knowledge, in this instance Elihu was solidly instructed by his deep pondering over the principles of God's government, and when he spoke it was truly the Holy Spirit speaking through him. The man who is truly God's man has no need to fear lack of wisdom or indiscretion in expression, for his words and demeanour will be guided by the Spirit.

One wonders if Jesus had this incident in mind when He referred to his own teachings as being like new wine which must be put into new bottles. The old wineskins, having been already well stretched, possessed no further elasticity and were therefore incapable of taking the new wine which, continuing to ferment to some degree, would increase the pressure inside until the wineskin ruptured. New wine, said Jesus, must be put into new bottles, so that the skin could stretch and accommodate itself to the increasing pressure and so both be preserved. Elihu felt the increasing pressure within him; the word had to come out, and come out it did. Only then did he feel relieved of that which pressed him down. Not for nothing did the Hebrew prophets refer to their messages as a "burden"—"the burden of Isaiah" "the burden of the word of the Lord for Israel" (Zech. 12. 1) and so on.

Elihu aims his final shaft. With the impassioned sincerity of the man who has but one ideal, to be a messenger and interpreter of God despite the consequences, he takes his stand against the world. "*Let me be partial to no man, and unto no son of earth give flattering titles. Surely I know not how to give flattering titles; how soon might my maker take me away*" (32. 21, 22). This again is Rotherham's rendering. It is as much of a prayer as a declamation, almost as though he prays God for strength to deliver his message without fear or partiality, caring nothing for the praise or blame of men, only that he might speak out loud the word God has given him to speak. He cares not for the opinion his hearers have of him or the attitude they manifest toward him, or presumably the treatment they might afterwards mete out to him. All of this is as nothing to him. He is God's prophet, an instrument in God's hand, and like Paul in later times, it is "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel". Overshadowing all he thinks and says and does is the consciousness of his responsibility to God and the power of God over his life. "*How soon*

might my Maker take me away" he says. That is the sublime thought with which he ends this introductory outburst. He has life and ability and a message to which that life and that ability must be devoted while as yet he has the opportunity. His life is in God's hands and in the inscrutable purposes of God he might be taken away at any moment; to Elihu very definitely it was "now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" and he meant to utter his message and discharge his commission there and then, though in the next instant the heavens fall about him.

Of such stuff are men of God made. In every generation there has risen up the solitary individual who sees a vision, and

without fear or favour, regardless of consequences, reveals what the Lord has spoken to him. It matters not that in any one generation the message spoken is suited to the needs of that generation and is made largely out of date by the circumstances of the next. The whole fact is that, as Whittier said, "*the eternal truth of God moves on*" and it is because of the faithful work of the Elihus of every age that the Church of God is purified of the outworn shibboleths of the past, renewing its vision of the future, and able to continue, as it must continue, to be the "light to the nations" which is its mission in the days of this present world.

(To be continued)

GATHERED GRAIN

In the earliest days of Christianity it was revealed there is no power which can do battle with the beast except the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which, in the eyes of a prophet of that time, seemed like a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. If in those first days, when the life of the Church appeared to hang so precariously in the balance, there could be traced clear signs of battle joined between the great beast and the spotless Lamb, surely now, in what may be the final hours of modern civilisation, it is not unreasonable to discern a like tremendous struggle. In the midst of such a conflict it would be rather foolish to try to make things a little better, bringing in here a little and there a little of the spirit of Christian charity. The struggle between the Lamb and the beast is one in which no quarter is asked and none is given; at such an hour nothing less than a complete surrender to the leadership of Christ can be of the slenderest service. Our halting obedience and our careful policies have undone us at the last and, if the Lord Christ can find it in his heart to make any use of us at all, it can now be only as we are ready to follow him whithersoever He may care to lead.

(Rev. Paul Gliddon, 1946)

* * *

Social work is no substitute for evangelism. Zechariah does not say that the Kingdom of God will have come when all the frying-pans are made of gold, or even when everyone in Jerusalem has a frying-pan of their own; but when all the existing pots and pans are dedicated to the Lord. What about our fountain pens and typewriters, the symbols of our business life; our pots and pans, the symbols of our home life; our books or musical instruments, the symbols of our intellectual gifts or

social attainments? Do these belong to him? Is Monday just as much the Lord's day for us, in the sense that it belongs to him, as Sunday? If it is true that social work is no substitute for evangelism, it is equally true that evangelism not backed up by honest Christian living is of little avail. The preaching of the Gospel by the life does not absolve us from the responsibility of witness by lip, but the two must go together.

(Brian Aldis, 1942)

* * *

For those who believe that the old foundations are unshaken still, and that the fabric built upon them will look down for ages upon the floating wreck of many a modern and boastful theory, it is difficult to see anything but infatuation in the destructive temperament which leads to the notion that to substitute a blind mechanism for the hand of God in the affairs of life is to enlarge the scope for remedial agency; that to dismiss the highest of all inspirations is to elevate the strain of human thought and life; and that each of us is to rejoice that our several units are to be disintegrated at death into 'countless millions of organisms'; for such, it seems, is the latest 'revelation' delivered from the fragile tripod of a modern Delphi. Assuredly, on the minds of those who believe, or else on the minds of those who after this fashion disbelieve, there lies some deep judicial darkness, a darkness that may be felt. While disbelief in the eyes of faith is a sore calamity, this kind of disbelief, which renounces and repudiates with more than satisfaction what is brightest and best in the inheritance of man, is astounding, and might be deemed incredible.

(Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, 1868-1894)

ELDAD AND MEDAD

A Reflection on
Num. 11. 27-29

Eldad and Medad had been slaves in Egypt. Born slaves of a nation of slaves, they hardly dared hope that deliverance would come in their own lifetime. Until Moses came their way. The name of Moses had been familiar for many years to all their friends and acquaintances in the slave village which was their home. He was a great man and lived at the King's Palace, and was reputedly the son of the King's daughter. Eldad and Medad knew better; it was whispered from mouth to mouth, when the Egyptian taskmasters were looking the other way, that Moses was in reality one of themselves. Some of their own kindred had seen and spoken with his father and mother. Miriam his sister, and Aaron his brother, were slaves like themselves. There was a reason, too, for Moses being at the King's Palace. He was learning all the wisdom of the Egyptians so that one day he could lead the slaves out of their bondage into a land where they could live as free men. Eldad and Medad, young men both, straightened their backs and their eyes glowed with pride and hope as they talked about that. They had been brought up by godly parents and although very few of their fellow-slaves believed in God or had any hope that He might one day deliver, Eldad and Medad had been well instructed in the ancient stories of their ancestors and they knew of God's promise to their forefather Abraham, that after many years in Egypt He would cause them to be delivered. There was no outward evidence that the time had yet come or was anywhere near, nevertheless there were days when they hoped, and talked with brighter eyes and fast-beating hearts.

Then came that bitter disappointment when Moses left the King's Palace and disappeared—none knew where. There was talk of some trouble; an Egyptian overseer had been killed and Moses was concerned in it; no one seemed to know much about the details but one thing was definite—Moses was no longer their hoped-for champion. Eldad and Medad conversed about it at times but for the most part they kept their thoughts to themselves, even yet hoping against hope that in some wonderful way God might remember them and fulfil his promise.

They had waited a long time—forty years since the disappearance of Moses and in all

that long period no sign that God either knew or cared. Eldad and Medad were no longer young men now; they had both passed their threescore years and began to find the daily tale of brickmaking strangely arduous, much more so than of yore. But there were compensations. To the little circle of slaves that, unlike the majority of their fellows, refused to worship the gods of Egypt but held fast to the dim traditions of Abraham and the promise Eldad and Medad had become pillars of strength. They still believed, strong in faith, and looked daily for the coming of the Deliverer. Somehow there was in them the workings of a Spirit, telling them that the time would not be much longer delayed. . . .

* * *

He came, with breathless haste, that young man, so zealous for the honour of his master and leader, the great Moses. From the centre of the camp of Israel he had run, across the level sand shimmering in the blinding glare of the noon-day sun, to where Moses stood at the gate of the Tabernacle. The seventy elders, grave, dignified sons of Israel, supremely conscious of their position of ministers to the Lord's people, made way somewhat reluctantly to give him access to the Leader. Joshua, taut and rigid in his soldier's attire, stepped forward a half pace, hand on sword, almost as if to challenge the newcomer's progress. Only Moses remained calm, unruffled.

The runner halted, panting. He was almost out of breath, but not so much that he could not turn and point, with not altogether steady finger, to the dense crowd of men and women which could be discerned, even at this distance, in the great space at the centre of the black goatskin tents. He spoke, hurriedly, his voice one in which subservience and indignation were strangely mingled, and as he spoke the enquiring eyes of the listening elders sought the face of Moses and remained fixed on him. "*Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp!*"

It was true! While the rest of the elders of Israel had gathered at the Tent of Meeting to hear the instructions of God at the mouth of Moses, the Divine Spirit had rested upon those two who had remained back there in the Camp, and now they were prophesying there among the people, telling them of the things

of God, without any mandate or permission from Moses the Leader. Disapproval showed itself on each countenance; resentment that these two men should apparently have appointed themselves to proclaim and teach the truth of God without waiting for or seeking an ordination from Moses the accepted leader of the people in things relating to their covenant with God. A whispering began, a shaking of heads; these two men were surely slighting the company of the elders, setting up their own judgment as against the judgment of the majority. This independence of thought and action ought to be stopped; the Lord surely had already shown that his favour was with the organised body of elders and the priesthood in whose care reposed the Tabernacle and all its ceremonies. What right had these two, owning responsibility to no influential company in Israel, subject to no kind of control from priest or prince, to assert for themselves the privilege of preaching to the people? Surely Moses would quickly put a stop to this incipient heresy. He had been in the mountain with God and had spoken with God and God had given him the Law which he had written with his own finger; Moses would surely very soon put these upstarts in their proper place. The elders turned towards him expectantly, still burning with indignation at this audacity. "Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp."

Joshua had sprung forward, his youthful features alive with fiery zeal. The hand grasping the sword twitched nervously. There was outraged loyalty and hot jealousy for his Leader's honour in his tone, as he cried impetuously "My Lord Moses, forbid them!"

The magnificent figure of Moses stood motionless, his clear eyes piercing into the distance straightly to those two dynamic forms in the middle of the crowd, moving from side to side and gesturing with hand and arm as they addressed the multitude. Long did he gaze, and slowly withdrew his eyes from viewing that distant scene to turn them upon those who now crowded around him so closely. He looked upon the runner, waiting before him, so secure in his knowledge of duty well done; upon the righteous elders, every movement of their robes betokening the quivering of outraged dignity; upon Joshua, standing there in wrathful indignation; and as he looked, the keen eyes suddenly softened, the stern lips, almost hidden by the shaggy beard, parted in a half smile, and in an indulgent, almost fatherly tone, he asked them "Enviest thou for my sake?" The strong hands

moved suddenly in a gesture of entreaty; the fine eyes looked upward with an expression of unutterable longing. "WOULD TO GOD" cried the great Prophet of Israel "WOULD TO GOD THAT ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM!"

* * *

More than three thousand years have passed since that memorable day. We have not learned the lesson yet. We, many of us, still circle around our favourite leader, our favourite organisation, our favourite avenue of service, and refuse to admit to ourselves the supreme truth that God, Who has all the resources of all his creation at his command, all the heart's devotion and life's endeavour of all who have given their lives to him, on which to call, is not limited to one means of expression or one channel of revelation in the world of men. The One Who "hath made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccl. 3. 11), Who has evolved the flowers and the trees, the insects and the birds, the mountains and the valleys, into a thousand different forms and has never made any one sunset exactly like another must surely be pleased to beautify his truth with the same variety of expression and diversity of ministration. The Apostle Paul tells us as much. Does he not say "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all . . . all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12. 4-11)? We must needs be positive in our own beliefs in Divine Truth and zealous in the discharge of the work that has been committed to our hands; that does not entitle us to assume that there can be no other acceptable service for our Lord nor that none who have not received their ordination to ministry through our own channel can share in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. No single well can give forth all the stored waters of the earth and no one river can carry all the rainfall from the heavens; neither can any one of us comprehend, far less expound and minister, more than the veriest fraction of the accumulated treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are gathered up within God's holy Word.

Let us then in our own service and ministry bear this great truth in mind and look with sympathetic brotherliness upon all who are serving with their talents our gracious Master.

Let us seek to find true fellowship wherever the Spirit of Christ is manifest and let us, in our own allegiance to the things we ourselves have received, try to help, rather than hinder, those who are labouring in a different corner of the vineyard. The disciples tried once to restrain some who "followed not with us", and Jesus reprov'd them. "*Forbid them not*" He said "*for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me*" (Mark 9. 38-40). When Peter, more concerned about the Lord's intentions for others than for himself, asked "Lord, what shall this man do?" he was told, very kindly but none the less plainly, to mind his own business and see to the execution of his own commission. "*Go thou and preach the gospel.*" So with us; we enter most into the spiritual presence of our Lord if we realise that He is conducting a

great work here on earth in this our day; that to each one of us is committed some very small and yet some very definite and very important part of that work; that we individually are not permitted to view the whole work in its entirety and indeed could not do so, but that our Master has all the threads in his own strong hands and will bring all together in one harmonious structure in his own due time. Meanwhile we do well to pray and labour for the increase of the number of those who will serve the Lord. "*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into the harvest.*" The need is great, there is room and yet room for all who will come and serve our Lord. Would to God, let this be our prayer, would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!

A NOTE ON EXOD. 19 4-6

"If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation."

That was the promise, something like three and a half millenniums ago, to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. The history of that people in after times gave small ground for supposing that they ever merited the title of a Holy Nation. According to the Apostle Paul there was only "a remnant" who truly obeyed God's voice and made any attempt to keep his covenant. (Rom. 11. 5; Heb. 1. 1) the rest being "blinded" and shut up together in unbelief. (Rom. 11. 32). He goes on to show that the opportunity once given to Israel was then taken away and offered to the Gentiles.

Yet the promises of God are sure and must be fulfilled. Paul does say that after the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, after the opportunity thus extended to the Gentiles has been taken up and those from among them who will turn to Christ have truly done so, there will be a turning away of Israel's blindness so that eventually "all Israel shall be saved" because "*there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" (Rom. 11. 26). It remains then to reconcile the apparent contradiction; shall it be Israel after the flesh or Israel after the Spirit that is to inherit the promise and be God's servant to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

The answer is that there are to be two phases of that "servant". It is very difficult—in fact it is impossible—rightly to understand the Divine Plan until we appreciate that God's way of bringing the blessings of life to all mankind is by means of the devoted—and suffering—service of both these classes, one heavenly and one earthly. The earthly class was developed first but it is the heavenly that occupies the superior plane and has the greater blessing. When the prospect of becoming a kingdom of priests and an holy nation was offered to Israel it was conditional. "*If ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant*". As a nation Israel failed to keep the condition, as a nation they failed therefore to attain the promise. But individuals within the nation did show themselves of the spirit that God desires to see in his servants and those individuals are called by a name which appears first in the words of the prophet Joel and was later elaborated by Isaiah and Micah—the "*remnant*". "*Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election (elect—choice or chosen) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded*" says Paul in Rom. 11. 7.

There were some of these in the days of the First Advent, and they accepted Christ and became Christians, heirs of the heavenly calling and had no further part nor lot in the earthly Israel. There were some of them in preceding generations before Christ came, and these are they that God can and will use in the resurrection. The most outstanding of these are the ones to whom we usually refer

as the "Ancient Worthies", or as more generally known among Christians to-day, the "Old Testament Saints". Paul's argument throughout Romans 11 is that there is such a "remnant" that will eventually be brought back actively into God's purposes and become the means of saving, first, their own unbelieving brethren and later, the believing of all mankind, acting all the time under the instructions and guidance of the then glorified Church. It is obvious that those of Israel who rejected the covenant and perished in their unbelief are no more fitted for use in the Kingdom than are Gentiles who in this Gospel Age have turned away from the High Calling and *disdained to follow the "Narrow Way"*. It should be clear therefore that Israel as a nation comes back in the resurrection on just the same footing as the rest of mankind, candidates for restitution. Just as the Church in heaven will be composed of the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of this Gospel Age, so the new nation on earth which is to commence the Millennial missionary work will consist, at least in the main, of the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of the Jewish Age.

The first work of this restored "remnant" will be the conversion and reconciliation to God of their own unbelieving brethren; that therefore is the first work of the Kingdom. That is implied by Paul's words "they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in"; "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved". This may well indicate that there will be a large scale conversion of Israel in the Holy Land before the full end of the present Age. This would result in a missionary nation composed

of men and women of faith, tested and proved by the stress of Armageddon and "Jacob's Trouble", ready for the work of the Kingdom immediately that Kingdom is established in power and announced to all mankind. "If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world" (in the death of Christ) "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (resurrection). The raising of all men from death depends upon and waits for the reconciliation of at least a part of Israel, and this seems to demand a prior resurrection, or, perhaps more accurately, the resurrection of Jews before Gentiles when once the "general resurrection" has commenced.

It is not quite right to say that Israel lost the right to their Divine destiny and that it was inherited by the Christian Church, for there are two separate destinies here and each is achieved in due time. Israel at Sinai was not promised a spiritual salvation and the Church at Pentecost was not offered an earthly salvation. Israel as a nation was offered the opportunity of becoming a Kingdom of Priests on earth but Israel as a nation lost that opportunity; individual Israelites won it and they will eventually form the nation of destiny. The Gentile world was offered a similar, but this time a spiritual, kingdom and again the opportunity was embraced and won only by individuals; they and they alone will be the spiritual Royal Priesthood. Both earthly and heavenly phases of that royal priesthood, holy nation, chosen people, will represent the consummation of God's work in the Jewish and Gospel Ages, selecting training and preparing the means that He is to use for the reconciliation of men to himself in the third Age, the Millennial Age.

Bro. F. A. ESSLER—Itinerary

| | | |
|------|-------|--------------------------|
| June | 2 | Atherstone |
| | 4-5 | Leicester Convention |
| | 6-10 | Downham Market |
| | 11 | Lutterworth |
| | 12 | Blaby, Leicester |
| | 13-17 | Aylesbury, Oxford, Luton |
| | 18-19 | Lincoln |
| | 20 | Sheffield |
| | 22 | Warrington |
| | 23 | Manchester |
| | 24 | Southport |
| | 25 | Wallasey |
| | 26 | Bury |
| | 27 | Shotton |
| | 28 | Latchford |

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|------|-------|-------------------|
| June | 29 | Accrington |
| | 30 | Bootle |
| July | 2-3 | Glasgow |
| | 4 | Perth |
| | 5 | Dundee |
| | 6-9 | Montrose |
| | 10 | Belfast |
| | 11-15 | Londonderry |
| | 17 | Cardiff |
| | 24 | Windsor |
| | 26-27 | Greenford |
| | 28-29 | Welling |
| | 31, 1 | London Convention |

A Convention is being arranged at Cardiff on Sept. 10-11 next. Details from Bro. J. A. Jones, 95 Heathwood Road, Cardiff.

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

A Study in
Divine Purposes

2. Before the Deluge

The times of man's ignorance commenced very shortly after the Fall. The Scriptures are very brief in their account of those early days in human history, but even in their brevity there is a great deal of solid information, and the most important characteristic of that age, man's rapid descent into sin and degradation, is clearly shown. To such an extent had that downward course affected all mankind that by the time of the Flood, something in the region of two thousand years after the Fall, it was recorded that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually". The original mental and moral image and likeness of God that had been impressed upon the first human beings at the time of their creation had been almost entirely lost, and with that the knowledge of God had departed. Notwithstanding the near-perfect physique and mighty intellectual powers of the men of the antediluvian age, had God not intervened at the time of the Flood the human race would have very rapidly passed into extinction. What seems at first sight to have been a merciless massacre of helpless creatures and a renunciation of the Divine purpose in creation was in fact the only way by which human life could be preserved on earth. The old wicked generation was removed and a righteous remnant preserved alive whereby a fresh start might be made.

Mankind did not come to this sad pass all at once. The process of degradation and sinking into ignorance was a gradual one. There is really plenty of evidence in the early part of Genesis that the first few generations after the Fall consisted in the main of godly men and that God was worshipped in sincerity. Whilst the defection of Cain evidently led his posterity into sinful ways more rapidly than was the case with the other sons of Adam, even Cain showed some reverence for God at the time of punishment for his crime. And it is important to notice that upon his banishment Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt . . . in the east of Eden". (Gen. 4. 16). It would appear that the first human family still dwelt in the "presence" of God, that is to say, with some definite acknowledgment of his rule in their lives; that although sin had entered and begun its defiling and corrupting work in their hearts and minds and bodies, yet, despite the expul-

sion from Eden and the measure of separation from God that accompanied the Fall, the first human family continued in acknowledgment of God and in a form of worship before him. So much is implied at least by the fact that in the fulness of time both Cain and Abel brought of the fruit of their labours an offering to the Lord, an acknowledgment that all they had achieved in life was due to him and his bounty. These early progenitors of our race were the ones who preserved and handed down the story of Eden and immediately subsequent events; the faithfulness with which its dark shadows as well as its lighter views have been recorded is evidence that those who passed them on and wrote them down were men who despite their sin-stricken condition had reverence for God and a desire to serve him still. At the birth of Seth—which must have been after Cain's departure—Eve showed by her words her personal faith in God, and still later on, in the time of Enos the son of Seth, "*men*" says the Chronicler "*began to call themselves by the name of the Lord*" (Gen. 4. 26 margin) as though only then had apostasy from God become sufficiently clearly marked that it became necessary for pious men to proclaim themselves God-worshippers, as distinct from the remaining, godless portion of the human race.

The Cainite Lamech had two wives, an indication that in his day, that of the sixth generation, knowledge of the original principles behind the institution of marriage was being lost and those principles violated. At much about the same time Enoch, of the line of Seth, was especially noted for being a God-fearing man. "*Enoch walked with God . . . and God took him*". At that point the veil drops over the Scripture record and nothing more is revealed about the course of human history until the time of the fallen angels and of the Flood, events which terminated Time One of the "Times of Ignorance".

Scripture gives no indication of the date of this angelic rebellion unless it be the rather vague "hundred and twenty years" of Gen. 6. 3. Jewish tradition placed the event in the days of Jared, which might easily have been a thousand years before the Deluge. It is difficult to believe that the corrupting influence of the rebellious angels upon mankind could have continued so long. Jewish tradition

also represents men as crying to heaven for release from the oppression of the angels, and sending to Enoch, in the mountain retreat to which he had been translated by God, imploring him to intercede with God on their behalf. But there can be no certainty as to the length of their disastrous rule.

We leave the first thousand years of human history, then, with the impression that men had retained much of the original knowledge of God imparted to their first parents in the garden, and that despite the entrance of sin and death there was still the endeavour to worship and serve God. Much of this may have been due to the personal influence of the first pair. There is evidence that both Adam and Eve retained their faith in God for many centuries at least after the Fall, and in all probability did all they could to implant that faith in their children. There are only two recorded utterances of Eve, but they are both significant. At the birth of Cain, her first-born, she said (Gen. 4. 1) "*I have acquired a man from the Lord*". There was acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God in that word, and, perhaps, an expression of faith in the original promise that God would one day, by means of the seed of the woman, undo the harm that had been caused by her sin. And this conclusion is intensified when, many years later, a hundred and thirty if the Hebrew chronology be followed or two hundred and thirty if the Septuagint, Seth was born and Eve said "*God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*". (Gen. 4. 25). And here is an interesting thing. Seth was born *after* the murder of Abel. But Eve must have had other sons, not named in the Scripture, between Abel and Seth, for Cain's fear was that "every one that findeth me will slay me". There must have been a goodly number born of Adam and Eve and grown to maturity during that first hundred years, before the birth of Seth. How then did Eve come to know that it was of *Seth* that the promised seed should come five or six thousand years later, as we know the case proved to be? Is it possible that Eve was in fact the first of the prophets; that she, first of all, prophesied concerning Christ? And if that is so, must she not have been a godly woman, in the midst of her fallen condition looking forward to the day when God should arise to make an end of sin?

But when, a millennium later, the curtain rises on the stage already set for the great Flood, the world presents a very different picture. God could find only one righteous

family in all that generation, and all other flesh had corrupted its way upon earth. Men were ten or twenty generations away from Eden and the Fall; Adam and Eve had been dead for nearly—perhaps more than—a thousand years; and the story of Enoch, the righteous man who disappeared from amongst men because God had taken him, was already seven hundred years old. To the men of the Deluge generation, Adam was as far back as would be, to us, our own legendary King Arthur with his knights of the Round Table; Enoch as remote as William the Conqueror, and the stories of those early days as we now have them in Genesis, and the knowledge and worship of God, was preserved only in the family of Noah. Ignorance had come to the full, men had built up a world replete with all that life could offer in the way of indulgence and self-gratification—we have no means of knowing to what high degree of civilisation they had attained but with their powerful physique and mighty intellects, not so impaired by millenniums of progressive degeneration as are ours, it must have been considerable—and God was ruled out of all their thoughts and all their actions. It was a time of steady descent into every kind of sin with no sign of release, and, because even the very idea of repentance had not appeared, no possibility of release. Peter tells us (2 Pet. 2. 5) that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness"; it is evident that his preaching was quite unheeded. The Flood came and took them all away, without knowledge, without hope, steeped in their sins, lost for ever . . . unless God had devised a way of reclamation in some coming day. It is in confidence that God has in fact devised such a Plan that we see a world of meaning in Paul's words to the men of Athens.

(To be continued)

A ship's compass points true to the magnetic pole, but there are certain influences in the environment of the ship that may upset the compass, so there are smaller instruments made to deal with them. These local forces do no harm if they all pull in the direction of the pole. So, if the influence which we exert on each other is towards our Lord we shall draw each other up to Him. He must centre our minds on things above and in due time we shall appear with Him in glory. We have a fellowship that is nearer, dearer, truer and closer than a brother, our fellowship is with the Father and His Son. Can we wish for anything better?

THOSE BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

A Comment on the difficulties
confronting historians

It is a common occurrence to come across a writer of the "modern scholarship" school who makes much of occasional discrepancies in parallel Bible narratives relating to the same person or incident. Such writers rarely make allowance for that divergence in the minor details of a story that does take place in transmission and repetition. Many examples could be cited. Here is an up-to-date one which was recently observed.

About one hundred years ago Henry Rawlinson scaled the Behistun rock in Western Persia and copied the famous inscription, an act which paved the way to modern understanding of the Babylonian and Assyrian languages. The story of his exploit has been repeated in numerous publications since that time. One would think that in this modern age, with its permanent record of books in libraries and the like, there would be no dispute as to the details of such a happening; but no

"*The Stones Cry Out*" published twenty years or so ago, designates him Sir Henry Rawlinson and says he climbed the rock in 1833.

The *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* (1902) does not agree. It gives his title as Major-General Rawlinson and that his exploit was in 1837—adding that the inscription is 300 feet up the precipice from ground level.

"*Wonders of the Past*" makes him plain Henry Rawlinson, a young soldier of 25 years of age; agrees with Harmsworth in fixing the date as 1837, but makes the height 100 feet above ground.

The British Museum *Handbook on Babylonian Antiquities*, which should be authoritative, ranks the explorer as Major General and places the inscription at 100 feet high, but advances the date ten years to 1847.

"*Thrilling Voices of the Past*," about twenty-five years ago, plays for safety by making the hero Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Bart., the height of the inscription 500 feet, avoiding the issue of the date by giving it as during the period of the climber's life, 1810-1895.

"*Stones Crying Out*," a much earlier book, goes the whole hog by promoting the intrepid Henry to a full Colonel, the date to 1857, and the climb accomplished to a height of 500 feet not only by himself but by his troops as well!

Here are six accounts of a well-known incident in the life of a well-known man within three generations of our own time; and of these six published accounts no two agree. It is not reasonable to accept the fact that ancient writers experienced the same difficulties when framing their narratives? The marvel is that in a book such as the Bible, embracing so wide a variety of subjects and coming from the pens of so many different writers, the stories are so wonderfully consistent. There has, without any doubt, been a wonderful overruling of the Holy Spirit in so co-ordinating the work of those various writers that the Word of God has been to all generations, and is to us today, what it claims for itself, sufficient "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work".

(For the benefit of those who may now wish to know which of the above statements is the true one, it appears that Sir Henry Rawlinson, born in 1810, died 1895, was British Consul at Baghdad 1844, Minister to Persia 1859, Member of Parliament 1865, President Royal Geographical Society 1871. In his earlier days he was in the service of the East India Company and in 1835 was posted at Kermanshah, near Behistun. He first scaled the rock, and copied the *Persian* inscription only, in 1837. He went again and copied the *Median* version in 1844 and the *Babylonian* version in 1847. In this latter year he published his translation of the Persian version copied ten years previously. The complete translation of all three versions was not published until several years later. The inscription can be seen, in photographs of the cliff which are to be found in various publications, to be evidently not more than 100 feet from the ground. Some of the additional military titles found in some accounts are probably due to confusion with another Henry Rawlinson, born 1864 died 1925, professional soldier, who held commands in the South African war and the European war of 1914, and in 1920 became Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India.

The difficulties confronting the writer of history, even when dealing with events within a century of his own time, are immense. Some of the Bible historians had to deal with events much more remote from their own days. That fact should be borne in mind by would-be critics of Scriptural narratives).

THE RETRIBUTIVE CHARACTER OF DIVINE LAW

A Doctrinal Essay

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."—(Gal. 6. 7).

The Apostle Paul, addressing the Church, announces a principle of Divine Law which is applicable not only to the Church, but to all men everywhere. Hosea expresses the same truth, saying that if we sow to the wind we shall reap the whirlwind. (Hos. 8. 7). Solomon says if we sow iniquity, we reap vanity. (Prov. 22. 8). St. Paul says if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly, and if we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully. (2 Cor. 9. 6). This is equally true, whether we sow wild oats or good wheat.

It is in view of the harvest of the world's sowing, that we are informed that *"the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Prov. 15. 3); that *"God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Eccl. 12. 14); and that *"there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known"*; that *"whatsoever has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light"*; and that *"spoken in the ear, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops (openly)"*. (Luke 12. 2, 3). And again we read *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"*. (Rom. 12. 19).

But when will this reckoning time come? Now, as saith the Prophet Malachi (3. 15), men *"call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered"*. With the Psalmist (Psa. 94. 3, 4) we inquire, *"Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph, and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?"* The Apostle Paul answers that the Lord *"hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained"*—Jesus Christ. (Acts 17. 31). And *"then"*, says the Prophet Malachi to those who fear the Lord and whom He hath chosen as his jewels, *"shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not"*. (Mal. 3. 18).

But take heed. The same Prophet raises a suggestive question, which all would do well to ponder. He asks, *"Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. . . . And I will come near*

to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, and the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts". (Mal. 3. 2, 5).

The reference of these Scriptures is to the great judgment of the Day of the Lord—the day of trouble with which this Gospel Dispensation is to close—variously described as a day *"of wrath"*, *"of vengeance"*, *"of recompense"*, and as a *"time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation"*.

But while this great judgment will have to do with the world in general—with nations and corporations and all civil, social and religious organisations of men; and while it will touch the cases of all the individuals living at that time, we naturally inquire where retributive justice came, or is to come in, in dealing with all the generations of the past?

Our Lord answers the question when He says, *"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection by judgment"* (John 5. 28, 29; see R.V. and Diaglott). The whole Messianic Age is thus set forth as a *"day"* of reckoning, of trial, of judgment. In that searching judgment there will be a reckoning, even for every pernicious word (Matt. 12. 36); and by submitting and learning obedience under those judgments, the masses of mankind who *will to obey* are to be gradually raised up to perfection of being, as well as of knowledge.

But here a philosophic and important question arises as to the extent to which the *justification* of a sinner, through faith in the precious blood of Christ, and his full consecration to do the Father's will, may intercept the course of the Law, that a man must reap what he has sown. In other words, Will his new relationship to God save him from a miserable harvest of a former sowing of wild oats?

In one sense it will. The just penalty for all sin is *death*—the severest penalty that can be inflicted. And from this penalty his justifica-

tion freely exonerates him. His past iniquities and sins will no more rise up in judgment against him, demanding their just penalty—death; for “*blessed are they whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute (reckon) sin*”. (Rom. 4. 8). All who by faith in Christ's sacrifice for sin and by consecration of heart and life to God's service come under the Robe of Christ's Righteousness are thus blessed. The iniquity, or legal sentence, of such is passed altogether or forgiven; and while the results of their sins, the harvest of their misdeeds sown before they came to a realisation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or to an appreciation of God's mercy in Christ, are still painfully with them, yet they are assured that these are *covered*. They are further assured that God's provision for them is that they may some day be *healed*, or cured, of the weakness brought on them through sin and now reckoned as “covered” from the Divine eye.

These sins, or actual defects, are to be *blotted out* or *wiped out* when the Times of Restitution shall arrive, at the Second Advent of Christ. (Acts 3. 19). The result of this blotting or wiping out of sin will be new bodies, new beings—free from sin, from imperfection and every consequence and evidence of sin. With the Church, this cleansing and blotting out process begins with the present life, and will be completed by a share in the First Resurrection.

The world's cleansing time will be the entire Messianic Age, or “Day of Judgment”, when those who then shall accept Christ and the New Covenant may gradually be cleansed and healed. At the close of that Age, if faithful to their opportunities, they may be presented blameless and perfect before God, needing no further healing or cleansing, but each being, as was Adam, a human image of the Divine Creator—a perfect man.

The Scriptures, as well as observation, assure us that our *justification* before God does not remove at once and without our co-operation all the results of previous transgression. The *harvest* is like in kind to the *sowing*; but the penitent and forgiven one has the promise of grace to help in the battle with his inherited as well as cultivated weaknesses. and so we read (1 John 1. 9), “*God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*”. It is in this *cleansing process* which follows justification that the consecrated believer must of necessity suffer from some of the baneful results of a

past course of sin—reap the reward of his former sowing. While the Lord will be very merciful in dealing with him, nevertheless, as a Wise Physician, He will not spare the necessary experience to eradicate the deep-seated evil propensities of long cultivation in the past.

Here the retributive character of Divine Law is especially noteworthy. Men often make a distinction between the law of *nature* and the *moral law*, calling the one *natural* and the other *Divine*. But the fixed principles of both are of *Divine origin*, and accomplish the *Divine will* in their *operation*. Both operate on the basis of retributive justice. All Divine Law, whether of nature or of morals, is but the operation of certain fixed principles of righteousness, having for their object the peace and happiness of all intelligent creatures under its jurisdiction. Obedience to this Law brings its reward of happiness, while any interference with it incurs its certain penalty.

If you hold your hand *before* the fire, it will be warmed, and your comfort and happiness will be thus ministered to; if you put your hand *into* the fire, it will be burned, and you will suffer pain. Thus the law of nature, which was designed to comfort and bless us, is also prepared to punish us if we *violate its proper use*. And not only so, but it is prepared to grade its penalties in proportion to the aggravation of the offence against it.

If you put your hand into the fire for a very short time, it will be *scorched*; persist a little longer, and it will be *blistered*; and a little longer still, and it will be *consumed*. Applied properly to the cooking of your food, fire will reward you with a savoury meal; but applied improperly, it may render the food undesirable or unfit for use. Water, also one of our greatest blessings, becomes, if the law of nature be disregarded, an agent of death and destruction. So throughout the laws of nature we might trace retribution.

In the realm of moral law, the case is the same. If you violate the principles of righteousness, you deface the image of God in your being. Impure thoughts write in clearly legible signs upon the countenance the dark lines of a bad character; while pure, just and noble thoughts illuminate the countenance and render the pure character transparent to beholders. And the operations of moral law are as sure and reliable as are those of natural law.

The fact that the retribution—the reward or the penalty—is often delayed is frequently

presumed upon by the foolish, who vainly think they can sow their crop of wild oats and never realise their harvest. Both individuals and nations have long presumed to act upon this hazardous and vain hypothesis; and well indeed would it be if they would even now hearken to the Apostle's warning: "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*".

The operations of this law are most manifest upon classes and nations—first, because their prominence gives them world-wide publicity; and second, because their judgment must of necessity be in the present life, since beyond the grave the present order of society will have no existence. A glance at the pages of history reveals the fact that all the nations of the past have reaped a bitter harvest, and amid harrowing scenes have breathed their last. They had their rising, their struggling periods, and their flourishing eras; and then "pride and fulness of bread" caused them to rest in fancied security, and to sink in the scale of morals, until their decline was followed by their fall. They reaped what they had sown.

Just now, all the nations of the world are fast approaching the most terrible crises of their national existences. In a great time of unparalleled trouble, which is even now imminent, they are about to reap what they have sown. They have sown to the wind the seeds of selfishness, and now they are about to reap the whirlwind of terror and the destruction of all law and order, and of national and social organisation.

The operation of this law in individual cases, though not so prominent, is none the less sure. Every thought harboured, every disposition exercised and cultivated, becomes a component part of individual character; and this character, which is more or less tender in early life, becomes fixed in the course of years. If the cultivation of character has been along the lines of righteousness and truth, according to the light possessed—whether of conscience merely, or of revelation also—the ripened fruit of an established, right-preferring and benevolent character is a blessed harvest in comparison with others, the reverse. If the cultivation has been along the lines of depravity, self-gratification and degradation, the terrible fruits are a fearful penalty.

Even though such a one be freely forgiven upon repentance and faith in the Redeemer—fully absolved from legal condemnation through Christ, who bore its Divinely pronounced penalty—death—nevertheless, the

fruits of his sowing are manifest in his character. Evil propensities must all be rooted out and a proper character formed at a considerable cost of painful, but valuable experience; for God is just, not only to forgive us our sins, but also to *cleanse us* from all unrighteousness. The eradicating of these evil dispositions, propensities and appetites, deep-rooted and long-cultivated, will cause great disturbances of the soil in which they have grown; and pain as well as joy will attend their removal, and their replacement with the graces of the Spirit.

The Lord, as a wise Physician, will be as merciful and tender with his patient as the necessities of the case will permit. All will be shown their need of his aid, but no patient will be treated further except with his own consent and co-operation. With the Church this treatment takes place in the present life and is a treatment of the will rather than of the body; for although the body will be greatly helped by the treatment, it is not the Great Physician's purpose to cure these marred bodies, but to give to this class perfect spiritual bodies in the resurrection. In these the consecrated will is being transformed and renewed to perfect harmony with the will of God, the mind of Christ. The "overcomers", the true Church, passing through difficulties and cleansing and trials of faith and afflictions now, and being approved of the Lord, will not come into the judgment trial of the next Age (1 Cor. 11. 32); but, with the Redeemer, their Lord, will be Kings and Priests of God, who shall judge the world and recompense to them good or evil, impartially, under the terms of the New Covenant. (1 Cor. 6. 2).

Another feature of retribution upon the world during their trial will be the publicity which will then be given to the reaping and to the deeds of the past. Our Lord has so intimated, saying, "*There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known*". (Matt. 10. 26; Luke 12. 2, 3). This also will come about in a natural way, when in that day all that are in their graves shall come forth. Then the murderer and his victim, the debtor and his creditor, the thief and his dupe, the defamer and the defamed, must face each other and the facts, which, with even the secret motives, will be discerned. The terms of their reconciliation to each other and to the Judge will be equitable, and will be known to all.

Past history will have proclaimed to the world the character of many a Nero; but additionally, there will be the necessity of

seeing the former victims of their ignoble cruelty, and facing them in the light of a new and healthy public sentiment, which will manifest crime in all its horrid deformity. Truly such "shall awake to shame and lasting (Heb. *olam*) contempt", even in their own eyes; for as the renewed manhood of the race begins to assert itself, they will the more fully realise the depth of the pit of degradation whence they were digged; and even the generous forgiveness of formerly injured and outraged fellow men will be a great humiliation. It will truly be, as the Scriptures suggest, the heaping of coals of fire on their heads (Prov. 25. 21, 22; Rom. 12. 20), so great will be their shame and confusion. (Jer. 20. 11).

It should be borne in mind, too, that the only standard of judgment in public sentiment at that time will be *character*. None of the *false standards*—wealth, noble birth, or aristocracy of power, by which men are often measured now, and under which cloaks the wicked often take shelter—will then avail anything; for under the New Dispensation men will come forth shorn of all their former possessions. They will have neither wealth nor power; and in the light of that Age, heredity will be nothing whereof to boast.

The same conditions which will thus expose the evils of the past life and thus, in the natural operations of moral law, bring about a measure of retribution to the evil-doers, will also make manifest the good deeds of the righteous, so that even the slightest favours done for others, deeds which at the time blessed the characters of the doers, will then be recognised and appreciated.

In this view of the matter it can be seen how, in a perfectly natural way, a man must reap the harvest of his sowing of wild oats, even though he has been freely forgiven, absolved from guilt and its penalty, death, and legally justified through faith in Christ. He will reap it, not only in the difficulties he will have piled up for himself in the hardening of his own character, making the steps up to perfection more painful and slow, and requiring severer discipline, but also in the just disapproval, or indignation of a righteous public sentiment in that Day of Judgment.

Such will be the natural and inevitable results of present wrong-doing. One consolation, however, will be the fact that this humiliation, in some measure, at least, will be *shared by all*; "for there is none righteous (none perfect), no, not one" (Rom. 3. 10); and

all must pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others". It will indeed be a time for melting and mellowing all hearts. Thus the Lord will take away the stony heart and give to all who under the New Covenant shall become *his people* a heart of flesh, according to his promise. (Ezek. 36. 22-28).

In some instances a portion of the reaping is experienced in the present life; and in some it will be in the life to come, as the Apostle intimates in 1 Tim. 5. 24, 25. So also good works are sometimes manifest now, and rightly appreciated and rewarded. But whether now or hereafter, our Lord's assurance is that even the gift of a cup of cold water to one of his disciples, *because* he is his disciple, shall have its reward (Matt. 10. 40-42); so minute will be the Lord's cognisance of character and works, and his rewards therefor; and they will be none the less his rewards because accomplished in the natural operation of retributive laws.

A murderer may be one who has little or no knowledge of God, whose hereditary disadvantages may be great and whose environment may be very unfavourable. He may meet with a just recompense for his crime at the hands of his fellow men, and yet in due time come forth from his grave *unto* (the privileges and opportunities of) a resurrection (lifting up—all the way *up*) by judgment (trial, discipline). If obedient, he may reach the height of perfection and life everlasting although the sins of his past life may have made mountains of difficulties in his character for him to clamber over during that Judgment Age.

On the other hand, one may be a moral man, who has "tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the Age to come" and who has been made a partaker of the spirit of holiness through faith in Christ; yet he may permit envy and strife to take possession of his heart; and he may *hate his brother*, though he outwardly violates no law and is esteemed among men. Such a one is a murderer at heart (1 John 3. 15), though restrained from outward violence by respect for the opinions of others or by fear of the consequences. Who will deny that such a one, because of the light enjoyed, may have even greater difficulties to overcome in the reformation of his character than the grosser, but ignorant, murderer? To whom much is given in the way of knowledge opportunity, of him much will be required. (Luke 12. 48). That judgment will be according to knowledge and ability to do right—a

just recompense of reward.

When Christ came, He "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel". (2 Tim. 1. 10). Since then, proportionately as men have come directly or indirectly in contact with that Gospel, their responsibility has been increased, whether they accepted or rejected, opposed or ignored it. As it is written, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil". (John 3. 19).

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

The spiritual individuality of every person can be preserved only by his personally receiving and digesting the truths of the Divine Word. This is why our Lord and the Apostles so earnestly exhorted the early Church to search the Scriptures—to make the Truth their own personally, to know and understand its meaning. Thus the Apostle points out that one of the important purposes of an individual understanding of the Truth is that the Lord's people might be given such a comprehension of the Divine will and the principles of righteousness that, having their senses exercised, they might discern both good and evil, and thus experience sanctification by the Truth. The noble Bereans were especially commended because of such personal search of the Scriptures daily to prove whether or not those things were true. Nor does our study of the Truth and our standing fast in the faith signify that we are to contend and stand for innumerable and fanciful interpretations of the parables, symbols, and types of the Bible, which were never designed of the Lord as a basis for the Christian's faith and practice, but were arranged merely as a pictorial method of confirming truths and facts already known and understood. Types should never be used to teach doctrines, but to illustrate those already taught in plain terms. It is on the clear, plain fundamentals of the Christian's faith that all should unite. But upon the theories and speculative views of the figurative expressions of the Scriptures there can be no satisfactory union. Our motto rather should be, on essentials, unity, on non-essentials, liberty and charity.

In the light of the foregoing we find that accordingly our Lord and the Apostles sought to put the Church on guard against the yielding up of their right and liberty to see the Truth for themselves, and to settle every

This is our judgment day; and the judgment of the world will proceed upon the same general principles. They will first be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and will then be judged according to their use or abuse of that knowledge after they receive it, as worthy or unworthy of life. The good and bad actions of their life, previous to their knowledge of the Truth, will enter into this judgment only in the natural order of the retributive character of moral Law.

matter of doctrine and faith each for himself. Hence, the forceful warnings of the New Testament against submitting to any self-appointed leaders, or any person or combination of persons who might attempt to lord it over God's heritage and to take away the liberty of the sheep.

God's people are to be just as much on guard to-day in reference to these matters as at any time in the Church's history. Any organisation of professing brethren, therefore, making the claim that they are God's exclusive channel through which truth must flow to the rest of the Church, that they are the custodians of the sheep, that they have been set over the Church as its special authorities and spiritual guides and that they are to decide all matters of faith and service, such organisation of brethren is surely to be regarded with apprehension; for such boastful claims, such assumption of authority over the sheep is entirely without any Scriptural warrant. Such leaders would only mislead and enslave the sheep. Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and a stranger will they not follow".

From "Herald of Christ's Kingdom"

We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults. We would have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeaseth us, and yet we will not have our own desires denied us. We will have others kept under strict laws, but in no sort will ourselves be restrained. And thus it appeareth how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

Thomas A' Kempis

GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND

An
Exhortation

Though written so long ago, the above words of exhortation lose none of their force to us. They were penned for the instruction of the whole Church, down to the end of the Age. The introductory, "Wherefore," refers us to the glorious hope of our high calling, and of the necessarily severe measures required to fit us for our exalted inheritance, as mentioned in the preceding verses. Peter would have us appreciate what it is to be called with such a high calling—to an inheritance incorruptable and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. (Verse 4). He would have us know that, if faithful, we are to be made even "partakers of the Divine nature", and that we are to be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, of all things. (2 Pet. 1. 4).

As the spirit of God draws our hearts into closer fellowship and sympathy with the Divine mind, the value of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is more and more fully realised, until there glows in our hearts the same holy enthusiasm that so filled the hearts of the apostles. And only when our hearts are thus warmed and our minds thus awakened, are we prepared to understand the Apostle's "Wherefore", upon the inspiring comprehension of which depends our ability to heed the earnest exhortation which follows.

If our hearts are not duly inspired with this hope—if we have begun to esteem it lightly, or to forget it, or to think of it as an idle tale—to heed the counsel of Peter, here given, will be impossible. If, therefore, we realise that a spiritual lethargy has to any extent been creeping over us, imperceptibly benumbing our spiritual senses, so that the truth is losing its inspiring power upon us, our first duty is to betake ourselves to prayer and to communion with God and His Word, that its sanctifying power may be realised.

"Wherefore," then, you that discern the prize of your high calling, and who are endeavouring to press along towards the mark. "gird up the loins of your mind"—as in the illustration; strengthen and fortify your purposes and efforts; renew your determination; redouble your diligence; cast aside the weights of unnecessary worldly cares; increase your zeal; and, as the Apostle Paul also urges, run with patience the race set before

you. Run, not like one who is merely beating the air, but like one who has a purpose in view, and who, in desperate earnest, is *determined* to make his calling and election sure. (Heb. 12. 1; 1 Cor. 9. 26).

Having thus "girded up the loins of your mind" for a long, steady and determined effort, he further counsels,—*"Be sober:"* do not allow yourself to become excited and under the spur of excitement to exhaust all your spiritual vitality in a very short time, and then to suffer a relapse into coldness or discouragement; but thoughtfully to consider and prepare for a long and patient endurance of all the discipline and trial of faith and patience necessary to prove an overcomer and worthy of the blessed reward promised "to him that overcometh". The race before us is not one to be run by fits and starts, but by *"patient continuance"* in well doing. Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

Such a sober view of the situation fortifies the mind against discouragement, and enables us, as the Apostle suggests, to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ". Such a sober view keeps Reason on the throne of our minds. And Reason says, the Divine call to joint-heirship with Christ clearly implies eligibility to the exalted office; the Divine promise clearly ensures Divine grace to enable us to fulfil the conditions; the Divine provision for my justification, by faith in the precious blood of Christ, releases me from condemnation to death; and the righteousness of Christ, imputed to me by faith, fully supplements all my weaknesses, so that before God I stand



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 38, No. 5

JULY/AUGUST, 1960

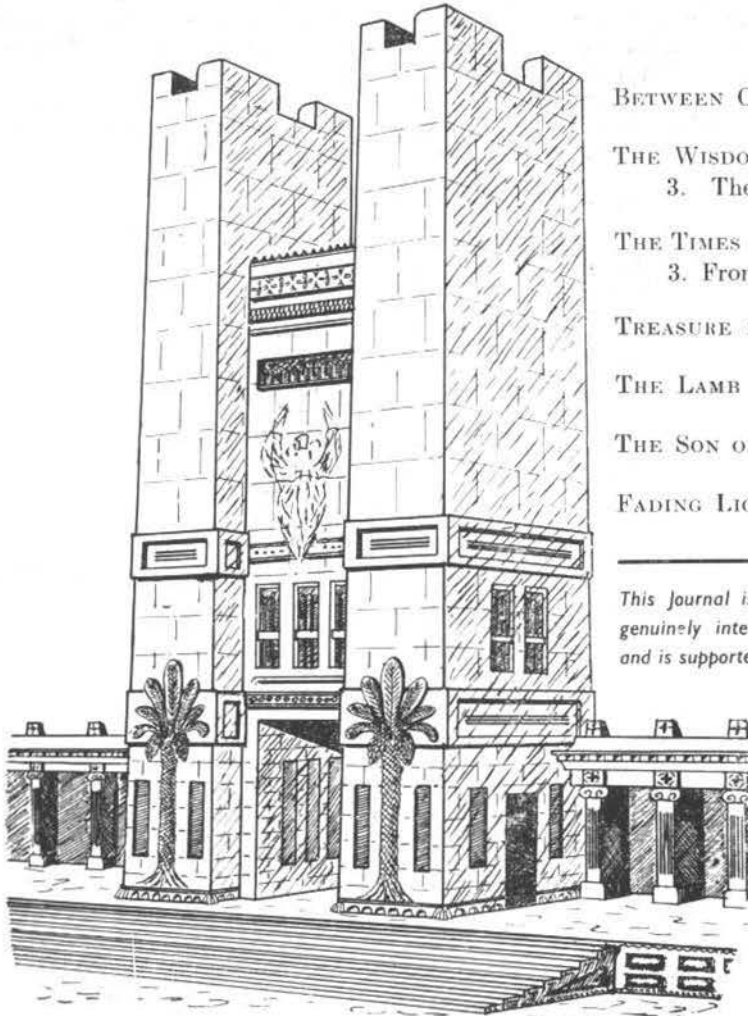
Published July 15th

Next issue September 1st

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*This Journal is sent free of charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on request renewable annually
and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers*



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The annual "Maran-Atha" Conference at Rosehill, Reading, is well known to many of our readers. The sponsors have issued the programme for this year and copies with any other information desired may be obtained from the Conference secretary, F. B. Quennell, The Glen, Knutsford Old Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Lancs., (Phone Grappenhall 315). Rosehill Conference Centre is situated at Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Reading, and is served by No. 7 bus from Reading station. The Conference will last for one week, Saturday, August 13 to Saturday, August 20, and all "believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the imminence of his promised return" are warmly welcome. Consideration of this theme is the primary purpose of the Conference. Among the many guest speakers, F. A. Essler of U.S.A. will speak on Sunday evening, and Dr. Fredk Tatford on Friday afternoon.

* * *

The series "The Tragedy of Samson" which recently appeared in the "Monthly" has been reprinted and is available now as a paper cover booklet of 50 pages at 1/6 post free (2d stamps acceptable) from the "Monthly" office. This series traces the life and experiences of the Israelitish hero through his many failures and weaknesses to his ultimate triumph after the hand of God had been laid upon him; it does not gloss over his sins as have so many treatises on his life but shows how a man subject for most of his life to the weaknesses of the flesh can at last become the subject of true conversion by the saving power of God.

* * *

Friends in overseas countries sometimes express surprise upon receiving a "renewal slip" several weeks after they have sent in a donation to the BSM funds, not realising the explanation. Even in these days of "many running to and fro" it takes several weeks for a letter sent by surface mail to reach this country from U.S.A. and Canada, and even

longer from Australia. It also takes a similar time for the "Monthly" to arrive overseas. In consequence a renewal slip may be inserted after a gift has been sent but before it has been received here, and thus reach the giver still later. The renewal slip states that it shall be ignored if a gift has recently been sent and we trust all readers will realise the difficulty and rest content accordingly.

Bro. F. A. Essler Appointments

| | | |
|-------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| July | 17 | Cardiff |
| | 24 | Windsor |
| | 26-27 | Greenford |
| | 28 | Welling |
| | 30 | Aldersbrook |
| | 31, 1 | London Convention |
| Aug. | 2 | West Wickham |
| | 4-6 | Maidstone |
| | 7 | Central London |
| | 9-12 | Ipswich |
| | 13-20 | Reading Conference (Maranatha) |
| | 21 | Dewsbury |
| | 27-28 | Lymm |
| Sept. | 4 | Coventry |
| | 10-11 | Portsmouth |
| | 17-18 | Yeovil |
| | 19-21 | Brixham |
| | 22-23 | Bristol |
| | 24 | Stroud |
| | 25 | Rugby |
| Oct. | 2 | Forest Gate |

Gone from us

Sis. G. Brooke (Bury)
Bro. W. T. Dronsfield (Manchester)
Sis. R. Melling (Bury)
Sis. R. Scott (Leigh)
Sis. M. H. Scragg (Manchester)

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

3. The Supremacy of God

Elihu's first thesis is the inerrancy of Divine Wisdom. Because God is all-wise, nothing to which he sets his hand can possibly go wrong. If to the untutored mind of man it seems that some things are in fact grievously wrong, the explanation is not that God has erred, not even that God is unjust, but that man is unable to perceive the full extent of the Divine activity, unable to see the end which God has in view and toward which He is working. In this understanding of the matter Elihu is passionately sincere and grounded upon a basis of firm conviction. "My words" he says "shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly" (33. v 3), "Out of my straightforward heart come my sayings" is how Leeser translates. There is no boasting here, no egotism. These are the words of a man who knows, and who knows that he knows, and is not afraid to speak of what he knows. There is a reflection of this in words of James the half-brother of Jesus "who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew . . . his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3. 13). There is an old saying, said to have been coined by the ancient Chinese, which runs "He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; shun him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a child; teach him. He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep; wake him. He who knows, and knows that he knows, is a wise man; follow him." Elihu knew, and he knew that he knew; that is why his words, preserved to our own time, still constitute a wonderful exposition of that wisdom from above which is the Christian's guide through life.

Now he comes right down to the fundamental basis of all things with which mankind has to do, "The Spirit of God hath made me" he declares "and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (33. v 4). The entire theological system of Elihu stands upon this basis and he knows no other. If he lived in our day he would have no time at all for the modern theory of evolution from protoplasm; the language he employs shows that he takes his stand on the literal acceptance of the first story in the Bible "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. v.7). There is a striking

exactitude about his choice of terms. "Spirit" in verse 4 is "*ruach*" which word when used in connection with God defines the dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit, which is the expression of God in the active exertion of his power as in creation ("*the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*") whereas "breath" is "*neshamah*", the life-giving influence which is manifested in the breathing of living creatures. David had the same idea in the 104th Psalm when he said, speaking of the animal creation "*thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*" (Psa. 104. 29. 30). In this text both "breath" and "spirit" are *ruach*, this because the breath is that of the creature, not of the Almighty, and *ruach* is used in its mundane sense of "wind". But in both cases, as so consistently throughout the Scriptures, the breath and life of man are indissolubly linked and both entirely dependent upon God who is at one and the same time the Source and Sustainer of life. All life emanates from him and without him no life can continue. So Solomon says (Eccl. 12. 7) speaking of human death "*then shall the dust return to earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*". Later on in his discourse Elihu is to show that this is the basis and assurance of life after death; man can only attain that after-life by means of a resurrection from the dead, but the fact that the spirit has returned to God who gave it is an assurance that it is in safe keeping and in the resurrection will be "clothed upon" with a body suited to its exalted resurrection state (see 1 Cor. 15. 35-54 and 2. Cor. 5. 1-4).

The first verse of chapter 33 makes plain that Elihu's words are addressed directly to Job himself—"Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken unto my words" (33. 1). Now he requests, politely yet firmly, that Job shall put himself in a position to refute Elihu's philosophy, if he can: "If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, and stand up" (33. 5). Lest this attitude should seem in Job's eyes to indicate a claim to superiority, the young man immediately hastens to voice his realisation that he and Job stand together on an equal level before God. "Behold, I am in the same relation

as thyself toward God. I myself also am cut out of the clay" (33. 6 Leeser). This is the true expression of what in other connections has been called the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Despite his personal consciousness of the possession of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual enlightenment which comes with that possession, and the magnitude of his mission as a messenger of God, Elihu insists that he is but a man as are other men, created by God to be a co-citizen and joint-heir of the earth and all that is in it. Peter had the same insistence when Cornelius would have worshipped him as a representative of God, preventing him with the words "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10. 26). And the revealing angel in the Book of Revelation, even though of a higher state of existence than the human, forbade the prostration of the saintly John, saying to him "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets . . ." (Rev. 22. 9). Many a mediæval—and modern—ecclesiastical dignitary could take a lesson from this far-sighted Arab of so many centuries ago, and reflect that the honour and privilege of being a Christian minister is given not for personal aggrandisement or because God would elevate the recipient to a position of lordship over God's heritage, to use St. Peter's expression in 1. Pet. 5. 3, but rather that he might serve his fellows in things pertaining to God. "I am among you as he that serveth" said Jesus. So Elihu is at pains to insist that any effect of his words must be credited to the content of his message and to its Divine Author, not to any personal impressiveness or power of his own, for he was only an ordinary man among men. "My terror" says he "shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee" (33. 7). From the purely natural, everyday point of view, there was nothing in Elihu of which to take notice. Only in his message, he insists, is he to be heeded.

Now comes the first accusation. Job is to be confronted with his own words and by his own words he is to be judged. "Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying . . ." (33. 8). The following words are those of Job, culled from his speeches during the long discussions which preceded Elihu's intervention, and which the young man has remembered that he might use them in his refutation. "I am clean without transgression" says Job "I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he

counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths". (33. 9-11). This is a pretty sweeping claim for a man to make, and a rather serious charge of unjust dealing to lay against God. Even the evident sincerity of Job in making such a statement does not excuse it. He really ought to know better than to claim complete innocence and in the same breath charge God with unjust dealing because he has entered into a share of the evils which admittedly afflict all mankind. But Job is not the only one who has been guilty of this lapse. Who amongst us has not at some time or another come across someone who has been faced with some personal disaster and has demanded to know "why has God done this to me?" A loved one is stricken with grave illness or the victim of a tragic accident. "Why did God let it happen? She never did anyone any harm? The people down the street are regular blackguards and they get off scot free and everything goes alright for them. It isn't fair." Of course it isn't fair. The incidence of sin and evil comes upon all men indiscriminately; the sins of one have their effects upon another. The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, as said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel when he was faced with a similar plaint in his own day. And the reason is fundamental; the human race is a unity and in this marvellous terrestrial creation which God has designed for man's happiness and well-being it is and must always be true that no man liveth unto himself. (Rom. 14. 7). That is why the sin of Adam has affected his entire posterity, why it is that in Adam all die. But it is also gloriously true that in Christ all men can be made alive, that by faith in Christ and acceptance of Christ to the extent of complete dedication of life to Christ, the righteousness of Christ can become the basis on which any man and every man, "whosoever will" (Rev. 22. 17) can become part of that unity which is brought back into full harmony with God in the Messianic Age and ushered into those never-ending Ages of glory which God has prepared for those who will eschew sin and take their appointed place in God's perfect and sinless creation.

But Job was in no mood to philosophise to this extent. At this moment he was angry and embittered with the anger and bitterness of the self-righteous man who feels that God has let him down. Job knew well enough that the words of his so-called "comforters" were empty and hollow; he knew God sufficiently

well to realise that nothing they had suggested came as yet anywhere near the root of the problem. He was hardly prepared at this stage to listen with the necessary patience to the younger man Elihu and in any case he had no basis as yet for any confidence that Elihu could do any better than the others. He knew only that he had served God to the best of his ability throughout a long and honourable life and God had rewarded him with complete and utter disaster, and he was morose and resentful. "*I am pure without transgression, I am quite clean, and there is no iniquity in me*" is the eloquent manner in which Leeser translates his plea. Yet God had regarded him as an enemy, putting his feet in the stocks—medieval English readers would recognise the force of that allusion better than their fellows of to-day, but is an accurate rendering of the ancient punishment concerned—and watching all his paths so that he could not get away. In the intensity of Job's mental stress and sense of injustice he was hardly prepared to listen to reason.

The younger man's calm yet firm reply sets the standard he will maintain. "*Behold, in this thou art not just*" he says. "*I will answer thee; for God is far greater than a mortal*" (33. 12 Leeser). Here is the first principle to which all must give assent. God, who is the great First Cause and Creator of all things; God, who is the source and sustainer of all life, wherever and in whatever form it appears; God, who exists in eternity, and who was before anything that is made was made, is so self-evidently greater than man and of such infinitely surpassing wisdom and

knowledge that no man can ever presume to criticise or question his actions. Whatever God does, that thing must be right. The wisdom of God may not at any time be questioned. "*Wherefore against him hast thou contended, for with none of his reasons will he respond*" (33. 13 Rotherham). It is true that "the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3. 7) but that is because the prophets are men dedicated to his service and fit receptacles for his Holy Spirit, men who have completely submerged their own wills into the will of God whom they serve. The Holy Spirit can find no entry into a heart that is trusting in its own reasoning and questions the ways of God when they lead into places not capable of understanding by human knowledge. There must always be a definite place for faith in the life of any man who would serve God, and at this stage in his life Job had found no such place. He did find such a place later on, at the end of the story. So Elihu had to lay down as a preliminary maxim the unpleasant truth that Job could not expect God to come down and state his reasons. Job must first of all concede that whatever God was doing was right and good, and would prove to be such in the end, because it could not possibly be otherwise if it came from God. And to illustrate that principle Elihu proceeds to show how Divine Wisdom is manifested in the operation of his Plan for the redemption of man from the curse of sin and death.

(To be continued)

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

3. From the Deluge to the Exodus

A Study in
Divine Purposes

It was after the Flood that men began to reason in their minds, as Paul did before Felix, of "*righteousness, temperance and judgment to come*" (Acts 24. 25) but their reasoning was crude and immature. There was still no idea of the nature of sin, and no understanding of repentance. Men were making efforts to regulate their lives in an orderly fashion and to establish some standard of justice and right dealing—that much is evident from the records and laws that have come down to us from their times—but there was no realisation at all, outside the very narrow circle of those who did know and worship God, that only by means of a full knowledge of God and a full acceptance of

his ways would their problems be solved and their hopes fulfilled. It is not surprising; even in our own day, five thousand years later, the majority of men have made little progress in that direction.

From the time of God's covenant with Noah, immediately after the Flood, to the call of Abraham, a thousand years after, there is no record of the Divine dealings with man, no indication that any man, even of the line of the chosen "seed" through Shem, was specially notable for his faith and piety. The only occurrences that are noted in all that period are the building of the Tower of Babel and the city building exploits of Nimrod (Gen. 11 and Gen. 10). There is nothing here to afford

any idea of the extent to which men had progressed in their knowledge of God. The story of the great Tower certainly indicates a degeneration in the other direction. And the statement of Joshua in his parting charge to the children of Israel (Josh. 24. 2) is significant. He declares that Abraham's ancestors, down to Terah his father, served *other gods*. Laban, grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor, possessed and worshipped teraphim—images of household deities—so that very evidently the uprightness of Noah and his sons had been lost in the intervening generations and perhaps was only recovered in Abraham.

Although the Bible says very little about this period there is a tremendous store of written records now in the world's museums which were made during this time and from these it is possible to form a very fair idea of the state of men's minds in those days. So far as the ancestors of Abraham, and their fellows, in Ur of the Chaldees and the neighbouring cities in the south country were concerned, the records show them to have been a deeply religious people, but their devotion was not inspired by love or by reverence; it was inspired by fear. Their mythology embraced a great number of gods and goddesses but the incentive to sacrifice and worship was the propitiation of those deities that their anger and wrath might be averted. It was almost as if men realised instinctively that they were in a condition of enmity with God and must find some way of reconciliation with him, but did not know the way. Dim recollections of a happier past lie embedded in the Chaldeans' religion and in their folklore and poetry. They wrote and sang of a time when there was no evil on earth and all men dwelt in happiness. They spoke of a Tree of Life and of Water of Life, and in one of their oldest poems, the "*Epic of Gilgamesh*", the hero goes through many harrowing adventures in order to find the Plant of Life, only to have it dashed from his fingers by a serpent in the moment of success. The laws of Hammurabi, a king who lived just before the time of Abraham, give evidence of a sincere attempt to administer the realm along lines of justice and right doing, so much so that his "Code" is studied and quoted by men of law even to-day. The people told each other of Oannes, the mysterious being who had come up out of the sea to teach them all the arts of civilisation and the ways of life—a very evident tradition of Noah, who was in fact the author of all that they had and knew. But there was a glimmering of light in those dark

minds; some of the hymns to the gods breathe the spirit of repentance and supplication, and in the Gilgamesh Epic the hero is told by the immortal being who had, long before, escaped the Great Flood (Noah) that "so long as brethren quarrel and so long as there is hatred in the land, so long will death come to every man". There was at least that realisation in the minds of a people who had nothing but a few dim and distorted recollections of a nobler past to guide them in such search for truth as they were disposed to undertake.

In the land of Canaan, a thousand miles from Ur of the Chaldees, there lingered in the days of Abraham another worship, that of *El Elyon*, the "Most High God". That worship continued until the days of Joshua and the entrance of Israel into the land, but by then, judging from the written records that have been discovered, it had become hopelessly corrupt. Perhaps in earlier days, long before Abraham, it did represent a tolerably pure and true remembrance of the faith that was in Noah. There was no doubt that the "Most High God" was the same as the God of Shem and of Noah and of Enoch. The Scriptures give one significant glimpse of this worship that was general throughout Canaan for many centuries. When Abraham returned from the defeat of the invading Chedorlaomer and his army (Gen. 14) there met him outside Salem (Jerusalem) Melchizedek, the "Priest of the Most High God". Abraham bowed down before him, acknowledging his authority, and gave him tithes of the spoils. Would Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, thus do obeisance before this man unless he recognised him to be a servant of the true God, of his own God? Assuredly not. It is clear that Abraham knew the "Most High God" of Canaan to be the same who had called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and promised him this land as an inheritance.

Melchizedek was a Priest-king, a King of the land as well as its Priest. That is not only declared in both the Old and the New Testaments, it is also confirmed by records discovered by archaeologists. Documentary tablets now exist showing that a line of Priest-kings calling themselves "Priests of the Most High God" and claiming to hold their position by decree of the Most High God, and to be independent of any earthly rulers, ruled in Jerusalem for many centuries right up to the time that the Israelites crossed Jordan. The last of those Priest-kings was Adoni-Zedek, who was slain by Joshua (Josh. 10). By that time the system of worship of which he was

the head had become corrupt and idolatrous; there was no true knowledge of God in Canaan. The Priest-kings had long since given a form of allegiance to Egypt, and the life of the Canaanites was such that God, in his wisdom, decreed that they be blotted out from under heaven. Once again had the light failed; once again had it been abundantly demonstrated that man, even with the advantage of a reasonably clear knowledge of God and his ways at the start, is unable by his own unaided strength in his fallen and sinful condition to maintain that standing before God. The men of Canaan, in those early days when they worshipped the Most High God, failed and fell because they needed a Redeemer, and the due time for the Redeemer was not yet come, and without that Redeemer their knowledge and their piety availed them nothing. Abraham in his day may have found—must have found—much in their worship and much in the ministry of their priest-king Melchizedek with which to sympathise. Joshua, six centuries later, found nothing, nothing but a system of superstition and idolatry with which the worship of Israel's God had nothing in common, and he swept it all away.

But God had called Abraham. Despite the prevailing ignorance and darkness there was a new light in the world. For the first time in human history there was definite outward evidence that God was moving to the fulfilment of his promise and the execution of his purposes. God had called Abraham, and the world now saw a new thing, a fully consecrated man, his life devoted to the Divine service, being led and used as the first of many instruments and agents in the work that is to culminate, at last, in the overthrow of sin and the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to God.

There is no hint in the Bible of any such thing as consecration or dedication to God's purpose and service before Abraham. He was the first, but after him there has never been a time when God has been without his consecrated servants in the earth. The work begun in Abraham has progressed ever since without remission or interruption. And with every fresh development in the outworking plan of God the light of knowledge and understanding grew brighter. In Abraham the downward course of ignorance was checked. From then, although men were still in the Times of Ignorance, they had at least begun the long upward climb which led to Pentecost.

Abraham was an educated citizen of Ur, a city-state which occupied a high place in the scale of world civilisation. Obedient to the

Divine call, he went to Canaan, a land whose cities were as elaborate and whose peoples were as civilised as those of the land from which he had come. Scorning the life of a town-dweller, he adopted the simple pastoral mode of living, that he might the better follow God. He knew God as *El Shaddai*—God the Almighty—and that simple fact shows that he was already in advance of the Canaanites, who in their worship of *El Elyon*—the Most High God—did not realise the all-power of God as did Abraham. Perhaps this was the starting place of Abraham's faith, that God is not only the Most High, remote, detached from the affairs of ordinary men, but is also All-Powerful, his might stretching unto and bending toward earth that He might do all his good pleasure. The Sumerians and the Canaanites limited the power of God; to them He, like themselves, had often to suffer the onslaughts of evil forces without being able effectively to repulse or destroy them. Abraham knew better; God was all-powerful and had the whole fate and destiny of all mankind at his own pleasure. Whatever He purposed, that He could most surely perform, for He was *El Shaddai*—God Almighty. Abraham's faith was built on that understanding.

Thus it came about that at the end of the times of the patriarchs, when Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, had been laid to rest, the world was ready for the next great revelation of God's character and Plan. The great power of God was now understood, the inflexibility of his purpose and the inviolability of his oath. A dim outline of things to come could begin to be discerned; a future day when the faithful would inherit the land and God's favour be with them for evermore. How it could come about did not as yet appear; the consciousness of sin and the necessity for a Redeemer from sin had hardly as yet dawned; but there was at least a hope in God of a resurrection from the dead and a means to regain, at the last, the happy state that had been lost so many long ages ago in Adam.

At the time of the Fall knowledge of God was confined to one pair. At the Flood it was preserved in a family. Now at the time of Israel's bondage and coming deliverance it was spread amongst a nation. At the next great stage it was destined to be proclaimed abroad among all nations. Now, God looked down from heaven, and God heard the groaning of his people in Egypt and knew that it was time to act. So God called Moses.

(To be continued)

TREASURE IN HEAVEN

An
Exhortation

"Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." (Matt. 6. 19-21).

This laying up of treasure is for a purpose. It is not just an idle storing up of something that is valuable and is not to be touched or used again. It is not a mere amassing of wealth for the sake of possessing wealth, or for the self-satisfaction that misers feel in the knowledge of their riches. There is no place in heaven where goods may be stored up for possible use in a future "rainy day", neither are there any strong-rooms devoted to the custody of possessions not at once required by the owner but the benefit or use of which he will not allow to others. Everything in Heaven is live, virile, dynamic, and neither idle beings nor idle forces can be found in all its wide realm. Whatsoever therefore is laid up in Heaven is serving God's ever-working purpose even in the time of its laying-up.

Neither is the laying up of treasure in heaven merely a kind of insurance whereby a seat in the realms of celestial bliss is guaranteed the depositor when at length he must depart this life. There are politicians, business men and others who realise that for various reasons a day will come when they must flee the country of their residence and end their lives in a foreign land. In order to make preparation for the event they take care to invest their money in the land of their choice, and acquire the title to property there, so that when at length they land on its shores they will have the wherewithal to live and eat. "Salting it away," the process is called, in the expressive language of our times. But if anyone should think that God will sit on the throne of his holiness accepting the offerings of his people for no other purpose than that, he must needs think again. The Most High is not so short of resources, nor yet so niggardly, that He will not make abundant provision for the future lives and activities of those whom He eventually receives into the glory of his presence. Jesus has already gone to prepare places for his disciples in the heavenly mansions. And what God will have ready for the entrants into heaven will far

transcend anything that we weak, puny mortals could hope to "lay up" for ourselves by way of fruit of our own efforts. *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."* (1. Cor. 2-9).

We who are Christ's have given our lives to him for purposes of training. Christians today are in training for a great future work, the work of reconciling the world to God. It is not going to be an easy work: the habits of sin and the effects of sin have become deeply ingrained in the human character, and even although men and women will rise from the dead at the commencement of the Millennium with new and perfect bodies, their minds and characters, carried over and reproduced from the old life, will still be imperfect and need regeneration. That work will not be done as it were miraculously, at the wave of a magic wand or in obedience to some potent word from the Almighty. Had it been so, the story of sin and death need never have been enacted and the Fall would not have occurred. Men and women in the next age will need to be converted and induced to accept Christ, so becoming reconciled to God, just as truly as is the case in this Age. And they will need in their endeavours to obtain human perfection the assistance and guidance of those who know and understand the difficulties in the way because they themselves have faced the same difficulties and found the way to overcome them. It is the ability thus to be "merciful and faithful priests", "ministers of reconciliation", in that Age, that constitutes the "treasure in heaven" which we are bidden to lay up in full confidence that it will not fail us when the time for its use has come.

Knowledge — experience — character — ability; these are the things which we shall never lose, once we have acquired them. They will all be laid up in the memory and power of the Father, and when the call comes, and we divest ourselves of this earthly frame and appear before him in all the glory of the spiritual body, we shall receive all these things back in full measure, and go out from the Divine presence fully equipped for saving the world. But not unless we have gained them first and so entrusted them to the Divine keeping!

In this there is a place for all, and none

need feel discouraged or doubtful because another appears to have greater ability, deeper strength of character, wider experience, or more accurate knowledge. The same variety which characterises God's earthly creation must be manifest in his spiritual creation also, and just as now, in the flesh there are "differences of administration, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12. 5) so it will be then. Each one of the glorified New Creation will assume quite happily and willingly the place that God has marked out, working in harmonious co-operation with his fellows in the ministry, knowing that it is of the Father, who doeth all things well. The restricted experience and lesser knowledge of a faithful soul whose opportunities in life have not been great will without doubt be just the "treasure" that the Father requires to fit into a certain place that could not be so well fitted by anyone else. There is the same spirit of service in the heart and it is that which is of importance.

It is this spirit of service for others, this willingness to become the servants of men for their salvation, and to use one's own powers and possessions to that end, that is the real lesson behind the story of the man who had such increase of goods that he had to pull down his barns to build greater. "Soul," he said to himself, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Eat, take thine ease and be merry" (Luke 12. 15-21). The sin lay not in acquiring great wealth, providing that he came by it honestly, and there is nothing in the story to suggest that he did not. Neither was there anything immoral in his enjoying greater wealth than his neighbours and in being rich beyond them all. His offence lay in that, having the command of all these material advantages, he proposed to reserve them entirely to his own selfish enjoyment instead of using them, the bounty of God, in the service of and for the benefit of God's creatures. His sin was self-sufficiency. He asked nothing of God nor of any man; he proposed to give nothing to God nor to any man. His riches were the increase from that which God must have given in the first place, for God made all things, but this man owned no obligation on that account and made no acknowledgment thereof. His motto was "What I have I hold" and in his own strength he proposed to stand.

Now the law of God which is at the same time the law of creation declares that no man liveth unto himself. We are all members one of another, and that is as true in the natural realm as in the spiritual. In the Millennial

Age the man who does not take his rightful place in the community and assume his rightful obligations as a member of the human family will die; there is no alternative. He either fits into his destined place or he is wastage—a castaway. It is not surprising therefore that in the story Divine judgment follows immediately upon the impious man's bold declaration. "Thou fool" came the stern, scornful words "this night shall thy soul be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be in which thou hast trusted?"

The spirit of service and sacrifice, then, is essential if we are effectively to lay up treasure in heaven. Our Lord exemplified this in the highest degree when He gave himself on the cross for the sin of man, and undertook all that He did undertake in order that He might be able to lead men back to God. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points proved like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). Jesus himself said "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22. 27). "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). That is the very negation of the attitude displayed by the man who built bigger barns in order to keep his riches.

All the same, service for one's fellows is not enough. So many Christians have made the mistake of thinking that it is, and have devoted their lives and all their powers to doing good for their neighbours and to all men, believing—and believing rightly—that the Christian commission is made up in large part of this very doing good unto all. "As we have therefore opportunity" writes the inspired Apostle "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6. 10). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this" says James "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1. 27). All this is right and proper, and to the extent that we ignore the injunction to go about doing good, as Jesus went about doing good, to that extent we shall find leanness to our souls. But that is not all, and the reason why it is not all is revealed to us in the story of the rich young ruler.

He was a likeable youth, this rich young ruler. Brought up, probably, in a comfortable and cultured home, he had all the refinements of speech and bearing which the education befitting such an upbringing would involve.

Jesus, looking upon him, loved him. There is a world of significance in that remark. Jesus loved all men, and because of that love He was in the world to save them: for the chronicler to record especially that Jesus loved this one it must have been evident that there was something in his freshness and sincerity that made a special appeal to the Saviour.

"All these things have I kept from my youth up!" There is no mistaking his honesty. So far as he himself could see, he had performed very faithfully all the commandments of Moses. He had been a true son of Israel, and he looked for the reward of the covenant—eternal life. Yet it was denied him, and he wanted to know why.

There were two reasons, said Jesus, two reasons which were really one. "*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*"—that was one reason. "*Come, take up thy cross and follow me.*" That was the other: and at that the young man went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

Must we of necessity assume that the young ruler's stumbling block was the exhortation to give of his possessions to the poor? It has often been so suggested. But if this man had indeed been as scrupulous about keeping the law as he himself had averred—and Jesus did not deny the validity of his claim—he surely must already have done something for the poor, for that was enjoined in the law of Moses. Is it not much more likely that it was the second injunction that found him wanting? Whilst he could retain his comfortable home and respected station in the midst of his neighbours, dispensing his benevolence in such fashion as not to cause him any personal inconvenience or any appreciable financial loss or sacrifice, then indeed he could with clear conscience claim to have kept all these things from his youth up, and still enjoy to the full those good things of this life that were in his possession. To take up the cross was a very different proposition. He looked around at the intently listening circle of dusty, travel-stained disciples. He noted their rough clothing, their tanned faces. He knew they led a life of labour and discomfort, scorned and derided and even persecuted by those to whom they would minister. Was it that from which he shrank, and the prospect of a life of sacrifice and suffering that caused him to bite his lip, and draw back from the kindly gaze of Jesus to reflect awhile, and then in sadness and disappointment of heart to turn and go away sorrowing? Jesus' words to the disciples, as his figure retreated into the dis-

tance, seem to suggest as much. "*Children, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!*" The rich young ruler could have sold possessions, and given to the poor, without entering into the Kingdom of God; he could by no means enter into the Kingdom of God without he first took up his cross and followed Christ. And that, it was plain, he was not willing to do.

There is the lesson for us! Our laying up of treasure in heaven can only be if we have added to our good works the taking up of our cross to follow Christ. That means nothing less than the full and wholehearted consecration of our lives, our possessions, our talents, our abilities, all, to the service of God to be disposed in accordance with his will. Thus, and thus alone, may we rely upon the safe storage of all that we commit to God, that it may be ours again in that day when we shall need it wherewith to give life to the world. The experience we have gained and lessons we have learned, the abilities we have developed and the talents we have improved, all will be of inestimable value to us in that day when it shall be the privilege of each one of us to carry the word of life to a sin-sick but hopeful world. It will only be by what we have developed in this Age that we shall be qualified to deal with man in the next; that which we develop now of knowledge and experience, of love and mercy, of patience and hope, of righteousness and justice, of faith in the goodness of God and understanding of the wisdom of God, all is being stored up for us, treasure in Heaven that can never be corrupted or stolen. And the power of these things will be bestowed upon us in the great Day of revealing when the kingdoms of this world have passed away, and the time has come that "the saints possessed the Kingdom," and those who have this treasure laid up for them will "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father" to the deliverance of all mankind.

It is said that St. Augustine had engraved upon his table these words: There is no place at this table for any one who loves scandal. Shall we not make a like resolve, to speak no slander—no, nor listen to it? For, if for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment, what shall the slanderer and the backbiter do when they are arraigned and have to answer for all they said?

GEORGE JACKSON

THE LAMB GOES FORTH TO WAR

The fiercest and longest battle recorded in the Bible, the book of many battles, is one between a Lamb and a Lion—and the Lamb is the victor! Apparently the most defenceless, and certainly one of the most harmless, of all creatures, it nevertheless engages in mortal combat the most terrible of the beasts of the earth, and overcomes him. The conflict is long and for the major part of the time it seems as though the Lion is going to triumph, but toward the end he is driven back by the victorious Lamb, compelled to relinquish his prey, and lies prostrate, his might and power laid in the dust.

It is a remarkable thing, to think that a lamb can overcome a lion. No man would have thought of that; no man unenlightened by the Holy Spirit of God would ever have realised that the powers of love, of goodwill, of benevolence, the spirit of service and of doing good, of complete reliance upon the power of God, are forces greater by far than all that the powers of evil can muster. The Lion draws all his strength from the things of this earth and expends it in the manufacture and use of material weapons. The Lamb draws his from the things of heaven and expends it in spiritual warfare. That is the difference.

The Lion is called such only as a matter of courtesy. He has undergone a process of degeneration during the course of his career. At the end he is so nondescript, partaking of the evil qualities of all wild beasts and the good qualities of none, that the scribe calls him a wild beast, knowing not how else to describe him. The lion as God first made him was in reality a noble animal. In the coming day he is going to lie down with the lamb, and be altogether lovable. But not the kind of lion that the lamb is going to slay!

The lion in this Age is a carnivorous beast. He devours flesh. The Lion which the Lamb engages in deadly combat has his archetype in the Devil, whom the Apostle Peter calls "a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour". (1. Pet. 5. 8). That Lion was defeated in his first endeavour to defy God and frustrate his plans for the human race. True, by virtue of his lie, uttered in the garden, man was enticed into sin, and reaped death, "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". (Rom. 5. 12). But he was defeated for the time being, nevertheless,

for the fallen pair still believed in God and began to bring their children up in the knowledge and fear of God, and there is no evidence that they ever heeded or had anything to do with the Devil again, after that first disastrous experience. Satan had to wait for one or two generations to pass by before he could again make a really effective entry into mankind's thoughts (see Gen. 4).

The fight was not really joined until God's work with the people of Israel began to show some definite fruitage. We are accustomed to thinking of Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness and of their going repeatedly into captivity because of their sins. What, it may be, we do not realise so easily is that a solid body of people, the "remnant", was being prepared for God's purposes and laid aside to wait the time when He would need them. The Hebrew prophets rendered yeomen service to the Divine Plan in their day and their work was not wasted, even although they were very generally disesteemed in their own generation and as often as not put to death in vain attempts to stifle their message and their work. The rejection and martyrdom of the prophets was the first round in the conflict between the Lamb and the Lion and for the time being the Lion seemed to have the advantage.

The Scriptural symbolism of this conflict commences with the visible appearance of the Lion upon earth. The Devil, in a state of rebellion against God, excluded because of his sin from heaven, was able to prosecute his warfare against God only upon earth and in the affairs of men. It was when the work of the prophets began to produce such an understanding of God's plan in the hearts of men that it must inevitably make some of them ready to receive the Messiah—as it did do some six or seven hundred years later—that the Devil initiated that strategy which has been used to such terrible effect ever since. The people of God began to be menaced by the "wild beasts of the earth"!

There are many powers, forces, institutions in the world that are opposed to the powers and forces and institutions of God and of righteousness. Most of them become, sooner or later, incorporated into the fabric of kingdoms and empires, which then, because of this evil content, become the enemies of God. It is this power of worldly evil in the kingdoms of

this world that constitutes the Lion that is eventually slain by the Lamb.

It was in the empire of Babylon that the Lion first became manifest. Daniel in his dream (Dan. 7) saw the thing clearly. A lion with eagle's (vulture's) wings which enabled it to rise up from the earth and soar into the heavens, but the wings thereof were plucked and it fell to the earth, where it must perforce remain. There is something in this that reminds us of the story of the founding of Babylon itself, how they planned to build a Tower whose top should reach into heaven, as though they would storm the heights of the place of God's throne itself; and how their project was defeated and they were cast down to the earth and scattered abroad on the face of the land. In the days of Daniel the lion's wings had been plucked—but it was standing up like a man and a man's heart had been given to it.

A strange expression, that! Does it mean that the lion had his nature softened and transformed so that the lion-like disposition was tamed? Or was it the kind of heart that man has now, deceitful and desperately wicked, as the Preacher puts it? Or is it a matter of contrast, the erst-while flying creature, aspiring to soar aloft among the angels of heaven, condemned now to be like the sons of men, restricted to walking on the earth and living as do men on the earth. Looking at the reality in history, it would seem that something of the first and something of the third suppositions are combined. The analogy of Daniel's four beasts with Nebuchadnezzar's great image is too obvious to be ignored. The lion is Babylon, and Babylon, although one of the wild beast powers that have oppressed God's people through the centuries, was in some important respects more humane than any power that succeeded her. Under Babylonish rule, the Jews, although held in captivity and their land made desolate, were at least free from persecution and could follow their distinctively Jewish way of life, and worship God according to the law of Moses without let or hindrance. That was more than could be said of any of the succeeding wild beast powers, except perhaps the Persians, who followed Babylon and to some degree for a short time imitated Babylonish policy. God's people were in the grip of the lion, true, but it was a lion with a man's heart.

Satanic strategy could not rest at captivity. The lion became transformed into a bear. The man's heart was gone, and in its place the bear appeared with three ribs in its mouth—

the last remnants of its victims—and a voice was heard saying to it "Arise, devour much flesh". Although the Jews had welcomed the advent of Persia in the expectation that they would thus gain freedom from the bondage of Babylon, and although at first, under Cyrus and Darius, it seemed that those hopes were being fulfilled, in later years came the time that Judah hailed the Greeks as deliverers from Persia, and led Alexander in triumph to their Temple to show him the prophecy predicting his coming victory and conquest. Jewry had suffered greatly since the prosperous days of Babylon. There were Jews in Judea, in Babylonia and in Egypt, three separate and distinct communities each having its own characteristic traditions and culture, but all owing Israel's God. But they were three ribs in the mouth of the bear, pitiful remnants of what had once been, and when the bear in its turn gave way before the four-headed winged leopard they rejoiced.

The rejoicing was not for long. This third wild beast of Daniel's vision was by far more voracious and menacing than either of its predecessors. Its wings were those of a flying creature or flying insect rather than those of a soaring bird like the eagle. They were for speed in flight rather than power to climb. That was characteristic of Greece, this speed with which its conquests were achieved. The same idea is conveyed in the parallel vision in Dan. 8 where the he-goat, Greece, traverses the ground with such rapidity in his onward rush that "he touched not the ground" as he went. The four kingdoms into which the empire was split almost immediately after its formation, in consequence of the death of Alexander and division of his territory between his four generals, brought all Jews under the jurisdiction of one or another of the "four heads". It was under the rule of Greece—or of these Greek sub-kingdoms—that the covenant people suffered the miseries and persecutions which ultimately led to the Maccabean revolt and the recovery of some degree of national independence. The lion had become a leopard and Truth lay almost prostrate under his talons; and still the Lamb had not appeared to give battle.

Although there was as yet no outward sign of the Coming One, the arch-enemy of God and man must have known that the time was not far distant. He must have observed the growing fitness of some in Israel to comprehend him when He came; the steady development of a "people made ready for the Lord", the fact that "all men were in expectation".

And so, relentlessly pursuing his plan to exterminate truth and righteousness from the earth, he produced, only half a century before the Lamb did appear, an even more fearsome beast to supersede the leopard.

Judah had gained measurable freedom from the leopard, from Greece. The cause of the Lion had received a temporary set-back, and the ground lost had to be regained. The emergence of Rome as the fourth dominating power could only be described by Daniel as a beast dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and having great iron teeth, a power that persecuted and ground down the saints and destroyed them. Here, it must have seemed, was the final stand of truth against the very embodiment of all evil, and the victory of lawlessness and sin over all that is good and pure and holy. Here, surely, the Lion appearing in guise of this terrible beast, would overcome the last feeble resistance and finally and for all time put an end to the dominion of God in the earth.

As if in answer to that threat, there appeared on earth—a Lamb!

John stood, and cried "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". Isaiah, long centuries before, had told of a lamb being led to slaughter in order that he might bear the sin of many. Whatever the spiritual powers of evil might have understood of that at the time, there can be little doubt they had been on the watch for some such development in the Divine Plan. However few there may have been among the people in the days of John's preaching who believed, it is certain that the Devil was one who did believe, and he acted quickly.

The oppressions and cruelties of the wild beast powers before the Lamb stood revealed upon earth were as nothing compared with the cold-blooded ferocity that marked Satan's working through the powers of this world from now on. John, the Revelator, looking back from his standpoint of a century later, saw this opening phase of the activities of the "dreadful and terrible" beast" as a great red dragon, standing expectantly waiting to devour the man-child as soon as it should be born—to slay the Lamb as soon as it should appear on the earth. History records how no time was lost in launching the attack—the story of Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem is witness to that. Without any delay the great red dragon swept into action, and the battle was joined.

The Book of Revelation is the splendid symbolism of that tremendous struggle.

Thwarted in his first attempt to destroy the Lamb, the Dragon sought to suppress the further development of God's work in the earth. The man-child had been caught up unto heaven, beyond his reach; but he could attempt to ensure his perpetual banishment from the earth by destroying the remnant of his brethren, those that kept his commandments. By every diabolic device known to demoniac or human ingenuity the Dragon sought to drive back to high heaven those principles of truth and righteousness that with such difficulty had found a lodgment in the earth. He failed; and the rising power of Christianity established itself. So the demon-inspired system of the Dragon gave place to a more subtle creation, another beast also having seven heads and ten horns as did the Dragon, but one owing its origin to earth rather than to heaven; claiming as its authority to rule, not the mandate conferred by pagan gods, demons of the power of the air, but that given by the great and the mighty men, the kings and princes of the earth. To ordinary men and women the result was much the same; they were ruled from above with no say in the choice of their rulers. To the saintly followers of Jesus the result has been much the same also; if anything the persecution was intensified. The martyrs began to cry out "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth*" but they were told to wait yet a little season; the time was not ripe.

So the apparently hopeless conflict went on, generation after generation of faithful witnesses for the faith and stalwart soldiers of the faith being laid low in death, waging a good warfare but giving place at last under the well-nigh irresistible savagery of the wild beast. The seven-headed monster exercised power for many weary centuries, but eventually even he became old and no longer so effective. With the rising tide of the power of the people characteristic of these later centuries of the Age there comes a fresh manifestation of the "dreadful and terrible" beast, a manifestation which owes its vitality, not to the energy and dominance of the kings and great men of the earth, but to the clamour and the surging strength of the masses, of the people. But the same unseen power remains behind the scenes, influencing and adapting this new development to serve his own ends. To this very day the Lion relentlessly pursues his attack on the Lamb and the people of the Lamb.

Now we are entering into the final stage of the conflict. The Lamb is being threatened as never before. Truth is in process of being crushed out of existence. Of all the ages that there have been since Pentecost, there has never been one in which belief in God and knowledge of Christ has had less hold on the masses. Not only do the forces of irreligion gather momentum and extend their scope, but the power of Antichrist steadily rises to its climax. There are men to-day who preach a new religion, the faith for which, they claim, the world is waiting. They speak of what they call "cosmic religion", meaning one that is a philosophy of life having no place for anything supernatural and no place for God. They claim that this "new religion", which is to meet the needs of twentieth century man, is superior to the idea of a God who rewards his favourites with Heaven and punishes his rejected with Hell—as though any intelligent Christian believed in such a travesty of God to-day anyway—and banishes the conception of "sin" as a morbid psychological condition. The nobility of man and the kindness of man and the unselfishness of man are all to be expressed through this new religion, it is said, and no account at all taken of the fact that in all history the rejection of religion has invariably led to the loss of all those virtues. But there again, the Lion has "blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them". (2. Cor. 4. 4).

Let us be under no misapprehension. We are not living in a world which is prepared to tolerate Christians and accept them as rather odd but harmless members of society. We are living in a world which is becoming increasingly intolerant of true Christianity and true Christians. The increasing godlessness and iniquity of this world is showing up in ever clearer relief against the background of Christian standards, and the world hates those standards because its own evil deeds are condemned by them. The imagery of the last assault against the forces of righteousness, given under the symbol of the Beast and his armies gathered to make war against the Rider on the White Horse and those that follow him, is no empty metaphor. It betokens a very real conflict that is yet to take place, and the battlefield is going to be the length and breadth of the whole world.

That is the day of Divine intervention. That is the day when the Beast is captured and cast into the fiery lake and utterly consumed. That is the day when the followers of the Beast are

slain by the sword of the Rider on the White Horse—the victorious Lamb. But let no one imagine this militant imagery implies that the Lamb, at the end lays aside his gospel of peace and takes up the weapons and methods of the Beast; in such case the Beast would have won the final victory after all. The symbol of a fierce and sanguinary conflict in which no quarter is asked or given, culminating in the utter destruction of the defeated enemy, is the only one adequately to express the sweeping, the crushing, the overwhelming nature of the final victory of righteousness over evil. But it must never be forgotten that the victory is only attained because the forces wielded by the victorious Lamb are forces that cannot be touched by material weapons; because in the long run love, and unselfishness, and self-sacrifice are superior to hate and greed and lust. The sin of man, accumulating its evil fruits through the centuries, has undone men at the last and the whole of their world is falling—crashing about their ears by the weight of its own corruption. If in that hour of final disaster they look up into the heavens and see the drawn sword of Divine Truth stretched out over their ruined institutions it will not be surprising if they admit that the Rider on the White Horse has made war on them and has conquered. The Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, who spent his life endeavouring by all possible means to exterminate Christianity from the earth, murmured as he died "*Thou hast conquered, O Galilean*". So will it be with those who have upheld the systems which in the last days form the final phase of the Beast; when they perceive the armies of heaven advancing to take over the control of this ruined earth they will realise that the Lamb that was slain has received power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. They will witness his receiving dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; and they will speedily know that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; but because of that and in consequence of that, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. "*He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*" The Lamb will have slain the Lion, and all peoples of the earth shall rejoice.

THE SON OF MAN

A Bible
Study

When our Lord asked his disciples (Matt. 16:13-20) as to whom men said that the Son of Man was, and followed their answer by asking them whom they thought him to be, it was Peter who announced that He, Jesus, was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our Lord was manifestly pleased that the Father had revealed this to Peter, yet after the blessing of Peter which follows, He charges them that they tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ. We might think (and the disciples possibly thought) that this great truth should have been published throughout the land. We read (Luke 3:15) that the people were in expectation and mused in their hearts if John the baptiser were the Christ, or not. Would not the prompt declaration of Jesus as the Christ end all doubts? Why did our Lord charge his disciples not to tell others? Why did He tell them not to tell the transfiguration vision to men till the Son of man be risen from the dead? In this connection it will be noted that only on rare occasions does our Lord own to being the Christ; that He will own to being the Son of God; and that usually He refers to himself as the Son of man. And further, He is never addressed as the Son of man, and the expression is almost exclusive to the gospels. When He was raised from the dead to the right hand of God, the disciples proclaim him as the Lord Jesus Christ without any restraint being enjoined on them.

The first explanation that may come to our minds, that He was the Son of man prior to his crucifixion, and the Lord Jesus Christ when exalted, is not convincing when we recall the circumstances in which the titles were used. For they are titles; titles indicative of the particular Divine work in which He is engaged. Upon study we shall find that these titles are never casually used, and it will assist us in the understanding of scripture by noting which title is used. Of all his titles, the expression, Son of man, sounds, shall we say, the most human—it was the usual one our Lord used of himself. "Lord" always implies that He is our master and superior, and is one that we may respectfully (and never forgetfully) use of him. "The son of David" reminds us of the true descendant of David who will sit on the throne of Israel as their rightful and eternal king. "Jesus" we are liable to think as being a name to distinguish him from others (and was so used by the Greeks; John 12:21),

but when further considered reveals him as the Saviour who effects the salvation which God has purposed. "Christ", the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*, speaks to us of the Anointed (as the word means) and appointed chief instrument of God and head of the church which is his body. We think of the "Son of God" as primarily showing that He derived his life from his heavenly Father, while the "Son of man" reminds us that this son of God became flesh, became a man for the purpose of redeeming man. Of all who have lived on this earth, this Son of man (not son of men) stands revealed as the one above all others. Nothing in the title implies human fatherhood. The titles should not be confused with a similar expression in the O.T.; for example, when the angel enlightening the prophet Ezekiel addresses him "son of man". With the thought in mind that the title speaks to us of the redemptive work of our Lord and the associated work arising from redemption, it will be useful to consider some passages of scripture where the expression is used, and there will be seen that the title most allied to our Lord's first advent mission has been used and that to have used any other of his titles would have been out of place.

Take as an example the verse which is regarded by many as the key text of Mark's gospel—ch. 10:45. Our Lord's remarks were prompted by the request of the two disciples to places of honour when He would inherit and sit in his glory, and the displeasure of the ten disciples (vv. 37-41). He answers that in the purposes of God (in contrast to the practice of human government) and among his disciples whoever would be the greatest must be the servant of all. They had still to learn the Divine rule that "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted" and it is one of the hardest lessons to learn, with ambition and self-advancement so much praised by men. Only one could be known as the servant of *all*, and He became the servant of all and therefore the chiefest of all by expending his life that all might live. And this is the thought that He adds in v. 45 "*For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many*". And thus is the title Son of man linked with the thought of redemption. And elsewhere we read that the "Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost", and it is by

referring to himself as the Son of man (not as Christ) that our Lord adds point to his teaching about his first advent mission. Yet when Paul speaks of him in risen glory and refers back to his redemptive work, he says of Christ "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". Thus did the greatest servant become the chief of all "That at his name every knee should bow". It should be noted that our Lord himself does not use the title Son of man when referring to his work after He was raised from the dead. Prior to his sacrificial death He foretold his death, saying (Matt. 17. 22, 23) "*The Son of man shall be betrayed . . . and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again*" but when raised, his words are (Luke 24. 26) "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory*". Raised to immortal glory in his resurrection the title *Christ* is more appropriate than the title which speaks of his work before his triumph is accomplished. Again, when the Pharisees request a sign they were given one sign, like unto that of Jonas, that the Son of man would be three days in the heart of the earth. Those Pharisees may not have known how such a sign would declare whether He was the Christ or not, but all Christians know why He descended into the lower parts of the earth.

The first usage of this title in the N.T. (Matt. 8. 20) shows how among the titles of our Lord the most apt one has been used. He had just cured many of their ills, thus fulfilling the words of Isaiah, and it may be that in the enthusiasm which our Lord wished to avoid a certain scribe said "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest". It is easy to-day to say that the scribe did not know what was involved in following Jesus when he made the promise, but we will suppose that he meant well, and he is not the only one who has made that promise in the first flush of enthusiasm. But, Jesus' answer to him and to us all is exact—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head". We may think that the scribe would infer that following the Master would mean that he would never have home comforts again in this life and that he must be prepared to endure hardness in the field of service. Providentially there was always the home in Bethany where our Lord could rest; but

whereas all lower animals are able to live their lives within their own environment, the Son of man Who of all men was most entitled to fulness of life on earth could not rest until He had finished the work given him to do. Early in our Lord's ministry He said, apparently to Nicodemus, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. (John 3. 14). We have thus in the O.T. story an illustration of redemption (see Num. 21. 5-9). Because of the people rebelling at the discouragements of the journey the Lord God sent fiery serpents among them so that they died of their bites. The people realised their sin and prayed Moses to intercede in prayer for them; and Moses was commanded to prepare a brazen serpent (a copy, we may say, of that which caused their deaths) to which looking they were cured. And if we combine the teaching of John 3. 14, John 12. 32, 33 and 2 Cor. 5. 21 we shall see that the Son of man was likewise lifted up to die for us all, becoming sin for us. As the Son of man He was lifted up so that his own self should bear our sins in his own body on the tree, taking the place of the condemned race as surely as the brazen serpent meant life to those bitten of the fiery serpents. The people who heard our Lord's words of John 12. 32, 33 were quick to say that "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" They connected Messiah with the Son of man, but could not understand that he could die. Had it been said that *Christ* must die they would have argued from the law and the prophets to prove otherwise. And we may well believe that had the Jews believed that He was the very Christ, they would not have compassed his death. Possibly they viewed the matter as did Peter, who when he revealed that the Son of man was in truth the Christ (Matt. 16) and our Lord charged them not to tell others, and from that time forth Peter spoke of his sufferings, Peter, who cannot believe that Christ must suffer promptly exclaims "*Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee*". And Peter would not then comprehend the truth within the rebuke he received from his lack of understanding, but he had learnt fully when he wrote the words of 1 Pet. 2. 21-25.

From these incidents we observe that it were better then for our Lord to be spoken of as the Son of man because He came expressly to die for us; but once the work of redemption is done we believe in words from the Acts

"that God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" and now Christians do not use the title Son of man. It is, however, noteworthy that one disciple, the martyr Stephen, did speak of our Lord as the Son of man. There is probably one clear reason why the Holy Spirit prompted Stephen so to speak of our Lord, even though it hastened his own condemnation. When our Lord was examined by Caiaphas, he, seeking whereby he could condemn him (the false witnesses having failed) adjured him by the living God to say if He were the Christ or not. Our Lord acknowledged that He was, but added that hereafter he, Caiaphas, would see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26. 63, 64). Caiaphas needed no more confession to condemn him; but when this same Caiaphas was trying Stephen, his trial was summarily ended when he "*looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts 7. 55, 56). This reminder to Caiaphas of his previous infamy struck home, and the unrepentant Caiaphas again showed himself a bitter opponent of the purposes of God.

His redemptive work as the Son of man having triumphantly achieved that portion of the Divine Plan, He was raised from the dead; He had given his flesh for the life of the world. But now the title Son of man does not seem so appropriate; yet no title reminiscent of his atonement could ever be outdated. The atonement made at the first advent will be completed by the work of the second advent, for restitution perfects redemption. Speaking of his second advent John says (ch. 5. 27) that God hath given him authority to execute judgment BECAUSE He is the Son of man. Who, of all men or angels, is better suited to be man's Judge, than He Who died for them? Who, of all men, would men select were they asked to choose their judge? And God has given assurance of coming judgment in that He hath raised him from the dead. But though He comes to judge, He comes also to give the earth and man their needed rest, for the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath day, for the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. The weekly day of rest, the jubilee sabbath, the Millennial sabbath, and the ages of glory and rest were made to suit the needs of man, and He is the appointed Lord of it all.

When our Lord spoke of his second coming

and presence He referred to himself as the Son of man, not to suggest that when He came again He would come as a man but to show that the same One who died for a man would himself come again. Just as the angels at the ascension (Acts 1. 11) said, this same *Jesus* shall come. It would be of great satisfaction to men were they now to believe that the Son of man Who died for them will himself come as their rightful king, but sad to relate the numbers who believe in him are diminishing day by day. We could soon reach the position our Lord implied in his own statement "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith (or the faith) on the earth?" He gave no answer to his own query, but the implied answer suggests darkness over the earth when He, as the Son of man, comes again. In contrast to this dark picture, we know that He finds faith among his true followers when He comes as the Lord Jesus Christ, for He comes to receive them unto himself. It is by noting the use of his titles that we avoid some confusion relative to his second coming, and find that verses such as Luke 18. 8 and those which tell of his return for his own do not oppose each other. We shall realise therefore that our Lord Jesus Christ comes again first for his own, and that following that He is present to rule as earth's King and Judge.

He that is much in prayer shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most that is busiest in this, which is our traffic with Heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence. He that sets oftenest these ships of desire, that makes the most voyages to the land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven on earth.

* * *

"*With the heart*" says Paul in Rom. 10. 10 "*man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*". Paradoxical as it may seem, it is the *head* as much as the *heart* that he is talking about here. The "word of faith, which we preach" (vs. 8) must be received, not only in the heart (emotionally), but also in the head (intellectually), before the believer can say, intelligently, "Lord, I believe—and I repent".

FADING LIGHT

A Discourse for
the month

"And he lighted the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses."

(Exod. 40. 35).

That was a great day in Israel's history—and momentous for the later history of the Church—when Moses set the first light to the first lamps in the Holy of the first Tabernacle. For God had sent a light into the world, a light that was destined to burn brightly at times, anon to flicker uncertainly and all but go out, yet blaze up at last into the full brilliance of the Millennial Day. But there were to be many times of darkness before that.

Moses had made the Tabernacle in accordance with the instructions he had received in the Mount. "Take heed" the Divine oracle had warned him, "that thou make all things after the pattern". And Moses, ably aided by Bezaleel and Aholiab, the skilful craftsmen whom the Lord called, had faithfully followed that injunction and prepared a sanctuary for the Lord that was true to his plans in every detail. Now for the first time lights appeared and their radiance spread out and touched with their brightness the gleaming gold of the furnishings in the Holy, and ran up the lines of the tall posts that supported the roof. For many years were those typical lights to burn, until in the fulness of time their brilliance would fade in the greater glory of that spiritual Light that should come into the world, Jesus Christ, the true Light. But that great event was as yet fourteen hundred years in the future.

Evening by evening, throughout all Israel's generations, that light in the Holy was to be renewed and kept alive through all the hours of darkness. Although the Scriptures do not definitely say so, some think that it burned day and night and was indeed the only source of light in the Holy. Unless daylight filtered through the linen veil that closed the entrance, there could have been no other source of light; but in the intense sunlight of Sinai and Palestine it is quite conceivable that sufficient of daylight did pass through the veil to lighten the interior. That fact need not alter the typical picture. Day by day continually the priests performed their duty of cleaning the lamps, refilling them with oil, renewing the wicks, and seeing to it that never for a moment was the Holy in darkness. Those lamps were to burn before the Lord continu-

ously.

That was the ideal. It was hardly ever realised in practice. Time and time again did Israel relapse into apostasy and idolatry, and neglect the sanctuary of God and the observance of his behests. The undying flame was not an undying one after all. It burned low and flickered and at times went out, and in its flickering cast grotesque shadows on the walls of the sacred apartment so that the negligent and inattentive priests formed strange impressions of what the furnishings of the Holy really did look like, and in their half-hearted ministrations often stumbled and performed the service of the Lord in an imperfect way. Because there was no clear and steady light, they themselves lost the power to see, and the vision of the sanctuary became to them as a thing that is sealed, and their eyes became blinded, and they stumbled and fell.

Thus it was in the days of Samuel, when as a child he ministered before Eli. "*Ere the lamp of God went out in the Temple of God, where the Ark of God was*" (1 Sam. 3. 1-3). How eloquent the words, how sad the picture! Eli, the aged priest, weak, indolent, no longer imbued with the fiery zeal of his earlier years, content now to minister the duties of the priest's office in a more or less perfunctory manner, heedless of the solemn responsibilities of his exalted position; his sons, openly and avowedly apostate, using their privileges as priests for purposes of material gain and fleshly indulgence, indifferent to their duties as ministers of the sanctuary; the people as sheep without a shepherd, fast losing both their understanding of and their faith in God; the entire nation drifting away from its covenant and its high calling to be a chosen nation, a peculiar people to show forth God's praises and to be a means in his hand of world-wide blessing. And there, in the dimness of the sanctuary, the neglected lamps guttered shakily in the seven-branched lamp-stand, draining the last drops of oil from the burnt-out wicks before the light, at last, went completely out in the temple of God while as yet there were many hours to go before dawn.

It was in that darkness that the voice of God came to a new instrument lying ready to his hand, and the child Samuel, growing up in the fear and reverence of his God, and mighty

in faith and vision, lighted a light in Israel that shed glory on their ways and illuminated the plans of God for many years to come.

The word of the Lord, it is said, was "precious"—rare—in those days. There was no open vision. That word "open" is significant. It has the meaning of bursting open or breaking forth. The vision of the prophets was always a breaking forth, the release of an irrepressible inward urge that could not be satisfied until it had leaped out and spent all its impetus on the deliverance of its message. Jeremiah felt like that. "His word" he says "was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20. 9). Israel had known that kind of thing in past days but there was nothing of it in the days of Eli. The impetus of past faith and enthusiasm had spent itself, and now the priesthood, the leaders and teachers of the people, had become an established institution, performing routine duties in a purely mechanical manner, and with none of that spontaneity which is the hallmark of the work of the Spirit. The loss of their first fiery zeal, their evangelistic fervour, their whole-hearted and confident reliance upon the Lord, had left them a purely human organisation, having its basis and interest in material things, but bereft of any ability to transmit the light and power that comes from God.

Now this fading light within the priesthood had its repercussions on the people of Israel—the peasants, the farmers, the vine-dressers, the keepers of sheep, the craftsmen and house builders in the cities, those who built aqueducts and reservoirs for water and those who felled trees, and dressed timber for palaces and temples. All in Israel were profoundly affected and influenced by this drift into apathy on the part of those who should have been their spiritual instructors. For they followed after the same example of unbelief. Blind guides led the blind, and in consequence both fell into the ditch. The light faded out for the people as a whole, and to such an extent that they became at length manifestly unworthy of any longer being called God's representatives, and their national polity God's kingdom, even in name, and so they lost both their place and nation and went into captivity to Assyria and Babylonia for their sins. Their national attitude at that time was well expressed in the plaint of the people in the days of Ezekiel. "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth" to which the Spirit-inspired preacher made reply "the days are at

hand, and the effect of every vision" (Ezek. 12. 21-28). Ezekiel's day, the time of the Babylonian captivity, was a day of fulfilling prophecy, a day when mighty works were being wrought and mighty signs seen by the saintly Daniel, a time when the deeper thinkers in Israel might have been expected to discern the significance of the times in which they lived, and to look for early deliverance. But the fading of the light had in its turn induced a fading of hope and expectation, and now the people in the main no longer really expected deliverance, or believed in the word of promise at all. They gave themselves up instead to the interests and pursuits of the present, and recked little or nothing of the future.

The result of that was that Israel rejected the Lord when He came; and the Lord rejected Israel. "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you" He said "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21. 43). That "nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" is the Church of the Gospel Age. The failure of Israel has provided the opportunity for the Church.

That is where the typical teaching of the lighted lamps has its value to us to-day. We, no less than Israel of old, are prone to let our light go out through indolence, apathy and satisfaction with the condition of things as they are. And the result to us is the same as to them. Of us also will it be said in such case "The Kingdom of heaven is taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof". For the Lord's arm is not shortened, and He can well find other instruments for his work should those He has chosen prove unfitted to His use.

It is so fatally easy to allow the light to fade. The long history of denominationalism through the centuries, or reformation by sects, is witness to that. From the days of the Early Church right down to our own day there is constant repetition of this same story, of a Christian group or community taking its stand upon the truth of the Scriptures and prosecuting its mission with ardour and zeal, only to become stereotyped and lifeless when the first impetus of its reforming force has been spent. All this has been said so many times, and now it must be said again, and then again and again, for no generation will learn the lesson from its predecessors, and individuals in every century must still emulate Samuel and minister faithfully before the Lord in a day when the light is going out and there is no open vision.

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" comes the words of the beloved disciple, "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin". Here is the guidance for which our souls are seeking. To walk in the light guarantees to us an entrance into the fellowship of the brethren and a standing in justification. To walk in the light means a making use of the talents and the pounds with which our Lord has entrusted us, instead of burying them in a napkin and hiding them in the earth. To walk in the light means to view the world around us, its condition and its needs, from the same standpoint as did Jesus, and proceed to lay down our lives on behalf of the world's need just as did Jesus during the three and a half years of his ministry. We cannot be practical Christians without walking in the light and we cannot walk in the light without being practical Christians. The surest corrective for fading light, therefore, is to make of our faith a practical thing and to work out in the opportunities of daily life the principles of the belief that is in us.

In his message to the Laodicean Church our Lord spoke of the eye-salve of his providing, the acceptance of which would enable the disciple to see, not only clearly, but into another world. The light of this world cannot shine into spiritual things. The light that is of God can illuminate spiritual things but even then the natural man cannot see them. It is only by the power of the Spirit that the glories of the spiritual can be made known to us. So then the one who would guard himself

against the effects of fading light must needs take to himself the eye-salve of the Lord's providing and so behold, no longer dimly as in a vision, but clearly and distinctly, the conditions of his calling and the truths by which his faith is defined and the principles by which his faith is regulated. "Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see" must needs be the continual prayer of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus, for only by such a continual straining to see more and more clearly may we have our spiritual vision exercised so that it may, at last, take in the whole vast landscape of that celestial realm which is to be the eternal inheritance of the faithful. Like Job of old, we may say "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" but that can only be if, again like Job, we have retained our integrity and firm confidence in God from the beginning even unto the end. The duty of the priests of old was to keep the lamps burning throughout the hours of darkness; they were never to be suffered to go out. We, each one of us, have our own little lamp to guard and keep. An abundant supply of oil—God's Holy Spirit—is always at our service. It is our part to keep the vessel clean and ready, the wick trimmed, and the flame burning clear and steady. Thus we shall both be lights in the world and have light within ourselves, a light that will never fade, but will at the end expand into a radiance that is to lighten all the world, in that day when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

"I thank thee that I am not as other men are." What a miserable confession to make. In looking upon his fellows he saw nothing to emulate, no characteristics or virtues which he could desire for himself, but only the sordid evidences of evil. The reign of sin and death was a very real thing to this Pharisee; and with an exquisite nicety he carefully dissociated himself from it all and explained to the Almighty that, living perforce in an evil world and amidst sinful men, he was nevertheless not of them nor with them, and that he at least was one to whom had come the superior inward knowledge which, separating for ever from the plebeian multitude, rendered him a fit companion for the One Who dwelt in the inner sanctuary.

* * *

Diligence in duty leaves no time for vain disputation. Controversy lowers. The work is more important than discussion concerning it. Remember Him Who told us that His meat was to finish His work, and Who on the Cross, by His silence, said in effect to those who taunted Him: I am doing great work . . . and cannot come down.

ROBERT RENDALL

* * *

God delights in joy, and His desire for His people is that they should be trustful and joyful, and this both for their own sakes and for His glory. God needs vigorous workers, and He can only have these by bestowing on them a joy adequate to the greatness of the work.

HORATIUS BONAR



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 38, No. 6

SEPTEMBER, 1960

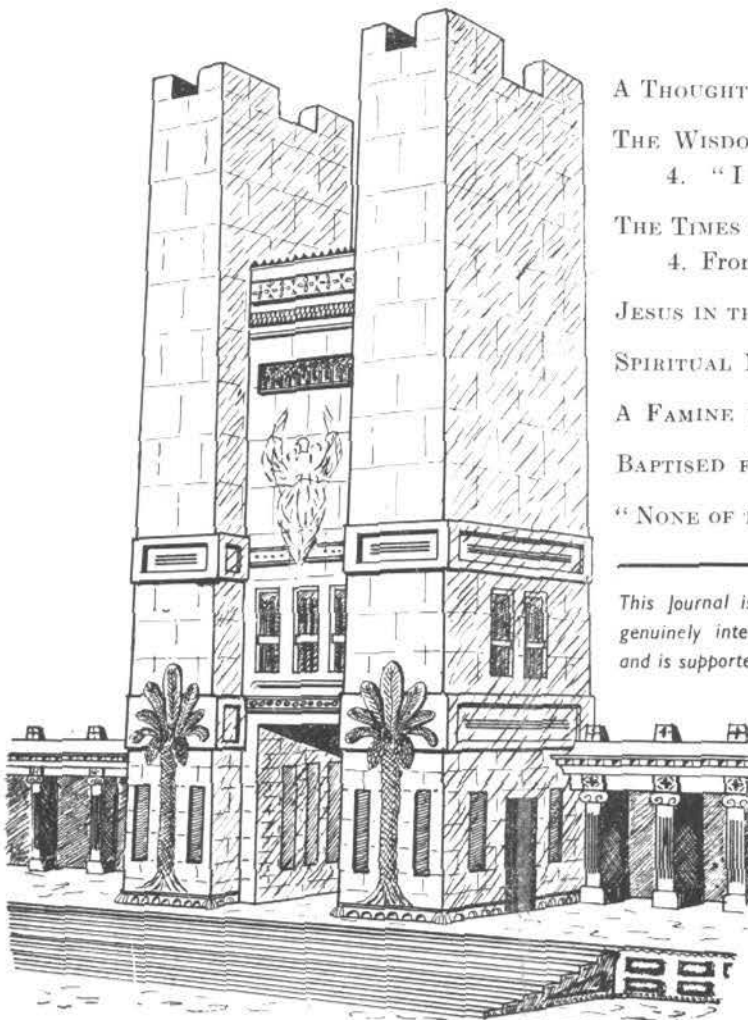
Published September 1st

Next issue October 15th

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who are genuinely interested, on request renewable annually and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."
(Prov. 11. 19).

Here is a statement of principle the correct understanding of which will help anyone to a better understanding of God. All too often are the two ways, the way of good and the way of evil, with their respective climaxes, set forth as something based on the arbitrary decrees of a rather capricious Deity. In the most extreme case, that of believers in predestination, the eternal fate of each individual was unalterably fixed before he came into the world. A rather more modern and somewhat toned down version of this belief insists that whilst acceptance of the Divine call rests with the individual, God calls only a selection from amongst mankind; once called and accepted, the called one must of necessity be ushered into eternal salvation or the will of God has been thwarted, so that in practice it becomes a case of "once saved, always saved". Orthodox Christian theology, whilst allowing the freedom of holding this view to those who are so convinced, does not make it an element of normal faith; nevertheless the orthodox theology does depict heaven in the guise of a reward for rightdoing and some state of "conscious misery, eternal in duration" to use the old definition, as punishment for evil doing. The emphasis is rather upon pleasing or displeasing God and reaping commendation or condemnation accordingly, so that good and evil are reduced largely to a question of obeying or disobeying God's expressed commands.

The Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs knew better than that. Righteousness is a power, a force, which is inherently conducive to life—obviously to continuing life. Evil, on the other hand, contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction; it is inherently conducive to death—and death in this connection is the antithesis of life, the complete absence and negation of life. Since all life stems in the first place from God, and more-

over can only be sustained by God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, it follows that righteousness is that condition of things which allows the perpetuation of that flow of life from Creator to creature which imparts the quality of everlastingness to the creature. Conversely evil is that opposing force which tends to hinder or destroy the orderly conduct of God's work, and because it is thus at variance with the laws on which Divine creation is founded and by which it continues, must eventually destroy itself. So the life which is governed or influenced by evil will become less and less capable of recovery and maintaining that inflow of life from God which alone can guarantee continuance, and will at last end in death. The idea that there can be any kind of life, any kind of conscious state of being, existing eternally in a state of sin or of disharmony with God, is both unscriptural and against all that is revealed concerning the principles of Divine creation. A man to whom God has given life and the power of living must either come, eventually, willingly into alignment with the arrangements God has made for the eternal continuance of Creation—and this implies coming into a state of eternal righteousness—or he must reap the wages of sin in the loss of even that measure of life he possessed for a limited period, and be reduced to what is in effect the condition obtaining before he knew conscious existence.

The channel of that life is Jesus Christ. It is through him, through faith in him and acceptance of him, and ultimately complete dedication to him, that men receive life which is eternal, timeless, everlasting. *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

Details of Bro. F. A. Essler's future appointments in this country will be found on page 107.

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

4. "I have found a Ransom"

With verse 14 of chapter 33 Elihu plunges into the essence of all Divine revelation, the process by means of which God will restore the willing of all mankind to himself, exact the penalty of sin upon those who will not accept him, and eliminate the power and effects of evil from his creation. That process has as its centre and essential basis the earthly life, the sacrificial death, and the mediatorial work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such themes could not be plainly defined in concrete terms by Elihu for he lived at far too early a time and the men of his age were by no means ready to understand the story of a suffering Messiah. There was a great deal of history to be enacted before the "fulness of time" could be sufficiently complete to allow God to "send forth his Son". But everything was there in principle in the Spirit filled mind of Elihu. God, who had devised the whole scheme from before the foundation of the world, spoke here by his Spirit, through this man, of the things He intended one day to do. Let the critics scoff as they may, let the "modern scholar" talk learnedly of "primitive ideas of resurrection", the grand truth remains that here in the 33rd chapter of Job we have the first detailed definition of the Divine purpose for the reclamation of man from sin and death, and the fact that this reclamation is to be brought about by God himself providing a redeemer and a teacher to lead men back to him. In the light of Christian knowledge not possible to be understood until the Apostles had left their inspired legacies on record for later generations there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this marvellous passage.

The whole theme of Elihu in this chapter is the Wisdom of God, wisdom which inspired such a wonderful way of dealing with the evil in man and wisdom which is personified in One who would come from God, an earthly manifestation of God, having all the authority of God, to show men what God is and can be. This idea of Divine wisdom personified took firm root in Israel and the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs show just how firmly it did take root. "*Behold, wisdom calleth, and understanding sendeth forth her voice . . . unto you, O men, I call, and my voice goeth forth to the sons of men*" (Prov. 8. 1-4). Wisdom personified developed into the later

doctrine of the Logos, the Word of God, the mind, the thoughts, the words, the revelation of God projected into personality which could become the manifestation of God to men so that at last John could say "*and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father . . .*" (John 1. 14). That is the final revelation of something it was first given to Elihu dimly to perceive when he spoke of the one whom God had provided to deliver man from death and show him the way back to the light of God.

Elihu is concerned throughout this part of his discourse, occupying the remainder of chapter 33, with a single theme which revolves around four words in two couplets, the soul and the grave; life and death. Five times (verses 18, 20, 22, 28 & 30) is the theme repeated. The soul goes into corruption, the grave, and is lost; the life swallowed up in death. The Divine mediator appears, to undo the work of evil, and behold, for "*whosoever will*" (Rev. 22. 17)—and this is important; the deliverance is only for those who will avail themselves of it on the Divine terms—for "*whosoever will*" the soul comes back again from the grave and death is swallowed up in life. Both the principles underlying deliverance and the process by which deliverance is achieved are already set out here, and it is to these principles and this process that we have now to address ourselves.

"*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth (regardeth) it not, in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*" (33. 14-17). Right at the outset Elihu refutes the oft-heard accusation that God does not care, that He is indifferent to the woes and weaknesses of fallen man. God does care, and God is and always has been ready to respond to the slightest opening any of his creatures may offer for the ingress of his words and power. Elihu knew that all too often such overtures are rejected "*God speaketh once, yea twice . . .*" In the Hebrew this is not limited to one repetition and no more. The words literally are "*God speaketh, one, two . . .*" as though He speaks with a kind of constant repetition,

stroke upon stroke, word upon word, "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little" (Isa. 28. 10). But just as with the people of Israel in Isaiah's day, of whom it was said "yet they would not hear", so now, says Elihu, men do not regard the constant witness of Divine truth. In a remarkably vivid illustration he describes the word of God coming to man in a dream, during the silent watches of the night. Traditionally this was held by the ancients to be the most favourable time for God to gain entrance into the human mind. Psychologically there may perhaps be something to be said for it. Freed from the cares and preoccupations of the daytime, without the distractions of sight and sound,—*for the Eastern night is tropically dark and there were no jet planes or late car drivers to make night hideous in those days*—there must have been many others like David who could say as he did "*when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches*" (Psa. 63. 6) and realise that in such frame of mind God could talk to them as never during the daytime. So here, He is depicted reaching men at such a time to open their ears, and seal their instruction. It is a forceful illustration, derived in all probability from the method of letter-writing in force in Job's day. The use of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform (wedge shaped) characters, thought at one time to be confined to the Euphrates valley where it originated, is now known to have been widespread throughout Western Asia; Job and his friends, educated men all, must have been thoroughly familiar with it. The letter or other document was inscribed on a tablet of soft clay measuring, often, not more than two or three inches each way by an eighth of an inch thick. The tablet was baked in an oven, dusted over with fine dry powder and then completely enclosed in an envelope of clay which was sealed down on all sides, and inscribed with the recipient's address or, if a legal document, with some indication of the contents. The whole thing was then baked again to render the outer covering hard. To open, the outer envelope was cracked and removed and the document found safely preserved inside. Just so, says Elihu, is it with God. He puts his message into the ears of man and then seals it in as though with a clay envelope, and all to the end defined in the next verse, that he might withdraw man from his self-willed purpose, taking away man's self-pride, so evidencing his own love for man and his own desire to deliver man from the sorry state in which, because of sin,

he finds himself.

Verse 18 is a pithy analysis of the Divine purpose for man—if man will have it, as later verses make clear; no one is to be forced into a life of righteousness—and it gives in clear and succinct phrase the net result of it all "*He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword*" (33. 18). Here is the first of the five occurrences of "soul" and "pit". "Pit" is "*shachath*" rendered variously in the Old Testament *pit, grave, corruption*; It is derived from the root "to corrupt" and the underlying idea is the corruption and decay of the body in the grave until nothing is left. Be it noted that it is the soul ("*nephesh*") which is here said to go into corruption. The distinction between the soul and the spirit is often slurred over in everyday Christian thought, and the fact that the "soul" is the product of the union between spirit and body; without both there cannot be a "soul". There is a distinction also between the ideas of soul and life. Life as a principle is inherent in God; the life that animates a fleshly creature is given by God. In the case of Adam "*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*". (Gen. 2. 7). And at death the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 10. 7) so that when Elihu says God keeps back the soul of man from corruption, decay, and the life, the spirit, from perishing, he is saying in effect, that notwithstanding the apparent hopelessness of human life as seen outwardly, all is not really lost and God is able to preserve man's life and deliver him from the enemies which would destroy him. But not before he has suffered according to the Divine laws of retribution. Not before he has gone down into the depths of despair in consequence of the follies of his own way. Not until it has been abundantly demonstrated that only by accepting and living God's way can man inherit and enjoy eternal life. And most important of all, not until the Redeemer has come, who will show man the way back to God and lead him along that way.

So Verse 19 begins the downward story, the descent of the doomed soul into death and corruption, a doom which can only be nullified by the power of God in resurrection. "*He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and with continuous struggles*" (as Cook has it) "*so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers*". (33.

19-22). Can there be a more eloquent picture of the man, wasted by disease and weary with pain, sinking slowly into that which eventually comes to all men. Soul and life together share in this descent and in its end. When the breath leaves the body and the slow processes of Nature begin to resolve that inanimate frame into its constituent atoms, there is nothing left, only the spirit of life held in the infinite power of God, waiting until it shall be clothed again with its resurrection body in God's own due time. But first of all, says Elihu, before that resurrection can take place, the Redeemer must come and it is to that aspect of the Divine purpose that he next addresses himself.

"If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, (ambassador or mediator) one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him and sayeth, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (33. 23. 24). The messenger is God's messenger, his representative and spokesman, to declare God's uprightness to man. But more than that, he is also a mediator. This word "*luts*", here translated "interpreter", is one that really refers to the treatment of a foreigner, an alien, an enemy, and can be equally well rendered ambassador, teacher, mediator, according to the sense of the context. (See 2 Chron. 32. 31 where it is rendered "ambassador" and Isa. 43. 27 where it is "teacher"). Now in this particular passage the setting is that of man sunken in sin and unreconciled to God; the promise is that God will be reconciled and man see his face with joy (verse 26). The obvious sense of the word here is "mediator". The messenger comes to declare the righteousness of God and to be a mediator between God and man in the process of reconciliation. That is exactly what St. Paul declares of Christ. "*There is one . . . mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*" (1 Tim. 2. 5. 6). That New Testament word is the exact counterpart of this Old Testament vision; Elihu and Paul are in complete harmony, seeing the same thing. In this is the grace of God manifest, when he says that man shall be delivered from going down into the pit because he has found a ransom. "Deliver" here has the meaning of buying a man out of bondage, of redeeming or ransoming for a price. "Ransom" is "*kopher*", primarily a covering, from which the word "atonement" in the Levitical sacrificial ritual comes; in fact Leiser uses "atonement" instead of "ransom" in this very passage. So the Divine decree goes

forth that man is to be bought back from the power of the grave and is not to lie in corruption, because God has found or provided an atonement, a ransom for his condemned life.

Now this matter of being ransomed from the power of the grave is not just merely a figure of speech or an item of academic theology; it is a very real literal thing. Jesus himself said very plainly "*The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live . . . the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth . . .*" (John 5. 25-29). "Thy brother shall rise again" he said to the sorrowing Martha. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" she replied. Jesus supplied the essential link. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11. 23-26). Here is basis for confidence that in the outworking of the Divine purpose men will come back from the grave to face the challenge of Christ. They will find that all their ignoring of God and all their flouting of his laws will have availed them nothing; they will be brought face to face with the Mediator and have the issues of life and death placed squarely before them, and there will be no more evading those issues. It is the purpose of Elihu now to lay down the principles which will obtain when men thus face the mediator who has come to them, the principles and the choice which determine the eternal destiny of every man. For none may escape the crisis of eternal judgment.

This next part of the discourse reminds one irresistibly of the Lord's words to Israel. "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" (Ezek. 33. 11). The Divine attitude revealed through Elihu is precisely the same. "*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*" (33. 27. 28). Here is the basic principle; the messenger appears with the message, the ransom is provided and given, the mediator is ready to fulfil the functions of his office, and there and then if the man repents and admits his realisation of the scriptural truth that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 13. 34), God

will receive him. This is very reminiscent of the parable of the prodigal son. There, too, the erring one came to himself, realising his true position, and arose, and returned to his father, and his father received him. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the old mediæval idea of God as a kind of grim ogre intent only on casting into hell all but a few saintly ones who somehow manage to live lives of sufficient piety to scrape into heaven is utterly and hopelessly wrong. God made men for life, and not for death; for felicity, not for misery; recipients of his benevolence, not objects of his punishment. True, He cannot and will not condone or tolerate sin or permit the perpetration of evil. After all, sin is intrinsically the transgression of those laws and principles which God has established for the orderly and harmonious conduct of his creation. No man can violate those laws without marring some aspect of that creation or causing harm or unhappiness to one or more of its inhabitants. It is obvious that the gift of conscious life, on whatever plane of being, has to be contingent upon willing and active harmony with those laws; it ought to be equally obvious that the logical consequence of wilful and deliberate failure to keep those laws is the withdrawal of that life of which the recipient refuses to make the intended use. So death, that final death which is the ultimate penalty of sin, is simply that withdrawal of life, a return to the condition obtaining before the individual existed. That dark climax can only come after God has, as it were, exhausted all his efforts in the endeavour to win the individual's allegiance to himself, and is actively working all the time so that all men, if only they will, can inherit the glorious destiny He plans for them. But of course the conditions must be maintained. The man must realise, as Elihu says here, that the practice of sin or the violation of the apparently most trivial of God's laws will profit him not. A full and hearty acceptance of the place in creation for which God has made him is the only possible attitude of heart for every man. So on the basis of his repentance the past is blotted out, he is delivered from eternal condemnation, and he enters into eternal life.

That condition of eternal felicity is eloquently summed up in the two preceding verses which Elihu, in his enthusiasm for the final outcome, had to utter before he could settle down more quietly to the basis in verses 27-28 which makes that outcome possible. *"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his*

youth. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he will see his face with joy; for he will render unto man his righteousness" (33. 25-26). This is quite obviously a promise of the future. After all the affliction and disease and wasting of physique, culminating in death, the grave, the flesh returning "to dust as it was", the effect of the Redeemer's work and the Teacher's work is a complete restoration to youthful health and vigour, in a new environment. The old background of sin has gone; the man now beholds the face of God, he dwells as it were before him, and he finds that *instead of being the slave of sin he has become a freeman in righteousness*. This is the time of which Isaiah speaks when he says that *"the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf be unstopped, the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing,"* for, says he, *"the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"*. (Isa. 35. 5-10). This is the time when "the dwelling-place of God is with men, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 3. 4). The whole tenor of Scripture, from Elihu to John, is definite on the reality of this coming glorious Age of Christ's Mediatorial reign when, in the words of the old Methodist hymn, repeated from Scripture, *"the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea"*.

"Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living" (33. 29. 30). Says Moffatt in his translation *"Now God does this over and over again, twice, thrice, for men, to bring them back from death into the sunshine of life"*. This is the crystallisation of the Divine purpose. God repeatedly brings to bear all the weapons in his armoury with which to break down the pride and hardness of man and show him what is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It does not do to over-simplify this passage and look upon it as meaning no more than the everyday repetition of mundane disasters which may eventually bring a man to repentance in this life. These two verses are the climax to Elihu's whole argument; they cap and terminate what has gone before. He finishes this particular subject here. They must have direct connection with what he

has been saying and as such they must define the three factors which in this 33rd chapter stand out as the primary elements in God's course of action for man's reconciliation to himself. "Oftentimes" says the Authorised version "Twice, thrice" is Moffatt's choice. "Two ways, three, with a man" is how Rotherham renders it. What Elihu means here is that God deals with any man in a plurality of visitations through visions (vs. 14-17) which in modern aspect means leading and enlightenment by his Holy Spirit and by his chosen pastors and teachers. Some respond to this and become disciples here and now. Next comes the permission of afflictions and chastening, of earthly disasters and disappointments (vs. 19-22). That has its effect with others who in consequence of such are persuaded finally to turn their hearts to God. Finally comes the messenger, the Mediator (vs. 23-26) and this projects us into the coming Age when all men will be brought under his benevolent yet firm rule and be constrained to face the issues of life and death. Without much doubt Elihu here surveys the whole scope of God's redemptive purpose and perceives its onward extension into the far distant future, beyond the ending of the kingdoms of this world and into the light of the Kingdom of God

The young man paused; he had concluded the first discourse of his exposition and he now invited Job to comment, if he would. He wanted to know what Job thought about his reasoning and his revelation. "Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom". (33. 31-33). It is

SUCH AS I HAVE

When the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple expectantly asked alms of Peter and John, how his heart must have sunk within him as he heard the first words of the reply, "Silver and gold have I none". They might be going to offer him words of comfort and advice, but what he needed was money, the only practical avenue of help he could foresee. Yet the "such as I have" that Peter was able to give far exceeded anything within the hopes and expectations of this life-stricken cripple, changing his despair and disappointment into abounding joy and praise to God. And all men glorified God for this miracle of healing, for the man was above

probable that the 31st verse is intended to be understood in the past tense. Job had marked well, had held his peace, while Elihu was speaking. Now Job was invited to make rejoinder. If he had nothing to say, goes on Elihu, let him continue to hold his peace and hearken, for there was yet much to be said. There is no intimation that Job did say anything, for in chapter 34 Elihu resumes his speech, this time introducing a new aspect. Leaving the Wisdom of God, he now seeks to show how the whole of the questions at issue can be explained in the light of Divine Justice, the Justice of God.

(To be continued)

BRO. F. A. ESSLER (U.S.A.)

Appointments

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| Sept. 4 | Coventry |
| 10-11 | Portsmouth |
| 17-18 | Yeovil |
| 19-21 | Brixham |
| 22-23 | Bristol |
| 42 | Stroud |
| 25 | Rugby |
| Oct. 2 | Forest Gate (Farewell meetings) |

The departure of Bro. and Sis. Essler from this country is to be marked by a farewell meeting arranged by the Forest Gate friends in Clinton Road Church on Sat.-Sun. Oct. 1-2. There will be a meeting on Saturday at 7.0 p.m. addressed by Bro. Essler. On Sunday meetings at 11.0 a.m. (Address Bro. S. H. French) 3.15 p.m. (Bible Study, Bro. A. Oakley, John 10. 1-18) and 6.30 p.m. (Address, Bro. F. A. Essler). Lunch and Tea will be provided in the Church on Sunday, and all are welcome.

forty years old, and had been crippled from birth. God had granted him, not the thing he had asked, but more than he had ever asked or thought. (Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

* * *

In a deep sense it is possible for me to be living in heaven, even while still on earth. My heart can be resting in the peace of heaven; my mind seeing by its light; my soul drawing strength and inspiration from that other world. I shall feel increasingly that that is the world to which I really belong, and that the things of that world matter most to me.

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

A Study in
Divine Purposes]

4. From Moses to Christ

"The Lord your God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me. Unto him shall ye hearken: and it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." (Deut. 18. 15. Acts 3. 23).

That is one of the most significant utterances of the Scriptures. It tells more of God's purposes than did all that had been revealed to man in all the ages before Moses. For the first time in history the Divine intentions and promises became centred in the person of an individual—"He that shall come"—and for ever afterwards the constant theme of all who thought and spoke and wrote of the ways of God was the "Coming One". In Him would all the fair promises of God for human welfare be fulfilled!

Small wonder that Isaiah should speak so rapturously of the King who one day would rule in righteousness, of the shepherd who would feed his flock, of the Conqueror who would destroy all evil in the winepress of God's wrath. Small wonder that Malachi should speak of the Herald who would announce his advent, and the blessings that would attend the completion of his work. Small wonder, indeed, that the common people, waiting and longing for the promise, should ask John the Baptist, hopefully, "Art thou 'that prophet'?" They had been waiting so long and by then they realised how much they needed his coming and his ministration.

But, of course, back in the days of Moses the people had by no means come to this stage of development. They as yet hardly realised their undone state before God. True, they knew that they were in misery and suffering. Their cry in Egypt had gone up to God in heaven, and He had heard, and had reached down from heaven to deliver them, "with an high hand, and an outstretched arm" (Deut. 26. 8), but once the immediate stress was over and they were safely on the other side of the Red Sea they quickly forgot the Lord their deliverer. It was not until their enthusiasm was engendered by the making of their Covenant at Sinai in the mediation of Moses that their faith returned and they shouted "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. 24. 7).

The making of that covenant was a great event in the history of the Times of Ignorance.

Here was God undertaking to teach this whole nation the things concerning himself and his Plan. For that Covenant was much more than a mere understanding "If you do *this*, you shall live; if you do *that*, you will die." It was not framed merely to inaugurate and perpetuate a series of rites and ceremonies that might become the ritual form of the nation's worship. It was essentially a covenant of knowledge, a means by which Israel—and others, too, in after days—might be taught the elements of God's Plan and the laws of his universe. We, today, many thousands of years later, still gain valuable instruction in the Divine Plan by consideration of things that the Law Covenant contained, its precepts and principles, its warnings and promises, its types and shadows. The Covenant became to Israel a teacher, a teacher that was intended to lead the sincerely reflective among them to a higher plane in the knowledge and understanding of God—and ultimately to the Saviour. "The law" says Paul "was our *pedagogue* (tutor) to lead us to Christ" (Gal. 3 24).

The making of the Law Covenant with Israel, then, was by far the greatest advance in the dispelling of man's ignorance of God that had been made since Creation. The standards of God's holiness were now made known in the world, not as reasoned out by man on the basis of things that are seen, but revealed by God from things that are unseen. A new voice was in the world, speaking with authority, the voice of God himself; when God said at Sinai "*Thou shalt not . . . thou shalt . . .*" there were none that could gainsay.

It has been asserted by scholars anxious to discredit the Divine authority of the Scriptures and the supernatural element in the Exodus story, that the Laws of Moses bear so striking a similarity to the Code of Hammurabi the Sumerian monarch of six hundred years before, that Moses must have taken his commandments from the earlier laws. That there is a great similarity is true, and since the rules of rightdoing and justice are based on the same fundamental principles in all ages it is not surprising that such a similarity does exist. Hammurabi did the best he could with the same motive at heart as had Moses; but when God spoke to Moses He revealed depths of understanding in the regulation of

the conduct of fallen man which the Sumerian ruler never plumbed. It is the law of Moses which has survived almost intact to our own day and not the Code of Hammurabi, and the reason is because the work of Moses was directly of God; that of Hammurabi only indirectly, through generations of fallible and imperfect men.

So Israel pursued her notable career through the centuries, despite many failures and shortcomings continually advancing in the knowledge of God and presenting to the world a constantly deepening and widening view of the principles of his government and his Plan. Men, as a whole, were no more disposed to believe than they had been in the earliest stages of world history, but the opportunities for acquiring knowledge of the way of salvation, and the bases of faith, were much more extensive, and that is an important consideration when the question of responsibility comes to be discussed. Our Lord indicated that much when he spoke of the men of Sodom and Nineveh rising in the judgment with the men of his own generation (Matt. 12. 41). Greater knowledge, greater light, brings greater responsibility and therefore liability to a greater judgment. The Israelites had light a hundred-fold, a thousand-fold, more than had the antediluvians.

Perhaps in no way is this increase of light on God's character and Plan more strikingly shown than in the Lord's own words to Moses "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the name of *El Shaddai*—God Almighty—but by my name *Yahweh*—the all-embracing One—was I not known to them" (Gen. 6. 3). What profound truth is hidden in those few words! The patriarchs, knowing God as the Almighty, All powerful One, had advanced tremendously from the position of their ancestors who knew him only as the Most High; so did Moses and his generation take another great stride forward into the light and come to know God, not merely as the Almighty, One who had all power, but as the Eternal, omniscient both in power and being, the source of all things and the sustainer of all things. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" said Paul to the men of Athens. That is what the name *Yahweh* implies. He embraces all things, and in him all things consist. There was only one greater height of understanding to be attained, and to reach that highest level of all, men must needs wait for the Coming of One who had dwelt in the bosom of the Father and

could therefore in due time interpret him to man, not as the Most High, not as the Almighty, not even as the All-embracing One, but as—the Father! But men were by no means ready for that in the time of Moses.

The history of Israel was not one of uninterrupted advance in the knowledge of God. There were periods of retrogression. Such an one was the latter part of the period of the Judges, a time when idolatry was rampant and the people were falling away fast from their covenant. The work of Samuel did much to bring them back to God and the terms of their national standing before him. Then in the days of the later kings the ugly head of apostasy reared itself again, and this time the people went away into captivity, a captivity in which they learned another and an entirely distinct set of lessons, which brought them back, in the days of Cyrus, a very different nation to that which had gone away under Shalmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar. In the interim the prophets of Israel had arisen with their several messages, so that when there were barely four centuries left to go for the Times of Ignorance to have run their full course there were many in Israel able to look forward with considerable clarity of vision to the God-promised prospect of a world in which sin and death were banished and all men would live in the light of God's countenance and find at his right hand pleasures forevermore.

It was during this period that the *benevolent* aspects of the Divine dealings with man became clearly understood, as they had never been understood before. The old mechanical, ritualistic idea of God, eternally demanding appeasement by blood sacrifices, requiring unyielding obedience to a meaningless jumble of precepts, began to give place to an appreciation of the principles which lay behind those outward forms and ceremonies. "*Hath the Lord as great delight*" cried Samuel to Saul "*in sacrifice and offering as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*" (1 Sam. 15. 22). It was Jonah, one of the earliest prophets, who was taught, and taught in his turn, the great lesson of the mercy of God. "*Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?*" (Jon. 4. 11). Times of Ignorance indeed! The entire population of what was at that time the world's capital city was incapable of the most elementary discernment and God would save

them, that an opportunity be granted them to repent, and so come to a knowledge of him that their ignorance might be swept away. The Gentiles, sunk much more in unbelief than was Israel, were nevertheless just as much objects of Divine care, and although they had been left to make their own way through the fogs of ignorance there were among them from time to time men who showed that the spirit of enquiry and of investigation was not dead. And oft-times there were those who, like the discreet lawyer of the Gospel story, were "not far from the Kingdom of God".

Such an one was Akhnaton, the Egyptian Pharaoh, who not long after the time of Moses sought to wean Egypt away from her many gods and return to the purity of her ancient worship, that of One God. Akhnaton has been called "the world's greatest dreamer", "the world's first pacifist", and kindred names. He drew all Egypt away from the worship of many gods and set up the worship of one god, restoring Egypt's original monotheism. He could compel respect to his wishes, for he was Pharaoh. He closed the old idolatrous temples and built himself a new capital city, sacred to the cause to which he had devoted his life. That he was a great man and a profound thinker there is admittedly no doubt—but he was no sooner dead than all his reforms were abandoned, his memory vilified, and Egypt went back to her old ways. The monotheism of Moses has borne lasting fruit in the world and given us Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three great monotheistic faiths; the monotheism of Akhnaton failed to survive his own generation. Moses was led by the Holy Spirit; the Egyptian Pharaoh was not; that is the difference.

So it was with the great philosophers who came in the later centuries, a few hundreds of years before Jesus was born at Bethlehem. The world was growing rapidly in knowledge and experience; explorers were pushing to the ends of the earth and astronomers were scanning the heavens. At the time that Sennacherib took the Ten Tribes captive to Assyria, Zarathrusta, the Persian philosopher, was laying the foundations of a great religion upon his thesis of an eternal conflict between the powers of light and darkness, of good and evil. He had not attained to the truth as it was shortly to be revealed, but he had taken a great step forward. While Nebuchadnezzar was ruling in Babylon and Daniel was his Prime Minister, Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, was teaching men on the other side of the world that human nature is essentially

and inherently good; it only requires development to attain to righteousness and perfection. He was right—and yet how short he came of the truth, that only by means of a Redeemer shall man complete that development which alone can result in righteousness and perfection. Whilst Malachi the Hebrew prophet was declaring in impassioned tones that a day must come when God will burn as in an oven all that is evil and corrupt, that the true and good might emerge purified as gold and silver, the Grecian philosopher Socrates—between his cups—was extolling the inherent goodness and rightness of knowledge as all that is necessary to open to man a pathway to the stars; but man had sought for knowledge at the very beginning, had attained knowledge, and it had brought only suffering and death. All that Socrates had to say concerning the virtue and the necessity of knowledge was true, but knowledge of itself cannot save, and that is where the Socratean philosophy fell short and failed. These philosophers, and many like them, were searching for the truth, and each of them uncovered some fundamental principle that has its place in the great plan whereby men will come into harmony with God and remain in harmony with him, but they all, without exception, failed to give real illumination to men because they did not know Christ, and had not heard, and failed to realise, that in addition to all that man can find out for himself and all that he can do for himself, he needs the saving power of God, in Christ, as expressed in the knowledge of the Gospel. Without that, and without faith in the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, there is no salvation.

So, at last, and in the fulness of time, Paul the Apostle stood upon Mars Hill at Athens and announced, in a tone of authority never before voiced either by prophet or philosopher, and with a knowledge transcending the loftiest heights to which either had in time past attained, that the world's ignorance was now to be dispelled by a plain and authoritative statement of the Divine Plan; the beclouded minds of men were to be illumined by a proclamation and a calling as clear and definite as it was commanding and obligatory. The Times of Ignorance God had "seen beyond"; now that which He had foreseen had come to pass and in the light of the triumphant life and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ He called upon all men to forsake their former ignorance, to heed his words, and repent.

(To be continued)

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

A story of the
First Advent

One of the early incidents of our Lord's ministry was his discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, a discourse which both set the pattern of his future work and would, had Jesus been no more than an ordinary man, have terminated that ministry before it fairly began. Received at first with approbation, his concluding words so incensed the worshippers that they rushed him to the top of a precipice outside the town, intending to cast him down; by the exercise of that mystic power which was his He turned and made his way through the crowd and defeated their intention.

It is a little difficult to piece together the four accounts of Jesus' movements immediately after his baptism. It seems certain that he made his way to Galilee but not at first to his home town of Nazareth. For a little while He visited other places in Galilee, arousing some interest in his message and performing some miracles. During this short time came the wedding at Cana with its turning of water into wine. Then he went to Nazareth and attended the synagogue there on the first sabbath of his stay. Following the sequel to his discourse he went down to Capernaum on the lakeside and never went back to Nazareth.

On that memorable sabbath Jesus entered into the synagogue and was apparently received as a well-known and respected member of the community. He must of course have been accepted for many years as a young man singularly proficient in the knowledge and exposition of the Scriptures and he had probably officiated as reader many times before. It is possible that none of the local townspeople had heard anything about his recent baptism in Jordan and they would have received him on exactly the same basis as in the past. And when, being called to read, he repeated to them the well-known words of the prophet Isaiah, words which spoke in glowing terms of Israel's coming glory, there would be much nodding of heads in approval.

"*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*" he read "*because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" (Luke 4. 18-19). Familiar words; they

had heard them many times before, but today there was a difference. An air of expectancy pervaded the synagogue. "*The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.*"

"*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" That announcement must have caused a good many to sit up. Accustomed as they were to hearing the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah expounded in public, this must have been the first time they had been told that the prophecy was even then in process of fulfilment. The customary exegesis looked forward to a future day when the Roman occupation of Judea would be ended by the victorious advent of Messiah, a king ruling in righteousness and riding to victory in the majesty of his power, crushing all opposition and exalting Israel to the head of the nations. The rest of the chapter, and the succeeding chapters, are eloquent on this theme, how that the Gentiles would become tributary to Israel and bring gifts, how the old desolations would be restored and the favour of God be turned toward his people as in the days of old. Here was a theme with which any preacher could always command the attention of his audience, present woes being temporarily forgotten in the anticipation of that which was to come. The idea that the fond expectation was to be realised in their own day and time must have awakened instant interest just as the same kind of declaration has done in every generation since that day.

Details of the sermon which Jesus preached have not been recorded. All that is known is that "*all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*" (Luke 4. 22). Up to this point his words could be unanimously approved, as they always are when a congregation has its own particular beliefs, prejudices and outlook endorsed from the pulpit. But Jesus had no intention of finishing on that note. He intended to complete the vision of Isaiah, to show how the glory of the Lord is to be revealed to all flesh, and all men all over the earth have the opportunity of covenant relationship with the God of Israel. The Jews of our Lord's day never failed to remember that their nation one day was to be exalted above the nations and become the blessed people of God but they had long since forgotten the

expressed purpose of that destiny, that they might be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. In that they become the prototype of practically every reform movement in the Christian church, starting off in genuine evangelical fervour to deepen individual spiritual life in close conjunction with intensive missionary endeavour in the promulgation of the Gospel to those who are still unreconciled to God. Invariably, before many generations have passed, the missionary spirit has largely died out and the movement crystallised into the unreasoning dogmatism of a sectarian club in which little possibility of further progress in the light remains.

It would seem as though the interest and enthusiasm of Jesus' hearers was not altogether without an ulterior motive. He himself anticipated a demand for the performance of some miracles. Whether this emerged from their fulsome praise of his discourse or was manifest in their attitude does not appear, but Jesus told them of his expectation that they were going to ask him some such thing. And as always, he had nothing but the stern word of reproof for those who thus manifested their lack of desire for the fundamentals of his mission. Jesus wrought many wonderful works but He did not come to earth for that purpose. He came to die for man's sin and by his life and death show to man the way by which man can be reconciled to God and ultimately fill his destined place in God's creation. The miracles of healing and other wonderful works were intended as examples, illustrations, of the wholesale work of healing and blessing He will conduct when his kingdom is set up at his Second Advent, when the glories of Isaiah's prophecies which He was then and there expounding should become realities. Jesus never refused a plea for healing, but He did not set out on a systematic campaign to heal all the diseased and crippled in Israel. He felt it necessary to stress this fact at the outset. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, he said, all suffering from the famine, but Elijah was only commissioned to relieve one and she was not even of the chosen people; she was a Gentile of Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha but the prophet was not sent to heal any of them but only Naaman a Syrian. And when the good people in the synagogue heard these things, they were filled with wrath.

Why the sudden change of feeling? There was probably a dual reason. Disappointment

and vexation that Jesus was not going to work any miracles to satisfy their curiosity, and rage that He should dare to suggest that God would bestow blessings on the hated Gentiles. These were incidents in their sacred writings which they preferred to forget. An all-Jewish Messiah who would pander to the national pride and use his powers exclusively for the benefit of Israel they would accept, but one who proposed to include the Gentiles and all nations in the scope of his benevolence they would not have. The meeting broke up in disorder as the congregation seized the one whom they had so lately been eulogising and rushed him outside the town to a place where in their insensate fury they would have hurled him to death from the precipice.

It seems that Jesus suffered them, unresistingly, until they came to the cliff. The record runs "*but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way*" (vs. 30). There is something here that is very similar to the incident in Gethsemane at the close of his life when his would-be captors fell back from him upon his declaration of identity, and fell to the ground. There must have been such times when the majesty of his Divine origin shone out through the veil of his flesh and caused men to realise that they had to do with one who was more than a son of Adam. So here, the maddened crowd must have fallen suddenly quiet, the rough hands loose their grip, the cries of anger lapse into silence, as the crowd looked upon the young man they had known from childhood, and beheld something in him they had never seen before. Perhaps in that moment conviction came to some of them that the words they had just listened to were words of truth, unwelcome though they had been.

So far as is known, Jesus never went back to Nazareth. His rejection by the townspeople was utter and complete. According to Mark's account, he could do no mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them. Capernaum became his headquarters for a while and that town probably became the home of Mary and the rest of the family. James, the eldest son of both Joseph and Mary, was grown up by now and probably assumed the duties of head of the family, so leaving Jesus free to pursue his ministry wherever it might take him. It is significant that none of his disciples came from Nazareth. None of his old time friends, the companions of his youth, believed in him enough to throw in their lot with him. It was chiefly from

among the fishermen of the lakeside that he found the men who were to labour and suffer with him. Pride, and prejudice, and bigotry and national arrogance, blinded the men of Nazareth so that they missed the opportunity

they and their nation had been anticipating for centuries. They rejected their most illustrious citizen, and the opportunity never came their way again.

SPIRITUAL DROUGHT

*A lesson from the
life of King David*

According to the heading given to it in our Bible by the translators, the fifty-first Psalm is the expression of David's sorrow and penitence after his double sin of adultery and murder. In trying to arrive at a proper understanding of this penitential Psalm, we should not forget that prior to writing it David had been in an impatient attitude for many months. It was after the Prophet Nathan's visit and the enormity of his guilt had been brought home to him that his pent up, deliberately repressed feelings found vent in this spate of self-condemnatory words—words which have been the medium of repentance for countless thousands of men and women, in more recent times, when throwing themselves upon the mercy of Almighty God.

Scoffers have ridiculed the Bible, and the God of the Bible, for setting forth before men such stories as this from the life of David. "This," they say, "is a fine specimen of a man to be a man after God's own heart—an adulterer and a murderer. If this was living after God's own heart, well, such a God might have been all right for those far off, barbaric times, but He is no God for these enlightened days."

This black spot, the blackest spot in his whole life, shows us that David was a man of like passions with other men, and that in unguarded moments the black depths of his heart showed how even the best of human kind was fallen in sin. It shows the truth of Paul's dictum that "that there is none righteous". The inclusion of such a story in Holy Writ only tends to show that the Divine Author has drawn a true picture of man when He said that the heart of man was desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. It is included, not because God approved of the sin, but for the very opposite reason, because God disapproved and strongly condemned it, and that it might serve as a model of God's clemency and grace to the thousands who should later be overtaken by their sins and should repent and confess their weaknesses and shortcomings. It stands on

record as a permanent testimony that man's life is barren and cheerless when earth-born clouds intervene between God and his earthly creatures, and illustrates the truth of Jesus' words that "man does not live by bread alone" but only when in touch with the words of the Lord.

It was after the birth of Bathsheba's child that Nathan came to David, to tell him that the death of the child was to be part of the punishment for his sin. The better part of a year must therefore have elapsed between the sin and the deep repentance for it of which this Psalm is the expression. What had been going on during this time? What had David been doing all this while? The Scriptures do not say directly, but certain hints are given which help somewhat. We may form some conception from our own particular experiences of sin not immediately repented of—of sin never honestly faced, never dragged out into the light of God's presence and there confessed. David was trifling with his better self; playing tricks with his conscience. He was substituting diligence in his duties as king and magistrate—his duty to man—for his duty to God. He heard and settled the disputes and grievances which came before him as Israel's chief judge (as did Solomon later when asked by the two women to decide whose child was living and whose dead); he received petitions addressed to the throne; he went up to the house of God to worship; he endeavoured, no doubt, to conform to and administer the law with even greater diligence. This we realise from his hot anger against the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb to feed his visitor, as Nathan unfolded the parable.

It is likely that he had reasoned within himself again and again that he had done nothing more than eastern monarchs did at any time they pleased. Was it not the commonest thing for an Oriental despot (and was not David a despot within limits) to send for any woman they pleased to become a member of their

harem, and to get rid of any man who stood in their way either by violence or strategy or both? "What more have I done than is done every day by my fellow sovereigns?" David might say and think, and would he not make recompense for it by more attention to the administration to the law in coming days, throwing his protection over the weak and oppressed; the rich man should smart for his theft of the ewe lamb when brought before his tribunal.

David had lulled his conscience to sleep so much that he did not recognise his own portrait in the parable of the prophet while it was being narrated to him. Not for an instant did he realise that his own conduct had been *much more reprehensible, wicked and hard-hearted* than the rich man. All these months he had been hushing up his sin, trying to silence his conscience by his activities (his war with the Ammonites for instance) until the Spirit of God winged those four words, "*Thou art the man*" to his guilty, restless heart. It was with David as it must be with all who leave their misdeeds unconfessed, he was restless and wretched. Listen to his own words in Psalm 32. 3 and 4, written also about this time, "*When I kept silence my bones waxed old . . . Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is like the drought in summer.*" There was such a hard, dry, stiff, formal life all these months, so unlike the constant play and uprush of spiritual emotions in his earlier and happier days. His conscience was asleep, his soul was in chains, his creative genius was stifled, his life was like a summer's drought.

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

You who read this, if the joys of the Lord which once you knew have been lost; if your soul is in chains, will you not ask yourself the reason why? Is there some dread spectre in your life, some weakness unconfessed, unrepented of? Is there some earthborn cloud intercepting a Father's smile and blotting out

the sunshine of his love?

Read the story of David, and profit thereby, for God was very gracious to him though He left him not unpunished. It is not necessary that there should have been anything so flagrant as David's sin to shut the windows of heaven over one. Spiritual dryness and lethargy can come about by sheer neglect, or it can be the result of some little "incident" where we could not have our own way, and hence we have failed to assemble together, and slowly the drought has crept over our souls. No stimulus from fellowship, no iron sharpening iron, no occasional songs of praise to lighten the load on one's shoulders, and later on, no joy of exultation in the morning and evening prayer, till we shrink from the bending of the knee—and then, all the little weaknesses unconfessed and unforgiven. Then the heaven becomes as brass and there is no rain for us. So David's experience became our experience. Spiritual dryness, spiritual lethargy, spiritual deadness, the loss of "the first love," the loss of the response to the things that once stirred the soul. How tragically sad and how prevalent!

God grant to all such a message from some faithful Nathan, which may start the tears of repentance flowing and bring down the showers of blessing to end the drought and cause the blooms and fragrance of restored verdure to shoot forth again in the heart.

Illustrating how rapidly God's command to "breed abundantly" (Gen. 8. 17) after the Flood could be obeyed by the lower creation is the fact that two rooks imported into Australia in the year 1900 increased to half-a-million by 1950, and now present a major problem to farmers. * * *

Those who have tasted of the Lord's grace, those who have come to realise his favour as *better than life*, and who have joyfully laid upon his altar every earthly good thing, and hope and ambition, rejoice to tell the good tidings to others; they rejoice to tell forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. The message is too good to keep; they not only do not require to be hired to tell it, but they are willing that the telling of it, and the enjoying of God's favour in connection with the telling, shall cost them something—cost them trouble, cost them money, cost them the loss of earthly friendships, cost them the straining if not the breaking of some home ties, cost them the frown of the world and of churchianity; yes, they rejoice, saying, in the language of the Prophet, "He hath put a new song into my mouth, even the *loving-kindness* of our God!"

A FAMINE IN THE LAND

A talk for
the times

"The days come that I will send a famine in the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8. 11).

That old Hebrew prophet was a far-sighted man. He knew that the course of history could end only in one way; the continued ignoring of God would at last lead to almost complete ignorance of his Word. The prophets of old had great reverence for such of the written Word as existed in their days; there was not much of it but what there was became the rule of life by which they lived and the infallible authority on which they based their claim to speak. And some of the prophets—perhaps a score or so—added to the words of the Book for the greater benefit of those who were to come after them. Amos, the herdsman, who spoke and probably wrote the words quoted above, was one such and in his burning denunciation of the evils which were rampant in his own lifetime we see a vivid picture of the condition of world society to-day.

"When the Son of Man cometh," asked Jesus of his disciples, "shall he find faith on the earth?" His own words upon other occasions leave us in no doubt as to his own answer to his question. He did not expect to find faith on the earth. In the wondrous wisdom of the Divine Plan his return to earth in the power of his Second Coming was to be deferred until the world in the outworking of its own wilfulness and selfishness had come near to self-destruction. That would imply that the world would by then very largely have rejected God and turned aside from his Word. Jesus might equally truthfully have said that the Son of Man *could* not come until faith would no longer be found in the earth. So it has been in the outcome. Events in the political and commercial and social worlds for nearly a century past have so abundantly fulfilled the Biblical foreviews that there is no doubt the end of the Age is upon us, the time of God's intervention in the affairs of the nations. Concurrently with this the very same period has witnessed a steady decline in religious belief and faith and an increasing ignorance of God's Holy Word.

A strong light was cast upon this fact ten years ago when the "News Chronicle" conduc-

ted a "Gallup Poll" directed to testing general knowledge of the Bible by finding out how many people could name all or any of the writers of the Four Gospels. One would think those four names are among the most familiar in the English language. At one time they were, but now—apparently—no! Of all the people questioned—supposed to represent a fair sample of all levels and classes of the population—three out of five could name all four Evangelists; one out of four could not name any. The figures for the younger people are more revealing. Of all questioned under the age of 29, four out of five could not name a single one. Four out of five of the present generation, had either never heard of, or at any rate, did not know the Biblical connection of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

There is nothing really new about this. Similar conditions have been observed and recorded for quite a few years. Despite the optimistic claims of some ecclesiastical dignitaries—quite sincere claims, in most cases at least—and the ponderous utterances of certain politicians clad in the mantles of would-be Christian oracles, the fact does remain that the majority of people to-day are appallingly ignorant of the basic facts of Christianity, the nature of the Christian life, and the contents of the Word of God. Whatever may be the reason, and opinions differ, that is the position.

Now the Hebrew prophets, when they in their own days found themselves faced with a situation such as this—which was, relatively speaking, quite often—never hesitated to draw public attention to the fact and to denounce it; but they also never failed to go on to the remedy. They did not interpret their mission as one of denunciation or condemnation only. They set themselves up as teachers of the Word that had become all but universally despised, and out of that Word they brought all the assurances and the warnings that God had beforetime caused to be written concerning the inevitable consequences of continuance in such wrongful course. They declared on the authority of that Word the way to be taken whereby men might change their course and inherit, instead of disorder and unhappiness, the peaceful and prosperous state of order and happiness which awaits any people that attempts to order its life in

accordance with, and holding in due recognition, the written Word of God.

The teaching of those prophets was positive, even to the verge of dogmatism. "If ye do this, ye shall If ye do that, ye shall not The Lord God will" and so on. There is no doubt or indecision in what they had to say. They were men who had already learned well the principles of the Word that was in them and had applied those principles to the practical problems of life and knew how they worked. It was on that account they were able to stand before the people and speak, as did our Lord at a later date, "as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

The reason that we in our day enjoy so clear and detailed a view of the Divine Plan, particularly in its dispensational and prophetic features, and understand so much as we do concerning the details of the Time of Trouble and the Kingdom that is to succeed it, is because these men were so clear in their own understanding and so definite in what they committed to writing. The work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds has given us a sharp, well-defined understanding of the Plan of God that need not admit of uncertainty or doubt. We, in our turn, have succeeded to the inheritance bequeathed by faithful men of God through all preceding generations. "*Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours*". The question that comes up and requires an answer is—What are we going to do with it?

Here, on the one hand, are the teachers, qualified both by acceptance into the body of disciples and the possession and understanding of the sacred Scriptures to teach the ignorant out of the Word. There can be no reasonable doubt about that. Christians who have made themselves thoroughly familiar with the Word of God and its basic principles, and especially with the philosophy of the Divine Plan, how that God created man for life and happiness and is actively working through the ages to attain that end and will surely achieve his purpose, are the qualified teachers of this generation. Of course there are many, actively identified though they may be with some one or other of the Christian denominations, whose consecration to God and dedication to his service has not been so wholehearted that they have attained this position; or perhaps they are not consecrated or dedicated at all; in either case they come within the category described by the writer to the Hebrews as those who "*when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need*

that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Heb. 5. 12). But we are not concerned with such at the moment; the important thing is that those who are consecrated to God and are diligent students of his Word, and have learned to apply it in their own lives and its principles in their daily conduct, are fitted by virtue of that fact to be teachers of the Divine Word to the generation in which they live.

So much for that side of the picture. On the other hand there is the colossal ignorance to which reference has been made. The word of Micahiah, the prophet of King Ahab, comes to mind. "*I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep having no shepherd. And the Lord said unto me, 'These have no shepherd, let them go every man to his own place.'*" Things are like that to-day. There is a famine in the land, not of bread, nor of water, but of the hearing the word of the Lord. What is our mission in the face of this situation?

Quite evidently, to teach! That was the primary commission given to the Church. "*Teach all nations*"! The present ignorance of God and of his Word is a challenge to all who love God and know his Word to plan very deliberately for the extension of knowledge on every aspect of that Word. This at once involves the consideration of the message that is to be proclaimed, and the type of person to whom it is to be proclaimed.

The general answers to these questions are already well known and very generally agreed. Apart from those few who understand the will of God for them to require attention to their own spiritual development to the complete exclusion of any imparting of their faith and knowledge to the "world" around them, it is probably almost universally agreed that our mission is to preach Christ whenever and wherever we can, and to exclude from our evangelistic efforts none who are prepared to listen. That, at any rate, is how it usually works out in practice. At the same time it should be recognised that at this present stage in the world's history—or in the outworking of the Divine Plan, which is much the same thing—during this present "Gospel Age", the fact that God is inviting and selecting the members of the "Church" who are to be his agents of world redemption in the next Age means that emphasis should be placed upon Scriptural teaching regarding the "High Calling". Those most likely to respond to this

will be men and women who already have a measure of Christian faith and belief and who want to learn more, to progress into something better than they have yet attained. These are obviously more likely to appreciate and perhaps accept the deeper truths of the "High Calling in Christ Jesus", the principles of Divine dealing which guarantees to every man a full, fair opportunity for life, and the appeal of the death of Jesus on their behalf, than those who have never so much as heard of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. To increase the number of "would-be" disciples who become "all-the-way" disciples is to increase and so help to complete the force that God is preparing for future world conversion and this surely is working on right lines and co-labouring intelligently with God. The detailed substance of our message, therefore, should be such as will appeal to those who already have some faith in God and his Word and want to increase their measure of belief. The message should be built very largely around definite expository teaching of Bible themes and this, strangely enough, is one of the foremost remedies advocated by some leading ministers for the present condition of indifference and frustration.

Another important necessity is to see that the way is not made too easy. The tendency of this modern age is to make all things superlatively easy for everyone. Whether it is in the realm of labour-saving devices in the home, a library service that provides information on every conceivable subject for no conceivable purpose, or a State welfare system that lifts every vestige of personal, parental and filial responsibility from the shoulders of John Citizen and make those interests the responsibility of the State, the universal appeal is "take this, see how easy it is". God's way is not like that, and the Christian way was not intended to be easy, and in fact is not easy, and no good can come by pretending to people that it is. Our message should stress the fact that its acceptance will cost something. The life into which it leads and the benefits it brings will be found well worthy of the cost; but a price there is and that has to be paid. It is sometimes suggested that those who take their stand on the Lord's side will be preserved from all physical harm in the Armageddon that is to come; a variant of the belief is that the "saints" will be "gathered home" in order to escape the tribulation which is coming upon the earth. Now whatever of truth there may be in that understanding of the Divine intentions it is

quite immoral and unscriptural to hold out that kind of inducement for people to accept Christianity, and, with it, Christ. The early Christians certainly had no such bait held out to them. They accepted Christ knowing full well it might very easily mean wild beasts in the arena, the stake, or worse, as in many cases it did.

Our task, then, is to relate our understanding of Scripture and of the Divine Plan to the state of present day knowledge—and the pageant of current events, that those who are already half-way in their progress to God may find in this presentation that for which they are looking. So doing, we shall be using our energies and abilities and resources to the best advantage, like the man in the parable who by the more judicious use of his "pound" eventually gained ten pounds. It would seem, anyway, that his zealous endeavours in the matter had resulted in his attainment of qualifications for future administration to a much higher degree than had the endeavours of his fellows, for he was made ruler over ten cities, and the Lord would not have done that had he not been fitted for the task. The man who hid his talent in the earth did not succeed in obtaining the rulership over even one! The timorous, the cynical—and the condemnatory—man will stand aloof from the activity inseparable from the promulgation of such a message, but will be quite satisfied with the ultimate results. All are acquainted with the weak-in-faith or pessimistic brother who surveys the empty chairs and proclaims aloud his opinion that the meeting will be a fiasco; how pleased he is, as pleased as any of the rest, when the unexpected happens and the hall is full. So it will probably be with those of our brethren who feel that Jezebel has slain all the prophets and pulled down all the altars and only we few are left; the Lord may well bring into his fold some whom we would have considered most unlikely ones, and perform a work, even at this late stage of the Age's history, which we might have deemed improbable. When all that can be said has been said, it remains true that there is a famine of the Word of the Lord in the earth, and if we are anything like the first disciples whom we claim to take for our teachers and exemplars, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard".

Christians often refer to Israel as the "Holy Land". How many realise that the prophet Zechariah first gave it that name; see Zech. 2. 12.

BAPTISED FOR THE DEAD

A note on
1 Cor. 15. 29-30

"What shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" (1 Cor. 15. 29-30).

A strange passage! The majority of commentators are frankly uncertain of its meaning. There is really no evidence that baptism in proxy for the dead was practised by the Early Church, despite the efforts made by some to substantiate the surface interpretation of the words. In any case, even if any such practice could have been shown to have existed, it has no Scriptural foundations whatever, and would in fact directly contradict the Scripture doctrine. The baptism of a believer is a symbol of something already having taken place in his own heart, his own intelligent and deliberate consecration of himself to God's service and discipleship of Christ. *"We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Rom. 6. 4). No person can be baptised into Christ's death on behalf of another; the symbol performed under such circumstances would lose all significance. It is in the highest degree unlikely that the Early Church during St. Paul's own lifetime would have developed so variant an understanding of the matter, and even if they had that Paul himself would countenance it in this manner.

Perhaps the key lies with the final sentence "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour". The argument is that those who are "baptised for the dead" base their position upon the veracity of Christ's resurrection. If He has not risen again, says Paul, why are we baptised for the dead and stand in jeopardy. Is it possible that he was thinking of the theme exemplified in his own words to the Romans already quoted and recalling that those who are baptised into Christ's death are in fact being baptised on behalf of a dead world. The purpose of our being "buried with Christ by baptism into death" is that we might "rise to walk with him in newness of life." The purpose of that new life—at any rate that part of the purpose which is of the most immediate importance—is that the faithful of all ages, thus baptised and risen with Christ, may ultimately be glorified

together with him and associated with him in his future work of blessing all nations of earth and reconciling "whosoever will" to God. The real hope of the world lies in the final opportunity for life which will be afforded them by the Church in association with her Lord in the days of the Messianic Kingdom. In a very real sense, then, those who are now baptised are baptised for the dead world and will one day extend the fruits of their baptism to that dead world. Every baptised Christian stands "in jeopardy" every hour, in danger of being enticed away from his lofty calling by the wiles of the Evil One. Not until his call to "be with Christ" at the end of the way can he expect to hear the words "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord" and until then he stands in jeopardy. Why is he thus baptised, and why does he stand thus in jeopardy, asks Paul, if in fact Christ has not risen and no basis exists for the accomplishment of human salvation as promised in the Divine Word? The whole underlying principle of the Christian calling, the whole reason for the existence of Christians, is not that Christ lived and inculcated a new code of conduct, but that Christ died, and rose again, and is exalted to the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. And when He thus comes, to judge the nations righteously, we, who have been baptised for the purpose, will be with him to share in that work of judgment. *"Know ye not"* says Paul in another place *"that the saints shall judge the world."*

But it is not till we think of each individual Christian man and woman as God would have each one to be, that we come within sight of the wonderful range of this word and promise, "He that overcometh." It is there in this one or that who has not allowed the pressure of the world to prevail, who has not let the salt of a consecrated personality lose its savour, or the light of a steady witness to Christ grow dim, who has used the God-given talents, be they ten or five, or even only one, as God would have them used, that the answer to the message of the risen Christ is given.

"NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME"

A reflection on
Acts 20: 22-24

What wonderful words are these which fell from the lips of the unconquerable Apostle as he bade his Ephesian brethren what he thought was a last goodbye! All the way along on his journey to Jerusalem, the brethren endowed with the gift of prophecy testified that bonds and imprisonment awaited him when once he arrived in that heart-hardened city. And brethren who loved him with all the warmth of their passionate hearts, pleaded and begged of him not to proceed further on his journey,—knowing full well that he did so at the peril of his life. Possibly they pressed him to realise how necessary it was for the "works" sake, and the "brethren's" sake, that he should not unduly jeopardise his life too much, for should he fall there was none to replace him in the whole wide world. Or they may have tried to assure him that it was not cowardice to keep away from that city of peril, but the very essence of wisdom instead. But neither entreaty nor persuasion could produce effect on his indomitable soul. What if bonds did await him—or scourgings; or persecution? He had faced all this before. Long before this hour of his life, he had been scourged five times by the Jews, with the utmost rigour of the law—forty stripes save one—thrice he had been beaten by Roman rods; once he had been stoned and left for dead; and yet in it all, the Lord had never forsaken nor forgotten him! How very truly he had lived to realise and experience the truth of those vivid words spoken concerning him by Jesus to Ananias while Paul lay in his darkened room at Damascus "*I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*" (Acts 9. 16).

And he had suffered, without murmuring or complaining; without losing one jot of his resolute tenacity, or unwavering determination. Search the records of the New Testament, or of the early Church, or of the entire Church from beginning to end, and no more thrilling and inspiring catalogue of willingly-borne suffering is found anywhere to excel (even if to equal) the record he sets out when writing the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter eleven. And this terrible list had befallen him already prior to this journey to Jerusalem, on which he was now bent. To this list must be added those afflictions that came to him in Jerusalem, in Cæsarea and in Rome

for some ten years more.

The Lord Jesus knew his man; for He told the same Ananias ". . . *he is a chosen vessel unto me*". He was a man of granite, unyielding as a granite bastion against which the waves of persecution could make no impression. In like manner as it was said of Moses "*he endured as seeing him who is invisible*" so Paul always had the clear perception of his Master's unseen presence, and in this he rested, and was strong.

Hence, when the testimony was several times repeated that bonds and imprisonment awaited him, and when to the repeated prediction there was added the ardent tear-bedewed entreaties of his dearest friends, it was no easy matter to keep his face "set like a flint" to go forward to Jerusalem. Almost to the gates of Jerusalem this foretelling of bonds and imprisonment awaited him; for arriving at last at Cæsarea, again a certain prophet, Agabus, gave a dramatic emphasis to it by binding himself with Paul's girdles. "*So shall they do to its owner at Jerusalem.*" And then the whole assembly, with tears and fervent solicitations, besought him not to proceed further on the fateful journey.

"*What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?*" asks Paul. Man of granite though he was, there was a heart beneath that inflexible exterior as tender as a child's! Their tears touched him to his depths, and for their tears, he too could return tears of affection, but . . .

He had undertaken this mission—bound in the spirit—feeling it to be the Will of God; and that being so, neither the ferocious hatred of his enemies nor the ardent love of his friends could swerve him from his predetermined course. "I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." "*I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me there. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus . . .*" (Acts 20. 22-24).

Strange enigma! Wonderful paradox! Bonds, afflictions, tribulations, imprisonment,—sufferings of all kinds—and even death—

yet he looked forward to it all with "Joy". What an inexplicable intoxication it is to have the love of Christ in the heart at a white-hot glow! How irrational it all seems when judged by ordinary standards. Seeking suffering and courting execration, and finding "Joy" in it!

That is just what comes of having in the heart that living vitalised faith in the power and presence of Christ! It was no mere theoretical acknowledgment of Christ Jesus that led to that pain-hunger! It was not just the admission of the historic fact that Jesus of Nazareth had lived and died in Jerusalem that steeled the heart to all that fearful outlook and yet gilded the darkness ahead with cloud-fringes of joy and exultation. No mere academic recollection that that same Jesus had even been raised from the dead, to procure our justification, would have kindled a consuming fire within the soul, which no torrents of persecution or pain could extinguish! It was only the inwrought assurance that on every step of the journey, from Corinth to Philippi—from Philippi to Cæsarea, from Cæsarea into that howling den of fanaticism which was Jerusalem—an unseen, but ever-present companion; closer than a brother, warmer than a lover, more tender than a mother, stronger than an army; entering into every experience of every moment of every step of the way. Never a thought, but it was permeated with Christ; never a word, but it was saturated with the power of his Lord,—never a longing, but that it reached up to the Jesus who had redeemed and rescued him.

Conviction, assurance, persuasion; that was the material out of which the chain was made that linked him to a living, loving Christ. And with Christ in his life, no enemy or persecutor mattered!

All the long years of his Apostleship had led up to this. The fruits of all those years had been gathered, and he had grown strong thereon. A hundred times he had faced death; but with Christ at hand he had smiled at the dread monster. His faith and assurance and conviction fed itself on the threats of enemies, and the intimidations of his foes!

Happy indeed the man who has reached this stage of growth in the stature of Christ! "My peace I give unto you" said Jesus. Paul had it. His own lips later came to say "the peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts". And it kept Paul. Rest, peace, joy, exultation, within; bonds, tribulations, prison-cells, death, with-

out; yet the power that worked within, made him more than conqueror over all that opposed without.

It is not given to all to climb the heights, nor to plumb the depths of rest and peace and joy which the Apostle knew. We are not all made by nature as he was. We could not fight single-handed so often as he did, yet thanks be to God, we have the same Lord and Master just as embracingly near and as tenderly interested as Paul had. He is the same loving Jesus to us to-day as to his "Chosen Vessel" long ago. We have the same truths, and the same High Calling to thrill our hearts which carried that unfaltering Witness over all his stormy way. We have the same "grace to help" in every time of need. God has not changed, and He is not one whit less heedful of us than of Paul. Christ has not altered, and he is never farther from us than from his great Apostle. Remember these things to-day when this thing or that comes in to assail our faith. When subtle suggestions or clever deductions come along, and call in question the facts and experiences upon which our convictions have been built, let us say "None of these things shall move me"! When attempts are made to prove our foundations wrong, and to unsettle our assurance in the things we have learned, let us "stand fast in the faith" unmoved and unmovable, knowing of whom we have learned. It is not the physical sufferings—the bonds and imprisonment—which menace our well-being and salvation to-day. Our danger arises in being moved away from the assurances to which our faith has been moored these many years. Growth and development from the old truths are to be expected, but when it comes to casting this and that of our earlier assurances overboard, there is risk and danger to us. Unloading the cargo which has given ballast to our boats is a perilous thing. Thousands there are in the world to-day who threw their rubbish overboard, as they thought, and have found to their sorrow that they have nothing left. Let us hold fast that which we have, and determine that none of these things shall move us from our conviction and rest of peace in the heart, determined that nothing will intervene to deprive us of the comfort and companionship of Paul's Lord and Master, who is our Lord and Master too. It is still conviction, assurance, and persuasion that is the material out of which salvation is made, and he or she who retains these, will never falter or fall by the way.



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 38, No. 7

OCT./NOV., 1960

Published October 15th

Next issue December 1st

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who are genuinely interested, on request renewable annually and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4. 33).

It was because the early Christians in the first flush of their newly-established faith in the resurrected Christ found themselves all with one accord in one place that the power of the Holy Spirit was able to come upon them all collectively, and inspire them to go forth with supreme confidence that their message must surely conquer the world. We to-day know of a surety that, although the torch of faith has oft-times flickered uncertainly, and at times all but failed entirely, there has never lacked that nucleus of devoted followers who, as it were again receiving the Spirit from on high, have come forth from the upper room with faces transfigured, even as Moses coming down from the Mount bore on his features the visible reflection of the glory of God. Then why should we, of all people on earth to-day, hesitate to proclaim and practise the glorious truth that they who, fearing the Lord and speaking oft to one another, may by means of the very strength thus imparted, become an instrument in his hand to effect some further mighty triumph of faith. In our coming together we are forced to recognise that our God has not left himself without witnesses, that there yet remain the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. In our communion together the Spirit warms our hearts with that flame of sacred love which urges us with irresistible force to "lay down our lives for the brethren" and count no sacrifice too great if so be we may exemplify the teachings of He who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me" says Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, "Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the

posts of my doors". Here is the way by which we shall come forth as a people charged with a message to this generation—the road of day-by-day advancement in understanding of the revelation of God. We who now live need a message that will answer the questions and solve the problems of to-day. That message we have, for the Divine Plan, testified "in due time" even though known and expressed only "in part" is sufficient to satisfy the mind and the heart of every sincere enquirer. But to give it with power and effect, it is necessary that we ourselves should live the message—that as exponents of the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth we should in our own lives and fellowship give evidence of the transforming influence of the things we have heard and the life we have entered upon. To believe is not enough. To hold the true doctrine and to live in constant expectation of the Lord from Heaven will not suffice. To retire into a bigoted self-satisfaction with our own position before him and an indifferent attitude to the interests of the Kingdom to-day will never bring as a result those stirring words "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord". Here then is the call—to take our rightful place in this day as men with a Message; up-to-date, all-sufficient, the power of God unto salvation to all those that believe.

Gone from us

Sis. M. Busson (London)

Sis. M. Shaw (Glasgow)

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

5. God is Just

The thirty-fourth chapter of Job records Elihu's defence of the justice of God. Whatever may be the appearance of things; to whatever extent it may seem on the surface that Job's adversities were visited on him unjustly and that God is culpable in allowing them, it will yet be demonstrated that God is supremely just and that in the final outcome no man will be able to claim that he has been unfairly treated. Elihu is at pains to stress this fact, and rightly so, for it is of first rank importance that all who serve and honour God should have confidence in the justice of his dealings. Elihu commences therefore by appealing for the close attention of his companions. "*Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear to me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good*" (34.2-4). It is quite a masterly approach, giving no hint of the nature of his coming discourse, avoiding the mistake of plunging too soon into the crux of his argument, seeking first to arouse and fix his listeners' attention. There is stress laid also upon another most important factor, the natural dignity and responsibility of man. Although he is going to talk about the justness of God and the weakness of man in comparison, he starts off here by dwelling upon the duty of every man to make his own decisions according to his own lights, and act up to the knowledge and understanding he possesses, whether it be great or small. "*What is right let us choose for ourselves, let us know, among ourselves, what is good*". That is how Rotherham translates verse 4. Elihu is encouraging and exhorting his companions to use their God-given powers of free-will and self-expression to consider right and wrong, truth and falsehood, judgment and indecision, and take a stand firmly and intelligently on the right side—on God's side. The Almighty did not create men to be weak-willed puppets, virtually incapable of aught save automatic responses to influences or stimuli imposed from above. He made men to be kings in their own right, lords of terrestrial creation, intelligently and consciously taking their intended places in God's creation and espousing the right because of inward and understanding sympathy with that which is right. Of course it is not possible fully to reach that ideal whilst still under the dominion of

sin. Like Paul "the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do". (Rom. 7. 19). But the effort is worth while and produces good fruits. The day will come when the power of inherited sin shall be broken and the Devil, who is the god of this world (2. Cor. 4, 4) be bound that he may deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1-3). When that day comes every effort that any man has made in this present life to live nearer the standard God has set will have its reward in a position of closer approximation to the ultimate standard to which every man must attain before he can be adjudged worthy of everlasting life. So before talking to Eliphaz and the others about the manner in which Divine justice and judgment is displayed before men he tells them first that they themselves must use such powers as they may possess to reason for themselves concerning, and put into execution in their own lives, the principles of justice and judgment to the extent that they discern them and in accordance with the ability they possess. There is more than a modicum of truth in the old saying "the Lord helps those that help themselves" and although it is true that remission of sins and the blessing of salvation came through Christ and upon the basis of acceptance of Christ, every man is required and always will be required to testify the sincerity of his conversion and his allegiance by his endeavours to reach up to the standard which is set.

Now Elihu quotes Job's own words as basis for the development of his argument. "*For Job hath said, I am righteous; and God hath taken away my judgment . . .*"—perhaps Rotherham's rendering is better "*I am righteous, but God hath turned away my right, concerning mine own right shall I tell a falsehood? Incurable is my disease—not for any transgression*" (chapter 34. 5-6). It is certainly true that Job did talk like this and chapter 9 records his words in this strain. Conscious—perhaps too conscious—of his own integrity and innocence, the apparent unfairness of his affliction, he does seem to come perilously near to accusing God of injustice. And the younger man can see, what Job, with all his greater maturity of experience, evidently did not see, that the next step to harbouring thoughts against God is receptiveness to evil men's accusations against God. So Elihu proceeds "*What man is like Job? He*

drinketh in scoffing like water and is on the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity and to walk with lawless men". (32. 7-8 Rotherham). That was a pretty serious charge to lay at the door of Job, who held so high a reputation amongst men for his godliness and uprightness. It only goes to show how narrow is the dividing line between the outward aspect of a righteous and honourable life and the secret corrupting influences which can so easily and quickly destroy such a life. Here is Job, without doubt a righteous, clean-living, godly man, becoming so steadily broken down by his misfortunes that whilst he does not swerve one iota from his allegiance to God and his loyalty as God's servant, he does begin to doubt the inherent and absolute justice of God's dealings. And in so doing he fails to realise that that very doubt could be the first step towards sympathy with the ungodly and unregenerate. "*On the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity*". It is a fine phrase but a terrifying one. Not yet a worker of iniquity; not yet disloyal to God; not yet keeping company with God's enemies,—but because of that nagging doubt, he is "on the way" so to do. "*For he hath said*" Elihu goes on "*it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*". (34. 9). Although those precise words do not occur in any of the recorded sayings of Job they are implicit in much that he does say, particularly in his wonderful impassioned final speech which occupies chapters 26 to 31 of the Book. It was not that Job accused God, not that he entered any kind of complaint against him; it was only that he registered his conclusion that God did not necessarily reward the righteous with felicity and the unrighteous with misery; as often as not it was the other way round, and he as a servant of God must accept the position even although every instinct cried out that it was wrong. That is where the situation comes home to us to-day with such force, for even now the same phenomena is observed and the same conclusion is drawn and voiced. Because oft times the righteous do suffer, because oft times the unrighteous do not reap retribution for their deeds, it is said that God is at best heedless and even some who are the servants of God feel sadly that they do not understand his ways. And all the time the only answer is that, despite all appearances and our own failure to perceive or understand the outworking of Divine dealings with man, God is just and God does, at the last, see to it that in every case, righteous and unrighteous alike,

man reaps what he sows. The Almighty is inherently just; there cannot be unrighteousness with God.

That is the tremendous truth which Elihu now proclaims with all the emphasis he can muster. Neither Job nor his three friends had reached this level of understanding and Elihu means to impress it upon them. "*Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding; far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity*", and then, as Rotherham has it "*For whatever any son of earth doeth, he repayeth him, and according to every man's course he causeth him to find*" (Ferrars Fenton has it "But man's actions return on himself, and the tracks of a man find him out") "*Nay verily, God will not condemn unjustly, nor the Almighty pervert justice*" (34. 10-12). Again and again does Elihu insist that God is just, inherently and absolutely just, and that no matter what the apparent injustice of any possible earthly situation or circumstance, we must still take our stand upon the justice of God and wait with patience until in due time the apparent anomaly is explained. His words reveal another facet of this truth also; that our own instinctive demand that righteousness shall reap the reward of eternal felicity, and sin be eventually eternally condemned, is a right instinct and a true instinct, and is well-founded in the basic constitution of the human mind, implanted at the first by God. "*I know*" says Solomon "*that it shall be well with them that fear God*" (Eccl. 8. 12). That knowledge rides high above all the philosophic debates and the endless arguments over the permission of evil and the effectiveness of Divine power over the Devil. It stands as a basic principle which can never be challenged or overturned; "*It shall be well with them that fear God*".

Now to buttress his argument Elihu interjects a word respecting the supremacy of God. The One whom he puts forward as the very embodiment of Justice, rewarding every man according to his deeds, from whose sight no good deed and no evil deed can possibly be hid, is the One who created all things and in whom all things subsist, the One without whom all things would cease to be. "*Who set him in charge of the earth?*" asks Elihu in rhetorical vein: "*Who appointed him the whole world?*" (34. 13 Rotherham). He waits not for the answer, for of course only one answer is possible, and so he goes on to the omnipotent power of the One whom he is

eulogising. "If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust (34. 14-15). Here we have the three elements of God's terrestrial creation, the three things which make man—the dust of the ground which constitutes his body, the animal breath, *nephesh*, which makes him a breathing, sentient creature, and the Spirit of God which is the vehicle of life, the channel of the Divine gift of life to man, and the power by which man lives. God has only to withdraw the life which only he can give, and the man returns

to dust. God has only to withdraw the Divine energy which has made this world what it is, and this whole terrestrial creation returns to its original chaos. The whole of creation depends on God, says Elihu, and its continued sustenance is only by the power of God. It goes on its orderly way and man goes through his pre-destined course of development, attaining at last, if he will, and if he profits aright by his experience, the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is in God that we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28). How can we then charge injustice to God?

(To be continued)

BALAAAM AND THE LAST DAYS

A note on
prophecy

There is a curiously modern ring about the story of Balak, king of Moab in the days of the Exodus, alarmed at the prospect of the Israelites conquering Canaan and perhaps absorbing his own land and people in the process. The Arab nations manifest a similar fear to-day; in a sense history is repeating itself on the very same territory. Balak tried to avert the threat by hiring Balaam the prophet of Baal-peor on the Euphrates to invoke Divine curses upon the invaders. Instead of concurring, Balaam, somewhat against his own will apparently, found himself obliged to declare the Divine blessing upon this people which had come out of Egyptian slavery, and after the manner of the prophets uttered this mystic saying which has had such an evident fulfilment through the ages. The prophecy in Numbers 24 indicates the downfall and destruction of certain nations with whom Israel was to be connected at various times during her history and this clear foreview of long distant future events goes far to stamp this arresting passage with the hall-mark of Divine authority.

"There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Num. 24. 17).

The A.V. translators thought that Christ was here referred to and gave Star and Sceptre capital letters but this is unjustified. The rest of the verse shows that it was King David to whom reference was made, for it was David who subdued Moab, although they did afterwards recover their independence for a while. The Moabite Stone, (now in the British Museum) states that they were again subdued by Omri of Israel, (circa 800 B.C.),

oppressed forty years, and revolted successfully once more under Mesha of Moab. This is confirmed by 2 Kings 1. 1 and 3. 4-5. They were eventually conquered by John Hyrcanus in 129 B.C. and merged in the Jewish State. It is an unwitting testimony to the antiquity of this passage that the emergence of a king in Israel, though yet five hundred years in the future, is likened to a "star out of Jacob" for in the ancient days when Balaam lived the cuneiform symbol for "king" and "star" was one and the same. A star was the symbol used to denote a king. "Children of Sheth" is properly rendered "sons of tumult" and is a poetic reference to the Moabites already mentioned—Sheth should not have been translated as a proper name.

"Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly." (vs. 18).

The Edomites in their Mount Seir were subdued by David, revolted under Solomon, (1 Ki. 11. 14) again under Jehoram and made themselves a king (2 Ki. 8. 20), defeated Amaziah (2 Ki. 14. 7) and Uzziah (2 Ki. 14. 22). After this they remained independent and although subdued by Hyrcanus in 125 B.C. never amalgamated with the Jewish people. True to the prophecy, they were not destroyed, but became a "possession". After Israel's dispersion in A.D. 73 they merged into the general Arabic peoples, their distinctive language perishing.

"Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever" (vs. 20).

The Amalekites occupied the "Negev" south of the Dead Sea at the time of the Exodus. Beside the heavy losses inflicted on them at

that time, Saul, five hundred years later, is said to have "utterly destroyed" them (1 Sam. 15. 2) this being confirmed by Josephus (Ant. 6. 7); but David twenty years later (1 Sam. 27) fought what was evidently a survival from that destruction, and the Simeonites in the days of Hezekiah, about 700 B.C. "smote" the remainder (1 Chron. 4. 23). After this they drop out of history except for the solitary mention of Haman at the court of Ahasuerus (Esth. 3. 1), thus literally "perishing for ever".

Vs. 22: "*The Kenite shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry thee away captive*". The word "wasted" (Heb. "baar") has the meaning to dwindle or be consumed. They gradually lessened in number, living with the Israelites, until they shared the latter's fate at the fall of Samaria and were carried away captive into Assyria (Asshur being the native name, Assyria the later Greek form). The Kenites were Midianites who shared Israel's fortunes from the Exodus onward, (Jud. 4; 11., 1 Chron. 2; 55; Jer. 35; 2) and after the Captivity never re-appeared as a distinct people.

Up to this point Josephus notes the fulfilment of Balaam's words. He says (Ant. 6; 5) that Balaam "*foretold what calamities would befall the several kings of the nations, and the most eminent cities, some of which were of old not so much as inhabited; which events have come to pass among the several people concerned, both in the foregoing ages, and in this, till my own memory, both by sea and by land. From which completion of all these predictions that he made, one may easily guess that the rest will have their completion in time.*"

Josephus' comment is a fair one; every item of Balaam's foreview, spoken at the time of the Exodus, more than a thousand years before Josephus wrote his history, had come to pass, with the exception of the final prediction expressed in verse 24. The records of history confirm this fact.

Vs. 24: "*And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.*" Chittim proper was the island now known as Cyprus, but the expression means more accurately any remote seafaring nation or country and by Rotherham is rendered "the coast of the isles". The doom of Asshur and Eber is to come by means of ships, coming from the West, from the unknown lands lying beyond what the early Hebrews called the "Great Sea"—the Mediterranean.

Asshur was one of the sons of Shem, progenitor of the entire Semitic race, which includes the entire Arabic world of to-day.

The descendants of Asshur spread over the Mesopotamian plains and westward into what is now Syria and Southern Turkey, and are represented now mainly by the Iraqis, Syrians and Armenians. Eber was great-grandson of Shem, and ancestor of those Semitic Arabs who to-day inhabit the vast sub-continent of Arabia between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf—Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, the Hadramhaut (the name of which is directly derived from one of Eber's grandsons and preserved in Gen. 10. 37)—The word "afflict" is *anah*, meaning to bring low, abase, humble. That for "perish", *abad*, has as its basic meaning the idea of being lost or wasted away. Balaam takes his stand here and looks into the far distant future. "*Who shall live when God doeth this?*" he asks in vs. 23. He sees the abasement and wasting of Asshur and Eber at the coming of ships from the west. The Arab world to-day is rich and powerful, thanks mainly to the fact of its territory constituting the richest oil producing area available in the Western world, but this same Arab world has one great and abiding fear—Israel. For two generations now the sons of Asshur and of Eber have been watching those ships from the west bringing the children of Israel back to their own land, the land of prophecy, the land promised to them nearly four thousand years ago by the Almighty Himself. Like Balak the king of Moab, looking upon the surging thousands coming out of Egypt, the Arab world to-day would fain forbid the entrance of these returning hosts to their inheritance. The hope is vain; just as the idolatry of Canaan vanished away before the purer faith of the newcomers, so the Crescent of Mahomet is doomed to be brought low and waste away before the Star of David, and eventually, the Cross of Christ.

All this lies in the future but its beginnings are visible now. The area of the present State of Israel covers less than 8000 square miles but the territory promised to Abraham amounts to nearly 240,000 square miles. That, incidentally, still leaves an area the size of Europe for the Arab peoples who do not affiliate with Israel. The wasting away of Asshur and Eber is probably not so much in terms of man-power as in the superseding of their political rule by that of the State of Israel and their religious faith—Islam—by the worship of the God of Israel, for this prophecy does not attain its final realisation until the apex of Israel's glory has come in the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

JOY TRIUMPHANT

In the days of the
Apostolic Church

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

That was the foundation of the Christian Church!

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

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

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

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

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

we live began, on that memorable day, in five things:—blessing, worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving. Those five manifestations of the human spirit in its stand before God are vital. First of all there is blessing; not only the blessing of God coming upon his people just as the blessing of Jesus came upon the few disciples standing before him on Olivet, but the consecrated, devoted attitude receptive to blessing. On our part we need to be in the condition of heart that has faith in the coming of the blessing, stands ready to receive the blessing, and rightly appreciates and esteems the conferred blessing. The Lord our God will bless us; of that there is no doubt, on the authority of his Holy Word; but we must needs be open and amenable to receive the blessing, apply it to ourselves and make manifest its fruits in our lives.

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

Thirdly, we travel the Christian way with

joy. As the little group made its way back into the city it did so "with great joy". If that ascent into heaven which they had witnessed a few minutes previously had been construed by them as involving a parting there would hardly have been this atmosphere of outward, ebullient joy, so obvious as to be recorded by the historian many years later. The conclusion is irresistible that they did not picture Jesus as having left them at all; He was still with them, only invisible, and He was going to be with them for the rest of their lives as they went about the fulfilment of his commission to preach the glorious gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and make disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. No wonder they were joyful.

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

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

Blessing; worship; joy; praise; thanksgiving. These five are the keynotes of Christianity, the hallmark of the Christian society, the evidences of Christian fellowship. "*The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but joy, righteousness and peace in the Holy Spirit.*" The extent to which we as a fellowship of Christian believers neglect or lose these things is the extent to which we lose our usefulness to God and our standing before God. If Paul, having all knowledge, but without love, could be nothing more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, how much more are we hollow and empty in the Lord's sight if, despite all our knowledge and all our protestations of loyalty to him, we have not succeeded in preserving these things in our own communal life? If it was by the power of such things that the early Christians challenged the evil forces of their day, and triumphed, how can we expect to challenge and triumph in our turn without them?

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

This then was the impelling power behind the marvellous achievements of the early Church; this the faith that enabled them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. It was their certainty, not that Christ *will* come, but that He *had* come, and that they were now engaged in a work of witness and in the building of a Church that could not have been commenced until He *had* come and could not be continued except by the power of his abiding presence. Their faith was rooted not so much in the promises of the future as in the events of the past. They believed in the coming of the Kingdom and in the Second

Advent of their Lord; but the theme which was so often upon their lips and which formed the mainspring of their lives was that which is best defined in the words of Paul "*Remember ye the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said . . .*" They had seen the Lord; He had been with them and set them this commission to fulfil; true, He now was invisible, but they knew that He was with them. "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age*" He had said, and they believed him. It was because they believed him that his power, the power of the Holy Spirit, was in them and manifested itself through them. So the early Church grew and multiplied, and men began to take notice of this new force that had come into the world. A small provincial movement became a world-wide community; what had seemed to be but a minor sect of Judaism developed into a universal Church.

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

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

The saintly John, last of all the Apostles, was not one whit behind his fellow-labourers in the constancy of his faith in this central fact. "*Abide in him*" he exhorted his spiritual

children "that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2. 20). There is a subtle shade of meaning here surely. "When He shall appear (*epiphaneo*—be manifested as it were openly) ye shall not be ashamed before him at his coming" (*parousia*—presence). Does this mean that if we abide in him we may have the joy of being aware of his presence even before his open manifestation? That is the thought of many and it harmonises well with those other Scriptures that tell of his coming for his own silently and unobserved, before the world at large are aware of his Advent. But at any rate there is no doubt in John's mind that in the meantime, while as yet they are to wait for his coming, they may and must "abide in him". That demands a recognition of his spiritual presence with them "even unto the end of the Age" which is quite a different thing from his invisible presence at the end of the Age.

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

It was Nehemiah the zealous patriot who coined the immortal phrase "*the joy of the Lord is your strength*" (Neh. 8. 10). He was calling his people then, as a certain famous statesman of our own day called our fellow-

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

There is far less danger in an enthusiastic layman talking heresy than in a dull cleric talking dogma.

(William Temple)

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Justification by faith is essential to salvation and justification comes in consequence of an intelligent belief in Jesus' sacrifice and an intelligent acceptance of that sacrifice. The head and the heart therefore run parallel with each other in this matter of receiving the "word of faith", and the act is manifested by outward confession in the hearing of others. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation". The same combination of head and heart is involved in the step which follows justification, consecration of the believer to be "dead with Christ". It must be the impulse of the *heart* which leads one to exclaim "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God" yet at the same time it is the reflective power of the *head* which "counts the cost" and decides that all things be well lost if by such a course of action one can "win Christ, and be found in Him".

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

5. "God now Commandeth . . ."

A Study in
Divine Purposes

The hour had struck! God, during the slow progression of many centuries of human history, had waited, inscrutable in his wisdom, long-suffering in his patience, for this hour. Men had gone headlong down the steep slope of ignorance and degradation into hopelessness; the judgments of God had come upon them, time after time, to cause their heedless minds to reflect. At definite points in the chain of years He had intervened in some marked manner—at the Flood, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the Babylonian captivity—that men might have opportunity to realise both his almighty power and his overruling providence. Great lights had flared up in the darkness of those slow years, lights that showed how the spirit of man, as yet without God and without hope in the world, was endeavouring to free itself from the encircling shackles of sin and death. Hammurabi in Babylon, Melchisedek in Canaan, Akhnaton in Egypt, stand out in the earlier years as men who knew not the God we know but sought for something better than they had. Zarathrusta and Buddha and Confucius and Socrates, great philosophers all, made contribution, each to his own age, but despite their greatness, ignorance remained. They lived before Christ came and they knew not God. Abraham and Moses and Daniel and a long line of worthy men in Israel had greater influence in the preparation of men's minds for the revelation that was to come because they were men of God and their lives were knowingly devoted wholly to his service. The nation of Israel, a royal priesthood, a separated people, became an example to the world of what God's Kingdom would be when in the fulness of days the Times of Ignorance were past. In spite of stubbornness and unbelief and hardness of heart, Israel was a flaming beacon in the darkness that preceded the dawn, a witness to men that God was not unmindful of their plight, that He was actively planning for their future good and would, in due time, reveal himself to them.

So, at last, when all men, not only in Israel but in all the Roman world, were in expectation, realising, by what means they knew not, that a great awakening was soon to come, there came the herald, the long-awaited messenger, stirring the hearts and minds of men with his thrilling cry.

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

The advent of John the Baptist was the signal that the Times of Ignorance had ended; the Light was about to break in upon the world of men. John was not that Light, but he was sent to bear witness of that Light, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. What glorious hope for all mankind is enshrined in that burning cry! Every man that cometh into the world! Not just those who happen to be born after the advent of Christ. Not only those who may happen to hear the message of Christ in this Age, those who are reached by the missionary zeal of Christ's disciples, a tiny fraction of all earth's millions despite the intensity of that zeal. *Every man that cometh into the world!* From the first unnamed and unknown children of Adam, back there many thousands of years ago, to the last heathen savage who is born in some impenetrable jungle and lives his life and dies there without anyone coming to him with the story of the saving power of Jesus. Every man is to be brought to the light, in the day which God has ordained shall follow the Times of Ignorance, the day in which God shall judge the world in righteousness by that one whom He hath ordained, Jesus Christ the Saviour of men.

So it was that "in the fulness of time" (Gal. 4. 4), when at last men, or at least a "remnant" of men, were ready for the message, Christ came. He came to bring "life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1. 10). He came that the people who walked in darkness might see a great light and that upon those who dwelt in the darkness of the shadow of death the light might shine (Isa. 9. 2). He came to reveal God's Plan in all its fulness, to clear away the mystery and doubt and perplexity that had for so long assailed the minds of men, and to point them to the way which God would have them take, the way that leads unto life.

Jesus came to reconcile men to God. There was no possibility of reconciliation before He came, for there was no basis upon which true reconciliation could be made. Man, imperfect, fallen, sinful, could not so much as stand in the presence of One who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, so the "way into the Holiest of all was not manifest while as the first taber-

nacle was yet standing." (Heb. 9. 8). Jesus came to open that way. It involved his own death, a willing sacrifice, the "*just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18), but that death did open the way for all of earth's millions, "*whosoever will*", to enter, in due time, into the eternal inheritance God has prepared for them (Matt. 25. 34). The coming of Christ and the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ was for all men, and upon the day that He ascended triumphantly on high, having led captivity captive (Eph. 4. 18) He began to set in motion the mighty forces which are destined to have spread their energy over the long span of three thousand years before they will have completed the achievement of the Divine purpose, the reconciliation to God of all who will, and the subjection of all things to Christ, that at his Name shall every knee bow, whether of things in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth (Phil. 2. 10).

It was Peter who saw so clearly that the keynote of the new dispensation was repentance. Gone for ever were the old archaic ideas that God could be propitiated by sacrifice, or bribed by means of ritualistic observance. God was not a Deity delighting in the suffering and misery of his creatures, neither was He a tyrant demanding abject and grovelling obeisance. He desires not sacrifice and burnt-offering but rather the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving . . . "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*" (Psa. 51. 17). Therefore Peter placed, as the first requisite for those who would come to God, repentance. Time after time he hammered out this theme. "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Repent, and be baptised" (Acts 2. 37-38). "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3. 19). Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16. 15). Peter interpreted that injunction in terms of repentance. The Light had come, the Times of Ignorance were past; all men could now rejoice in the knowledge of the glory of God, if they would. But entrance into that privilege could be gained only in one way—the way of repentance. And so Paul, years later, speaking to the men of Athens, telling them of the passing of those Times of Ignorance, could do naught else but confirm Peter's gospel. "*God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*"

This did not mean that God was calling all men at that time into the fellowship of the Church. True, the invitation was extended to

all, and all who would exercise the faith and devotion necessary to present themselves in whole hearted consecration to God would have been accepted, as indeed some three thousand were accepted in the very first day (Acts 2. 41). But God knew and had provided that for the first two thousand years only a few, relatively speaking, would in fact come to him and become his; for the many the more intense work of the third thousand years, the Millennium, would be necessary. That does not affect the fact that on the Day of Pentecost the active work of reconciliation of man to God was begun, that it has progressed without intermission ever since, and that it will progress without break or interruption until all mankind save the incorrigible have accepted the Divine standards and come into harmony with God. The transition from the Gospel Age to the Messianic Age, the onset of the great time of Trouble, the ending of the "Call of the Church" and the going forth of the Law of the Lord from Jerusalem to all people in the world will make no difference to that.

The responsibility and obligation laid on all men, therefore, in these days of the Gospel, is to heed the words of his witnesses and to repent. That is the message that has been going out since Peter stood up with the eleven; it has never changed and it has never been abrogated. And it will not change, and will not cease until the end of the Messianic Age. In our day we are privileged to announce, with that message, the glorious news of the imminence of the Messianic Kingdom. We are also obligated to make known the fact of Divine judgment coming upon the world for its evil, the "day of vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61. 2), the bitter harvest of his own sowing which man must reap. But nothing in this changes the original message. In answer to the oft-repeated question "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" we can only say, as did Peter, "*Repent!*"

In this there is guidance for us in our Christian activity. The suggestion that a time comes in the end of the Age when it becomes contrary to the Master's will to proclaim his message far and wide, wherever opportunity offers, is not only quite unscriptural but the very negation of the Christian position. The very purpose of our existence is to preach the Gospel. The very object of our earthly lives is to be instructed and trained for a future work of service in which the preaching of the Gospel will play a very important part. God has been working through the ages to develop in man a closer and increasingly accurate

knowledge of himself and his plans. How short-sighted, therefore, to hold that in this crucial time, when one mighty Age is merging into another mighty Age; when the climax of all human history is about to be reached; when God is preparing to take over the sovereignty of the world and put into operation the final stage of his great Plan, the work of witness should be stopped. Shall no voice speak about the wonders that now are so imminent, no warning be given of the stupendous changes so soon to take place, no injunction to repentance be uttered in face of the momentous nature of the times and the swift entrance of the world into judgment? Has God ever left the world without an opportunity for repentance in the face of disaster before? Never! Has He ever been without his witnesses, his messengers, his ambassadors, in this world in bygone times? Never! Then why should we think He will change his methods now, when all the world is crying out its need of the message that those who know his plan alone are able to give!

Our mission, then, like that of Paul and Peter, is to preach Christ and him crucified. God will give the increase; it is ours to plant and water. We are, as were the Apostles and as have been all Christians since, ministers of reconciliation, (2 Cor. 5. 18) beseeching men in Christ's stead "be ye reconciled to God". Neither is this ministry for our own edification or instruction solely. Too often is it suggested that the preaching of the Gospel is not for the sakes of those who may hear, but for the sake of those who preach, that they may be the more qualified for the future day of world conversion. The work of witness that is going on to-day and has been going on throughout the Age has a definite place in the Divine Plan—it is the voice of God sounding through all the world his command to repent. The fruitage of that message will be manifest in the next Age when some will be found ready to co-operate in restoring order and peace upon earth, because they heard something of these things in this Age, and although not called into the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, did nevertheless apply their minds to these things, and believed them, and waited in faith and hope for the coming of the promised Day.

Is this, then, a sowing for the next Age? In a very real sense our preaching must be a sowing for the next Age. It is impossible to give expression to the faith that is in us without sowing for the next Age. That is not at all

the same thing as trying to convert all the world in this Age to the exclusion of the next—the mistake into which so many Christians have fallen. "Go ye, teach all nations" said Jesus. That teaching must have its effects upon men in the next Age just as it has its effect upon those who through that teaching become footstep followers of the Lord Jesus during this Age and are ultimately glorified to reign together with him. So our work for the Lord is definitely a preparation for the future. We shall take up our activities on the other side of the Veil just where we leave them on this side, but, thank God, shorn of the weakness and the toil, and continued then in that wondrous power which is to be the eternal possession of the glorified saints.

God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness. The whole of our message hinges around that one inescapable fact. The long story of sin and death, the misery of man in his darkness and ignorance, the revelation of Divine oversight, first at Sinai, then at Calvary, finally at Armageddon, all goes to show that God has been steadily working towards that great Day. And we stand in the dawning of that Day. The time of its full manifestation cannot be long delayed. The goal toward which we have been pressing is almost immediately before us. Let us, then, with more zeal and more certainty than ever, proclaim with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength the message which has been the Divine call to mankind for nearly twenty centuries, and remains the Divine call still.

"The time is fulfilled—repent ye, and believe the gospel."

THE END

"Perfect through suffering." What a method! Perfect? By what standard? An entirely new one, never before applied in either in heaven or earth. Perfect? By what method? By means never tried before, either in angelic or human creations. First the Captain—Jesus—(Heb. 2. 10). "Princely Leader" (Rotherham): then "many sons led up to this glory." And these "many sons", remember, were warped and twisted; stained and soiled by sin, though they groaned under its burden. But grace, in due time, reached their hearts, and won its way in. And grace kindled new desires and a readiness to yield to an amazing invitation—a High Calling indeed—wonderful! amazingly wonderful!

CLAY IN THE HAND OF THE POTTER

A soliloquy on Psalm 50

"Gather My saints together unto Me: those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice . . ." So speaks the Eternal, through his prophet, the Psalmist. The word "saints" is significant. One of the problems perpetually confronting any enlightened and responsible interpreter of Holy Writ is that of determining those utterances which may reasonably be taken as having a spiritual significance and message for the New Creation, the Church of the Firstborn, which is his Body (Eph. 1. 22, 23), and those which are obviously of exclusively literal significance, the meaning of which is plain and clear, and allows of no involved or obscure construction. Here, however, we have a message which is at once both clear and involved, a message which, at the first reading, seems natural and literal; but, at the second reading, conveys a deep and significant 'Alert'—to all who have the hearing ear!

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined . . ." Not literal Zion! When was literal Zion ever "the perfection of beauty . . ."? But, to those "Washed, cleansed, sanctified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus and the spirit of our God"—He is our righteousness, the "Altogether lovely", in Whose perfect merit his people are beheld by the Almighty Father—and accepted. (Eph. 1. 6). To and through these the Father speaks—have they but the ears to hear—and says: "Let My saints be gathered together unto Me . . ." He speaks with a measure of indignation (vss. 3, 4 and 6, Psalm 50). And no wonder! "What could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done unto it?" (Isa. 5. 4). Now He calls, and calls with vigour, to those still precious in His sight.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence . . . Hear, O My people . . ." And all still worthy the name, "My people" (1 Pet. 2. 10) will hear. Under the beautiful natural parable of a Potter sitting at his wheel, moulding a lump of clay and fashioning it to the beauty of design and workmanship in his mind (Jer. 18. 1-4), Jeremiah was shown a type which applies to both natural and spiritual Israel (1 Cor. 10. 11), the latter being the greater, and therefore the more important, fulfilment. "As . . . clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine Hand . . ." (Jer. 18. 6); thus speaks the great Creator, God and Father of

mankind, to those upon whom He has laid his hand, as chosen vessels unto himself, sanctified and meet for his use, in the Redeemer. (Ezek. 40. 1; Rev. 1. 17; Acts 9. 15; 2 Tim. 2. 21). God could, had He wished, have chosen clay of finer, nobler substance than they. He could have chosen, even from among fallen men, clay of better composition, of minimum fault or failure, which would have responded utterly and instantly to the great Potter's hand, yielding the immediate fruits of obedience, loyalty and trust. He did not do so—either with natural or with spiritual Israel (Deut. 31. 27; 1 Cor. 1. 26-29). There is hope, then, when the clay is marred in the hand of the great Potter, in that He does not cast it away, and choose another piece, but remakes it, in different mould, "as seemeth good". And now, behold, a wonderful thing. The fact that the clay has failed, and been remade, does not diminish its value or usefulness, but rather enhances it! For experience has shown, time and time again, that not the shallow, inexperienced servants are the most useful to the great King: but those who, through failure, trial, suffering, deep—and often bitter—experience, have come to know him as Father of Mercies, God of Love—and his dear Son as the great "High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek," able to bear patiently with their infirmities, and even to recover them when out of the way—these are the "vessels of mercy" able, because of a ripe experience of his mercy manifest to and in themselves, to carry the word of forgiveness and salvation to others! (Heb. 5. 1, 2, 5, 6; 7. 25; 1 Tim. 1. 15, 16; 2 Cor. 3. 6; Rom. 9. 23).

It has been mentioned on several occasions before, but will bear of repetition once more, that when a Persian Carpet is being made it sometimes happens that one or more of the apprentices who are allowed to help may make a mistake in weave or colour. When this happens, should the artist be a past master at his craft, he does not undo the mistake! Instead, he weaves it into the pattern—achieving new and enhanced heights of design and craftsmanship. To quote again—from another well-known epic—"Can this man—and can God not?" So take heart ye who, as another epic poem has put it, "Kneel, conscious of our failure and our sin, and dare to call His righteousness our own . . ." God is

never impotent amid the wreckage of anyone's hope and expectation. There is no "cul-de-sac" in the Divine purpose.

Abraham, "Father of the faithful," believed God—and it was counted to him for righteousness; being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was abundantly able to perform . . . ! We are *his* workmanship—not our own—and the tremendous faith which shone in the heart and life of Abraham and so pleased his Heavenly Father that he was given the magnificent title of "the friend of God"—that tremendous faith must be ours also as we look up in the Beloved into his dear face and say "Yea, Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief! I believe that what Thou hast promised Thou art abundantly able to perform! That Thou, Who hast begun a good work in me, wilt perform it! That Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me . . ." And one day we shall see this apparently ruined, wasted, emaciated, unprofitable life of ours crowned with glory and honour, as the lovely product of his Grace! "Keep on believing, there's nothing to fear; keep on believing, Jesus is near; keep on believing, in night as in day; He is still guiding—will guide all the way."

To return to the Psalm. "Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Any application to natural Israel must of necessity be more than swallowed up by the aptness of its application to spiritual Israel; those born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1. 13). It is obvious that, if natural Israel were in "A covenant by sacrifice," *spiritual* Israel (for whom the Son of God died—Eph. 5. 25) is much more so. For whereas the nation of Israel were involved in that Covenant whether, in a manner of speaking, they liked it or not—they had no choice or option in the matter, for the covenant had already been

made with their fathers, and the types *had* to be formed and fulfilled—spiritual Israel is in a very different category. *Every member* of the Church of the Firstborn, the New Creation, Israel after the spirit, is there by specific invitation and acceptance, on the basis of the Sacrifice of God's dear Son, Whose precious blood was shed for and accepted by each of them, as individuals, on an entirely voluntary basis—and they are thereafter "Members of his Body", the Church of the Living God.

"*By sacrifice!*" Admittedly, we have offered our puny little all—"All we have, our hearts, we give Thee; consecrate them Thine alone . . ."; have presented our bodies as "A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God", our "reasonable service". But far transcending any or all of these is *his* great and tremendous Sacrifice of his dear and only begotten Son, the dearest treasure of his heart, on our behalf. And thereafter all we can offer that could possibly be acceptable is, as the Apostle so beautifully and simply puts it, the "Sacrifice of praise!" (Heb. 13. 15). And this is itself a most beautiful and spiritualised rendering of the final verse of Psalm 50: "Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth Me; and prepareth a way, that I may show him the salvation of God." (R.V., margin).

Dearlly beloved, can we not then, in face and in view of all these wonders, realise the greatness of his love and mercy toward us, the unspeakable gift of the sacrifice of his dear Son, and, on this basis, "Gather together unto him . . ." ? Forsaking all lesser things, and on the basis of his great sacrifice for us, and full acceptance and belief of that great and vital fact, come together in love and gratitude, and with one mind and one mouth "Glorify him" to Whom all Praise belongs; and his dear Son, Who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Of the many archaic words in the Authorised Version, words in current use in 1611 but which have now dropped out of the English language, perhaps "sith" in Ezek. 35. 6 is the most strange. "*Sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee*". The word "sith" was a term used in the same sense as we now use "since" or "whereas". The same Hebrew word "*im*" is rendered "since" in Jer. 23. 38 "Since ye say, the burden of the Lord . . ." and "whereas" in Job 22. 20 "*Whereas our substance is not cut down*". The word ceased to be used over two centuries ago and it is probable that many have passed it in their

Bible reading without really knowing just what it means.

* * *

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

[? The Question Box ?]

Q.—In Col. 3, 1-10 we are told in vs. 6 that “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” and in vs. 8 that we must “put off” wrath among other undesirable traits of character. If wrath is one of God’s characteristics why are we counselled to put it off?

A.—The dictionary definition of “wrath” or “anger” is “emotion or passion aroused by a sense of wrong”. Divine “wrath” is referred to about twenty-four times in the New Testament and in many cases the context shows that the word includes the idea of judgment. Divine wrath always appears in connection with sin and against sin. The Greek word is sometimes used in classical Greek writings to refer to the punishment of evil doers. So we have “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3, 7). “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness.” (Rom. 1, 18). “The great day of his wrath is come” (Rev. 6, 17). In every case where the expression “the wrath of God” or its equivalent is used it refers to the determinate counsel and will of God proceeding to the execution of judgment against sin. There is no thought of the hasty rashness that usually accompanies human manifestations of wrath, and that is where the difference lies. A man be angry or wrathful from a perfectly proper motive, such as indignation at some act of meanness or cruelty committed by another; but in his imperfect state he is liable to allow his anger to get the better of his judgment and lead to some violent action which in itself might be wrong. Hence the Apostle warns us against anger and wrath because we are not yet fit to be trusted with the power of executing judgment upon evil. We are unable to be completely dispassionate and absolutely just in our estimation of the matter that has called forth our anger and therefore we are told, in another place, to “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” (1 Cor. 4, 5). The wrath of God is scrupulously fair and just; ours is not: that is the difference.

Q.—What is the meaning of our Lord’s words in Matt. 10, 23 when, sending the disciples out to preach in the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, He said “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come?” Did He refer to his Second Coming?

A.—The most reasonable understanding of the text is that He did. In sending out the disciples He told them, among other things, that they would be delivered up and brought before kings and governors, and would be “hated of all men for my name’s sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved”. Now that, at least, did not happen to the twelve disciples until after the death of Jesus. Verses 17-22 are more truly descriptive of the persecutions and apostasy of the Gospel Age than of the disciples’ experiences whilst Jesus was with them. It seems evident therefore that Jesus was speaking to the disciples as representing all who would follow in their steps in after years. The commission He had just given the disciples, to go forth and preach “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (vs. 7) is the same commission that He afterwards expressed in the words “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mark 16, 15). That witness was to continue until his return, as we have it in the well-known words of Matt. 24, 14, “And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” This 24th Chapter repeats the warning given in Chap. 10 that the true believers would be delivered up and persecuted, and that some would betray their brethren. The expression “Son of man be come” seems clearly to point back to Daniel 7 and the vision of the Second Advent. It seems then that Jesus meant to convey that the mission upon which He was then sending his disciples would continue for the rest of their lives, and throughout the lives of all the believers who would follow them, generation after generation, until He should come again. They thought that He would return in their own lifetime; events proved otherwise, but it is still true that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached continually until the full revelation of the Lord upon the Throne of his glory.

Proud Christians—and the Master was meek and lowly! There is nothing that will so shame us out of our pride as to take a good look at Jesus Christ. And He says to those who have come and received that promised rest: Learn not to be selfish, and learn not to be proud.

W. Graham Scroggie

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER ONE

An
exposition

Part I (Complete in two parts)

We might call this chapter the Drama of Creation, because the apostle presents a vision not only of the salvation of those on earth but also to comprehend in its scope the whole creation of God. If we ourselves get in mind the wonderfully wide and bold outline which the apostle here presents, then the possibly difficult details would be more easily understood in the light of the background of this great framework. The new creation, as it seems the Apostle Paul presents it in this chapter, is not the particular name of the church. The new creation is as it points out; a new creation, not a new portion of creation. Revelation points out that He is going to make all things new, and this chapter shows that the salvation which we know by contact with this world, referring to this world only, is extended by the apostle to cover also the things in the heaven as well as the things on earth. So we will briefly attempt to present the thoughts which the apostle had in mind when he wrote these wonderful words, which, however we look at them must give us confidence and assurance, and a measure of joy.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother." The apostle knew whom he believed and was fully persuaded of what he had heard. He was in no doubt as to his ministry, nor the meaning of it, nor its power. "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timotheus our brother". He remembers also those who labour with him; he is not the great 'I Am', he is but a sounding board of the things which God has revealed to him.

"To the holy and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." Of course others may not have thought that the brethren at Colosse were so holy, but he did, because he was judging, not after the sight of the eye, but as God judges, not after the appearance of the flesh. We shall see later he realised that their standing with God was not according to the manifestations of the fallen flesh, of which they had not gotten rid. So he is fundamentally sound in all his utterances. He does not say, now you who are not perfect, you who are not holy, you who are being reformed but are still sinners; No! he knew that there was now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, and that cancelled all the imperfections of the

flesh which we had inherited and which they had inherited from their fathers. "To the holy and faithful brethren in Christ". There is no other name given under heaven by means of which you can attain unto that title of holy and faithful brethren.

"Favour and peace be unto you from God our Father." Fundamentally he knows that the only source of help and grace and favour is from God. Every good and perfect gift cometh from above and not from below, and that is where we should look for help. "I will lift mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help"—because the arm of flesh will fail you. "Favour and peace from God our Father" That is where our pleas should be presented, and that is where they will be answered if we ask according to his will. "Favour and Peace be unto you from God our Father." He does not say here "and the Lord Jesus Christ" because he is dealing with the perfect will of God, and the prime cause of everything in the first instance, 'God', who giveth his honour to no other; his name he giveth to no other. The Son will never take the place of the Father. The Father must be all in all, and even when all the work that the Son has done is finished, note that it is presented to the Father, that God might be all in all. That is what the apostle had in mind here. Then dealing with the matter further, he brings in "*We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you*". He has introduced the second great cause in the scheme which he is going to enunciate later on, and what he knows of the work of the combination of the two causes him to give thanks; that is why he often in many places enjoins us to "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. In everything give thanks"—in everything. Unless the mind is fully attuned to the purposes of God, and has fellowship with God, and understands the ways of God, it is impossible in everything to give thanks, because unless the mind sees the reason for what is occurring its reactions cannot be satisfactory as far as God is concerned. That is why God reveals everything to his servants before it occurs, that they might be aware of and co-operate with him in the work which is going to be accomplished. "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying '*occasionally*' for you"?

No! "praying always for you". Not necessarily that the literal words are pouring forth from the mouth continually, but rather that the intent of the heart towards those who are brethren in Christ is continually for their good. That seems to be the thought. If one is fortunate enough to possess a friendship of that nature you will appreciate the thought of "praying always for you". There is a bond of personality and influence which continually surrounds those who know each other extremely well. That is why the Lord speaks about God being in us—not literally, but because of the intimacy of mind, the communication and reaction to all circumstances is sympathetically the same between them. "Because our spirit testifies (or communes) with God's spirit that we are the children of God" illustrates the point.

"Praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which ye have of the saints." That is why he is praying for them; because he had heard of their faith in Christ Jesus. Surely it should delight us likewise when we hear of those who appreciate the work which is being done on their account by God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What greater wish and joy could you have for anyone but that they are being saved according to the power of God. You can wish them nothing greater, for there is no greater benefit in life that can be bestowed upon a sinner than that he should be given eternal life, or having the opportunity presented to him of attaining eternal life. So we should also be like that in mind, knowing that God is working out his great ideas for his creation even down to that minute detail of every individual circumstance. If one is of like mind there is bound to be fellowship, and if one is so akin to another personality there must be a greater unity of personality, so that if you come to the ultimate, we have the mind of Christ, and if each of us has the mind of Christ we can easily love another as ourselves, because it is a reflection of ourselves. God loves Christ because he is a reflection of himself. There is an attunement there which is unity, not physically but mentally, and so it should be with us, all who are of Christ and have the mind of Christ should be able to see in each other a reflection of ourselves, besides the reflection of Christ. That is how we are changed from glory unto glory, by the spirit of Christ.

"For the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof ye have heard before in the

word of truth of the gospel." So it is the hope and the confidence which we have in God which makes us rejoice. We know whom we have believed. If God could not do for us something which no one else could do, then our hope is useless. It is only because we are assured that God can give us eternal life, and that he is capable of raising us to the position where we are worthy of eternal life, that makes us pursue the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. That is the basis of our hope because we know that to know him is life eternal. "Whom to know—that is God also—is life eternal" because we can only know God through Jesus Christ, and if we know Jesus Christ we know God, whom to know is life eternal.

"The word of truth." It does not finish there; it says "The word of truth of glad tidings" actually. The truth and the glad tidings are two separate things. In the glad tidings the Christian sees the truth which gives him hope of eternal life. The glad tidings mean—just glad tidings. There are many people who believe the glad tidings who do not know the truth. Lots of people, at Christmas for instance, believe there is a Kingdom of God somewhere about, but how it has to be obtained they have only a dim idea. Their hope is very vague; they do not know whether they are going to be on earth or in heaven, or when they die they go immediately to heaven. The glad tidings is simply a knowledge of the outline of the purposes of God, that is all. But the truth is the principles of God, which, absorbed, bring you to the perfection which it speaks about later. The truth is the principles of God himself which he has revealed unto us to enable us to transform our minds, that we might know what is that good and perfect will of God, as he says in Romans 6. So it is doing the truth, as he says in another place, not knowing it, that constitutes an individual a Christian. Realising that God can transform our lives by the principles of the truth we have hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Which is come unto you, as in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew of the grace of God in truth." He is emphatic about this truth, and he says, now this truth brings forth fruit, so if anyone claims to know the truth and know the gospel and they are not bringing forth the requisite fruit, you know that they have not got the truth, although they may know something of the

glad tidings. Let us see that what we stand firmly for is really the truth, and is not some phase of the glad tidings, or the plan of God, which is not too essential, but rather be absolutely sure of what are the principles by which we attain everlasting life, and use those as the basis of our common fellowship. Things external to that may be interesting, may be helpful in some measure, but they are not vital. The vital things are the principles of God by which he is going to bring his creation to the level of perfection. For instance, the devils believed, and trembled. They have a good idea now and they had to some extent before, because they said to the Lord "Art thou come to judge us before the time". They knew something about the plan of God, but have not the truth, because the fruitage was not there.

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant who is for you a faithful minister of Christ." It is interesting to note how he puts into his epistles all those who help him, and all those whom he sees helping the brethren. He does not try to claim all the honour and glory for himself, he mentions whenever he can all those who assist him, and those who he sees God is using to further and build up the Church into that full stature which is required. "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." It would be nice to know that everyone who visited us and went everywhere else could report of our love in the Spirit. How often is it the reverse unfortunately! That is why some come and say "Well now, they are so confused I am afraid we cannot go there any more". Not a very good testimonial, really, is it! There might be some misconception on their side, but they should at least be able to report our love in the Spirit as being genuine, whatever else they might see. This then is one thing we must strive for—our love in the spirit, and not our love in the flesh particularly, not our personal preferences, not the things which please us most, but those things which require an effort of the mind, and can only be done by the power of the Spirit. That is the love in the Spirit, and it is extremely hard to cultivate because it is in opposition to the mind of the flesh. It will be one great day when all who know each other can report of that love in the Spirit. They will then have arrived at the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit, and for this cause." "And for this cause" because it was reported to him that they were bringing forth fruit by having the love of the

Spirit. "For this cause we also since the day we heard of it do not cease to pray for you" and this is the point of the prayer—"and to desire that ye might be filled with all knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". We see that knowledge here is the vital essential. It is a mental appreciation of the fundamental principles of God that is the power which gives you eternal life. The principles of God which are moral and which you can appreciate and which change your moral outlook lead to perfection. They are not to be guessed at, not things which you feel physically, but a clearer understanding of the principles of God, which, absorbed, make you God-like, so that you can love in the spirit of the principles which he has revealed unto you.

"That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his Will." "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye might know what is that perfect will of God." You must know what is the will of God by knowledge. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." By knowledge; that knowledge is given to us by the Lord himself through his apostle, and makes us to understand it by the Spirit which he sends unto us, because the spirit searches the depth of God, and we have the wisdom of God. We want to realise that as a man *thinketh* in his heart so is he. It is the thinking part of the heart that makes the man.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." You can walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing if you know what to do, but if you do not know the things you have to carry out you cannot walk pleasing. If you have an accurate knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding then you will be able to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work. You will know what is a good work and what is an evil work, because you will have habitually exercised yourself to know and to discern between good and evil. So when you get to know God you will be able to walk well pleasing in every good work, and increasing by experience in that knowledge by habitually exercising yourself in it, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Everything depends on an accurate knowledge of God which is an accurate knowledge of the truth.

"Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power." He knows, and the gospel teaches also "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" and by the power of the flesh you can

accomplish nothing. If through the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the flesh—note the distinction—If through the Spirit, or if through an accurate knowledge of God which is revealed to us by His Holy Spirit, we orient and translate our mind and know what is that perfect will of God, then we shall be strengthened by the Spirit according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. Now that is the secret of overcoming. It is he that endures to the end, battling against sin, that shall be saved. There is nothing else to battle against. There is only one thing in this world to battle against and that is sin; there is only one thing which will prevent you battling against it continually, and that is by losing patience, being dissatisfied with the progress that is made, and the continual repetition of the temptations which are brought upon you, that you get to become weary in well doing. It is only by having the patience of the Christian that we can continue, in face of tremendous difficulties, and the wearing down process of life, to put into operation the principles of the truth continually every day, to the detriment of the flesh, and do it with longsuffering and joyfulness. It is only when we can look back and realise that the circumstances have enhanced our powers of opposition to that which is evil, that we can feel that twinge of pleasure and satisfaction in the progress that is being made. It takes time to arrive at the position that virtue is one of its own rewards, apart from the prize which is offered. To attain unto a normal standard which is well pleasing in God's sight provides and gives an intense amount of pleasure to the soul. That is why our souls can find rest in Christ, and he says

"And ye in Me shall find rest to your souls." It is only by an understanding of God's purpose and his dealings with us that we can rest in the circumstances of life which are very unrestful, which are painful in many cases and extremely depressing in others, that we can, through the power of the Spirit, find rest to our souls, and patience and longsuffering in the afflictions which are brought upon us. We begin to realise that they are for our good, but it takes time, it takes a long time, but it is vital, and it is all by the power of the Spirit. Unless you have contact and fellowship with God you can never arrive at the position of joyfulness in affliction. It must be through the power of the Spirit. "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet,*"—or fitted us or made us qualify—"to have a portion of the inheritance of the saints in light". That is why we can have that measure of joyfulness when we realise that He is fitting us. We can see that we are not quenching the Spirit; there is some progress, and there is some truth in that statement that we are changed from glory unto glory into the likeness of the Lord by the Spirit. We see in our lives some evidence that is fitting us for a portion of the inheritance of the saints in light. We realise that our apprenticeship is doing something for us in our education, and will make us better individuals than we should have been had we not heard the truth. All must be sure of that, because their life is guided by principles which they would never have put into action before they knew the truth.

(To be continued)

Bunyan was the supreme example of the forceful Christian. Simple, direct, he spoke as he thought, and the positiveness of his expressions bespoke a firm and unyielding conviction of a righteous cause. Hear him on the subject of sectarianism. "Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian. And for those factious titles of Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Antioch nor from Jerusalem, but from Hell and Babylon, for they tend to divisions; you may know them by their fruits."

The native Christians in a West African village had no privacy for prayer in their huts, so they formed the habit of retiring to the bush to get quiet moments with God. Presently from each hut occupied by a Christian a little track could be seen leading into the bush. If they grew slack in prayer, the track soon became overgrown, and then some watchful elder Christian would approach the back-sliding one and say: "Brother, there is something wrong with your track". 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.



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 37, No. 8

DECEMBER, 1960

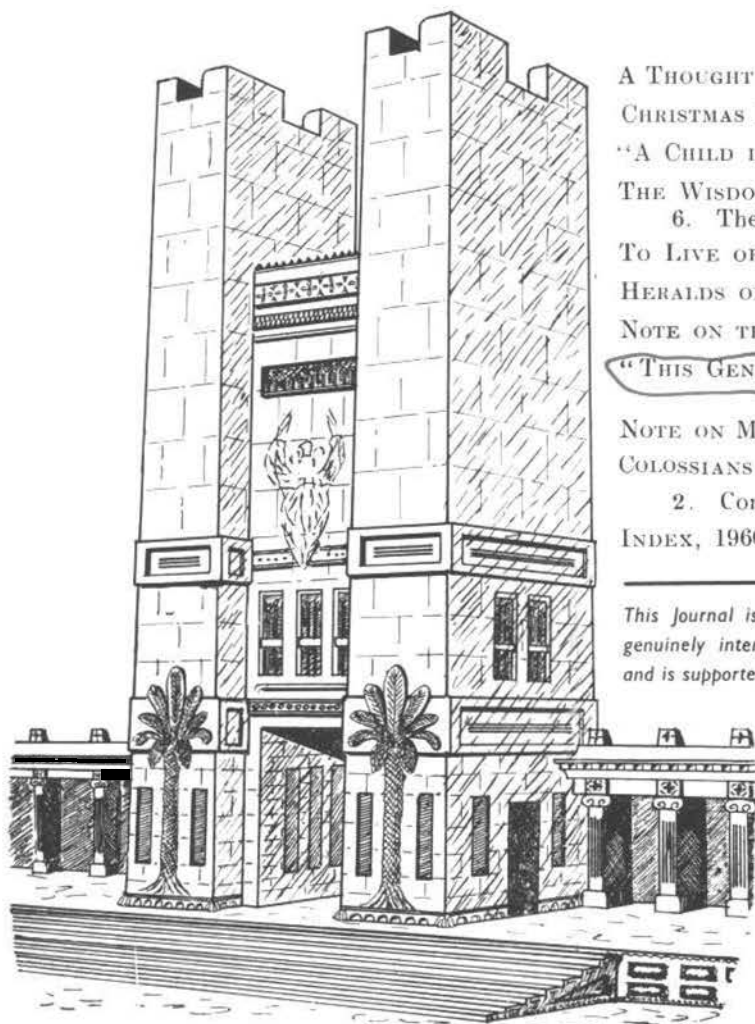
Published December 1st

Next issue January 15th

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who are genuinely interested, on request renewable annually and is supported by the voluntary gifts of its readers



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being 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 are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES

Attention is drawn to the index on the last page of this issue. Should any new readers desire copies of back issues containing any item which interests them we will gladly send such issues on request while stocks last. It is only necessary to mention the page numbers of the articles concerned and the appropriate issues will be sent.

* * *

It is customary at this time of the year to mention, for the interest of certain of our readers, the special fund administered by Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex, and to say that contributions will be utilised in the widest possible manner.

* * *

Please see page 150 for an interesting announcement by "Chosen Books".

A Thought for the Month

"Lo, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." (Rev. 2. 7).

Perhaps at the end of the year, more than at any other time, the minds of those who are wearied with the distress and suffering that is in the world tend to look to the heavens for help. From earliest times men have looked for the "Coming One" to appear in glory and power to bring deliverance. That is why men were so disappointed two thousand years ago when, instead of a supernatural apparition in the skies, striking terror to the hearts of the wicked, they found only a baby in a manger—and thirty years' silence after that. But that baby changed the course of history! To-day, as then, the majority even of instructed Christians fail to realise that John's exclamation in Rev. 2. 7 was a poetic outburst in the spirit of Daniel's vision; the reality of that coming in the clouds is something far more vital and powerful than the visible descent from the upper air of a transcendently radiant human form. In fulfilling his promise to return to earth for the accomplishment of all things written, the Son of God comes, not as a human being, for the body of his humiliation was put off at the Cross, but in the spiritual power and splendour of his Divine majesty, and that is something which can never be perceptible to the five human senses. Men will know of his Advent by the outward results,

the progressive destruction of evil institutions and evil things, the appearance of the visible agents of God's Kingdom on earth armed with powers of control men can neither understand nor resist, the firm suppression of all that hurts or degrades and the widespread promulgation of right and true things. This is the time of the Church's triumph, the time of which our Lord spoke when He told his disciples *"In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matt. 19. 28). Regeneration means the giving of new life. The Second Advent is to be a time of giving new life to all the world, to "whosoever will", and the promise that men shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory will be fulfilled when men see on earth the visible evidences that God's Kingdom is established. *"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed"* says Isaiah (40. 5) *and all flesh shall see it together*. An increasing number of Christians are coming round to the conviction that the blessed time is imminent and as one looks round at this present world rapidly dissolving into chaos and threatened with fiery destruction one can only echo the age-old prayer "Lord Jesus, come quickly".

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Some Seasonable
Thoughts

"We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (Matt. 2. 2).

All the world worships a baby. Its innocence and freshness, no less than its helplessness, command the adoration of all around, and these Wise Men from the East were no exception to the rule. They had watched and waited for many long years for him that should save the world and they had found him at last in the form of a little child. Not amid the pomp and glory of kingly courts, the ritual and ceremony of sanctuary and temple, the wealth and magnificence of city and market—but in the quietude and simplicity of a cave in a Judean hillside, did they find the Saviour of all men. And beholding the child—they worshipped.

They were, all three, probably old men. It is not likely that they ever saw the child again. They certainly never knew Jesus of Nazareth the leader of men. Their worship was of a child and not of a man; their adoration directed to a hope and an idea rather than to a calling and a life's devotion. Their journey was prompted by sentiment more than by sacrifice. They came, worshipped, presented their gifts, and went away. We see them no more; history knows nothing further about them. Their contribution to the out-working Plan of God was almost negligible; they have provided a theme for Christmas cards and Christmas carols and to that extent added some little moiety to the beauties of Christian worship, but that is all.

The faith and belief of a great many disciples in this our own day fails to rise to any higher level. In far too many cases and to much too great an extent the faith of Jesus is maintained on a level of sentiment and a form of intensified baby-worship. A great many Christian hymns and a considerable amount of devotional preaching takes one no farther than an exaltation of the personal attributes of Jesus, viewed more or less through the veil of his flesh. "*My beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely.*" That is the idol in the hearts of a great many whose conception of the Christian life enshrines a feeling of personal security and acceptance with God but does not include service and sacrifice, all that we mean by the expression "the consecrated life". A brother, once spending some little time in a country meeting

room of some evangelical body of the more emotional type, found himself assailed on all sides by an almost constant barrage of "I do love Jesus" "Do you love Jesus" "Isn't it lovely to be loved by Jesus" and so on. That sort of thing tends to be, in a spiritual sense, unhealthy. The Christian is called to a sterner and more practical life and with the world in the state it is in to-day we need more than ever to turn our eyes away from the babe in the manger and look to the Galilean preacher as he moved among the men and women of this sin-stricken world, treating kings and priests and publicans and harlots with complete impartiality and absolute understanding.

In somewhat similar fashion there is a tendency to behold with such whole-hearted regard the spectacle of the dying Christ on the Cross as again to forget the value of his life. Whilst we must hold very tenaciously to the oft-repeated Scriptural truth that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" and that only through faith in the saving power of his death can anyone attain reconciliation with God and everlasting life, still does it remain true that unless we give due heed to the lessons of his life and so learn to walk as He walked, we shall never progress beyond the immature stage of personal adoration which was all that the three Wise Men achieved. It is no use our hailing Jesus as the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world if we ourselves do not learn and then accept for ourselves the life of devotion and service which alone will eventually provide the means God has ordained for the actual removal of the effects of sin. Jesus died on the Cross and by that act made it possible for all men to be restored from the death that comes upon them in consequence of human sin; but the power of the Lord's life on earth, reflected through the lives of those who in this Age have been his faithful consecrated followers, is going to be called for when it comes to removing sin's effects in the minds and hearts of earth's millions thus restored from death. In the ancient Tabernacle ceremonies ordained by the hand of Moses there were offerings first made to make reconciliation—a covering—for sin, but before the ritual was complete it was necessary that all the transgressions and all the sins of the

House of Israel, covered over from God's sight as they had been by the sin-offerings just presented, had to be loaded in a figurative sense on the back of a beast and taken away into a far land from which they could never be brought back. The Millennial Age is set aside for just such a bearing away of sin; as men accept for themselves the redemptive work of Christ, and in the power of that "pouring out his life unto death" of Jesus' three and a half years' devotion and sacrifice at the First Advent, and the similar pouring out of life unto death of his Church during the two thousand years of the Gospel Age, begin to progress toward human perfection, so their weaknesses and imperfections and failures to live up to God's perfect laws will be steadily taken away into a "land not inhabited"—away from this whole earth which is the abode of men. Thus, at the last, when transgression is cleansed from the earth, the great High Priest can pronounce the final blessing "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

The message of Christmas to the instructed Christian, then, is not so much a remembrance of Jesus in his childhood as it is of Jesus as He afterwards became. It is a looking forward to the promise of the future and a willing acceptance of all the obligations which real association with that hope implies. The Wise Men from the East were not the only ones who looked and waited for the Saviour. Others there were, better instructed in the ways of God, who perceived deeper values inherent in that tiny form and lifted up their hearts to God in gratitude not only because they had seen the Saviour but because God had now commenced his promised work in the world and the days of inactivity had ended. Anna and Simeon in the Temple, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary the young mother, and Joseph her upright young husband; these were made of other stuff than the Wise Men, and whilst the latter were not lacking in faith and piety, these added to those things a willingness and even anxiety to be used in the outworking purposes of God that has immortalised their names in the annals of those who have rendered God service.

These people who "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" (Luke 2: 38) were practical, matter-of-fact believers in the reality of God's promises. They all cherished a deep and sincere devotion to God and reverence for the revealed Word; they all believed passionately in the coming Kingdom and they all watched

and waited for Messiah. But their knowledge and their hope and their watching was not merely academic. They expected in Messiah not merely an embodiment of all that is pure and just and holy, not merely a royal expression of the Divine majesty on earth, but they looked and waited for One Who would assuage the sufferings of the oppressed and bring to an end the ravages of hitherto uncontrollable disease; One Who would care for the lowliest and most insignificant of his creatures, carrying the lambs in his bosom and gently leading those that were with young, as the prophet Isaiah had predicted. They knew, did these peasants and artisans, and the lowly priests who ministered to them, how much the world needed that kind of Messiah. The magnificent vision of a King seated on David's throne must have weighed very little with them compared with the picture of a Man who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, nor fail nor be discouraged until He had set judgment and justice in the earth. And when, at that first Christmas season, they set wondering eyes upon the babe whom Simeon had blessed and declared the Lord's Anointed, they saw not the babe that then was, but the Man that was to be. "*This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel*" declared the saintly old man, and his hearers knew that there must be sorrow and heart-ache, and stern endurance, before all that the prophets had spoken could come to pass.

That is the message for this Christmas and every Christmas. We look, not at the birth which took place two thousand years ago, important though that birth was for all that came after. We look rather to the things which sprang from that birth, and not least of all to the Kingdom which is the fulfilment of the promises made at that birth and which is now so imminent. We look at the world in which we live and see it peopled by men and women living much the same kind of lives and oppressed by much the same kinds of sins and weaknesses, and troubles and distresses, as in our Lord's day. He moved among them and helped them, while He could. His preaching to them the gospel of the Kingdom was illustrated by the practical acts of mercy which He did. His call to single-hearted devotion to God and holiness of living was underlined by his own example. He was the perfect pattern, to man, of how man should live and behave toward his fellow-man. Surely we can do no less than follow his example.

Yet with all this He was no recluse, no visionary, no "holier-than-thou" ascetic. He was the perfect example of the man who is "in the world but not of the world". He could mix with men and women of every station in life and put them entirely at their ease, and yet remain himself immeasurably above them. He could sympathise with them in their petty troubles and help them out of their day-by-day difficulties without ever condoning their weaknesses or pandering to their faults. When the wine ran short at the wedding feast, He made more. When the five thousand omitted to bring provisions for the day, He created a supply. When the little children came running to him, He received them. How truly then had it been predicted of him "surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows". Now we, if we are to continue his brethren, must needs follow the same course.

Let us then, as this Christmas season runs its course and we enter upon a new year, take to ourselves the word of Scripture which says "as he was, so are we in this world" (1 Jno.

4. 17). Let us seek to manifest and practice toward all men the same tolerance, understanding, goodwill and ever ready impulse to help and heal that He manifested in such abundant measure. So doing, we shall exemplify in very truth at least one phrase of the angel's song, sung to the shepherds at the time of his nativity; "Goodwill to men". That is the real spirit of Christmas. The bringing of gifts is only secondary. All the gold and all the frankincense and all the myrrh left by the three Wise Men to brighten and perfume that Judean cave wherein lay the Holy Child counted for little in the courts of Heaven compared to the ecstatic praise of the little band of faithful workers which surrounded the same babe in the Temple courts only a few days later. "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*" That is the spirit in which we must go forth into the world to-day, and in that spirit we shall gain our needed experience wherewith we will be fitted for our Master's service in the great Day of Salvation yet to come.

"A CHILD WAS BORN"

A Christmas
Study

Many are the titles of the Son of man—the man Christ Jesus, Son of God, made flesh that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. The first name given in the list of the Prophet is "Wonderful", and is surely appropriate. His is the most wonderful career and the most wonderful character of which we have any knowledge. He left the glories of the heavenly state for human conditions, as He himself said, "*No man hath ascended up to heaven save he which came down from heaven*". (John 3. 13). He left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; He exercised that wonderful faith in the Father which permitted him to sacrifice everything with joy, delighting to do the Father's will, with confidence that in due time the rewards of the Father's favour and love would more than compensate for every sacrifice.

Wonderful was his life amongst men, the Light shining in the darkness, the darkness comprehending it not. More and more as we come into the light ourselves we are able to comprehend this Wonderful One. As the Apostle suggests, the eyes of our understanding being opened, we are able to comprehend with all saints the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of God which

passes all understanding; such love being manifested, exhibited, illustrated in this Wonderful One. Wonderful was his resurrection, the "first that should rise from the dead", "the first-born amongst many brethren", highly exalted, given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. (Rom. 8. 29; Col. 1. 15, 18; Phil. 2. 9, 10).

The second name on the list, "Counsellor", also appropriate. Who else is such a Counsellor? Who else is able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Who else is able always to guide us? Who else has assured us that all things shall work together for our good? Happy are they who have made the acquaintance of this Counsellor, whom God has set forth to be the satisfaction for our sins and to be the Counsellor, the Leader, the Guide, the Instructor of his people, and to bring them out of darkness into his marvellous light, out of the chains of sin and bondage of death back to full liberty of the sons of God.

"The Mighty God," another of his names, is also appropriate. If angels appearing to men in the past were called *Elohim*, gods, because they were the representatives of Divine

power, surely much more appropriate is the name to him whom the Father specially sent as his special messenger to men. If *Elohim* signifies mighty ones, surely He is above all mighty ones, and may therefore most properly be termed the mighty *Elohim*—the Mighty God—the one mighty amongst the mighty. “Mighty to save” we sometimes sing; yea, says the Word of the Lord, “*He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto the Father through him*”. (Heb. 7. 25). Such a mighty Saviour we need, one not only able to sympathise with us and to instruct us, but able also to deliver us from the Evil One and from our own weaknesses as well as from the Divine sentence against our race as sinners. Let us exult in this “Mighty One” whom the heavenly Father has sent forth for deliverance from sin and death.

The title “Everlasting Father” will in due time be appropriately his—but not yet. These words are a prophecy; some of them have been already fulfilled and others are yet to be fulfilled. When they were written Jesus had not yet left the heavenly glory. Jesus is not the everlasting Father to the Church. The Scriptures reveal him as our elder Brother, and again as our Bridegroom. The Apostle most explicitly tells us that “*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us*”—we are his children. The dear Redeemer himself taught us to pray, “*Our Father which art in heaven*”; and again after his resurrection He sent the message to Peter and others of his followers, “*I ascend to my Father, to my God and your God*”. (John 20. 17).

In due time He will be the everlasting Father to the world—to those of the world who, during the Messianic Age, will hearken to his voice and receive of his life—restitution blessings. Jesus purchased Adam and all of his children by the sacrifice of himself; they are his, to make out of them everything possible and to bring as many as possible back into harmony with the Father and to eternal life. They died under Divine condemnation; what they now need is life, and the Father has arranged that Jesus may be their Life-Giver, and to this end He has given his life, purchased them, that in due time, during his Kingdom reign, He may offer them the return of all that was lost in Adam, for it is written, “*He came to seek and to save that which was lost*”.

Since that life which Jesus will give to the world is the fruitage of his own sacrifice, therefore He is said to be the Father, the Life-Giver, to the world. And since that life that

He will give will not be merely a temporary one, but by obedience to him all those who receive of his life may be brought to perfection, and maintain that life eternally, therefore He is the Everlasting Father. He gives everlasting life in contra-distinction to Adam, who attempted to be the father to the race, but through his disobedience brought forth his children to a dying condition. Not so the everlasting life: the life which He gives to his children during the period of the Millennium, and which will accomplish the regeneration of the world, or of so many of the world who will accept his favour, will be unto life eternal.

Not yet is He the Prince of Peace and King of Glory, but very soon He will take unto himself his great power and reign. Far from peaceful will be its beginning. The Scriptural description is that the nations will be angry and Divine wrath will come upon them, and that they shall be broken in pieces as a potter's vessel: that the Lord will speak to them in his sore displeasure, and that there will be a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation. (Psa. 2. 5; Dan. 12. 1).

But the Lord wounds to heal, he chastises to correct, and will not “keep his anger forever”, but will ultimately prove that He is “plentiful in mercy”. The result of his righteous indignation against sin and all unrighteousness and iniquity will be the establishment of justice upon a firm footing throughout the world. Then as a consequence peace will reign and the King of Glory will be known as the Prince of Peace, whose blessings will fill the earth for the refreshment of every creature and the bringing of so many as will into full harmony with God through the processes of restitution.

As we long for the glorious day let us prepare our hearts that we may be approved of the King—that we may be accepted even as his Bride through his mercy and grace. Let us not forget that there are conditions expressed by the Apostle in the words, “*If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him*”, “*If we be dead with him we shall also live with him*”—“*heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together*”. A little while; the trials shall be over. A little while; if faithful we shall have the crown and hear the blessed words, “*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord*”.

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

6. The Eyes of the Lord

The second part of chapter 34, whilst still maintaining the theme of Divine Justice, is devoted to showing that the administration of God's justice is ensured by the fact that He sees all things that are happening in the world of men. Elihu says in verse 22 "*his eyes are upon the ways of men, and he seeth all his goings*". The Wise Man knew that; he said "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15. 3) and so did the writer to the Hebrews; "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4. 13). So Elihu here buttresses his assertion that God is inherently just with the fruits of his own observation of God's ways. The wickedness of the wicked shall by no means escape Divine scrutiny; the righteousness of the righteous will most certainly be recorded in God's Book of Remembrance.

"*Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?*" (34. 17). The first phrase is not well rendered; a better expression of the thought is "*What, doth He, hating right, govern?*" to which can be added Leeser's "*or wilt thou condemn the righteous Mighty One?*" It is a rhetorical question. Is it conceivable, asks Elihu, that God can govern creation whilst hating righteousness and justice? The very idea is unthinkable. The very fact that God is ruling all creation is of itself a guarantee that He is inherently just. Job and his three friends must accept that, insists Elihu, or else they themselves will be guilty of condemning the righteous Mighty One. And he drives home his point by reminding them that they would not in the ordinary way have the courage or the conviction to accuse even an earthly King or potentate of iniquity or unjust administration; how much less then should they, even mentally, so accuse God? "*Is it fit to say to a King 'Thou art wicked?' and to princes 'Ye are ungodly?' How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?*" (34. 18-19) Rotherham has verse 18 "*Doth one say to a king 'Abandoned one' or 'Lawless one' to nobles?*" which is more expressive of the point which Elihu is making here. Kings and princes, even the best of them, are apt to allow considerations other than those of

absolute integrity and impartiality to becloud their judgment and influence their actions. Not so with God. He cannot be bribed or cajoled, flattered or blackmailed. If we are prepared to accept the endeavours of a good king as being right and proper in all the circumstances, and to feel that there is no cause for complaint, how much more should we accept the dealings of God as absolutely just and righteous, whether we understand those dealings or not, whether the present effect appears to be in line with his avowed character or the reverse. That is what Elihu is insisting here.

The kings, the princes; the rich, the poor; they are all the work of God's hands, and He has complete control over them. The hand of death, laid upon all men, ensures that the power of evil men can only extend thus far and then be cut short. "*In a moment they die,*" he says ("shall" ought to be omitted in verse 20) "*at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand. For his eyes are upon the ways of a man and he sees all his steps. There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves*" (34. 20-22 RSV). This is a vivid picture of the unceasing vigilance wherewith Heaven maintains its watch upon Earth and encompasses the operation of sin and evil by the restraints of the Divine purpose. Jesus spoke of the rich fool who prospered exceedingly in the good things of this world and said at last to himself "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat and be merry*". But that night God sent for him "*This night*" He said to him "*thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be that thou hast laid up?*" In a moment all was gone. In a moment he died. At midnight God came to him and he was taken away. That is how it is with all men, for the eyes of the Lord are always upon all their doings and there is nothing that can escape their keen scrutiny. There is a fascinating vision in the Book of Zechariah in which Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the High Priest, picturing the secular and spiritual rulership of the nation restored from captivity and establishing itself in righteousness, discharge their administration in the presence of seven eyes, "*the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout*

the whole earth" (Zech. 4. 10). Israel of the Restoration never did reach up to that glowing picture painted by the prophet; the ultimate fulfilment of Zechariah's visions belongs to a time still future; but it is and always has been true that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere in the earth and nothing can escape the administration of his justice. "What a man soweth, that shall he reap"—in due time. Perhaps one of the most eloquent passages in all the Bible describing how the all-seeing eye of God will seek out the evildoer wherever he may go to escape the Divine Presence is in the 9th Chapter of Amos. Elihu may well say, as he has done at this point "there is no gloom or deep darkness where evil-doers may hide themselves", in the light of those burning words from the lips of the Tekoan herdsman. "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up into heaven thence will I bring them down. Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them." (Amos 9. 2-3). Well might Elihu stress the fact that the evildoer and the transgressor can never hope to escape from God.

From verse 23 to the end of the chapter the text has given translators a great deal of trouble. Certain scholars whose work on the intricacies of the passage is admittedly authoritative have not hesitated to say that these verses are "unintelligible, ambiguous and insoluble," and "bear signs of considerable corruption of the text". Were this the work of Virgil or Homer or some other ancient secular writer the opinion of the experts might be accepted without question, but here we are dealing, not only with the work of a man named Elihu who lived about three and a half millenniums ago, but also with a work prepared under the supervision of the Holy Spirit of God for the instruction of all who in after ages would serve God and know of his ways. The use of terms such as the above to describe the work of the Holy Spirit is inadmissible; rather must we conclude that our understanding is defective and seek the better to discern the meaning behind the words. It is in such passages that comparison of the renderings of various translators is often helpful towards an understanding of the text. For this reason the next few verses are taken mainly from Leeser's translation.

"For he need not direct his attention a long time upon man, that he should enter into

judgment before God. He breaketh down mighty men without long searching, and placeth others in their stead, for the reason that he knoweth their deeds; therefore he overturneth them in the night, and they are crushed". (From here the Margolis translation is adopted) "He striketh them as wicked men, in the open sight of others; because they turned aside from following him, and would not have regard to any of his ways" (34. 23-27).

This remarkable passage reveals a fresh facet of the Divine character, to wit, the swiftness of Divine judgment when necessity so requires. God does not need to hold a protracted investigation into the merits and demerits of the case, or to stage a lengthy trial at which counsel for the prosecution and defence can each have their say before the final verdict is arrived at. God knows, at any time and at all times, the degree of culpability and of guilt in any matter which comes before him for attention and He can render an infallible verdict in a moment of time. Says Elihu "he need not direct his attention a long time". Mighty men are broken down without a long investigation into their cases, and others appointed to their places without hesitation. Instances which come readily to mind are those of King Saul, given the sentence of deposition when as yet the smoke of his unlawful sacrifice had hardly died away; Ananias and Sapphira, within a few hours of their sin. It is not that execution of the judgment is necessarily immediate—Saul discharged the duties of King for years after Samuel conveyed the Divine decree against him—but Elihu's point is that judgment is immediate and just, because God is omniscient and infallible. It is this distinction between the passing of sentence and the execution of that sentence which forms the basis of Elihu's argument. Men criticise the Almighty because they do not perceive the immediate punishment of the wicked and assume that God has therefore not even passed sentence and has in fact taken no notice of the evil-doer. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8. 11). The Wise Man only put into words what a great many have thought at all ages in human history. "To every purpose" he says "there is time and judgment" (verse 6) and it is because men ignore the time element in God's plans they fail to appreciate that although the execution of the sentence may not follow immediately upon the passing of that sentence, it does not

mean that God is either heedless or limited in power. It often means that God has a purpose in allowing the "wrath of man to praise him" as with Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. No matter how long drawn out and protracted may be the operation of Divine judgment, we must accept as fundamental and absolute the truth that God does bring his stroke upon the wicked "in the open sight of others", because they turn aside from him and have no regard to his ways. "In the open sight of others" insists Elihu when all the time his critics' argument is that men do not see the judgment of God executed. Again there is only one answer to the enigma, and it is the answer already given us by the writer of Ecclesiastes. There is time and judgment; sentence against evil work is not necessarily executed speedily; but when it is so executed, it will certainly be "in the open sight of others". There is something here that connects with the words of Jesus when He said that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10. 26). In the resurrection, said the revealing angel to Daniel, there are some who come forth to enduring life, and some to shame and enduring contempt (Dan. 12. 2) and Jesus added a more solemn note to that when, speaking of the same great crisis in God's work with human kind, He said that some would come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to a resurrection of judgment (John 5. 29). All this will be in the plain sight of all men, and nothing that men will have done in their past life will escape being brought out into the light of day, revealed before the Father and the holy angels, and all mankind—verily God is just who judges in the earth.

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether unto a nation or unto mankind altogether, that impious men may not reign nor be ensnarers of the people" (34. 29. 30). Two questions wherewith to round off the argument before Elihu taxes Job and his friends with the implication of all he has said in defence of Divine justice. The theme is still that God is omnipotent. If He gives quietness, peace, then obviously no one can make trouble. If He elects to hide his face, then obviously none can behold him, and these things are true of a community or a nation just as they are true of mankind as a whole. There is none, of all the sons of men, individually or collectively, who can demand of God, "What doest thou?" And because of that inassailable fact men have no

option but to accept and believe in the inherent justice of God.

Now Elihu turns round upon his four listeners with a challenge which brings all that he has said in chapter 34 to the forefront. Here is the practical application of his discourse in defence of the justice of God. "*Truly it is only fitting to say unto God 'I bear cheerfully; I will not do any wrong. What I cannot see myself, do thou truly teach me; if I have done what is unjust, I will do so no more'. Should he then according to thy view send a recompense, because thou hast rejected him?—because thou must choose and not I—and what thou knowest do speak?*" (34. 31-33 Leeser).

This is an exhortation to Job; the other three appear for the moment to be ignored. Elihu is telling Job, in brief, that in view of the admitted infallibility of the Divine character, God's perfection in justice and the certainty of his judgment for sin, it is only fitting for Job to admit to God his fault in his previous impatience, and undertake not so to offend in future. Job had previously demanded compensation, a recompense, from God because of his unmerited sufferings, but Elihu, more harsh perhaps in his condemnation than God would have been, accuses him of rejecting God because of that very demand. Should God grant Job a recompense? No! says Elihu, because Job had, at least in measure, rejected God; but he admits the responsibility lies with Job and the onus of decision whether or not to admit his fault to God lies with Job—"thou must choose, and not I"—and having decided, he tells Job, God must be told the decision. "*What thou knowest, do speak*". It seems almost like an admission on the part of the younger man that with all his reforming zeal and all his clear insight into the ways of God and all his hortatory skill in showing Job where he had diverged from the Divine ways, the relationship between Job and his God could only be established and maintained by Job himself. No other man, not even Elihu, could act on Job's behalf in matters affecting Job's personal standing with God. Elihu might show the way, but in the end the decision rested with Job. That is something we all do well to remember as we endeavour to bring others to Christ. The type of high-pressure conversion where the subject is hurried along by intensive prayer and exhortation until he or she "accepts Christ", sometimes even in sheer self-defence, counts for little or nothing in the Master's sight. The final word to the

would-be convert, when we have said all that we have to say, must always be "But thou must choose, and not I".

And so to the final word in this part of the discourse, as Elihu finishes his plea for the justice of God. "*Men of sense will say unto me, and every wise man who heareth me, that Job hath not spoken with knowledge, and that his words are without intelligence. Oh that Job may therefore be probed continually, in order to give answers against sinful men. For he addeth unto his sin transgression; among us he uttereth too many loud words, and multiplieth his speeches against God*" (34. 34-37 Leeser).

It is noteworthy that here, at the end of his second discourse, that concerning the justice of God, Elihu should find occasion to reprove Job just as at the end of his first discourse, that concerning the wisdom of God, he uttered an implied reproof. At that time he indicated that Job had no effective reply to his representations (ch. 33. 31-33). Now he speaks more strongly. Job has impugned the wisdom of God and Elihu in his vehemence claims that any man of discretion and wisdom will agree with him in his assertion that Job has acted in an exceedingly unwise manner. He has spoken without knowledge and without intelligence, claims the younger man. For that reason it is Elihu's prayer that Job may be led through still further crucial experiences—"probed continually" is his expression—that he might eventually come to the understanding which is already so crystal clear to Elihu, in order that, like Elihu, he may be able to give the true answers to the irreverent and agnostic queries of unbelieving men. It is not that Elihu bears any animosity against

Job; his whole demeanour towards the older man throughout all these long discussions evidences that; it is only that he is so sure himself of the vision he has seen, so zealous for the honour of the God he serves, that he desperately wants Job to see the same things and voice the same confidence. There is a reflection here of the attitude of God himself to the fallen human race; he does not want to condemn and punish; he wants to see the barrier between creature and Creator broken down so that in the light of the glory of God the man who is at heart God's man may rise to the apex of his privilege and speak for God in the hearing of those who decry God. Job has not yet attained to that position, in the opinion of Elihu. He has yet to learn in quietness and meditation on his sufferings instead of declaiming aloud his innocence of any crime deserving them. "*He uttereth too many loud words*" comments Elihu, rather scornfully it would appear "*and multiplieth his speeches against God*". For one who himself has had a great deal to say it seems a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but the difference is that the whole of Elihu's speech is an impassioned defence of the supreme wisdom, justice, love and power of God, whereas the words of Job are devoted very largely to self-justification in consciousness of his own integrity, with the underlying implication that God is afflicting him unjustly. So the second discourse ends, as did the first, with an exhortation to Job to consider afresh his position before God. Elihu turns then to introduce his third thesis, the overwhelming evidence for the third of the Divine attributes, the Love of God.

(To be continued)

Special Note re "Chosen Books"

The enterprise known as "Chosen Books", a non-profitmaking Christian effort headed by L. H. Bunker, has initiated a novel aid to Christian service. The object is to encourage the reading aloud of the Bible in situations where such reading aloud can further the interests of the faith, and to this end "Chosen Books" are making available some Hi-Fi Records, 7 inch, unbreakable, 33½ R.P.M., for playing on any suitable radiogram or instrument. At present two such records are ready,

No. 1, "*Israel; Beloved of God*" being a dramatic recital of passages from Psalms and the prophets dealing with Israel's destiny, and No. 2, "*If ye love me keep my commandments*" consisting of appropriate selections from our Lord's words in the Gospels. The records are being made under expert technical supervision, and they can be obtained from Chosen Books, BCM/CHOSEN, London, W.C.1. The cost is 4/6 each plus postage 6d for one or two, and 3d per record thereafter.

TO LIVE OR TO DIE

*An exhortation
to trust*

In moments of high courage, when fired by a noble purpose, fearless men have been known to say "It is not necessary that I should live, but if I do, life can have but one object for me". It is no light thing to say, nor is it an easy attitude to have reached. Most men on sober reflection would agree that the world would still go on without them, but few sit down to face that uninviting situation. Most men are of a cowardly spirit on the question of "passing out" from the known to the unknown. They face the last issue with something of the resignation of fatalism, because they must. Even Christian people, long buoyed up by expectations of winging their flight to "a better land" at death, fight shy of the moment of departure. The doctor is expected to do his utmost to put off that farewell moment as long as possible, and many thanks are extended to him if he is successful in winning a respite for the "embarkee".

Those unhappy folk who "pass out" by their own hand are generally considered to be "of unsound mind", not able to weigh over properly the blessings of life against the dark uncertainties that lie ahead. Such unhappy souls are counted exceptions, beaten down by contrary forces till they find no desire in life. Not only would the majority of men not "pass out" in that way; but could they really have their choice, they would not "pass out" at all.

*"Had he his way, would rather stay
Right here, than go to heaven."*

is the way one wit of seventy-five summers expressed himself. There is nothing censurable in this attitude. Man was made to live originally, and had he not sinned, he would not have had to die. The entrance of sin did not destroy the desire to live, and except where adversity or unremitting pain rob existence of all its joys, the desire still persists. It is the enforcement of the penal decree of God against sin which makes death, thus far, inevitable. The "needs be" comes from the Divine side of the question, not from man's. The interruption of those subtle cosmic forces which come into our mundane sphere from outer spaces—vitalising life-promoting forces—cause man to wither and decay and die, long before he has had enough (as a rule) of this mundane world. It is accordant with nature to desire to live, and it is true that man only dies because he must.

It is not fair nor reasonable to judge this question from the standpoint of these war-fevered days. These are days of mass-madness and hypnotic dementia. With the fearful things looming ominously near, thousands—perhaps millions—might say it were better to be dead than alive, but could the reign of peace return, the balance of their judgment would quickly be restored. The attitude of man in every land could be summed up in one short phrase—"Man wants to live as long as he can, and will face up to death, only when he must".

This general attitude of the mass makes the attitude of the exception only the more remarkable, and when the "exception", still blessed with health and strength, still unworn by adversity or pain, looks out dispassionately on life and death, and says "It is not necessary for me to live, but if I do, life can have but one object for me," it may be taken as a veritable certainty that such an one is consecrated to the noblest things he knows. The "object" is greater than the man, and greater than his life—so great that life is something to be spent in its behalf; so great that if life may not be spent in its behalf, life has no worth in itself at all. Some men reach this Alpine height, and conquer self and circumstance, but these rare souls are few indeed. There are but few objects within this mundane sphere which are worthy of such consecration and devotion, and where such consecration has been seen the object has been universal, as a rule. Men will set themselves apart in this supreme sense more readily when it is for "all" than when it is for a few—for a scientific, or humanitarian, or universal end.

When the Church of God was young her experience was blessed by the utterance of one who reached Himalayan heights of self renunciation and utter consecration. If ever human lips said truly "It is not necessary for me to live, but if I do, life can have but one object before me" it was said by this man's lips. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" said this fully surrendered soul. "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" he said on other occasion to his perturbed and wondering brethren. These words were not uttered in the thoughtless flush of youth but in the years when

judgment was mature. He himself was getting well on in years, yet not so old that he was senile and worn-out. There was yet much vital force, and driving force left in his fervent soul. He had not reached "retiring" age. He was not ready for his "easy chair", yet with all this unspent reserve of capacity to "do", he was ready to subjugate his whole interest in life for his Master's sake—and "live" if his Master wished for him to live; or "die" if that were his Master's will.

It is not possible here to trace the full outline of his circumstances save only to say that it was a "crisis" time in his life. He was in chains, under arrest, and waiting verdict from Cæsar's Court. Brethren in Philippi were perturbed about this situation, and wondered why it should have come about. They could not understand why Providence should have permitted the Gospel's most zealous ambassador to be put in chains; but that ambassador was under no uncertainty himself. He had no need to be uncertain. He had committed himself—as man and as New Creature—into Jesus' hands, to serve him just as long as Jesus desired, and to lay his ambassadorship down and go to "sleep" just when his Master pleased. There were no "second causes" in his life. No other hand than Jesus' could mark out his path. It did not lie with Imperial Cæsar, nor with the Imperial Cæsar's Satanic master to interfere with his life's destiny. His life's objectives were not contingent upon the whim or mood of any man. The decisions which affected his life were made in heaven; were made by his own Lord, and none could say him nay. He was his Master's chattel, his Master's slave, his Master's voice, and his Master could do his Will in every sense, alike "in" him, and "for" him, and "by" him. He knew his Master had lived and died, and by the Father's power had mounted up on the hither side of death to glory, honour and immortality. His Master received "all power in heaven and earth" and was merely marking time, "from henceforth expecting" till the whole world should be made his footstool. Death could have no further dominion over that exalted One, and if to-day, to-morrow, or any day, his Master should decide his journey done, his service at an end, there was nothing else to the question—he would lay himself upon the headman's block as readily as on his nightly couch. There is something delightful in this utter abandon to the Master's Will. To have no choice of this or that apart from him is rest and peace. To care not if we live, or if we die, if thus his Will be done is victory in-

deed. To yield one's self to his embrace with infant-like dead-weight in mother's arms, is ever his delight.

We need to take stock of these things to-day. God has not made any promise to preserve in unconditional physical safety any child of grace. The story of the faithful Church has been one of death and suffering, from the beginning of its career. Stephen was crushed with stones; James was slain by Herod; the catacombs of Rome were filled with heroic dead; the Waldenses, the Albigenses and Huguenots were ruthlessly cut down. Germany was deluged for a hundred years with blood. The saints were given into one persecutor's hand for "a time, times, and the dividing of a time." Jesus said ". . . I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes . . . some of them ye shall kill and crucify . . ." God promises no immunity from violence to the followers of the Lamb, but He does promise grace enough to help them bear their lot. But though no complete immunity has been proclaimed, no man nor other agency can lay God's children low till his due time has come. "They sought to take him, but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come" (John 7. 30; 8. 20), but later on the Blessed One said "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12. 23). "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father; save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour".

In these troubled days the child of God who sits loose to earthly things, and begins each day with resignation to finish his course that day with gladness should the Lord permit, can find rest and peace of heart. The child who knows he cannot end his days till God's due time has God himself at the helm of his life, and with God at the helm his life cannot be wrecked by any storm until God pilots him into port. But if any saint of God thinks that the world or any part of it cannot go on without his oversight, and that it is essential for him to live on its behalf, that saint has much to learn. He has not yet realised that the only object of the Christian's life is "Christ", and should he live, or die, he is the Lord's.

Through the whole community the influence of a Christian home spreads. The town seems purer, the birds sing more sweetly, the flowers bloom more radiantly. Joy sings its anthems in such a home as it sings in no other place. And if this blessedness is to continue, we must shut out all unkindness, bitterness and injustice.

HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM

Reflections on
Paul at Athens

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said 'We will hear thee again of this matter'."

(Acts 17. 32).

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

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

waiting for the Golden Age which seems never to come, and have allowed its beauties to recede to a secondary place in their thinking.

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

There are influences abroad to-day which draw in the opposite direction. The tendency to retire more and more into a "devotional" Christian life, taking comfort from the more personal promises and exhortations of Scripture, and ceasing from the outward work of testifying to the goodness of God and the Plan of God, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and the principles of Jesus' teachings, is not good. It is the pitfall into which so many promising movements of the past have fallen. Especially is it true of Christian bodies that have ceased to attract the younger element into their ranks, and the not-so-young are realising the passing of the years. Their meetings tend to

become pleasant Christian social gatherings where the glories of the past are recounted and enlarged upon but there is no looking forward to the future. Their personal witness is to the converted, and the testimony meeting takes the place of public witness. And the vision of the Kingdom fades; it can do no other, for the basis of its inspiration—the Baptist message, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’—is lost. And that is why so many in this day are reluctant to talk about the Kingdom or to discuss the details of earth’s coming glory, dismissing any attempt to do so as “idle speculation”.

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

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

NOTE ON THE DECREE OF CYRUS

Cyrus the Persian, who captured Babylon in 538 B.C. and ended the Babylonian captivity by restoring the Jews to their own land, has been given a great deal of credit which may or may not have been deserved. According to Ezra 1. 2 he made this proclamation “*The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up . . .*” This sounds as though he had a considerable reverence for the Lord God of Israel. But at much the same time he gave orders for the restoration of the Temple of Sin, the Moon-god, at Ur of the Chaldees, and had bricks used for the restoration inscribed with a very similar story. “*Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favourite sign delivered into my hand the four quarters of the world, and I returned the gods to their shrines. The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hands; the land I have caused to dwell in peaceful habitation.*”

It is of course possible that Cyrus perceived little or no difference between Sin, the Moon-god of the Babylonians, and the God of heaven of the Jews, and used in each inscription the term which he thought would best suit the people to whom he was proclaiming his intentions. Ezra himself has the best light on the matter. He says that “*the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia*” (ch. 1. 1) to do this thing. Cyrus himself may

have had his own motives and they were probably mixed ones. Behind him and unknown to him was the overruling power of God, causing times and circumstances to work together in such a fashion that it only needed the astute mind of the Persian monarch to perceive the advantages of a friendly nation installed in Jerusalem to effect the long awaited and long promised deliverance of Israel exactly on time, as promised by Jeremiah some seventy years earlier. (see Jer. 25. 11. 12 and Dan. 9. 2).

Hand and heart, instinct and motive, the whole life within and without must be transformed up to the “Ideal”. And only the Omniscience of God knows what that is! And only the Omnipotence of God can sustain in the making! Thus the Will of Him who knows must of necessity lie across the will of him who knows not, to direct and cause them to aspire up to God’s perfect Ideal of Glory. Thus the Power of God must overshadow the weakness of those who leave the haunts of sin. Thus the Love of God must fill and enlarge the hearts which hitherto had been chilled and frozen amid evil things.

* * *

God is not sparing in His riches. He gives not a trickle but a torrent. As His power is great, so is His grace. (2 Cor. 9-8).

"THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS"

A Study of
Matt. 24,34

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. 24. 34).

Many attacks have been made by Atheists, Freethinkers, and Higher Critics upon the bona-fides of our Lord as a teacher sent from God on account of his words in verse 34. Looking at the long category of events foretold in this Olivet conversation, and not noting with sufficient carefulness what proportion of these forecasts were included in the scope of "all these things" they have claimed that Jesus' words were falsified by events. This is a serious charge to lay against One who said *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away"*.

They have included all the signs and portents connected with his Second Advent in the scope of "these things". Manifestly that is a wrong thing to do. The "All these things" of Matt. 24. 34, must be governed and defined by the meaning of the same words, from the same lips, as recorded in Matt. 23. 36. "All these things" refer only to the crimes perpetrated upon the Prophets by the fathers, and to the "filling up of the Cup" by that generation as it slew the Stephens, and the James and Peters and Pauls, who came in Jesus' Name, and the retribution that came from "All these things" could fall only on that people, and only while they were unrepentant concerning their crimes. Jesus spoke of many things associated with his return which lay outside the scope of "all these things". It will not be forgotten that Jesus was answering three questions, not one. It would therefore be most improper to place all his words in reply to the one question "When shall these things be?" Even the sign of the budding fig-tree—the return of Jewish favour—should not be included; for that indicates punishment ending and restoration begun.

Again, signs applying to peoples other than the Jew should not be included, for they were not the children of those ancient fathers who had slain God's prophets. Further, the particular signs applicable to the Christian Church, in verses 42-51, must obviously be omitted from "all these things".

However, when we have cleared the ground of our enquiry from all these mistakes and misunderstandings, there yet remains one other point to be cleared up, and set in order. That point has to do with the word "fulfilled" in verse 34. It is generally understood that

this word should have the same meaning as the words "accomplished" or "completed". But the word used by our Lord does not mean "come to pass" in the sense of being ended; but "come to pass" in the sense of beginning to happen, or beginning to take place.

One Greek scholar and writer says on this word "The Lord concludes this special prophecy of the tribulation by adding, *'Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass till all these things begin to take place'*." He then explains that the Greek word *Genetai* used by our Lord here is a derivative of the Greek *Ginomai*, which has a wide variety of meanings, few of which are so definite as the thought in our word "fulfilled". He further says "The word *genetai* from *ginomai* means 'to begin to be'; 'to come to be'; and is quite different from *pleroo* which does mean 'to fulfil'." In Luke 21. 32 which is the parallel passage, we have the former word "begin to be", while in verse 24, we have the latter word "fulfilled" [referring to the Times of the Gentiles]. Professors Young and Strong, in their concordances verify this suggestion regarding *ginomai*. Young shows it to be translated "be"—(the verb "to be") 249 times; "come to pass" 82 times, and many other forms which show a present and not a past fulfilment. Strong says *ginomai* (to cause to be; "to become")—is used with great latitude. He then gives a list of words which include "arise" "be assembled"; "be" "be brought to pass", "continue" and many more indicative of a present happening. As an instance we may note a form of *genetai* in John 13. 2, which in our Authorised Version is translated "and supper being ended". It is quite clear from verses 26-28, that supper was not ended but was only just beginning. The Revised Version renders it "and during supper". The Diaglott translates it "as supper was preparing".

What the Lord really said was "This generation shall not pass till 'all these things' *'begin to happen'*." And they did begin to happen to that very generation! As if to show that this is the correct thought the Lord throws in a very illuminating phrase when He said "THE END is not yet"—"these are the BEGINNING of sorrows".

This throws a new light on this baffling passage. The cup of Divine retribution was placed to the lips of that generation, and they

drank deeply of its bitter draught, but that generation did not empty the cup. The great tribulation only BEGAN in their days. The overthrow of their city and nation was only the beginning of those special curses incorporated in the terms of their national Covenant. Warning the fathers of the penalties which the forsaking of their Covenant would entail (Deut. 28. 15-68) he told them God would pluck them out of their land and curse them in field and home, and cast them into the wide places of the earth. Nowhere, not even in the Papal catalogue of cursings, are such terrible words to be found; and in their infliction there is nothing so terrible to be found in the records of history. That it had a portion of its fulfilment in the siege of Jerusalem is certain when we read verses 49-57; and that the nation from far is the Roman nation seems to admit of no doubt whatever. Then verse 64 says "*The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth to the other*". Jesus said, "*And they*

shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations" (Luke 21. 24).

Evidently then, while the sack of Jerusalem saw the beginning of their "great tribulation", yet, terrible as it was, it was only the beginning of sorrows and not the end. It was to continue till they should repent and be prepared to say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". Our Lord calls it "the tribulation of those days". "Those days" span an Age—the period that lies between Jerusalem's destruction, and that happier day when God pours upon them the spirit of supplication, when every family shall weep apart. (Zech. 10. 12).

When therefore the Lord said "*this generation shall not pass till all these things begin to come to pass*", his words were not intended to cover all the signs and portents associated with his *Parousia*, but had reference only to the retributive measures due to be inflicted upon that rebellious nation, and to have their beginning with that then present generation.

NOTE ON MATT II.II

"*Among men that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*" (Matt. 11. 11).

John was the most notable man of the pre-Christian dispensation; greater than Moses, greater than Elijah, because he was the messenger chosen to herald the coming of Christ and to proclaim him to men. In that he was the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.*" (Mal. 3. 1). But in what way was John, great as he was, inferior to the least one in the kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom of heaven did not exist until Jesus came. It was thrown open by him and thereafter entrance is gained by belief in, and acceptance of, Christ. The pre-Christian generations, dead in their graves, could have no part or lot in that kingdom, and will not, until they hear the voice of the Son of God calling into resurrection life. (John 5. 28). Until that event takes place there are none of those pre-Christian generations, not even John himself, who possess life in the New Testament sense. But once the kingdom of heaven is thrown open those who will accept Christ "have eternal life" and are passed from

death unto life. By this is the Christian age and the Christian calling superior to the age of John the Baptist and of Moses, with its Law Covenant binding upon every child of Israel. Even John did not possess eternal life; the least in the kingdom of heaven does have eternal life.

There is a further consideration. The kingdom of heaven so far as the period between the First and Second Advent is concerned, is manifest only in the calling out "from among the nations a people for God's Name" (Acts 15. 14), the Church, which after the Second Advent is to be associated with the Lord Christ in the administration of his kingdom on earth, his reign over the nations. Now there is no suggestion anywhere that any of the "Old Testament saints" of whom John is obviously one, have place in this exalted company. Whilst the Church will rule and reign from heaven, the place of the Old Testament saints will be upon earth, administering the work of the kingdom throughout the whole thousand years of the Messianic Age. It might well be in this sense too that the least of the glorified New Testament saints in heaven, in the glory of the celestial realm, will be "greater" than even the princes of the earth during that age of evangelisation and blessing.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER ONE

An
exposition

Part 2 (Completion)

The first part of this article, appearing in the last issue, treated vs 1-12 and traced the development of the Christian hope from its origin in the word of the Gospel, through its growth by transformation of the Spirit-led mind, to its focus in the heavenly inheritance.

* * *

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." That is another cause for joyfulness and assurance. We know that we have been delivered from the power of the Adversary which was in our past lives, and we are assured that God's Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are translated out of the power of sin and death and all those principles which we see around us in the world today, into an atmosphere of spiritual understanding, of moral standards of Christ, which is diametrically opposed in nearly every sense to the spirit of the world around us. We must clearly see that the cause of much of the weariness of fighting for well doing, being weary in well doing, is because the kingdom of darkness is trying to prevail against us. We know because of the fight which goes on continually in our mind between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit, that we have got out of the power and authority and influence, to a great measure, of the Adversary, and are under the influence and spiritual uplift of the Kingdom of God's dear Son, through the Spirit which is given to us. For unto everyone is given the gift of the Spirit—a measure of the Spirit.

"In Whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin." Now we know we have redemption; the redemption there is emphatic. It does not say everlasting life. The redemption which we have received is the forgiveness of sins, and everyone who has come into Christ has obtained redemption, which is forgiveness of sins. *"There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."* So therefore, they have redemption because that is forgiveness of sins. They have life because they have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. They have been born again, therefore, they have redemption. Their sins have been covered, have been blotted out as a matter of fact. They have got life, but that

has to be utilised and developed into eternal life by arriving, as the apostle says, at the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus. That is what he is labouring for, to bring that new life which God has started in you, and will be given to every individual, to perfection, that it might be worthy of everlasting life.

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Now we are coming on to the theme of the New Creation. He is pointing out here, as he did in Hebrews 1, that this one was the first born, and by him everything was made that was made, that in everything He should be the first. Remember that in Hebrews he goes on to say that "That creation shall wax old and as a garment it shall be changed". In other words, the first creation is waxing old and shall be changed, but in Christ, that is the wonderful plan of God, he is going to create again the creation. He is going to make all things new. God is not doing the work twice, he is executing the ultimate salvation of the creation in two phases, and two phases are essential because of the two opposing principles in the world—good and evil. The first phase of God's eternal purpose is for *all* the creation to experience evil. The second phase of the creation is to create them again in Christ Jesus, and give them an experience of good. Those are the two phases of God's great work. When the two phases are complete then those who have attained unto the full stature of man in Christ Jesus can pass over into everlasting life for the ages of the ages. That is the new creation; that is the drama of the ages which has been limited in outlook until now, obviously because of our intimate contact with the earthly phase of God's Kingdom. We may have been inclined to think that the new creation only refers to the Church, but the new creation according to Revelation, and according to this chapter, is a complete re-creation of everything which was created. Hebrews 1 confirms that point of view because it says "The things in the heaven and the things in the earth" and the verses lower down here point out that the blood of Jesus Christ is effective, not only for the things on the earth but for the things in heaven. *"For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or domin-*

ions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Now this gives a picture, as does Hebrews 1, how that the Lord created everything in the first instance, and then he goes on expanding the plan. "And he is before all things and by him all things are brought together, and he is the Head of the Body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." In the new birthday of the world which he speaks about in Matthew, and also in the new creation of all things which he speaks about in Revelation, the Lord is going to be the first born, so that in everything he might have pre-eminence. He is going to be the first of God's new creation both in heaven and in earth. The actual application of how that occurs is dealt with in verse 22.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The only way in which the whole fulness can dwell in Christ is that everything should be in him, and so he has shown us that in the first creation the whole fulness dwelt in Christ, because everything was brought together in Christ, and he sustained everything by the power of God. The Scriptures says he came to earth that he might "die to sin" and that is the example to us, as the apostle goes on to argue, that we should die to sin, that we should not render our bodies instruments of unrighteousness. The angels have to arrive at that position; the angels were not dead to sin, as is proved by the fact that many of them fell, and they all must die to sin by the experience of sin in the world. There cannot be a portion of the angelic host breaking away from the rest of God's orders in heaven without the same temptations being in the heavens as in the earth, and that is God's great purpose—that the exceeding sinfulness of sin has to be experienced by all God's creatures before the whole creation can be in a state of perfection and never be tempted again. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" and, quoting from the Diaglott "And through him to reconcile all things for him, having made peace by means of the blood of his Cross, whether the things on earth or the things in the heaven." He states that the blood of the cross, or the work of the Lord on earth, has made peace and reconciled, not only the creatures on earth, but the things in heaven. We have to understand then the work of the Lord in his sacrifice in that sense. It must in

some way reconcile to God the angels that fell, just as it reconciled fallen man to God. The only way that this can be done would seem to be by the moral impact of the principles on the mind, transforming the mind as in Romans 6 "Transforming the mind that they might know what is that perfect will of God". In other words, that all who witness the Lord's work, will by his death have demonstrated to them how exceedingly wicked this was, and also enable them to decide in their own minds that they will never pursue lines of principles or conduct which would bring about that same event—they will die to sin. We die to sin because we know Christ and the principles of God which are expounded, and that is the only thing which turns us from doing that which is wicked to doing that which is lawful and right. It is only the moral power of the Gospel and the strength of the principles of the truth which persuade us that the way of life which the Lord presents to us is the only possible way of living. Nothing else can make us do that but the truth. Physical contact and physical flesh, as the Lord said, profit nothing. It is the moral force of the knowledge of God which gives eternal life, and the Lord demonstrated that so effectively that all who look to the brasen serpent on the cross are saved from sin. All who see sin demonstrated in the death of Christ, and all who see the righteousness of God as exhibited in his life, can be so convinced of the exceeding sinfulness of sin that they can never again be tempted by it. Therefore, bringing it down to man's level, we know, or should know by the power of God and the gospel and work of Jesus Christ, that the life of sin is futile and is death. The works of the flesh being death, as the apostle points out. Now as soon as we are convinced of that, we have the moral outlook of the power of the Spirit working in us mightily to bring us to the moral standard of God himself.

"And you who were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." Alienated from God because of the thoughts and the principles which the flesh believes in and which the world believes in, and which the Adversary has inculcated into the world, we being of the world, we had all those same ideas; we did not see anything of the light or very little of it. Alienated by doing those things which are alien to the principles of the truth and enemies in mind. He is not saying we were enemies by works, it is the principle at the back of the work which counts. We

were enemies in our minds; it was the mind that was the key to the situation because it believed those works were satisfactory in themselves, but they produced actually the works which were wicked. "Yet now hath he reconciled." In other words, all who accept the truth in Jesus Christ and receive the power of the Spirit are born again and are therefore reconciled to God. "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

"Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unreprouable in his sight." In Romans 6 he points out that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his Son in the form of flesh and for sin, rendered powerless the flesh. So it is that through Christ we are re-created, and in Romans 8 he argues "He that is dead is justified from sin". If we are born again,—and the argument the apostle puts forward is emphatic, he says—"If one dies for all, all are dead". If we are born again, if we are reckoned dead of the old creation, we suffered the penalty of sin. He that is dead can have no penalty on him, and we are born again as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We are a new entity, free from condemnation, because the old sentence has been carried out and we of the old creation cease to exist. In the body of his flesh, we are reconciled by being made New Creatures. God has started his New Creation in us in Christ Jesus. We are a new creation, that is why we have life. "He that hath the Son hath life." We are the first of the wonderful new creation which God is going to bring forth in heaven and in earth, and we are now holy because we are free from condemnation, and as we were seeing before, he that hath this spirit in himself sinneth not. We are unblameable, irreproveable in his sight, because we are a new creation. In other words, our old man was crucified with him on the tree. The old creation is finished, we are a new creation free from everything which was pertinent to the old creation and the old man. "And unblameable in his sight if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." As he advocates in Romans 8, we must not take to sin again, we must not render our bodies instruments for unrighteousness, but if we continue in the principles which he expounded to us we shall continue to be holy and unblameable in his sight. If we are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, if we attain and keep to the moral

standards, we shall have eternal life.

"Which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." Now that is a bit misleading, because the Gospel has not been preached to every creature which is under heaven, not in that sense, not individually. "Which was published in all creation" is in the Diaglott, that makes it sensible. The Gospel was published in all the creation, and in due course it will be preached to every individual in that creation, but as it points out later, the mystery is not clearly understood by the creation as a whole, it is only revealed to his Saints.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake." There is no vital value in the affliction of any individual as far as covering sin of any sort, but the afflictions which Paul suffered were exceedingly powerful for encouraging the followers of Christ in his day, and in our day, because he was an example of the power which God had given to him—verse 11 "Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness". Those are the afflictions which he was filling up of the afflictions of Christ. He suffered exactly the same things. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is by continually fighting against sin and not being weary in well doing that we arrive at the standard which is desired. All the examples of our Lord and the apostles are to that end, showing that if one stands against sin, the afflictions must come from those who are sinners. One cannot be in an environment which is absolutely opposed without feeling the percussions. So it was with the Lord. It was inevitable that coming into the world of sin he should suffer, and so it is inevitable that all who live in Christ Jesus in some way or other must suffer persecution, because they must be pursuing principles which are unacceptable to those with whom they mix, whether at work, in business or in the world. Not necessarily all the time, but there must be that conflict between good and evil, otherwise one is not exhibiting righteousness.

"For his body's sake which is the church; whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God." This was his ministry. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." This is what he wants to make manifest "To whom God would make known what is the riches of

the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." That is the mystery which has not been understood; that is the plan of God, the New Creation which God is making; that in Christ one can see the glory of God, and can be changed into the same likeness and can obtain eternal life. That is the thing which the apostle realises is the Gospel of salvation "Christ in you the hope of glory". In Christ we obtain the power to resist and overcome evil. We can be overcomers; that has been the mystery which all creation has been trying to find out; how to obtain everlasting life. All the dogmas and creeds and ideas of the heathen are to that end. It has only been revealed to the Church clearly, even in this land, how that in Christ the hope of glory is

obtainable, and in no other name is it possible, because no other name reveals God's principles. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation because the truth exhibits the principles of God in Christ Jesus. It transforms us from glory into glory, and makes us morally perfect. So ultimately will be introduced the perfect creation in which everything that hath life and breath, on every plane of being, shall be of the same mind as God, and exist throughout the eternal ages without the possibility of any clash between good and evil, throughout the ages of God's Eternal Kingdom.

Conclusion

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