



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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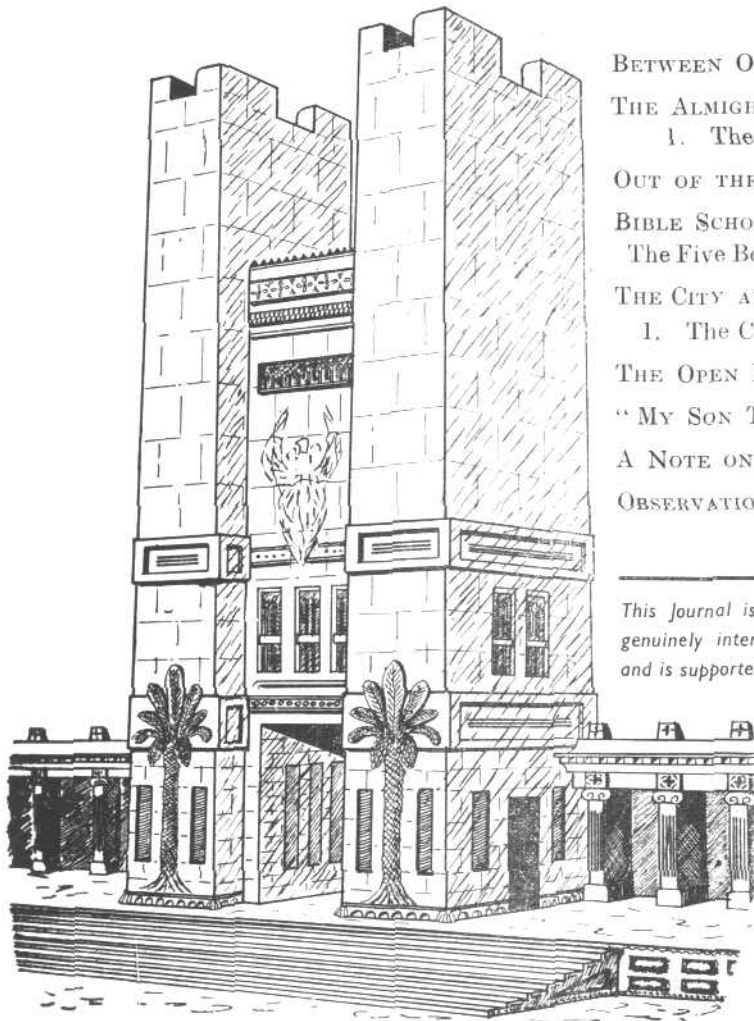
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

This issue commences several new features which will run for the first part of 1962. A word or two concerning them may be of interest.

"*The Almighty — the Eternal*" is a study in the omnipotence of God related to the evidences of His power and His purpose in creation, and His manifestation of Himself to man in the Person of the Son. There is a wealth of meaning in the familiar expression "the only-begotten Son" and it is hoped that this series will cast a few profitable side-lights on a theme which is of supreme importance to all Christians but by reason of its nature is capable of much misunderstanding. This study is not intended to be more than suggestive, for on such a subject it does not do to be dogmatic; if it helps in any way to a deeper understanding of the principle underlying St. Paul's memorable words "*To us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him*" (1 Cor. 8. 6) the series will have justified its inclusion herein.

"*A City and a Tower*" is an investigation into all that is known or can be deduced respecting the story of the Tower of Babel. This feature is based largely on the series "*The Tower of Babel*" which appeared in the "*Monthly*" ten years ago; since that time fresh material bearing upon the subject, particularly in the direction of recently deciphered clay tablets and other results of archaeological investigations since 1950 has become available and justified a revision of that series. It is hoped that readers new and old will find interest in this new presentation of a well-known Old Testament story.

"*Observations on the New English Bible*" is a series which will occupy only a few issues and follows the example of more than one Christian periodical in making a few comments on points which seem to be of importance in the new translation. It does not follow that all readers will attach the same value to the various observations which will be made

nor necessarily agree with the pertinence or validity of such commendations or criticisms that are offered. The value of the comments will lie chiefly in the stimulus to personal thought, and incitement to investigation, they provoke; like the noble Bereans of old, it is good that all search the Scriptures for themselves to see whether these things be so.

* * *

"*The Book and the Chosen People*" L. H. Bunker (Chosen Books) 48 pp stiff paper cover, 10 illustrations.

3/4 or 50 cents post free from Chosen Books BCM/CHOSEN, London W.C.1.

This is an appreciation of the Old Testament with particular emphasis upon its authorship, its compilation and its territorial basis. Brother Bunker has sought out a considerable number of apparently casual allusions scattered throughout the Old Testament each of which testifies to its genuineness and the more than human knowledge which inspired its phraseology—such as the statement of Job that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing" i.e. in empty space, an astronomical fact which was unknown to men at that time so far as all available evidence goes. The account of Creation, impossible at that time for men to have discovered, is another such. Apparent contradictions such as the two versions of David numbering Israel, in one case having been incited to do so by God and the other by Satan, are touched upon. The book gives some interesting information on the early languages of the Bible and the probable circumstances of its first writing, and concludes with a kind of reader's guide taking the reader through the "highlights" of the Old Testament by means of a planned glossary of texts.

Gone from us

Bro. A. Guy (*Forest Gate*)
Sis. L. Moss (*Ludlow*)

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

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

"Whom no man hath seen,
nor can see"

1. The Beginning of Time

"I only am God; I existed before Time itself." (Isa. 43. 13. Ferrar Fenton translation).

The eternity of God is beyond human comprehension. We are finite creatures; our minds can only conceive objects existing within space and events taking place within a span of time marked by a beginning and an ending. We can accept the idea of endless life by visualising the continuance of the present into future time without interruption or change for ever; it is not possible to project our minds back into past time and comprehend the idea of a no-beginning. Somewhere back in the distant recesses, our finite thoughts tell us, there must have been a start. But although this is certainly true so far as created things visible and invisible are concerned, God tells us it is not true as respects Himself. God has always existed, truly eternal. With Him there is no beginning.

Until God began to create, there was no such thing as space and there was no such thing as time. Space is the medium in which objects exist and time that in which events take place. Space can be defined as the distance between any two objects; until God created objects there was no space. Similarly time can be defined as the duration between any two events; until God caused events to happen there was no such thing as time. The ancient Greeks evidently saw something of this, for Plato writes "*Time and the heavens came into being at the same instant, in order that, if they were ever to dissolve, they might be dissolved together. Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time.*" The work of Einstein, in our own day, and of others who have followed him, difficult of comprehension by ordinary people as it is, goes to show that Plato was thinking on right lines. Time and space had a beginning. God, who exists eternally before that beginning, is the Creator of Space and Time. That is exactly what He tells us himself. "*I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he . . .*" or as Fenton translates it "*I only am God. I existed before time itself.*" In Isa. 57. 15 He declares himself "*the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity*"; perhaps that expression is the only really satisfactory definition of the existence of God before creation. The writer of the 90th Psalm attempted to convey his own understanding in his own words "*Even from ever-*

lasting, to everlasting, thou art God" (Psa. 90. 2) but that is a relatively feeble restatement of the conception given to man through the agency of Moses; "*say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*" (Exodus 3. 14). So many attempts have been made to express that word, *I AM*, into comprehensible English. The One being, the Ever-living, Eternal, the Self-existing, each conveys part of the meaning but none express it accurately. There is no word in the English language to describe a state of existence which is infinite in duration and scope, independent of all else, omnipresent and omnipotent. Isaiah again has to come to our rescue in simple words of one or two syllables. "*I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God*" (Isa. 44. 6). "*I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, I, the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour*" (Isa. 43. 10-11). "*I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.*" (Isa. 46. 9). This expression "I am" or "I am he" recurs again and again to designate the one eternal God who is from infinity to infinity, from the time of no-beginning to that of no-ending, whose power is limitless and all-embracing. The New Testament catches up the theme and repeats it to Christian believers in this present Age "*I am Alpha and Omega*" (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as though we were to say A and Z) "*the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. 1. 8). Present, past and future, God is always there.

So, before the beginning, God was alone. Before man trod the face of the earth, before this planet and all the starry Universe had come into existence. Before the angels were created or the world in which they move. Back in the emptiness and the darkness of infinity, there was God, planning for the future, devising the details of that creation which He purposed within Himself to bring into being.

The beginning of all things is marked by the distinction between God manifest in His Word for the progress of creative activity and God the Eternal, the Omnipotent. "*In the beginning was the Word*" says John at the opening of his Gospel "*and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This same*

was in the beginning with God" (John 1. 1). The English term "Word" is used to translate the Greek "Logos" which has a two-fold sense, that of speaking and that of thinking or reasoning. Hence it involves the conceptions of thinking, reasoning, meditating, calculating, planning—the mental faculties generally. That something more is involved than the operation of the Divine mind reaching out and pervading all things, becomes obvious when later on John tells us that this same Word "became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14). The Word has an objective existence in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, come to earth to manifest His Father in the sight of men, in a manner heretofore thought impossible, for men knew that the Eternal is fundamentally uncomprehended by human senses, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see" (2 Tim. 6. 16). John explained the wonder. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared" (revealed or manifested) "him" (John 1 18). We can regard the "beginning" at which the Word was "with God" as that point of time, in very truth the beginning of all things, when God made provision for the manifesting and the revealing of Himself to the creation which He was about to commence, when the word became an active agent whereby the designs of the Eternal were to be put into effect. That active agent is the "only begotten Son".

There must be something very real in this relationship of Father and Son, even though we realise that we are dealing here with a Divine mystery of which the earthly figure is but a feeble illustration. We are told, in what is perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3. 16). In a memorable passage St. Paul referred to God as "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all . . ." (Rom. 8. 32). These cannot be figures of speech. The matter dealt with is too serious to be defined in other than concrete terms. The Eternal really did give One Who had been with Him from the beginning of creation, yea, and since His ascension on high is with Him still and eternally. The "Word of God" really did walk the earth among men, yielded His spirit into the hands of the Father when upon the Cross, rose again in the power of an endless life, and is

with the Father eternally, lord over all created things. And we have to hold and believe all that in harmony with what we know of the oneness and eternity of God.

The Book of Proverbs helps us here. This is the book which enshrines a great deal of what is called the "Wisdom" literature of Israel. In pre-Exilic days, an equivalent term to the "Word of God" was the expression "the Wisdom of God". Divine Wisdom was held to be the agent of all God's work in creation, and "Wisdom" was personified in the same manner as the "Word" in New Testament days and in John's Gospel. Nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs are devoted to the words of the "Wisdom of God", transmitting His counsel to men upon earth. Embedded in these nine chapters there is what amounts almost to an autobiography of the Word of God, a personal explanation or definition of His relationship both to the Father and to the world in which men live. It is as if God knew how difficult it would be for men to understand how the Word, the Son, could be one with the Father yet distinct inasmuch as His relation to man is concerned. So Wisdom, the Word, speaks, saying (in Prov. 8. 22) "*the Lord possessed (acquired) me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up (anointed) from everlasting, before the earth was . . .*" The word translated "possessed" is *qanah* which means to get, to buy, to purchase, to obtain, and it carries the definite meaning of becoming the possessor of something not previously possessed. Now this is said to have become true at the "beginning" of God's "way"—a word meaning a road or trodden path leading to a definite goal—and this at once brings us into the realm of history, of events, occurring within time. God Himself had no beginning; the "beginning of His way" must refer to the point at which He began to put into operation His creative power to cause events to happen in the sequence He had already ordained. The investment of His Wisdom, His Word, with attributes of personality, as implied in this chapter, was evidently prior to any work of creation, for "Wisdom" goes on to say "*When there were no depths, I was brought forth . . . before the mountains, before the hills, was I brought forth, while as yet he had not made the earth . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth . . . then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*" (Prov. 8. 24-30). All this language should be understood as describing

the investiture of the Word with personality without doing any violence to that Divine Oneness which Jesus always claimed continually subsisted between Himself and His Father, a unity which was in Jesus' mind when He said "*I and my Father are one*". Furthermore, this association of personality with the Word marks the dividing point between the eternity in which God dwelt without creation and the time span during which His creative power brings into existence the creation comprehended in time and space as we understand those terms. Proverbs 8 describes an exercise of the Divine Will resulting in the concentration of God's mind and plan in respect to all creation in One who could thenceforth stand up and say with full authority "The Lord acquired me at the commencement of his developing purpose before any of His most ancient works; I was anointed to this from eternity". That is more of a paraphrase than a scholarly translation but it conveys the meaning of the passage in modern English idiom related to what is known of the nature of God. Theologians have wrestled with this basic truth of the Christian faith in the effort to make the mystery intelligible but this treatise is neither qualified to pronounce upon their arguments nor satisfied that they really succeed in what they set out to do. Nothing can match for clarity and simplicity the plain Biblical definition "the only begotten Son of God". And the clearest and most satisfactory manner in which we can view God in His manifestation toward us is to visualise One who became the embodiment of the Divine Word back there when God was about to commence creation, was thenceforth the Father's companion and agent for the execution of His work, as a beloved Son, in the fulness of time was found in fashion as a man for the suffering of death, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, Lord of all creation.

It is significant that the Son is said to be in the image of the Father. "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation*" says St. Paul in Col. 1. 15. "*The brightness (effulgence) of his glory, the express image of his person*" is the way Hebrews 1. 3 puts it. It was only when the Word was invested with attributes of personality that He, could be spoken of as the image of God. Not an image by creation as was Adam, who also was made in the image of God (Gen. 1. 26-27) but an image by reason of sonship—the only begotten Son of God.

So the Father entered into communion with the Son as with a companion; but to guard against thinking of the Son in the manner we think of created beings, who also derive life from God; archangels, angels, man; the Son claims for Himself those prerogatives which elsewhere in the Scriptures are attributes of God. "*Before Abraham was, I am*" He said to the people (Jno. 8. 50) and they, remembering that God is declared to be the "I am" took up stones to stone him "*because that thou, being man, makest thyself God*". "If ye believe not that *I am he*, ye shall die in your sins" He told them (Jno. 8. 24). The claim to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and last, attributed to the Father both in Isaiah and Revelation, is also accredited to the Son in Rev. 1. 11, 2. 8, and 22. 13. There can be no doubt about this. "These things saith the first and the last, *which was dead and is alive*" (Rev. 2. 8), God the Father does not die, cannot die; but the Son did die, and the mighty power of the Father was exercised to raise Him out of death and set Him at His own right hand (Eph. 1. 19-20). So that when we have explored all that can be explored and said all that can be said we can apprehend no more than is conveyed in the simple Scriptural statement that God the Eternal comprehended his Word, his Purpose, his Power in the only begotten Son, who henceforth became the Father's right hand in all creative work, the manifestation and revelation of the Father to all created beings. The institution of that condition of things was the first event ever to happen and therefore the beginning of time.

(To be continued)

A small thing is a great thing if God is in it. His power creates the tiny flower bud, the opening leaf, the blade of grass. He forms the grain of sand, the tiny globule of water, the glittering crystal of the snowflake. And it is these small things that make up the mighty oceans with their sand-girt shores, that clothe the vast forests, the rolling fields, and the snow laden landscape. God uses all His works. The weakest thing has a service of its own. The dewdrop, the little bird upon the tree, the flower of the field, the flitting butterfly, the busy bee. All creatures serve Him, small and great, and He can use us though we be the weakest of them all.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

A Reminiscence of Nahum

Nahum the Elkoshite (Nahum 1. 1). It is generally assumed that Elkosh in Palestine is indicated, but some think that Nahum was a prophet of the Northern Captivity, and that his home town was Elkosh in the mountains of Assyria, where the Ten Tribes were taken and settled by Shalmaneser. Elkosh to-day has a synagogue which possesses a notable shrine, claimed to be the tomb of Nahum.

"Nineveh of old is as a pool of water; yet shall they flee away," cries Nahum (Nahum 2. 8). A rather obscure expression; just what does it mean? A passage in Wigram's "*Cradle of Mankind*" supplies the answer. Standing on the heights just outside Elkosh, he looked down across the level plain towards ruined Nineveh, 40 miles away. "It was a weird and striking effect that we witnessed from it next morning. The clouds lay low and horizontal above the plain beneath us; and many of them seemed to have sunk on to the ground, and looked exactly like lakes under the level rays of the rising sun. As his orb rose higher they lifted, and dispersed into wreaths of vapour." So must Nahum, seeing the same phenomenon thousands of years ago, seen in that effect a picture of the doom of the great city of wickedness.

The Half Was Never Told

Strabo, the Greek geographer, of our Lord's day, offers an interesting sidelight on the culture of the Sabaeans, the people of the land from which the Queen of Sheba came to see the magnificence of Solomon. Strabo says of them "*By the trade in aromatics they have become the richest of all the tribes, and possess a great quantity of wrought articles in gold and silver, as couches, tripods, basins, drinking vessels, to which we must add the costly magnificence of their houses; for the doors, walls and roofs are variegated with inlaid ivory, gold, silver and precious stones.*" If this was the luxury to which the Queen of Sheba was accustomed in her own land, how much greater must have been that of King Solomon, for she said of his treasure "*The half was not told me.*" (1 Kin. 10. 7). And it was the possession of these treasures of earth that turned his heart away from the Lord.

Parables and Apologues

An *apologue*, (or apologue), is a fable or parabolic tale, with a moral truth; animals, trees, etc., are used as characters, and as it progress-

es towards the end the moral lesson can be deduced. A celebrated apologue is that of the trees called upon to choose a king in Judges 9. The apologue is in verses 8-15 and the moral in verses 55-57 though the whole chapter is a frame-work for the subject.

A *parable* is different, in that it is in itself a pictorial narrative, with a cryptic meaning not so easily understood without a key to the cypher. After His series of word-pictures Jesus privately explained them to His disciples, as is evident from Matt. 13. 10, 11, 16, 51, 52.

"A fire of coals" (John 18. 18)

The "coal" of scripture is charcoal, made chiefly from the root and trunk of a tree found in the desert. Amongst the well-to-do a brazier of copper about two feet high, bearing a chafing dish for the glowing mass, was usual. The charcoal was lighted outside the house in the chafing dish and burnt to a white heat until the worst of its fumes were given off, and was then brought indoors and used both for cooking and heating purposes. It was such a fire that the servants had lighted in the court of the High Priest's house and where Peter stood and warmed himself on that memorable night when the Lord was betrayed.

No evolution here !

Hippocrates, the "father of medicine", described tuberculosis twenty three centuries ago. The Eber Papyrus of Egypt, something like four thousand years old, mentions the same disease. The life cycle of the bacillus of tuberculosis is said to be about half-an-hour, which means there are 336 generations in a week, or 17,529 in a year. That makes seventy millions of generations of tuberculosis germs since the disease was first described by the ancient Egyptians—and they have not changed in any way in all that time. Not much evidence of evolution in that!

Have you a difficult temperament? Well, if you have you will require more grace; but the answer is, "*He giveth more grace*" You will not exhaust the reserves and resources of grace. *God never yet made a temperament which He could not sanctify.* God never yet saved one of His children whom He could not fill with the power of the Holy Spirit and make sweet and gracious and lovable and attractive.

Bible School *THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES*

Part 7. Gen. 37, 39-41

STUDY 8 JOSEPH IN CANAAN Gen. 37.

The story of Joseph ends what is generally called the Patriarchal Age. From the days of the Flood the Divine avenue of dealing with men appears to have been through individual men noted for their sterling faith and loyalty. Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—these are the names which stand out prominently in the long period of some twelve hundred years during which the early civilisations of Sumer, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon had their rise and the three great races of mankind began to spread outward and occupy the earth. With Joseph that order of things came to an end—a few generations after his death and a new figure occupies the stage, Moses, the man who led Israel out of Egypt and in God's providence welded them into a nation, a nation which remains to this day and will yet fulfil the Divine purpose of being a light to all peoples, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, born to his mother Rachel eight or nine years before the family left Laban in Haran and returned to Canaan. He comes into the story in Gen. 37 at seventeen years of age and evidently already in bad odour with his elder half-brothers, for, it is said, he brought unto his father their "evil report" (37. 2). To what extent this procedure partook of what is ordinarily known as "tale-bearing" does not appear from the account; it is plain from much of the story of Jacob that several of his sons were most undesirable characters anyway and Joseph might well have been justified in whatever it was he told his father. The thing that does stand out is Jacob's avowed predilection for Joseph, clearly on account of his being the first-born son of his beloved Rachel. The "coat of many colours" which 37. 3 declares Jacob had made for his favourite son has been variously explained but there is good reason for supposing that it was exactly what the A.V. says it was, a variegated garment made of various materials of different colours sewn together in a definite pattern. There is a famous Egyptian tomb dating back to the 12th dynasty, which is some time before that of Joseph, in which wall paintings exist showing Asiatic visitors to Egypt clad in just such garments of many colours. It would seem that Jacob, perhaps unconsciously influenced by the prophetic power of the Holy

Spirit, was already unknowingly prophesying Joseph's future exaltation. The brothers' jealousy was intensified when Joseph related his dreams—some of the earliest prophetic dreams in the Bible—and they perceived the implication. One dream showed them binding sheaves in the field when Joseph's sheaf stood upright and all the others bowed down to it. Later on he dreamed again and saw the sun and moon and eleven stars making obeisance to him. His father rebuked him at this, for in the strict code of the East the father is supreme until his death and this dream savoured of something like high treason. Yet 37. 11 says that "his father observed the saying" where "observe" means to take diligent heed. Perhaps he remembered his own dream of the ladder stretched up to heaven something like half a century earlier and wondered if this was another pointer to the outworking of God's purpose. He must have realised that his elder sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, were all of them men of blood and passion and most unlikely to be chosen to execute God's purposes. But for the present Joseph as a lad must take his place in the family duties and so it came about that he was sent to see about the welfare of the brothers who were guarding Jacob's far flung interests at the other end of Canaan.

Jacob had established his headquarters somewhere near his father Isaac at Hebron, for Isaac was not yet dead. His flocks however apparently ranged over Canaan as far north as Shechem, fifty miles away. When Joseph got there he found that his brothers had moved on to Dothan, twelve miles farther still. Casual allusions like this make it plain that Canaan must have been very thinly populated at that time; it is highly probable that Abraham and his descendants counted for a most important part of the country's inhabitants if their flocks and herds could thus apparently graze unmolested over what is practically the entire length and breadth of present day Israel.

Arrived at Dothan, the rascally brothers saw him coming and hatched a plot. It would be easy to kill him and persuade their father that Joseph had been slain by a wild beast somewhere in the desolate terrain on his way to see them, and all they themselves were able to recover for his father's inspection, the bloodstained garment. Reuben, the eldest,

was evidently not in agreement with the proposal but felt himself in a hopeless minority—he therefore proposed that Joseph be cast into one of the rockcut water cisterns which abounded in the district, deep excavations from which a man could not escape unaided, intending to rescue him later and smuggle him back to his father. Reuben's plan worked up to the point of dropping Joseph into the pit, but while he was away from the others, evidently busy about some duty connected with the flocks, Judah, also somewhat conscience stricken at the projected murder of their brother, proposed that their end could be equally well achieved by selling Joseph as a slave to passing traders and so the guilt of blood need not rest on them. So the bargain was struck and the Ishmaelite traders who were in the vicinity took Joseph in exchange for twenty shekels of silver and carried him into Egypt. Reuben, returning later to the pit, was grief-stricken at the turn events had taken; it would appear that he regarded himself responsible to his father for the younger son's safety. But there was nothing to be done; Joseph was gone from their lives for ever, and all Reuben could do was acquiesce in the brothers' lie to Jacob, a lie which broke the old man's heart. "*All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him but he refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.*" (37. 35). This particular verse is interesting as showing that in addition to his twelve sons Jacob also had a number of daughters; the only one whose name is recorded is Dinah. A characteristic of the Old Testament, or rather the genealogies which are incorporated in the Old Testament, is that daughters are usually not mentioned or recorded unless some particular incident is connected with their names.

So Joseph travelled with the caravan of merchants along the highway which connected Canaan with Egypt, a slow two hundred mile journey, lying for the most part alongside the sea, until at last his captors passed the frontier guards and Joseph beheld with his own eyes the land his great-grandfather Abraham had visited nearly two centuries earlier, Egypt, the land of the Pharaohs.

At this point chapter 39 opens and the scene of the remainder of Genesis, from 39 to 50, is set in Egypt, culminating with the death of Joseph and all his generation.

The time of Joseph's entry into Egypt and the subsequent coming of Jacob and his family to settle in the land of Goshen is a

subject of debate among chronologists on account of two major differences. One is the question whether the Israelites were in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years as stated in the A.V. rendering of Exod. 1. 40 or for two hundred and fifteen years as implied in the Septuagint and Samaritan renderings of the same text. The other is whether the Exodus took place in the reign of Thothmes III about 1440 B.C. or that of Rameses II some two centuries later. The relative merits of these alternative propositions will not be discussed here; they belong properly to the study of the Book of Exodus; but it is generally conceded that the most likely time for the Israelites entry into Egypt must have been during the period that the Hyksos, Semitic invaders from Syria, ruled Egypt, since these rulers would obviously be much more favourable to incomers of their own race than would native Egyptian Pharaohs. The Hyksos capital was Tanis, (called Zoan in the Bible), in the eastern Nile delta, and this was the district in which lay the land of Goshen assigned to the children of Israel. It might be assumed then that Joseph saw Egypt for the first time round about the year 1670 B.C. and that this period witnessed the commencement of the development of the nation of Israel.

STUDY 9 JOSEPH IN EGYPT *Gen. 39-41*

It does not seem to have been noticed by any of the leading commentators that 39. 1 contains an incidental support for the view that it was in fact in the time of the Hyksos that Joseph entered Egypt. The narrative declares that he was bought from the Ishmaelite merchants by "Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, *an Egyptian*". Were the reigning house a native Egyptian one there would seem no point in mentioning the circumstance that the captain of the guard was also an Egyptian; the fact would almost be assumed as a matter of course. But if the reigning Pharaoh was of the Semitic race then probably most of his court officials were Semitic also and the chronicler of Genesis would feel some reluctance to have it thought that any such would take a brother-Hebrew as slave, hence the care taken to point out that Joseph's master was an Egyptian.

The story of the attempted seduction of Joseph by his master's wife is well known and has formed the subject of many a sermon and homily. The fact that Joseph's master contented himself with putting Joseph in prison instead of to death, which was the usual punishment for the crime, seems to indicate

that Potiphar was probably not altogether convinced of the truth of the accusation. The net result was that Joseph stayed in prison for anything up to ten years but it was during that time that the incident occurred which became the means of his subsequent exaltation to the highest position in Egypt next to Pharaoh himself. This is perhaps the finest example in all the Bible of the hand of God moving in adverse circumstances to bring about His designs.

Two of Pharaoh's officials, his butler and his baker, had offended and been cast into the prison and so brought into contact with Joseph. Each had a dream, and with the superstition of the age each wanted to know the interpretation. Joseph pointed out, as Daniel was to do in similar circumstances a thousand years later, that the interpretation belonged to God, and in his confidence of faith indicated that he could reveal to them the meaning of their dreams. For the butler the news was good; for the baker it was bad. One was to be pardoned, the other executed. Within three days the prediction was fulfilled and the butler stood at his accustomed place attending upon Pharaoh. But he forgot the young man who had prophesied his good fortune, and Joseph remained in prison still.

Two years went by, and then it was Pharaoh's turn to dream. Seven fat "kine" came up out of the Nile and fed in the rank grass growing by the riverside, and behind them seven thin and ill-favoured kine who ate up the fat ones and yet remained thin and ill-favoured as before. Seven full ears of wheat on one stalk swallowed up by seven withered and thin ears. The magicians and wise men were unable to interpret the dreams and it was then that the butler remembered the young man in the prison who had correctly interpreted his own dream two years before. So it came about that Joseph was hastily brought out of prison, dressed and shaved, and ushered into the presence of Pharaoh.

This Pharaoh was probably Salitis, the first of the Hyksos kings, an Arab or Syrian chieftain who invaded Egypt and set up his court at Tanis in the Delta and ruled, with his successors, for something like a hundred years, constituting what are known as the 15th and 16th dynasties. Towards the end of the rule of the Hyksos, or "Shepherd Kings" as they are sometimes called, native Egyptians challenged their grip on the land and for a long time there were Hyksos and native kings exercising sovereignty over different parts of Egypt

so that the 17th dynasty overlapped those of the Hyksos. Then at last Aahmes the first king of the 18th dynasty expelled the last of the Hyksos from the country and Egypt was united under a single rulership. This was about twenty years after the death of Joseph and since the Israelites were of the same race, the Semitic, as the hated Hyksos and moreover had been greatly favoured by them, it is probable that from this time began the oppression of the children of Israel which hardened later on into the slavery which led to the Exodus.

Joseph modestly disclaimed all ability of his own and accredited God with the power to interpret. On this basis he explained to Pharaoh that the dreams portended a seven year period of plenty followed by seven years of famine through all the land. He counselled Pharaoh to appoint a wise and discreet man to supervise the storage of all supplies produced during the seven years of plenty for reserve against the seven years of famine.

With impetuous informality Pharaoh immediately appointed Joseph to act in the character suggested. At this point there is another sidelight on the likelihood of Joseph's Pharaoh being one of the Hyksos. Said Pharaoh (41. 38-39) "*Can we find such a man as this, in whom the Spirit of God is?*" and then, addressing Joseph "*forasmuch as God has showed thee all this . . .*" Now all the native kings of Egypt acknowledged and served many gods; it is most unlikely that this Pharaoh, who thus acknowledged one God, in the singular, was other than one of the Semitic Hyksos. It is well known nowadays that the worship of the "Most High God" was common in Canaan and Syria at that time. Melchisedek, the priest-king of Jerusalem in Abraham's time was one such worshipper and so was Abimelech king of Gerar. Here is another. It is very likely that this similarity of worship is one reason, perhaps the principal reason, for the welcome which Jacob and his family received when they came into Egypt.

The sudden exaltation of Joseph to the highest position in the land need not be thought improbable or fantastic. There is a story in Egyptian history of one Saneha who came into Egypt a poor man in the reign of Amenemha I, the first king of the 12th dynasty, married a local nobleman's daughter, acquired great wealth and was finally exalted to high office by the Pharaoh. This is almost a perfect likeness to the story of Joseph, although it must have been more than two

centuries before his time.

The expression "Bow the knee" in 41. 43 is "*abrech*" in the original and the translators, not knowing its meaning, read it as "*Habrech*" which does mean "Bow the knee". It is now known that "*abrech*" was a popular acclaim meaning literally "rejoice, be happy" but having much the same significance as our expression "God save the Queen". It was a shout of loyalty raised by the people as Joseph passed through the streets.

41. 41 declares that Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to "Zaphnath-paneah" an Egyptianised word meaning "the food of life", in obvious allusion to his mission of preserving Egypt through famine. He also married Joseph to Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of the Sun-god (not to be confused with Potiphar captain of the guard, Joseph's erstwhile owner, despite the similarity of name). It might be asked why God should have allowed Joseph thus to marry a heathen woman when such emphasis had been laid in past times on the obligation only to marry within the Semitic race. The later Jews invented a Rabbinic tradition to overcome this objection, to the effect that Asenath was in reality the child of Jacob's daughter Dinah and Shechem the Hivite (see Gen. 34) who had somehow got into Egypt in advance of Joseph and been adopted by Potipherah. There is of course no foundation whatever for the story. Asenath was in all probability a perfectly nice Egyptian girl and Pharaoh considered her a good match for the thirty-year old Hebrew he wanted to honour. Probably in actual fact the wishes of Asenath herself were not consulted in the matter. And there is always the possibility that Potipherah himself was a Semitic immigrant like his royal master so that no objection existed at all.

There is just one hint that this may in fact have been the case. "Potipherah" is an Egyptian term meaning "servant-of-the-Sun-god" and is extremely common in the Egyptian inscriptions; it is really a title rather than a proper name, indicating that the holder was the senior religious official in the land, "High Priest" so to speak. In fact Potipherah would be a man of immense authority and in the closest counsels of Pharaoh. But the name of his daughter, Asenath, means "dedicated to Anath", and Anath was not an Egyptian deity at all. Anath was a goddess worshipped by the Semitic Syrians and before them by the Babylonians, who looked upon her as the consort of Anu the god of heaven. Now it is very unlikely that a native Egyptian High Priest

should commit so grave a breach of etiquette as to name his daughter in honour of a goddess of the hated and despised Semites. On the other hand, if Joseph's father-in-law was actually a Syrian who came in to Egypt with the first of the Hyksos kings, what more natural thing than to name his daughter after one of his own national deities. This cannot possibly be claimed as proof, but her name does at least give some reason to think that Asenath might have been of the Syrian Semitic race and not native Egyptian, in which case she could even have been descended from one of Isaac's or Abraham's relatives and have derived ultimately from the parent stock of Terah. There is a sense of fitness in thinking that perhaps, after all, Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim, progenitors of two tribes in Israel, were full blooded Hebrews and not half Semitic and half Hamitic.

The first seven years of Joseph's married life were busy ones, for he was constantly engaged travelling throughout all Egypt supervising the gathering and storage of as much surplus food as possible. In this connection it is not always realised that the Egypt of Joseph was not the whole of the country now known by that name. While the Semitic Hyksos were ruling in the north, (known as Lower Egypt) native Egyptian Pharaohs were ruling in the south (Upper Egypt) having their capital at Thebes. The Egypt of Joseph stretched from the mouths of the Nile only about two hundred miles up the river and comprised mainly the Nile delta, the capital city of Pharaoh being Tanis, quite near the frontier with Canaan. It is estimated that the population of Egypt at the time did not exceed one million so that Joseph might have had half a million people to provide for, about the population of a British city like Leicester.

Then the years of plenty ceased and the years of famine came. Now was the efficacy of Joseph's work to be tested.

(to be continued)

Concluded from page 20

Divine purpose for man, and the means by which that purpose is being and will be fulfilled, that will put the eternal contrast between "the righteous" and "the wicked" into correct perspective. To that end scrupulously careful translation of the Scriptures is essential.

Further comments next month

A CITY AND A TOWER

The story of the
Tower of Babel

1. The City that defied God

Fifty miles south of Baghdad, on the railway that runs to Basra, there is a little wayside station, a station set in a wilderness showing no signs of human habitation, a station so unimportant that the trains do not stop there except by special request. There are no station buildings; there is no station staff, no town or village busy with life and activity; only miles of broken brickwork, groups of palm trees, and a few jackals and lizards. The express trains, northbound to Baghdad and southbound to Basra, hurry past the flimsy, desolate platform so quickly that the interested traveller has barely time to read the one word, painted in Arabic and English upon a board about four feet long—"Babylon"!

How are the mighty fallen! That wooden platform with its painted sign marks the site of what was once the mightiest and most magnificent city on the earth, a city that for size and wealth would have compared favourably with the greatest of cities to-day, a city that throughout a considerable portion of human history was the acknowledged queen and mistress of all nations. Merchant vessels from Africa, from India, and even, it is thought, from far-off China, made their way up the great river, the River Euphrates, from the sea four hundred miles distant, bringing the produce and the riches of the four corners of the earth to her quays. Caravans of camels and asses, bearing the wealth of the interior lands of Asia and Arabia, travelled the trade routes which ran over desert and mountain, through valley and plain, to converge at last on the market squares of Babylon. Here were gathered the rich men and merchants of the earth, and all in the city shared in their prosperity. Sometimes native kings dwelt and ruled in her palaces; sometimes alien conquerors imposed foreign rule and sat upon the throne, but always Babylon paid tribute and remained through all political changes the unquestioned commercial centre of the world. Her palaces and her temples were the admiration and the envy of all who came to see. Her public monuments, her architecture and her many works of art displayed the creative artistry no less than the mechanical skill of the people who had created this great city. For two thousand years she remained thus, arrogant in her proud title of the "lady of kingdoms" (Isa. 47. 5), flaunting herself before

the admiring world as the achievement of men who had given themselves over frankly and avowedly to the law of brute force, proclaiming abroad their determination to live their lives and build a nation that should endure for all time, without God, in defiance of God—and to-day there is nothing left of all the glory that was Babylon save a few masses of mouldering brickwork and a wayside station through which the trains pass without troubling to stop.

This was no "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11. 10)! Some cities of antiquity there have been, such as Ur of the Chaldees, Damascus, Haran, Antioch, and, of course, Jerusalem, which have been the scenes of great manifestations of the Divine purposes, or noted for some important event in the history of the Divine Plan of Redemption, but not so Babylon. In all its long history it never contributed to the building of the Kingdom of God and never housed within its walls any who lived and worked mightily for God except for that twenty years or so when the saintly Daniel served as Chief Minister to its famous king, Nebuchadnezzar II. Babylon was founded in impiety, rebellion and godlessness. It existed, millennium after millennium, without God, and it disappeared at last, utterly, as will disappear utterly at the end all that is opposed to God and His righteousness. The history of Babylon is the history of evil, its rise, its seeming triumph, and its eventual utter overthrow.

The tragedy of Babylon was that in rejecting the true God its founders made themselves slaves to false gods. In their pride and hardness of heart they made themselves gods in their own image and likeness, re-shaping that knowledge of God and His Plan which had been handed down to them, to suit their new godless world. There was religion and worship, of a sort, in their scheme of things. They did not dispute the existence of God but they did deny His claim to their lives' endeavours and their worship. "*The Gate of God*" was the name of their city in their own tongue, and at an earlier period "*the Place of Life*", but it has never been either a place of life or a gate of God through all the long ages of its existence. It always made a place—an important place—for religion, but it was a

religion of false gods, gods that deluded and blinded and intoxicated, gods that had no power to save and did not save. When the time for Babylon's fall was come, all men found that her boasted gods were altogether powerless to avert her destruction.

The city of Babylon grew up around the Tower of Babel. Long before the city became an important commercial centre it had been a military stronghold from which the sons of Shem sallied forth to extend and consolidate their rule over the sons of Ham. Before then it had been a small town sacred to the worship of the god Marduk, a group of houses surrounding the great temple which had been erected near the Tower. All that is known about those far-off days goes to bear out the historical accuracy of this simple narrative telling of men who said one to another "Go to, let us build a city, and a tower . . ." (Gen. 11. 4).

The founding of Babylon is usually dated at the time of its first recorded king, Sumu-Abum, about one hundred years before the call of Abraham, but it is clear that the city was in fact much older. About the first definite mention of the place in history is in the records of the renowned Semitic king Sargon, said to have been the first great military conqueror of antiquity, who lived—according to the most up-to-date conclusions—about three hundred years before Abraham. In Sargon's day the Tower of Babel was already standing, and he had taken some of the sacred earth from the holy enclosure in which the Tower stood wherewith to sanctify his capital city of Akkad, for which profanity, the chronicler tells us, Marduk the god of Babylon was angry and sought to slay him. It seems that Sargon averted his threatened fate by carrying out extensive rebuilding and renovating works on the Tower and its associated Temple, a circumstance which appears to indicate that the Tower of Babel was already old in the time of Sargon.

The investigations of German archaeologists under Prof. Koldewey at Babylon during the period 1910-1914 fixed the true site of the Tower. In the nineteenth century the ruins of Babylon had hardly been explored, and Bible commentators were in the habit of crediting the somewhat dubious honour of identification with the Tower to the celebrated "*Birs-Nimrud*" (Tower of Nimrod) at Borsippa, fourteen miles south-west of Babylon. The solitary upstanding remnant of vitrified brickwork which still stands above a mound of rubble, a hundred feet above the plain, was pointed to as visible evidence of Divine

destruction by fire from heaven, judgment upon the impious rebels of a bygone age. But it is now known that the Birs-Nimrud was the Temple of the Babylonian god Nebo (mentioned in Isa. 46. 1), the building which was called by the Babylonians *E-zida* "The House of the Seven Planets", and that it is, historically speaking, a building of much more recent date than the one whose history is related in Gen. 11. "Birs-Nimrud" has not yet been fully excavated. Like all Babylonian temples, it contained an abundance of rooms and courts, corridors and passages; some of these have been explored and cleared, and enough of the place is known to render quite obsolete its identification with the Tower of the Genesis story.

Koldewey's work at Babylon revealed the remains of the Temple of Marduk, once one of the world's wonders, and its great Tower, the Tower of the Bible story. This Tower and Temple was the original sacred place around which the city grew and became important; the first little township was probably no more than a home for the priests attendant on the Temple service. On the east bank of the Euphrates, at the centre of the city ruins, Koldewey found, buried under sixty feet of sand and earth, the ruins of a Temple which he recognised as the one that has been so fully described by Herodotus and other ancient writers who saw it before its final destruction. To the north of the Temple, and within the enclosed area which has been called by modern excavators the "Vatican of Babylon", Koldewey found, below the reeds and muddy slush of an extensive marsh, all that now remains of the Tower. There is not much to see; some long lines of brickwork about four feet high, sixteen steps of a brick staircase at the south-western corner, the foundation lines of some thirty or so chambers which were used for religious purposes, and traces of the enclosing walls and gateways. But by comparing what has been found with the records of ancient writers there is no doubt that here is the building which the Genesis writer had in mind when he penned the story of the Tower of Babel. That giant structure which was to endure for all time as a monument to the people who wished to make themselves a name that they be not scattered upon the face of the earth is represented to-day by no more than a few lines of brickwork half hidden by masses of reeds and rushes. And the people who would fain have become immortal among all the nations of the earth, have with all their greatness and all their civilisation given place

to a struggling population of half-starved Arabs scratching out a meagre existence on the barren desert that once was the fertile and prolific "plain in the land of Shinar" of the ancient story. So may all thine enemies perish, O God!

The story of the Tower belongs to that somewhat mysterious period which spans the time between the Flood and Abraham. It is probable that about twelve centuries elapsed between Noah coming out of the Ark and Abraham coming out of Ur of the Chaldees. Until quite recent times the Old Testament was the only available source for the history of those centuries and all that the Old Testament has to say about them is contained in the 10th and 11th chapters of Genesis. The city-building exploits of the ancient hero Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel by the immigrants into Sumer were the only two incidents recorded apart from the rather cryptic reference to the dividing of the earth in the days of Peleg. Nowadays all that is changed. The labours of archæologists for more than a hundred years, particularly for the last thirty years, have carried the known history of the ancient East back to within three centuries of the Flood. But there is no place in those histories for the story of the Tower. Even so far back, the nations were already divided; the eloquent words which close the tenth chapter of Genesis "*and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood*" had already become past history. The story of the Tower belongs to a time earlier still, a time when the sons of Noah had not as yet quarrelled or divided, when war and battle was unknown in the earth, when the first of those Sumerian and Egyptian kings whose names adorn so many ancient inscriptions, and whose tombs are so often discovered and examined by explorers, had not yet reigned. It was a time when, so far as we know at present, the art of writing was unknown or had been forgotten in the stress of survival in the early post-Flood world—unless, as is just possible, a different writing material of a completely perishable nature was in use and no examples have survived. But unless this latter was indeed the case, records of past events were preserved only in the memories of men and handed down from father to son. Somewhere during that shadowy time the descendants of Noah separated and the peoples who afterward became the great nations of the Bible—Egyptians, Sumerians, Assyrians, Canaanites, Hebrews,—started their several separate existences. To that

period the story of the Tower belongs. The unknown scribe who first penned the 11th chapter of Genesis related the story as it was known to him in his own day, some three or four centuries after it happened, and we who read his words may have assurance that the Holy Spirit overruled the form in which his narrative was cast in order that true details might be preserved and the story as it appears be true and accurate. Although only a couple of generations ago the idea that the nations of the Middle East—Semitic, Hamitic and Japhetic; Hebrew-Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek—originated from three sons of a man who had escaped a great flood which drowned all the other inhabitants of that land was, under the influence of so-called "modern scholarship", ridiculed and rejected, present-day knowledge of these nations' early history and the correlation of their known chronologies has made the entire thesis perfectly logical and quite reasonably in accord with known physical facts. The histories of Egypt and Sumer can now be traced in considerable detail back to a time when both nations, although highly civilised and proficient in many of the arts and sciences, consisted only of quite small communities living in nothing bigger than villages thinly scattered over large areas. Behind that, the logic of modern discovery points to a people highly intellectual, artistically and mechanically skilled, small in number, among whom signs of warlike habits are entirely absent, spreading out from some central point to populate the whole of the Middle East. That is exactly the picture the Book of Genesis presents.

The story of the Tower of Babel, then, can throw considerable light on a hitherto unknown but extremely important period in human history. According to the Bible presentation God made a new start with mankind after the Flood. He had cleansed the earth of its wickedness and commenced again with a righteous family. The veil then drops for two or three centuries. When it begins to lift again and we perceive, obscurely, the descendants of that righteous family beginning to occupy the land, plant and build, we find the same old ugly habits of evil growing and flourishing again. The world had not really been finally cleansed; it was still a world of sin and death. Ambition, apostasy, pride, greed, disobedience; all these are found rising up amongst men and becoming instruments of policy and determinants of action.

What went wrong? Did God fail? The story of the Tower of Babel points to the answer.

(To be continued)

THE OPEN HAND

A Meditation on
Divine Goodness

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

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

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

The other side of the question, obverse to man's need, is God's ability and disposition to GIVE. These two factors in universal life are complementary to each other. God is the source of unfailing abundance, man the creature of unending need (Psa. 104. 16-15).

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

The beginning of God's generosity to fallen men dates from Eden days, when in the act of imposing the sentence required by His broken Law, God promised Mother Eve that her seed

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

God gave Abraham a seed—first a son, then a nation. To this nation *God gave His Word* and His Law, those "lively oracles" (Acts 7. 26) which Moses received at Sinai. That Law was the most advanced moral standard of its day, and had it been received and obeyed would have raised Israel high above the nations around. That sacred gift from Sinai forms one important section of the Holy Book we treasure as the Word of Life. *He gave Israel a Tabernacle* so that He might give them the benefit of His presence in their midst. *He gave them the good land* on which the eye of God rests with holy delight (Ex. 3. 8., Deut. 11. 12). *He gave them judges and deliverers* when they fell into captivity—reformers who led them back to their "oracles", and "seers" who carried their minds forward to higher expectations. *God gave them advancement and prominence* among the nations, under David and Solomon, when the fame of Israel's king spread to the distant quarters of the world. The dual nations which later came about were given the benefit of God's patience and long-suffering, though they were fast becoming vessels fit only for destruction. Becoming inveterately idolatrous, Israel first, and Judah afterwards were given the spirit of slumber (Rom. 11. 8). Under the conditions this was a boon to them, for the blindness which came minimised the degree of their responsibility, and because God thus concluded them all in unbelief He will be able in Millennial days to have mercy upon all, "and so all Israel will be saved".

Isaiah, commissioned to deliver the message of rejection said ". . . the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep and hath closed your eyes . . ." (Isa. 29. 10-16) yet he concludes his denunciation with the statement "Is it not yet a little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field . . ." (v. 17). The

gift of slumber, while it deprived the two nations of their land for centuries, and of the privilege of supplying all the Body-members of Christ, will have kept the national spirit in a state of hunger for the appearance of Messiah as an exalted King.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

is a fruitage (Gal. 5. 22-23) and is more a matter of the husbandman's concern than that of the branch in the vine itself. God is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him than any earthly father is ready to give his children food (Matt. 7. 11). And more Holy Spirit power in the heart means more Love to shed abroad in the life. This Love also is a gift from God, for we love because He first loved.

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

us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15. 57).

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

The story of Divine grace is the record of One who has been disposed to "give," and "give," and "give" again, because it pleases Him to dispense of His fulness to helpless needy men. He created man with a great "need" so that He might play the part of a great giver. Man has but to open his hand to take of that bountiful fulness which God opens His hand to give (Psa. 104. 27-28). If God withheld not His well-beloved Son "*shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?*" (Rom. 8. 32). Christian experience of this and other days shows without fail that they who are most developed in grace are the ones most conscious of their need. The more one has grown in the things of the Lord, and the more tender and sensitive the heart has become, the more such saints become persuaded of their need for God. The ultimate end of every quest of the maturer heart, is not merely to accept the gifts of God, but to receive with open heart the Giver too.

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

Some Corrections

A reader raises a few points noticed in the December issue and questions their accuracy. It has to be admitted that two at least are manifest errors and correction and comment is here made for the benefit of others who may have been puzzled, and for the better explanation to all of what was intended to be said.

In "*Jesus and the Life to Come*", page 153, 2nd col, ninth line, the expression "*The Church of Christ, fully converted to God and enjoying His munificence on the restored and perfected earth . . .*" suffers from one line of

type omitted and another duplicated, garbling the sentence. The true reading should have been "*the Church of Christ exalted to the heavens, and all the nations fully converted to God . . .*" etc. The false impression which this unnoticed omission must have created is deeply regretted.

In "*Spiritual Manhood*" page 158, 1st col, 13 lines from bottom, the omission of part of a Scripture allusion from the copy sent to the printer, and not afterwards noticed, resulted in the sentence, "*...having put off the old man,*

which, after God, is created in righteousness . . ." which is palpably incorrect. Most of our readers will have filled in the missing words for themselves "... having put off the old man, and having put on the new man, which, after God, . . ." etc. Our correspondent queries the use of the word "reckoned sons of God" three lines farther down, suggesting that surely we are actually and truly sons of God. This is

agreed; the word "reckoned" there was used in its dictionary sense of calculated, assessed, considered after reflection, as though by judicial decree of God in the sense intended by Rom. 5. 1, 1 Jno. 3. 1 and particularly Col. 1. 13. There was no idea of suggesting that our sonship of God is anything but real and vital in the truest sense of the word.

"MY SON TIMOTHY"

A character
Study

One of the most beautiful experiences recorded in the life of the Apostle Paul began at the commencement of his second missionary tour. It was at Lystra that he met one who was to be his close and dearly beloved companion for the remainder of his life. "*Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren which were at Lystra . . . Him would Paul have go forth with him*" (Acts 16. 1-3). Paul had recently parted from his former companion, Barnabas, who had sailed to Cyprus with Mark, and Paul had chosen Silas to accompany him. It is perhaps significant that of Paul and Silas it is recorded "*they departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*" (Acts 15. 40).

Of this visit to Lystra made by Paul and his companion only one incident is told us but it happily affected all the future of the great Apostle. In his former visit he had converted the young Timothy, and it was in the house of the boy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois that he and Silas were probably received. These two women were Jewesses who had accepted the Christian faith. We are led to suppose that Eunice was a widow and if so, she showed a beautiful spirit of self-sacrifice in parting with her only son.

The youthful Timothy is one of the best known and most lovable of that little circle who were henceforth associated with the wanderings of Paul. Of the many who Paul loved, none was dearer to him than this young disciple of Lystra. He adopted Timothy and regarded him as a son in all affectionate tenderness. Hear the terms with which he addressed him, "*Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith.*" (1 Tim. 1. 2). "*To Timothy, my dearly beloved son . . . I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.*" (2 Tim. 1. 2-3) and he reminds the Philippians

how well they knew "*that, as a son with a father, he had served with him for the Gospel.*" (Phil. 2. 22). In spite of his shyness and timidity, which were increased by his youthfulness, he was so entirely united in heart and soul with the Apostle that among his numerous friends and companions he found no one so genuine, so entirely unselfish, so sincerely devoted to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. "*For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.*" (Phil. 2. 20). He was in fact, more than any other, the 'alter ego' (other self) of the Apostle. That their knowledge of each other was mutual is shown in Paul's letter to Timothy, "*But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, patience,*" etc. (2 Tim. 3. 10). One whose yearning and often lacerated heart had such deep need of a kindred spirit on which to lean for sympathy, and whose distressing infirmities rendered necessary to him the personal services of some affectionate companion, must have regarded the devoted tenderness of Timothy as a special gift of God to save him from being crushed by overmuch sorrow.

Much as Paul loved Timothy, he loved the churches more, and if any church needed warning or guidance or Paul himself desired to know how it prospered, Timothy was required to overcome his shrinking modesty, to console the persecuted churches of Macedonia (Acts 19. 22. 1 Thes. 3. 2) or face the conceited turbulence of Corinth (1 Cor. 4. 17. 1 Cor. 16. 10) or to be the overseer of the Church of Ephesus (1 Tim. 1. 3). In fact no name is so closely associated with Paul's as that of Timothy; not only were two epistles addressed to him but he is associated with Paul in the superscription of five. "*Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.*" (2 Cor. 1. 1. 1 Thess. 1. 1. 2 Thess. 1. 1. Phil. 1 and Col. 1. 1).

Timothy was with the Apostle Paul during

the greater part of his second missionary journey; he was with him at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16. 8-10), he accompanied him on his last voyage to Jerusalem (Acts 20. 4), he helped to comfort his first imprisonment at Rome (Phil. 2. 18-20), he was urged in the second epistle Paul addressed to him to hurry from Ephesus, to take with him the cloak, books and parchments which Paul had left with Carpus at Troas and to join him in his second imprisonment before it was too late to see him alive. (2 Tim. 4. 9 and 13). Some sixteen years had elapsed between the days when Paul took Timothy as his companion at Lystra and the days when, in the weary desolation of his imprisoned age, he wrote once more to his beloved disciple, yet even at that latter date Paul addressed him as though he were the same youth who had first accompanied him to

the hallowed work. (2 Tim. 2. 22. 1 Cor. 16. 11). Surely it is obvious that if Timothy, when first Paul won him over to the faith of Christ, was not more than sixteen or seventeen years old, he would be still far short of the prime of life when the second epistle was addressed to him; and that, even if he were older, there is no more familiar experience than an old man momentarily forgetting that those whom he had known as boys have grown to full manhood.

This was the youth whose companionship Paul now secured. Young as he was, the quick eye of Paul saw in him the spirit of loving and faithful service. He read the indications of one of those simple faithful natures which combine the glow of courage with the bloom of modesty.

A NOTE ON PHIL. 1.23

"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1. 23-24).

An accusation of inconsistent teaching is sometimes levelled against St. Paul on the basis that this word "depart" implies an immediate transference to the presence of Christ at his death whereas elsewhere, for example in 1 Thess. 4. 16 he pictures the "dead in Christ" awaking from sleep and rising from the dead at the time of the Second Advent, and in 2 Tim. 4. 8 his own "crown of righteousness" is "laid up" for him, to be given him "at that day" concurrently with the felicity of those who have waited for, and experienced, "His appearing" at that Advent.

An examination of this word "depart" shows that there is no inconsistency and no contradiction to the elsewhere expressed expectation of St. Paul that he was to receive his eternal reward at the First Resurrection in company with his fellow saints of all generations, at the Lord's Second Coming and His kingdom. "Depart" in this verse is the word *analuo* which has the basic meaning "to be unloosed". In Greek it is used chiefly in a nautical sense to loose a ship from her moorings, to weigh anchor, hence only in a secondary sense to depart, to go away. It also indicates loosing in the sense of freeing from entanglement or unravelling; in Homer (the *Odyssey*) it is used of Penelope unravelling her weaving every night. The New Testament uses it in a number of places, thus in Rev. 20.

3 and 7 of the "loosing" of Satan; 9. 14-15 of the "loosing" of the four angels which had been bound in the River Euphrates, and in 5. 2 the "loosing" or opening of the seals fastening the mystic Book. Other occurrences are in Luke 13. 12, the woman who was "loosed" from her infirmity, and John Baptist's declaration that he was not worthy to "unloose" the Master's shoe latchet. An interesting usage is in Luke 12. 36 where the word is rendered "return" in "When he shall *return* from the wedding", the sense here evidently that of being "loosed" or set free from the wedding party.

Perhaps 2 Tim. 4. 6 gives the clearest light on the Apostle's outlook. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my *departure* (*analysis*—same word) is at hand . . . Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day* . . . and to all those that love his appearing." Here there is plain evidence that St. Paul believed his "loosing" or "departure" to be separated in point of time from the bestowment of his crown of righteousness. And if this is compared with 1 Thess. 4. 16-17 it seems to be a logical conclusion that he expected to be among those who "sleep in Jesus" until, at the "voice of the archangel", the "dead in Christ" rise to join their Lord as He returns to earth for the Judgment and the establishment of His Messianic Kingdom.

It would appear then that St. Paul's intention in Phil. 1. 23 was to define his being

"loosed" from the responsibilities, cares and burdens of human life without any reference to the time of his appearance before his Lord for the award of his promised crown. To be "loosed" from this earthly life and all its trials and sorrows, and (eventually, at the First Resurrection) to be united with Christ,

was that which he desired most, but, says he "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you". For the sake of those to whom he ministered he was ready to relinquish that which he might naturally have desired most, and continue in their service notwithstanding the life of suffering it was going to entail.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

The majority of Christian periodicals have given space to comments on the accuracy and usefulness of the New English Bible. It is hardly to be expected that a production of such a nature could escape comment; the effect of inbred tradition is such that the extent to which the new version departs from the Authorised is more or less a measure of the criticism and objection brought to bear against it. But criticism need not be destructive. It is not to be expected that the committee responsible for the production could bring out a work framed to meet with unanimous approval. It is not even to be expected that the members of such a committee, with the best will in the world, could altogether avoid the effect of their own personal theological beliefs and convictions. There can be no reason for surprise, therefore, if a few accusations of biased or inaccurate treatment can, with justice, be levelled against the translation; the remarkable thing would be were it otherwise. And those critics or periodicals whose own outlook or understanding of the Scriptures differs in some respects from that of the translators are perhaps in the best position to detect and draw attention to such unwarranted concessions to popular theology as have been made at the expense of accurate rendering of the text. It is with such sentiments in mind that this short series, in addition to some words of commendation, draws attention to a few elements in the New English Bible which appear to fall below the normal standard of the production.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is the attitude to the Last Judgment and the word Hell. It is disturbing to find that in a work, one of the avowed objects of which is to make the New Testament more intelligible to the present generation, the method of translating the 'hell' passages, in Matthew's Gospel particularly, reads almost like a reversion to the crude literalism of the Middle Ages. What impression is likely to be made upon the mind of an enquiring teenager, for example, to be told that Jesus said (Matt. 5. 22) "*if he sneers at his brother he will have to*

answer for it in the fires of Hell"? There is no warrant in the Greek for the rendering; *Enokes* means to be liable to, or perhaps, as the Authorised Version has it, to be in danger of, but certainly not 'to have to answer for it'. And no Bible intended for the present generation—or any other—should present "hell" at this point without a footnote explaining that the Greek word is '*Gehenna*' and refers to the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where the city's refuse,—and, it is said, the bodies of criminals,—was tipped and destroyed by fires kept perpetually burning. The warning of Jesus in this passage is against the "anger, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness" in a man's character which, if persisted in, will ultimately ruin that character so that at the end the man is fit for nothing but that everlasting destruction which awaits the wastage of God's creation and is effectively symbolised by the valley of Gehenna at Jerusalem.

In similar fashion the fate of the tares in the parable of Matt. 13. 42 is expressed in terms which seem unnecessarily vindictive; "*these will be thrown into the blazing furnace*", where the A.V. has it "shall cast them into a furnace of fire", which is, after all, the natural fate of the waste from the harvest field. The close juxtaposition in the N.E.B. of this fiery destiny of the wicked with that of the righteous, who are then said to shine as brightly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, is reminiscent of Tertullian, who went on record as saying how he would admire, laugh, rejoice and exult to see the pagan philosophers of his own day consigned to the flames of Hell, while the saints rejoiced in Heaven. That sentiment is not likely to appeal to any reasonable modern man, who knows perfectly well that many of those same philosophers were noble and upright men, using their talents for the uplift of their fellows, and, with all their paganism, certainly not deserving the fate to which they were so cheerfully consigned by the African prelate. It is disturbing to find that the healthy introduction of "*Gehenna*" as a footnote in the Revised Version of 1881 and the Revised

Standard Version of 1946/52, where this word was rendered "hell" in the A.V., has been abandoned in the N.E.B.

Closely allied with this is the subject of judgment. In one of the most famous passages of the New Testament, Jesus declared that a time is to come when at His command the dead will rise from their graves, "*they that have done good*" He says "*unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" (Jno. 5. 29 A.V.). The Revised Version rendered this latter phrase more accurately "*unto the resurrection of judgment*", and so did the Revised Standard Version, both in recognition of the fact that *krisis* covers the whole process of judgment, the presentation and consideration of the evidence, the separation of the evil from the good, of that which is to be condemned from that which is to be preserved. The resurrection of judgment brings the accused before the Last Assize, but it does not necessarily end in his condemnation. And in any case, the rendering "will rise to hear their doom" is completely indefensible as a translation of *eis anastasin krisis*; it is not even a paraphrase. It is a totally unjustified theological interpretation, having no connection whatever with the Greek text.

A hint of this same passion for condemnation of the unrighteous is given in the renderings of the passages in Matt. 12 regarding the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South at the Last Judgment. The A.V., supported by the R.V. and the R.S.V. record Jesus as saying that the men of Nineveh, and the Queen of the South, will stand in the Judgment together with Jesus' own generation and will condemn that generation for its unbelief. This, of course, is obviously not the Divine judicial condemnation of the lost; it is the condemnation of Jews by Ninevites, and by the Arabian Queen, for their refusal to listen to their own Messiah, when Nineveh did at least listen to Jonah the Hebrew prophet, and the Queen of Sheba did at least listen to the Israelite King Solomon. *Katakrisis* is defined by Bagster "to place in a guilty light by contrast", and this definition well explains the words of Jesus as they appear in the A.V. The N.E.B., however, renders "*the men of Nineveh will appear against it*" (this generation) "*and ensure its condemnation,*" which alters the sense to make it appear as though it is the final Divine condemnation which is referred to, and that the testimony of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will be the deciding factor in con-

signing the generation of Jesus' day to eternal perdition. The logical inference of this rendering implies a new departure in Christian theology; it has not previously been suggested that the Most High is going to take evidence from other earthly beings, Assyrians and Arabians of the ninth B.C. century or any others, to help Him make up His mind when the time comes to decide the eternal destinies of the righteous and wicked. And since common justice would, in such case, demand that the Jews had an equal opportunity of testifying against their ancient enemies, the men of Nineveh, in the attempt in turn to "ensure *their* condemnation", the ultimate issue might be equally unsatisfactory for both.

The point to note here is that in fact this "judgment" in which both the Jews and the men of Nineveh will stand is more than an act of judicial sentence. Like the resurrection spoken of in Jno. 5. 29, it is a process, a process which might conceivably result in some of its subjects gaining a sentence of life rather than a sentence of death. Upon another occasion Jesus referred again to the men of Nineveh and to the men of Sodom, and said it would be "more tolerable" for them in the judgment than for the cities of His own country, Chorazin and Bethsaida. "Tolerable" here is a word which means "endurable" and this is a plain indication that the judgment which Jesus preached is one in which a process of some sort is to be carried out, and from that it is not difficult to see something here in the Divine Plan analogous to the separating work of the sheep and goats in the parable of Matt. 25, which again is referred to the same time, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory".

Perhaps the lesson to be learned from all this is that it is not well to be over-zealous for the speedy elimination of those who do not at the first yield so readily as professed Christians may have done to the challenge of Christ. God's ways are not as men's ways, and He may well have other weapons in His armoury wherewith to persuade the unregenerate of the unwisdom of their ways and bring some of them at least into the Holy City. Particularly it is important to give the "man in the street" as correct an impression as possible of the nature of the Last Judgment: popular theology on this subject throughout the centuries has been characterised neither by accuracy nor commonsense, and the need to-day is for a vision and definition of the

Concluded on page 10



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

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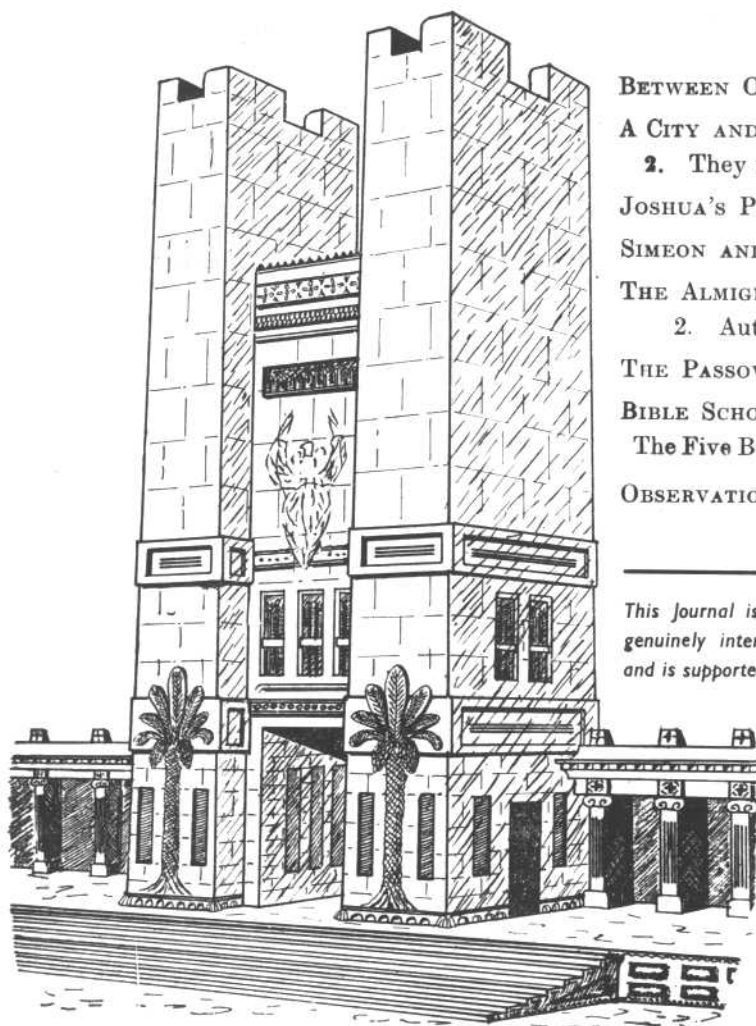
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And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

In common with several other journals we are asked to make the following announcement on behalf of the friends who organise the function referred to. "The usual August Bible Students Convention will be held (D.V.) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1. from Saturday, August 4th to Monday, August 6th. The sponsoring brethren extend a warm invitation to all to join with them in fellowship on this occasion. It is also their desire that a baptismal service should be arranged for any who wish to symbolise their consecration to God. However in order that appropriate arrangements be made we must ask that those wishing to be baptised should signify their desire early. Names should be sent not later than May 31st to the convention secretary, Bro. D. Walton, 25 Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Herts to whom also all enquiries concerning the convention should be addressed."

* * *

Friends who desire to know on what date the Memorial service will be held this year are advised that it will be in the evening of Tuesday, 17 April.

* * *

Our second instalment of "Observations on the New English Bible" appears in this issue—still somewhat critical; later on we shall find occasion for comments of a more commendatory nature.

* * *

It is learned that Bro. Percy L. Read, Secretary of the Pastoral Bible Institute of U.S.A., and known to many readers of the "Monthly", will be visiting this country for a few months during the coming summer. The time at his disposal will render his ministry somewhat restricted but he has already consented to speak at Leicester at Whitsun and at Conway Hall, London, during the August Convention there. We shall be kept apprised of his arrangements and can give information

on such future plans as may be made to anyone interested on request.

* * *

It might be appropriate here to mention the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom" a monthly journal of a high devotional tone published by the Pastoral Bible Institute of St. Louis, U.S.A., at a postal subscription price of one dollar (seven shillings) per year. The British agent for the "Herald" is Edwin Allbon, 9 Esher Close, Nyetimber Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis, Sussex, from whom a sample copy of the journal can be obtained upon request and who will be pleased to receive subscriptions for forwarding.

* * *

We would like to make it plain that we are at all times glad to receive the names of readers' friends who themselves would like to become regular readers of the "Bible Study Monthly" upon the usual terms—sent without charge and costs of publication and despatch dependent upon voluntary contributions. It is requested only that names are not sent unless it is definitely known, or there is very good reason to suppose, that the intended recipient would certainly be interested and willing to become a reader. We do not wish to dissipate funds in sending unwanted copies; moreover it is not unknown for some to have an objection to receiving literature which they have not requested. Nevertheless, if on this basis any reader cares to send such names and addresses we shall be more than pleased to add them to our readers' list.

Gone from us

Bro. E. Housden (Cambridge)
Sis. E. Roberts (Paignton)
Sis. N. E. Smith (Maidstone)

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

A CITY AND A TOWER

The story of the
Tower of Babel

2. They found a plain

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech". (Gen. 11. 1).

Any attempt to fix a date for the events related in this chapter must of necessity be very guarded and free from dogmatism; the only time indication that can be made to yield a clue is that which is given in this verse. The chronicler commences his story by referring to a time when the "whole earth" spoke one language. The ordinary student of human history declares scornfully that there was no such time; that language differences must have existed almost from the first appearance of mankind upon earth. There is not necessarily any conflict here. It will be shown presently that language differentiation is primarily due to the separation of peoples through migration from their common centre; even though the human race commenced with one pair, Adam and Eve, in the fashion described in Genesis, it is certain that if their descendants did spread over any extensive part of the earth's surface, and various communities during the antediluvian period did completely lose contact with each other, language differences would develop after a few generations had passed. This question, and the parallel one as to whether the Flood was only local to Western Asia and that men in other parts of the world may have survived that disaster is not relevant to the present study and does not affect its conclusions. The writer of Genesis 11 is not concerned either with the antediluvians or with any land or people which may not have been affected by the Flood; he is concerned only with the posterity of Noah and would not be in a position to be aware of the fact even if other far-off tribes or nations had survived. When he says "the whole earth" he certainly means that earth with which he is acquainted, the territory we now call Western Asia and North-Western Africa. The word "earth" here is "*erets*", which means the face of the land. It certainly denoted the whole earth so far as the writer had knowledge, but it need not be extended to mean more than that part of the earth with which Bible history is concerned.

At this point we ought to take the tenth chapter of Genesis into consideration. In that chapter the historian records the distribution of the descendants of Noah's sons for the first few generations over the earth. He shows how

the children of Shem, Ham and Japheth developed into three distinct races, each division settling in a particular territory. To this day the sons of Japhet can be traced to the peoples of Europe and Asia, those of Ham in Africa, southern and eastern Asia and India, and those of Shem, the well-known Semitic race, in south-western Asia, Arabia and North Africa. The Old Testament is not itself concerned with so far-reaching an extension of racial movements; it deals with the history of Hamitic and Semitic peoples only in what are called the "Bible lands", Canaan (Israel), Syria, Egypt, and Sumer, Assyria and Babylonia (these three being represented to-day by the modern state of Iraq). Of the descendants of Japhet it has practically nothing to say. But the Bible presentation of the distribution of nations resulting from Noah's three sons after the Flood, in Gen. 10 and 11, so well agrees with the conclusions of modern ethnologists that no reason exists for any to question the accuracy of this part of the story. Now the tenth chapter declares that these patriarchal nations, subdivided into various tribes, were settled "after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations". In that expression is noted the birth of languages. It was the scattering of men into remote parts of the earth that gave rise to differences in language. As they migrated into new territories and lost all touch with their former friends, new words came into use, new methods of speech, diverse grammatical structures, so that quite soon the speech of men of different tribes became mutually unintelligible. Each succeeding generation added its quota of new and changed terms, and the process has continued from that day to this. A simple illustration will demonstrate the fact. Wycliffe translated the Bible into English only five centuries ago but our language has changed so much since then that we, his countrymen, can read his translation only with difficulty and in some places it is almost unintelligible. Here is an example: "*Whether profecies schulen be voidid either langigis schulden ceese*". That is one of the well-known passages of the Bible—"whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease". Here is a sample from Richard Rolles' translation of the fourteenth century; "*Faine and glade genge, mare*

and lesse, for thou demes folke in euennesse". Who would think, now, that sentence to be English as it was spoken only five centuries ago, for "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously". (Psa. 67. 4)? If Wycliffe and Rolles came back from the dead to-day they, likewise, would have the same difficulty in reading our modern translations.

As illustrating the facility with which new languages can develop, as they must have developed in the early days of Genesis when men began to spread abroad over the face of the earth, it is an interesting fact that in 1893 a wild tribe of some thirty people was discovered in the Wentworth district of New South Wales, Australia, speaking a completely unknown dialect. It was found that this little community had sprung from one "black-fellow" (aboriginal Australian) and a few "gins" (native women) who had gone into hiding in this remote country thirty years previously. The natives with the white men who found this little tribe had considerable difficulty in making themselves understood or in understanding the wild men's speech, although they were of the same race. That separation of thirty years and the growing up of a new generation which had never had contact with the world around had sufficed to create what was virtually a new language, understood only by the thirty or so wild people who spoke it.

Now after speaking of this division of the sons of Noah into nations speaking divergent languages, the historian goes back to the time when there was only one language and relates the story of the Tower of Babel as marking the point at which the division into languages had its beginning. That ought to give us our first clue as to when these things happened. It was before the separation of Noah's family into three great divisions. The abandonment of the attempt to "build the city" (Gen. 11. 8) marked the separation itself.

Can we "pin-point" the time of this separation more closely? Genesis 10 seems to give some help in this direction. Let us put ourselves in the position of the writer of this chapter. We find that he records the sons of Japheth only to the second generation—five of Japheth's grandsons are named and a couple of tribal names, but nothing further. Of Ham much more is said; there are names of his descendants to the third generation and a great number of tribal names. But it is of Shem that most is said; his children of five generations are recorded, and in the eleventh chapter the genealogy of one of them, Peleg,

is carried on to the time of Abraham.

Now the obvious conclusion from this is that the writer of Genesis 10 was himself a Semite, of the family of Shem, and that his knowledge of Japheth's children extended only to the second generation. After that the two families diverged, and Shem's descendants had no further knowledge of the lives and welfare of Japheth's offspring. That in turn would indicate that it was in the second generation after the Flood, during the lives of the sons of Gomer and Javan (Gen. 10. 2) that the separation took place, and this therefore would quite likely have been the time that the Tower of Babel was built.

How long after the Flood? Noah was five hundred years old when Shem was born; Shem was one hundred years old when Arphaxad was born; Terah was a hundred and thirty years old when Abraham was born, and Abraham a hundred at the birth of Isaac. Two generations at this time could easily span a period of two hundred years, and by that time the three families could have increased so much that the dissensions which inevitably arise where large numbers are concerned might well explain the story of the Dispersion.

About two hundred years after the Flood, then, whilst Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth were all still alive, there was a great migration of people all speaking one language, journeying toward a plain in the land of Shinar. Where did they come from and why did they seek this plain?

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed eastward, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there". (Gen. 11. 2).

"Shinar" is the Hebrew equivalent of the native name "Sumer", by which we know the original people secular history reveals to have lived in Mesopotamia. The Sumerians are the earliest civilised people known to history, and archæologists never weary of extolling their artistic skill and stressing the fact that the farther back research into their history is conducted, the more skilful and civilised they appear to be. The world was stirred in 1930 by the discoveries of Sir Leonard Woolley in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace, which was a Sumerian city. Genesis 10 mentions others of their cities, Erech, Accad, Calneh; known now to excavators as Uruk, Akkad and Nippur; in fact, there were twenty or so powerful Sumerian city-states on the Euphrates plains during and about the times of Abraham and for many centuries before him. These Sumerians were descendants of Ham, and as the centuries rolled on they spread southwards along both shores of the Persian

Gulf as far as India on the east and into Ethiopia on the west.

The writer of Gen. 11, of course, referred to the land by the name it bore in his own day—Gen. 11 was probably written not long before the time of Abraham and many centuries after the events it relates. When the people, journeying eastward, found the plain, it bore no name; it was as yet undiscovered and uninhabited.

Why "eastward"? The Authorised Version says "from the east", which means the exact opposite. The translation is faulty; the marginal rendering is correct. In taking advantage of this slight clue to the identity of the Tower builders it has to be pointed out that the Sumerians oriented the four points of the compass in such a fashion that their "east" was our south-east and their "north" our north-east. The writer of Genesis 11 would naturally write in conformity with the system in vogue in his day, and from this it follows that the wanderers were travelling in the same direction as the flow of the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, both of which run south-east into the Persian Gulf.

From whence did they come? Evidently from the place where the Ark rested. There is no need at this time to take up the question of the precise locality. The narrative in Genesis says that the Ark rested in the seventh month upon the mountains of Ararat. (Gen. 8. 4). Ararat was the name of the whole mountainous country lying to the north of the Euphrates plain, the "plain of Shinar", into which the colonists had now penetrated. Nowadays the name is only used for one mountain in that land, but the Scriptural "Ararat" covered all of what is now known as Armenia and Kurdistan. There are several mountains in this whole territory with which one legend or another associates the descent of the Ark, but one thing is common to all of them. If travellers starting from any one of these mountains should set out to find a sunnier and less mountainous land for pasturing their flocks and building their cities, they would inevitably follow the course of either the Euphrates or the Tigris, both of which rivers commence in the mountains of Armenia, and in such case they could not help passing through the very plain in which Babylon was built. The short statement in verse 2, therefore, is perfectly consistent with the emerging of the family of Noah from the mountainous country in which the Ark came to rest, in search of a fertile pasture land. The distance would be something between three and four hundred miles.

The number of men involved could not have been very great by modern standards, even so long as two centuries after the Flood. There is sufficient evidence in the genealogical notices of the Old Testament to show that human beings took longer to attain maturity than now, and that the intervals between births of successive children were inordinately long compared to what is normal to-day. Thus Terah, the father of Abraham, had three sons only, and perhaps as many daughters, over the space of sixty years. Noah may have had other sons than the three we know, but if so there is no record of them; apparently he had no daughters unless they were unbelievers and not saved in the Ark. At any rate, one of his sons at least, Shem, was born when he was five hundred years old, and none of the three seem to have had any children until after the Flood a century later. (The old scepticism of critics regarding the declared longevity of these ancient patriarchs is not expressed so loudly nowadays since it has been discovered in the more recent deciphering of old records that various Sumerian and Egyptian notabilities of the same period apparently lived just as long). An analysis of all such data in the early chapters of Genesis leads to the conclusion that Noah's posterity two centuries after the Flood probably did not number more than four or five hundred.

So they entered the plain of Shinar, this travelling band of explorers, finding their way into new and untrodden regions of this wide earth which had been desolated by the Flood and now lay before them, in all its fertility, without inhabitant, theirs for the taking. Noah himself may not have been with them; he may have settled with a few of his grandchildren at some point between the mountain of the Ark and this land of Shinar that the others had discovered. There may have been one or two such little groups remain behind while the main body pushed on. But there is not much doubt that the writer of Genesis 11 meant us to know that the three tribes, those of Shem, Ham and Japheth, all speaking the same language and having much the same aims and ideals, arrived together at this fertile spot, and that it was here they separated, and from here that they spread over the face of the globe, "after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations".

(to be continued)

FEAR knocked at the door; FAITH opened it; and no one was there!

JOSHUA'S PASSOVER

Lessons from
long ago

"And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho." (Josh. 5. 10).

A year to be remembered; the year of entering into the land! Full forty years had they wandered in the waste howling wilderness, scorched by day and frozen by night, afflicted by dangers and perils innumerable, until it must have seemed that God had quite forgotten them. But now it was all over; the trials and tribulations of the day were ended, the river lay behind them, and they were in the Promised Land. Now all was going to be well with them.

Of course it did not turn out to be like that and we who read about these happenings of old know full well that even now, thirty-four centuries later, Israel still "hath not obtained that which he seeketh for". But for the time being we are going to limit our vision to that of Israel at the time of crossing Jordan. We will share with them in that Passover which Joshua commanded them to celebrate directly they set foot on the soil of the Promised Land and we shall seek the spiritual teaching which lies behind the momentous feast which marked the end, as the first Passover marked the beginning, of their pilgrimage.

It is probable that there had been no Passover for forty years before this. Only the circumcised could partake (Exod. 12. 48) and none save those who came out of Egypt had been circumcised. During the long period of wandering to which the people had been condemned because of their unbelief and lack of faith at the time of the sending of the twelve spies, they had not troubled to circumcise their children. (Josh. 5. 5). In consequence, now that the wanderings were ended, none under forty years of age were circumcised. This flagrant disregard of the central feature of the covenant is a matter of wonder; one is tempted to ask why Moses and Aaron were so apparently lax in their administration during that forty years. It is a question that cannot be answered. We know that Israel kept the Passover at Sinai one year after leaving Egypt; after that there is no certainty until the children of Israel have crossed Jordan and Joshua is commanding them all to be circumcised in order that they keep the Passover in the land. It may well have been that a few of the more devout did bring up their children

in the desert in the nurture and fear of the Lord, circumcising them the eighth day and sharing with them in the annual feasts and 'holy convocations', and that the rest were indifferent. The energies of Moses and Aaron, and the few who laboured with them, must have been entirely spent in the heavy task of controlling the general destinies of this mighty host of nearly three million people; it would have been a physical impossibility to ensure the individual "orthodoxy" of every one, and if the solemn feasts were observed at all it was probably by the minority. For all practical purposes therefore it may be assumed that there was no national Passover celebration during the thirty-nine years that elapsed between Sinai and Jericho.

There were, then, three great Passover celebrations in the history of Israel's journey to the Promised Land. First came that in Egypt, at the time of their departure from the dominion of Pharaoh. Next came that at Sinai, when they entered into a covenant with God and became a royal priesthood and separated people. Finally came that in Canaan, after they had crossed Jordan and had actually entered into their inheritance. It is impossible not to see in this a striking resemblance to the course of the Christian Church, and, too, of each individual believer. The first great event in the journey from "Egypt" to "Canaan" is Justification. That comes to us after we have believed but before we have left the world. In the darkness of this world's night we have light in our hearts; the sprinkled blood ensures our acceptance in God's sight and our deliverance from the condemnation that is on the world. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Justification by faith is an indispensable preliminary to our entering the wilderness journey which will lead us to the heavenly Canaan, just as that first Passover must of necessity be accepted and eaten before any Israelite could cross the Red Sea and escape from Egypt.

Twelve months later Israel was at Sinai, and the second Passover was observed. There they entered into a solemn covenant with God which made them a consecrated people, separated from the world and dedicated to the purposes of God for all time. Israel after the flesh has been a separated people ever since. Not even their own faithlessness and short-

coming has altered that. Though they have denied Him, repeatedly, yet He has abided faithful, and the mark of Sinai remains on Israel still. That is a fitting picture of the second great step in the Christian's progress—Consecration. The second Passover, associated as it was with the making of the Covenant, is paralleled in our case by our own entering into a "covenant by sacrifice". Like Israel of old at Sinai, we too have become members of a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But, again like Israel, the making of that covenant with God is only the beginning, not the ending, of our wilderness journey. Israel spent something like three months getting from Egypt to Sinai. After about nine months at the mountain they spent another thirty-nine years getting to Canaan—most of the time dwelling at Kadesh, on its borders, waiting for all the adults who left Egypt to pass into death in conformity with the Divine decree (Num. 14. 29-34). The spiritual is a true likeness to the material. We come to the issue of consecration very soon after our justification, but there is a lifetime of learning the lessons God would teach us before we enter the Land of Promise, the heavenly Canaan. Like Israel at Kadesh, we dwell for long almost within sight of the golden land, yet we are rigidly excluded from its joys until all that is of the old nature, of "Egypt", is consumed and replaced by that which is born in the desert of our "wilderness experiences". It is then, and only then, that God says to us, as Moses did to Israel "*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward*" and we come to the final phase of life's experience, the crossing of Jordan.

But in the meantime we do well to remember that "Kadesh"—where the Israelites spent at least thirty-seven of their forty years' wanderings—means 'Holy'. Whatever the condition in which our Lord has seen fit to leave us as we seek to make our calling and election sure, no matter how often we seem to fail in our profession, it is a condition which in His sight is "holy", because it is there that we are being fitted for the glory of His presence "in due time".

So then, at last, like Joshua's hosts, we cross Jordan into Canaan, and immediately partake of our third Passover, our Glorification. For Israel it was glorification in a material sense; they had arrived in the Promised Land after long years of wandering and now God would be always with them. For us it is the same;

we shall enter into His Presence where there is fulness of joy, taking our place beside that right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

Justification—Consecration—Glorification. These three great steps in the Christian's life and progress are well forthshown in the three great Passovers associated with Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan. And the story of the third one yields even further analogies for our instruction.

This Passover was different from the two previous ones. "*They did eat of the old corn of the land . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*" (Josh. 5. 11-12). Throughout the forty long years of Israel's necessity, from Elim to Gilgal, the Red Sea to Jordan, the departure from Egypt to the entry into Canaan, the manna came consistently and regularly. It never failed. "*He gave them bread from heaven; man did eat angel's food*" sang the Psalmist many years later. But on the day of that Jordan Passover the manna ceased, for the people began to eat of the fruit of the land.

So it is with us. While yet we linger on this side the Vail, the spiritual manna of our Lord's providing will be our constant portion. It began to come just so soon as we turned our backs upon Egypt and began to walk in the ways of the Lord. It will continue without ever failing until the very moment we cross Jordan and need it no more. There will be a day when we shall drink of the fruit of the vine, new, in the kingdom of our Father. We shall not need the manna then.

Joshua's Passover must have been a wonderful time of rejoicing. The first Passover was one of gladness at the thought of deliverance from Egypt but it must have been mingled with some apprehension of the unknown, some fears of the difficulties and dangers awaiting them in the desert. The second Passover would have brought a certain holy joy mingled with solemnity at the thought of the covenant and all its privileges, but again there would be the knowledge that endurance and toil would be demanded of all who would reap the reward of that covenant. The third Passover was different. All the hardships and dangers were in the past, all the fears and apprehensions dispelled. God had brought them into the land—their land—and now all would be well. "*The Lord hath done great things for us; we are glad.*"

So it will be with us. Our first Passover of Justification, our second Passover of Consecration, involve much of hardship and testing of faith, and calls for determination and endurance. Oft will we fall by the wayside, and pick ourselves up, and continue in the way pointed out for us by the guiding cloud. But the third Passover of Glorification is the attainment of our goal, of our heart's desire. As we sometimes sing, in our services of praise, "The toils of the road will seem nothing, When I come to the end of the way".

The golden dream did not last long for Israel, for they were still living in history, and faith soon failed, and unbelief returned, and consequently it was not long before they were fighting the Canaanites, instead of enjoying the land as a free gift from the Almighty, which would have been their portion had their faith held. With that devel-

opment we are not concerned. With Joshua's Passover the picture afforded by the wilderness journey is completed and the curtain falls. Israel's subsequent experiences in the land yield other pictures and teach other lessons with which we at the moment are not concerned. Suffice it that we, at this Memorial season, take fresh courage from the pageantry of Israel's journeyings of olden time and reflect that, just as they entered their Promised Land at last, so we, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end, will receive that inheritance promised to us and reserved in heaven for us. We have lived on the manna for many a long year and we shall sustain our lives by its aid for a while yet; but the day will assuredly come when we shall gather together without the manna—for we shall indeed eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS

An old man, ready to depart this life, and a baby newly come to earth. An age in history, waxing old and ready to vanish away, and a new age, flushing into the roseate hues of dawn. These four met on the day that the aged Simeon came into the Temple and saw this young couple bringing their first-born child to be dedicated to the Lord. He had seen many such during his long life of service for his God, but this time there was a difference. That inward voice which had been his guide and mentor so many times in the past spoke again, and now for the last time. God had fulfilled His promise; the Spirit's assurance possessed his mind, and he knew with certainty that at last he was looking upon the Lord's Messiah.

Simeon was evidently one of the few in Israel who were prepared to receive the Messiah in the way He came, as a child, born in humble circumstances, without pomp, ostentation or show. The majority expected Him in vastly different guise, as a mighty conqueror, bursting upon the world in all the splendour and power of His Heavenly glory. The many rejected Him because of the manner of His Advent; the few, like Simeon, accepted Him because by dint of reverent study of the Scriptures and constant waiting upon God they had a more accurate idea what to expect.

The child Jesus was six weeks old. Accord-

ing to the law of Moses, as recorded in Lev. 12. 1-8, a woman was considered unclean after the birth of a child, and—in the case of a boy child—must come to the sanctuary with an offering at the end of forty days. A lamb for burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering was stipulated, and after the offering of these by the priest she was ceremonially clean again. A further stipulation provided that if the woman was unable—through poverty generally—to furnish a lamb, she could bring two turtle doves or pigeons, and the intimation in Luke 2. 24 that Mary did in fact avail herself of this concession is an incidental evidence that Joseph and Mary were in poor circumstances. The Lord of all chose to identify Himself with the poor rather than the rich when He laid aside the glory which He enjoyed with the Father "before the world was", and became man for the suffering of death. The expression in Phil. 2. 7 that He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" was literally true to the extreme. But, despite her poverty, Mary came also to present her child in dedication to God, to offer back the gift she had received from Him to be devoted to His service. That also was a requirement of the Law. Whenever a woman's first-born child was a son, that son was to be presented to the Lord. In ceremonial fashion that child was particularly the Lord's, and although whilst

still on the way to the Promised Land the Lord arranged that the tribe of Levi should be exchanged for the first-borns of all tribes, so that the Levites became the dedicated ones to serve the people in the things of God, the people of Israel still retained the custom of presenting their first-born before the Lord in His sanctuary. So it came about that Mary and Joseph were to be found in the Temple on this particular day for the accomplishment both of the cleansing and the presentation.

It was thus that Simeon found them, as, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he came into the Temple Court. We do not know much about Simeon. He never appears again in the Gospel story and is not referred to anywhere else in the New Testament. The memory of the incident itself must have been preserved by Mary and related years later to Luke, for none of the men who afterward became Jesus' disciples were there; most of them were probably not even born. There are a few distinct clues in the description from which some definite inferences can be drawn. Luke says that Simeon was "*just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ*". (Luke 2. 25-26). Only Mary could have known these facts and imparted them to Luke; it seems clear that Mary must have been previously acquainted with Simeon or at least knew him by repute. The word "just" could equally well be rendered "upright" or "righteous"; that for "devout" is one that is used to denote the more scrupulous and rigid aspect of religious life. This, added to the fact that Simeon was one who looked for the imminent coming of Messiah, and believed that when He came He would be a light, not only to Israel, but also to the Gentiles, to all people, an unorthodox belief among the Jews of his day, makes it strongly probable that Simeon was a member of the little-known body of people called the Zadokites. During the century that immediately preceded the First Advent there had grown up a community which looked for the coming of Messiah in much the same way as the past two centuries have witnessed a similar expectation of the Second Advent among Christians, and who based their expectations upon the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and certain chronological calculations drawn from the same. With that outlook was associated a strong sense of dedication to God's service and holiness of life which caused many of them to

withdraw to a considerable extent from contact with the world around them. The sect known as the Essenes was strongly imbued with these views—the recently discovered "Dead Sea Scrolls" have thrown new light upon this sect—and although Simeon was a very common name in Israel, and it is impossible to identify the one who is mentioned in Luke's account, it is of interest to note that at the time of the death of Herod there was an aged Essene named Simeon who had gained some fame as an uncompromising critic of the King's misdemeanours. This man may have been the same as Simeon in Luke's account.

"—*waiting for the consolation of Israel*" (vs. 25). This word "consolation" has the meaning of one coming to the side of a person needing succour, comfort or salvation. It is rendered "consolation" or "comfort" on about twenty occasions in the New Testament, such as Acts 4. 36 "Barnabas, son of *consolation*", Heb. 6. 18 "We have strong *consolation*"; Rom. 11. 4. "That we by patience and *comfort* of the Scriptures might have hope;" 2 Cor. 1. 3. "The God of all *comfort*". "*Parakletos*", the Comforter, in John 14, referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, is from the same root. In the context of Luke's narrative the expression is used to denote the fulfilment of Israel's national hope, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom which should exalt Israel to the headship of the nations and fulfil the Divine promise to Abraham, "*in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*", although it has to be admitted that Israel at the First Advent had largely forgotten that wider extension of God's purpose. But Simeon was one who did believe, and now, by the inspiration of the Spirit, he knew the time had come.

It is not likely that Simeon was the priest into whose hands Mary's offering was to be entrusted. He is not stated to be a priest, and in fact, the expression "a man in Jerusalem" seems to militate against the idea that he held official position in the Temple. There is also the fact that he was a prophet, and it is not usual for priests to be prophets. It seems more probable that Simeon was in the line of prophets whose last representative in the Old Testament was Malachi, and the last of the line John the Baptist. Both Malachi, four centuries before, and John the Baptist, thirty years after, spoke of the Light that was to enlighten the world; Simeon held that Light in his arms.

So he gave voice to that wonderful pæon of praise which has become an established part

of formal church worship. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." The old man had lived through the time of Israel's greatest glory since the days of David and Solomon, that brief period after the Maccabees had won freedom for the Jews, and Rome had not as yet fastened her grip upon the nation. He had seen the boundaries of the Jewish State pushed as far as ever they had been by Solomon, and Jewish ambassadors represent his country even at Rome, the greatest of Empires. Then he had seen disaster and civil war, and finally Pompey the Roman general ride into Jerusalem to force Judea into servitude again, and all the golden expectations vanish. With his fellows who had regard for the law of God he had writhed at the spectacle of Herod, the hated Edomite, ruling over the people of Israel, and had mourned the scandals and violent deeds which disgraced the once holy priesthood of Aaron. But now all that was forgotten; he held in his own arms the Lord's Messiah, and with that inward conviction which is the inviolate possession of the man who is habitually guided by the Holy Spirit of God he knew that at last the promise had been fulfilled; God had indeed visited His people; the Christ had come.

The word "Salvation" in verse 30 is not the noun of that word, but the neuter form of the adjective, "that which brings salvation". The Septuagint of Isa. 52, 10 "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" uses the same form of the word; the reference in both instances is to the fact that Christ is the one who brings, and effects, the salvation that God has planned for "whosoever will" of the entire human race. Simeon saw that clearly, and hence he was able to describe both that salvation and the Child who was to be the medium of that salvation as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." (V. 32). The full force of that tremendous expression is only felt when one realises that the word "Gentiles" embraces all of mankind who are not Israelites, and hence is best rendered, as it is in so many modern translations, "nations". "A light to lighten the nations." "That was the true light" cried John "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1. 9). God's words cannot fail. Whether we understand the philosophy of the matter or not whether we appreciate the Scriptural doctrine or no, whether we comprehend the Divine Plan for mankind or find His

purpose dark and mysterious, it is true and gloriously true that every human creature that has ever been, or will ever be born, will, at some time before the final decision is taken, be enlightened by that light and be brought to a full realisation of the issue between good and evil. The fact that some may be impenitent and unregenerate to the end and wilfully refuse entry into life does not affect that. Not one single human soul will ever be able to say to God "I never had a fair chance".

It was this vision which Simeon had. He saw the Kingdom of Messiah as Paradise in which the foreview of Isaiah would be fulfilled "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm (Christ) shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with His arms and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. 40. 10-11). In this Babe he saw the future King who was to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy, and he rejoiced, knowing that God had now moved to deliver, not only His own people Israel, but all mankind, from the thralldom of sin and death. He was ready now to go to his own rest, confident that like Daniel of old, he would stand in his lot at the end of the days. (Dan. 12. 13).

"And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him." (V. 33). Most of the principal manuscripts have "his father" here but the A.V. follows the Alexandrian with "Joseph". It is of little consequence. If Luke did use the term "father" it was only because inevitably the common usage favoured this; obviously Joseph was the generally reputed father of Jesus, and only a very few could possibly have known of His virgin birth; Luke was, in any case, fully aware of that for he gives the best account. Joseph and Mary marvelled, not in the sense of astonishment as though they had not previously known of the Child's destiny, but in awe and wonder as they listened to Simeon's words and realised the magnitude of this great thing.

Then Simeon turned to Mary with a personal word for her: "This child," he said, "is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed . . . and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." (vs. 34-35). How much did the saintly old man, so near the end of his earthly course, see into the events of the next forty years, and perceive the figure of Jesus among the people, preaching, exhorting,

reproving; healing the sick, raising the dead, winning the love of the common people and incurring the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees? How much did the Holy Spirit show him of the Crucifixion, the little knot of women at the foot of the Cross, the distraught figure of the mother of Jesus? Did he even see, in shadowy outline, the figures of the Twelve, preaching to the dwellers in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost? How

much of the future he did perceive we may not know, but that Simeon the just and devout, the one who waited all his life for the consolation of Israel, was indeed in the line of the Hebrew prophets, speaking and seeing as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, we do know. Like John the Baptist thirty years later, he could truly say "I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God."

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

2. Author of Creation

*"Whom no man hath seen,
nor can see"*

Responsible scientists no longer deny that the Universe had a beginning. There was a time, fantastically remote from the present, when all creation—this earth, our Sun, all the starry splendour of the heavens—did not exist. It just was not there. There were no living creatures, for there was no life. There was no light, for there was nothing to give light. No heat, no sound, no movement; nothing. There was no means by which to measure out space, by which to span out time. Length and breadth, past and future, are words which would have had no meaning if there were any words, and there were not; time was only an eternal "now" and space was only an infinite "here".

There was a moment, say scientists, when matter, material, the stuff of which things are made, began to come into existence. From what cause, by what power, they do not know, and no scientific instrument can reveal. But they can and do observe the results of that coming of matter into existence and they peer intently into the recesses of distant space in order to gain clues that will afford them a clearer understanding of this profound mystery. Of course the experts differ, as experts always do, and it is still a matter of hot debate in the appropriate academic circles whether all the material now in the universe first appeared in the form of a colossal solid lump which exploded and sent its contents careering through space to condense into stars, suns and planets, or was rather the continuous appearance of atoms created out of nothing, a process which continues everlastingly, coalescing together to form great gaseous clouds which ultimately become the stars we see and know. But there are two facts upon which all the scientists do agree. They know that there was a start to the Universe; their

instruments cannot tell them by what power or what means it was started.

Science in its exploration of the past has to stop at this point, where the first stars were born, where in God's mighty crucible the first atoms were forged out of nothingness. Science has to stop at the boundary marked by the beginning of material things; only faith and spiritual discernment can step across the line and find, behind the coming into existence of all we can see and hear and handle, God the Creator, existing from eternity, putting into active operation His great purpose.

We do not know whether what is usually called the angelic world came into existence prior to the visible universe or simultaneously with it. We do not know the true nature of the celestial world or of celestial beings, only that it is a real world, with real citizens living nearer to the presence of God than do we upon earth, capable of intelligent loyalty, service and activity in the things of God, and ceaselessly engaged in the occupations and duties for which God has created them. Because the Bible tells us of angels who sinned, and are reserved to judgment, of evil principalities and powers in the heavens, we have to accept the fact that the citizens of that world are capable, like man, of obedience or disobedience, loyalty or disloyalty, to God, and that there are those in that world who now are in a state of rebellion against God. Neither can we pronounce with any certainty upon the relation of that world to our physical universe in terms of space and time. The five human senses, and every type of detecting instrument which the wit of man has devised, are incapable of sensing or detecting anything to do with that world. But because God is the Source of all life and the Author of all creation, in whatever sphere of being that life

and that creation is manifested, we can be assured that a time there must have been when the celestial world, with whatever forms of life it holds, came into existence by the creative decree of God, just so surely as did our own material order of things. There are a few allusions in Scripture to that fact. Of the Son it is said that "*by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . .*" (Col. 1. 16). That the creation of what is to us the invisible world, the angelic, antedated the formation of the earth at least is indicated in Job 38. 7 where the sons of God, i.e., the angels, are depicted as "shouting for joy" when God brought this planet into being. But our earth is a comparative newcomer on the scene; the starry heavens existed, substantially as we see them now, long before the Earth was formed. Sometime in that remote past, perhaps at the very beginning of things, the celestial world came into existence, and for the first time living, intelligent beings stood before God and gave praise to Him for the blessing of conscious life.

Knowing so little of that celestial creation, unable as we are to visualise the conditions of life in that world, in thinking and speaking of the work of God in creation we can do little more than consider the material universe of which we and our earth constitute a small—and infinitesimally small—part. When we talk of God as Creator, although we are fully aware that the angelic world is part of His creation, also, it is of man and the visible universe that we must speak.

Away back there in the dim recesses of past time, so many long ages ago that the mind could not possibly take in the significance of the number of the years, a stupendous event took place.

God created the first atom!

Now an atom is a very tiny thing. Most people know nowadays that all earthly materials and substances are composed of atoms, clinging together tightly to make up the mass of the material. These atoms are almost inconceivably minute. It would take more than a million of them, placed side by side in a straight line, to equal the thickness of a human hair. The tiniest grain of dust, only just visible to the human eye, can contain more than ten millions of atoms. Yet this earth and all that is on it, and all the stars of the sky, consist entirely of atoms, inconceivable numbers of atoms congregated together. God made them all, made them out of nothing, by the exercise of His own Will, the power of

His Holy Spirit. There are only about one hundred different kinds of atoms, but out of the tremendous number of combinations possible with those hundred kinds the whole wide variety of earthly things has been constituted,—land and sea, rocks and minerals, trees and grasses, animals and fish, man himself, all constructed from atoms. God made them all and ordered the fashion atom combines with atom to produce all the different substances we know, and so made possible the bodies we possess and the environment in which we live, and move, and have our being. And away in the vast stretches of empty space, at fantastic distances from this earth, there are those mighty star-clusters, galaxies as they are called, each containing millions upon millions of giant stars each one of which is bigger by far than our own sun,—which, as stars go, is only a midget,—and every star in every one of those countless galaxies is itself made up of atoms almost without number. One of our leading astronomers, Prof. Hoyle, is becoming well known for his explanations how all these atoms are constantly coming into existence from nothing, but he only records what from his researches he can observe as facts. He makes no suggestion as to the power which is bringing these atoms into existence. His instruments cannot tell him that.

The Bible does so. In some of those inspired moments when holy men of old were moved by the Holy Spirit to utter words the meaning of which they themselves could only dimly understand, or even not understand at all, there were occasional allusions intended to have significance for us in these latter days, and which, closely examined, do have meaning. Speaking of His almighty power and wisdom, God says through the prophet Isaiah "*My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned (Heb. stretched out) the heavens; when I call unto them they stand up together.*" (Isa. 48. 13). Let the implication of those trenchant words sink in! Here is the creative power of God calling into existence the material substance of which this earth and all the heavenly bodies are composed, preparing the space in which they are to continue their existence and by one word ("*when I call unto them*") setting the entire assembly in orderly array as we see it glistening above our heads every night. Says Wisdom, the *Logos*, the only begotten Son "*When he prepared (established) the heavens I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth . . . then I was by him as a*

workman (or architect"; this is the meaning of the Hebrew:) Prov. 8. 27-31. This momentous passage depicts as the speaker the active agent of God in the work of creation as distinct from the creative force or power whom we call God the Creator and God the Father of all.

But now we come to an even more amazing view of the creative energy of God. An increasingly influential school of thought among physicists, led by Prof. Hoyle, holds more and more to the conclusion that observed phenomena can only be explained by the fact that atoms are still coming into existence, that the unknown force or power by which the universe was brought into being immeasurable ages ago has been creating new atoms ever since. Matter, material, they say, is continually being created from nothing and in any one moment there is more material in the universe than there was a moment before. It is true that, expressed in ordinary terms, the increase seems infinitesimally small—in a space the size of an ordinary living room just one atom in every three million years—yet this means that in all the known universe enough material comes into existence in every second of time to form eight thousand stars. If Prof. Hoyle is right then this is what Divine power is accomplishing in the material world at this present moment.

That gives a wealth of meaning to Isaiah's words in 40. 26. "*Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these, (the stars) that bringeth out their host by number. He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*" Here is a marvellous picture; God the Creator "bringing out their host by number" as He creates the atoms, forms them into stars, and sets them to work. "Not one faileth". Never, in all this mighty process, is there a mistake or slip; all goes precisely according to plan. "*He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite.*" (Psa. 147. 4-5). No one of less than infinite understanding could originate and execute so tremendous a work. No one of less than infinite intellect could so number and give names to the myriads of stars that exist.

It is time now to ask the question "Why did God do all this?" For what reason has the Most High brought into existence this vast creation, so evidently intended to be the abode of continuous life—for the marvellous adaptability of our own planet to the myriads

of different forms of life it supports shows unmistakably the Divine intention to multiply life in all its manifestations. The Revelator gives the answer: "*Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" (Rev. 4. 11). The word does not signify pleasure strictly in the modern sense of the word, but rather the idea of purpose or intention. The glowing words of Revelation 21. 3 in which God is depicted at the last as making his dwelling with men seem at least to hint that in some wonderful manner which our altogether inadequate comprehension of God forbids our fully understanding, God comes inside his own creation of space and time in much the same way as a man builds a house for himself and then goes inside and lives in it. Some such idea may possibly be intended by the words of Isa. 40. 22. "*He . . . sitteth upon the circle of the earth, stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.*" Psalm 104. 2 has much the same idea. God enshrouds Himself in light as a garment, stretches out the heavens for a veil and lays the supporting beams of his dwelling-place in the celestial waters, the recesses of far space. God would dwell with man, but he remains invisible to man, "*dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*" (1 Tim. 6. 16). Inconceivably remote, and yet infinitely near. The same Divine Mind that ranges through the vast recesses of space, filling it with great stars, is able to take note of the smallest detail affecting the welfare of His humblest living creature. A sparrow, said Jesus, cannot fall to the ground without the knowledge of the Father (Luke 12. 6). The God of the atom, of the mighty stars, is also the God of the sparrows and is as fully aware of the one as the other. Even the hairs of our heads are numbered, Jesus went on to say. After all, if God can keep track of the untold millions of stars, and knows all their names, then heads and sparrows must be easy to Him, for there are far less of them to account for. So that as we look out upon the vast universe which our God has made we need not be appalled or afraid of its vastness and our own littleness. Out there, in the light behind the darkness, is our Creator and our Father, intensely conscious of us, our lives' experiences and problems, our loves and fears, our strength and weakness, our successes and failures, and He is most certainly and surely working out His great purpose for those on whom He has bestowed the inestimable gift of conscious, intelligent life.

But how can men, who even as nations are less than the fine dust of the balance before him, how can men with their limited powers of perception come to know the God who inhabits eternity; how attain that communion and fellowship with Him which He himself has said is His desire and intention? If no man can look upon His face and live (Exodus 33. 20), if He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, if He is One whom no man hath seen nor can see, how may we ever come to know him? The answer is in five simple words in John's Gospel. "*The Word was made flesh*". The Word of God, the *Logos*, already

the active agent of the Father in the work of creation, already in Old Testament days the means of communication between the Father and all men, now becomes more intimately connected with mankind that He might reveal God to them in even clearer guise. The Word came to earth, and dwelt visibly amongst men, having taken upon Himself the nature of man (Heb. 3. 16). And in Him men saw the Father.

The next instalment discusses the coming to earth of the Son of God and His relation to His Father whilst sojourning in the flesh.

THE PASSOVER MUST BE KILLED

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"—Cor. 5.7

The term Passover amongst Israel was frequently applied as the name of a festival week, otherwise called the Feast of the Passover, beginning on the fifteenth day of Nisan. But we must not confound this with the frequent references to the Passover found in the Scriptures when the word feast is not used, which generally referred to the lamb that was killed, the Passover. For instance, we read, "*Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed*". Again, our Lord sent disciples to enquire of a friend, "*Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?*" Again we read, "*And they made ready the Passover.*" When our Lord sat down with the disciples to eat of the lamb He said, "*With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you I will no more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.*"

God's arrangements for Israel were typical and full of valuable lessons for us, who belong to anti-typical or Spiritual Israel. In the type the Lord provided for two great religious occasions amongst his people, the one at the beginning of the secular year and the other at the beginning of the religious year. The religious year began in the spring, counting from the first new moon after the vernal equinox, approximately April 1st, but varying because of the difference between lunar and solar time. It was in connection with this, the beginning of their religious year, that the Lord appointed the Passover—the killing and eating of the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day, to be followed by a Passover week of unleavened bread. The civil year with Israel began six months later, in the seventh month, approximately October 1st; and it was in con-

nection with this civil year that the Atonement Day sacrifices were appointed in connection with the "Feast of Tabernacles" or "Booths", in which the Israelites called to mind their wilderness journey on leaving Egypt *en route* for Canaan.

These two great religious celebrations pictured the same lesson from different standpoints: the first emphasised more particularly the passing over of the first-born, who subsequently were represented in the tribe of Levi, at whose head stood the priesthood. Although the type seems to carry forward and to picture the deliverance of all Israel through this priestly tribe, to which Moses belonged, yet specifically, particularly, in detail, it dealt merely with the deliverance, the blessing, of the priestly tribe, the first-born. The other type, in the seventh month, more particularly pictures the atonement for the sins of the whole world, the forgiveness and reconciliation of all mankind.

There is a force and meaning in the Apostle's expression, "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*", which is not generally appreciated. (1 Cor. 5. 7). All Israel prefigured or represented the world of mankind, and the bondage of the whole people represented all mankind under the bondage of sin and death, the great taskmaster in the type being Pharaoh, in the antitype being Satan. Deliverance is desired for all, and the Lord's arrangement is ultimately to deliver all. The Apostle so explains when he writes, "*The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*". But the Apostle divides the groaning ones into two classes, saying, "*The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain*

together until now"—"waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God". (Rom. 8. 19, 21, 22). His reference here is to the world of mankind whose deliverance from the bondage of Satan and the power of sin and death will only come through the manifestation of the glorified Church, the Christ in glory and power, as God's Kingdom ruling the world. The Apostle also mentions the Church of the First-Born in her present condition, saying, "*But ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body*". Both classes have an experience of groaning, both classes have an experience of waiting, but they wait for different things. The latter, the Church of the First-Born, waits for her deliverance as the Body of Christ through a share in the First Resurrection. According to the Divine promise the former, the world, waits until the Church class shall have been perfected, glorified, empowered, and shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father for the blessing of all the families of the earth, for the uplifting of all who desire Divine favour on Divine terms.

Look now at the type: notice that it is not all Israel that is in danger from the destroying angel, but only the first-born. Only the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. Hence it was only the first-born of the Israelites that were spared or passed over. These first-born ones, protected by the blood of the lamb, the Lord declared to be specially His; and, with a view to marking them out and keeping them as a special, peculiar people, an exchange was made whereby the first-born of all the tribes were exchanged by the Lord for the one tribe of Levi, which He accepted as specially His and which in the type represents the household of faith. Out of this household of faith, in turn, a priestly family was selected, which typified Christ our High Priest and the Church His Body, the under priesthood, the Royal Priesthood. So, then, those who perceive the matter clearly see that the Passover has to do only with the household of faith. *It is in full accord with this that the Lord's Supper, which antitypes the eating of the lamb, is not offered to the unregenerate, but is strictly and exclusively an institution for the household of faith.*

Seeing in the type the slain lamb, its blood sprinkled upon the posts and lintels of the home and its flesh eaten with bitter herbs, we apply this in the antitype and see Christ the antitypical Lamb, see that His blood sprinkled upon our hearts cleanses them from a con-

sciousness of evil and gives us an assurance of our being *passed over*, of our being spared, of our being granted life through His blood. This sprinkling represents our justification by faith; and the subsequent eating of the lamb with bitter herbs is represented in the antitype by our consecration, our partaking of Christ, our participation with Him in His sufferings and self-denials—also represented by the bitter herbs, which give zest to our appetite and encourage us to partake more and more abundantly of the Lamb. All who believe the testimony, all who trust in the precious blood, are passed over, and, more than this, are expecting a general deliverance of the whole people, of all who love God, who desire to do Him reverence and service. So many as thus believe realise themselves pilgrims and strangers under present conditions, looking for a better country, even the heavenly Canaan. All this was represented in typical Israel, for while eating the lamb on that night of Passover they stood staff in hand, girded for a journey. Likewise the Lord's faithful to-day should realise themselves pilgrims and strangers, having no continuing city, but setting their affections on things above.

We meet not as Israel, to remember the deliverance from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage, but as antitypical Israelites seeking to escape the power of Satan and the dominion of sin. We meet not to eat literal lamb and bitter herbs and to commemorate the passing over in Egypt, but as spiritual Israelites to recognise and commemorate the death of the Lamb of God as our Passover—to feast upon Him, upon the truths which He gave us.

More than this, as explained by our Lord, we not only will use the unleavened bread to represent the purity of His flesh broken for us, and the fruit of the vine to represent His blood shed for us, but also in the light of the Apostle's explanation we perceive that it is a part of our privilege to be broken with Christ as a part of the same larger loaf, and to have fellowship in His cup of suffering and death as a part of the larger cup. From this double standpoint we view our relationship to the Lord, first as those whom He passes over, and secondly as those who share also with Him by and by in the great work of leading forth from bondage to sin and Satan all who will accept of the Divine favour and liberty as the sons of God! How wonderfully grand is the privilege thus accorded us! No wonder the Apostle said, "*Let us keep the Feast!*"

Our feasting upon this bread which came

down from heaven and which was broken for us is not merely for the special occasion of our assembling. Rather that assembling which our Lord enjoins represents our experiences throughout the entire night of His absence, until He shall establish His Kingdom in the morning. It is for us to keep the feast, not merely in this special and commemorative

manner, but day by day, hour by hour, to feed upon the Lamb of God, by faith to realise and appropriate to ourselves His virtues and merits, and to grow in grace and knowledge and love and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit. "As often as ye do this, do it in remembrance of Me".

Bible School **THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**

Part 8. Gen. 42-45

STUDY 10, JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

Gen. 42-45.

This is one of the classics of Bible history, the magnanimity of Joseph towards his brothers who had sold him into slavery. It is a noteworthy story, this whole involved proceeding whereby Joseph both brought home to his brethren the enormity of their crime and satisfied himself that their repentance was real and sincere. Behind the intertwining movements of the characters in the story lies the larger issue of the Divine purpose, moving smoothly into action and using these elements to fulfil the Divine intention that here in Egypt, safe from hunger, danger and all adversity, the children of Jacob should grow into that nation which God had declared was to be His special instrument for the preservation of His truth in the earth until its supreme revelation came in the person of Jesus Christ. In a very real sense the moving of Jacob's family into Egypt, and the famine which provoked that move, were pointers to the coming of Messiah.

The famine itself was nothing unusual. Egypt had known such times before and knew them again. This one was of somewhat unusual duration. Most commentators speak of a "succession of years when the Nile remained low" but in 41. 57 it is made plain that Egypt was not the only land affected. "*The famine was sore in all lands.*" Jacob and his family were not the only ones to come into Egypt for the purpose of buying food; and probably not the only ones to settle in that land, at least temporarily, either. There is some evidence (as in Brooks' "*Climate through the ages*") that for several centuries terminating about 1600 B.C. the world as a whole passed through a dry and arid phase, followed after that date by a much more rainy era which of itself induced considerably improved fertility. If Joseph did indeed enter Egypt in the early years of the Hyksos regime then the com-

mencement of the twelve tribes' growth in Egypt would more or less coincide with this change; this could have been one factor in the phenomenal increase of the Israelites, and of other nations too. It has to be remembered that although Canaan in the days of Isaac and Jacob was evidently very thinly peopled, when the Israelites after the Exodus only a few centuries later returned thereto they found it well populated with numerous tribes and cities "*with walls reaching up to heaven*". Explorations in the ruins of Babylon have shown that city to have increased in size many times over at about the same period; it would seem that the population of the Mesopotamian plains showed just the same acceleration of increase as did Israel and Canaan and this fact goes far to confirm the veracity of the Genesis story. The famine of Joseph's time, too, was probably merely the last of a series of such calamities extending over several centuries previously; Egyptian history relates several such occasions reaching back to the time of Abraham. It is likely that the wanderings of Abraham and Isaac recorded in Genesis were largely dictated by necessity due to the impoverishment of the land by dry weather; the various recorded conflicts between their servants and the people of the land over the possession of water holes and wells would tend to support the same conclusion.

The despatch of Jacob's ten sons to Egypt for the purpose of buying food as related in chapter 42 was therefore a perfectly natural thing and one that was paralleled by many other families. 41. 57 makes that plain. "*All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy food*", and so does 42. 5 "*and the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came*" Chapter 42 tells the story of the first expedition, one in which Jacob would not allow his youngest son Benjamin to participate. The popular image is all too often that of a little lad perhaps ten or twelve years old whom

Jacob would fain shelter from the risks and rigours of the journey; in actual fact Benjamin was at the time a grown man thirty-two years of age, and probably already the father of a goodly proportion of the ten sons he ultimately had. The word "lad" used by Judah in 43. 8 to denote Benjamin is probably partially responsible for this very general impression, but "lad" here as in so many places in the Old Testament is the Hebrew "naar" which can denote a boy or young man and is so translated in numerous instances. King Solomon at his accession is described as a "naar". At a time when men habitually lived to six or seven score of years Benjamin in his thirties would be accounted as a stripling anyway. Jacob's motive in keeping him at home was undoubtedly on account of the fact that, Joseph being lost to him, Benjamin was his only remaining link with his beloved Rachel. The other sons, headed by Reuben, the eldest at sixty-four years of age, took their way to Egypt, travelling almost certainly by the high road skirting the sea shore and passing the frontier guards at the wall called the "Shur" which Egypt had built somewhere near the present Suez Canal, and so at last coming into the presence of this high Egyptian official whom they utterly failed to recognise as their brother Joseph.

That is by no means surprising. There must have been a tremendous physical difference between the seventeen year old country shepherd lad whom they had sold into slavery and this calm, dignified Egyptian, whose very mien conveyed authority and self-assurance. Already awed and subdued by the magnificent buildings and all the other trappings of a civilisation these rough countrymen had never before seen, they were not likely to perceive in the countenance of this clean-shaven, well-dressed man in whose presence they stood as suppliants any resemblance to their own bearded and roughly appalled fellows. So they answered his questions respectfully, hopefully, and quite unsuspectingly.

Joseph, of course, knew them at once. He had probably been expecting them. He must have realised that his father's family back in Canaan would be as hardly hit as anyone else by the famine, and when parties of Canaanites began to appear in Egypt buying corn he knew it would not be long before his own brothers would appear. And he had the advantage of knowing for whom to look; although it was twenty two years since he had last seen them they would not have changed as he had done. So he was ready with a plan,

a plan devised, we may be sure, at least in part by the over-ruling of the Holy Spirit, that Joseph might be the means of a much greater deliverance to his father's house than could be achieved by selling them a few sacks of corn to tide them over until they could resume life in Canaan again, a deliverance that was to have as its most far-reaching consequence the creation of a nation which has profoundly affected all human history and is destined to survive still, and fulfil its Divine commission to "*blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit*" (Isa. 27. 6). So in pursuance of his plan Joseph at first pretended to disbelieve their story and accused them of being spies; to their indignant denials he responded with the demand that they prove their story by bringing before him the younger brother whose existence they had inadvertently made known to him, commanding that one of their number be held prisoner as hostage against their return and the production of their youngest brother. Joseph made it clear that there was to be no alternative; Simeon was summarily bound before their eyes and hustled away to jail, they were given the corn for which they had made the journey and nothing remained but to return to Jacob without Simeon and bear the heavy news that another of his sons was lost to him.

The brothers' anguished conversation between themselves recorded in 42. 21. 22 is significant. They had immediately jumped to the conclusion that this disastrous sequel to their mission was a Divine judgment upon them for their treatment of Joseph. "*We are verily guilty concerning our brother . . . therefore is this distress come upon us . . . therefore also his blood is required*". It would seem that these men's consciences must have smitten them before this day; it might well be that they had long ago bitterly repented their hasty action in getting rid of Joseph. The effect of the tragedy upon their father Jacob was always before them, and believing as they did that Joseph was irretrievably lost to them they did not expect ever to be able to right the wrong. For them so quickly to associate this experience in Egypt with that event of twenty-two years earlier can only mean that the evil deed was always in their minds and that to some extent at any rate they regretted their action and would have put it right if they could. So they talked together, agitatedly, in their own tongue, not realising that the Egyptian standing before them understood every word they spoke—for, according to verse 23, Joseph had pretended

infamiliarity with the Hebrew language and had talked with them through an interpreter. For a moment he was overcome—"he turned himself about from them, and wept"; partly, it is almost certain, with emotion at finding his brothers were at least conscious of the sin they had committed and to a degree repentant. So he sent them away, and they set out on the journey back to Canaan.

Jacob's reaction was only to be expected. He flatly refused to let Benjamin go with them into Egypt. Simeon he now accounted as irretrievably lost as Joseph. Bitterly did he reproach his sons for involving him in this new sorrow. The 42nd chapter closes on a note of unrelieved despair, and with no overt move in prospect to rescue Simeon from his servitude.

"And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn . . ." It had to come, a decision regarding this problem before the house of Jacob. The famine persisted, and they needed more food. This time Judah had to speak plainly to his father. No Benjamin; no journey. That was the position. The Governor of Egypt had made it plain that they would not so much as be granted an audience unless Benjamin was with them. In a splendidly impassioned plea Judah took upon himself responsibility for Benjamin's safety. "I will be surety for him. Of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever". It was Judah who had suggested selling Joseph into slavery and so deprived Jacob of his firstborn by Rachel; the wheel had turned the full circle and now it was Judah upon whom lay the responsibility for presenting to his father Rachel's second-born.

Jacob capitulated. "If it must be so . . ." He was old and weary; he could resist no more. Pathetically, he tried to make arrangements to placate the grim Egyptian potentate who threatened his life's last consolation, "Carry down the man a present, a little balm, a little honey . . ." There was not much they could take; the famine had seen to that; but Jacob desperately strove to make the best he could of a bad business in the hope that his meagre offering might please the man in whose hands lay Benjamin's fate. And having done all he could, he committed the whole thing to God who had led him through so long a troubled life. "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin."

So they came into Egypt the second time,

the confidence they had in having Benjamin with them tinged with a certain amount of misgiving over the matter of the money in their sacks. During the journey back to Canaan the first time they had found that the purchase money they had paid for the corn had mysteriously found its way into the tops of their sacks and the circumstance worried them not a little. (Incidentally the reference in 42. 27 to the "inn" where they first discovered this does not mean that there were regular hostleries in the desert where travellers could put up for the night; the word only means a lodging place for the night, of whatever description, and in this instance was probably a convenient well or oasis where they could settle down for the night and water their beasts) Joseph's steward speedily put their minds at rest on this score; he had of course been instructed by Joseph to return the money originally but the brothers did not know this. The restoration of Simeon from prison into their midst was another indication that circumstances were improving, so that when Joseph at length appeared they bowed themselves before him without the slightest realisation that they were fulfilling Joseph's boyhood dream when he saw the eleven stars making obeisance to him, and the eleven sheafs making obeisance to his sheaf, dreams which became the immediate cause of his brothers' enmity and his being sold into slavery. But they were not now thinking of the past; relief at the apparent friendliness of their reception and the prospect now of getting safely home with both Benjamin and Simeon, and the corn they needed, chased away all other thoughts. It was a merry party of men which sat down to the feast Joseph had prepared. True, when they found they had been set at table strictly in order of age they marvelled somewhat, wondering how this Egyptian could have guessed their order of birth so accurately; it is evident that as yet they had not the slightest inkling of the truth. The feast proceeded and they were merry.

For the second time the brothers set out for Canaan, this time in very much happier frame of mind. All had gone well, they would soon be home and Jacob's fears allayed, Judah's responsibility discharged and evidently no barrier now to obtaining further supplies from Egypt so long as the famine should last. Nothing more is said about judgment for their misdeed of two decades previously; adversity had gone, prosperity come, and all was well with the world. That was their happy frame

of mind, until Joseph's steward caught up with them.

Of course the accusation was preposterous. The suspicion was completely unfounded. Not one man among them would dream of stealing Joseph's silver divining cup, or anything else out of the land of Egypt. Indignantly they pointed out that the fact they had brought back to the steward the money they had found in the tops of their sacks should be sufficient proof of their honesty. With the boldness of outraged innocence they declared straight away that if the cup was found with any one of them, that man should die and the rest of them be slaves in Egypt forever. They challenged the steward to take up their offer.

So be it, said Joseph's steward, except that my master will not exact penalties from the innocent. The man with whom the cup is found shall go into slavery; the rest may go home free. *"Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground and opened every man his sack."* As the steward proceeded from one to another, taking the eldest first, expressions of righteous indignation began to appear on their faces and with ill-disguised smirks of complacency they began to fasten up their sacks again. And then with a grunt of satisfaction the steward produced the missing cup from Benjamin's sack!

The brothers gave up. They knew there had been some double-dealing going on somewhere. None of them believed that Benjamin was a thief. Somehow the cup had been introduced into his sack unknowingly. To what extent the steward was in Joseph's confidence in all this we do not know. He was a servant and he was merely carrying out orders and those orders now required merely that he take Benjamin back to Joseph. The others could go their way. But there was no hesitation on the part of the brothers now. They did not intend to return to Jacob without Benjamin. They turned their caravan about and accompanied Benjamin and the steward back to the city, and stood waiting to hear their doom.

This matter of Joseph using a divining cup has disturbed some godly people. The character of Joseph seems so flawless, he seems so ideal a man of God, that the association of his name with something that looks suspiciously like witchcraft comes as a shock. It was probably not quite like that. So far as can be gathered from references in ancient writers the general idea was to fill the cup with some liquid or other—usually water—fix the gaze intently upon one spot on the untroubled surface and empty the mind of all pre-occupying

thoughts. It was believed that in this condition of mind messages from the powers of heaven could be expected and that the recipient was then in the most favourable attitude for receiving them. Thus seen, there is really little difference between this "divining" and many modern systems of quiet thinking and meditation, such as, for example, the "Quiet Time" of the Oxford Group of a few decades ago. It might well be that Joseph conformed to the custom of his day in using this divining cup as the outward symbol of his communion with God and in the quietude of mind thus induced did receive that instruction from the Holy Spirit which enabled him to carry out the commission with which God had entrusted him.

Now Joseph applied the final test. Knowing full well the brothers' consciousness of innocence, he decreed that Benjamin, in whose sack the cup had been found, should remain in Egypt to be his slave for ever. The rest of them were free to return to their father. Now would he see if the history of twenty-two years ago was going to be repeated. Would they leave their younger brother in Egypt to save themselves, or would they risk their own lives to save their brother?

It was Judah who resolved the crisis—Judah, who had been the one to suggest the selling of Joseph himself into slavery. But this time it was his own self he wanted to sacrifice. In a marvellously impassioned and eloquent speech he pleaded with Joseph to accept his own self a slave forever as substitute for Benjamin, so that the latter might be able to return to Canaan and his father Jacob be not utterly heart-broken in his old age. *"For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me?"* Rather than have that happen, Judah was prepared to renounce his home and family for ever, ending his days in slavery in a strange land. From the expression in 44. 16 it is evident that Judah at least, and probably his brothers as well, had by now become persuaded that this terrible position in which they found themselves, innocent of the charge though they were, was of God's own appointing, come upon them in judgment for the crime they had committed against their innocent brother those many years back. Judah was ready now to expiate in his own person the guilt for which all his brothers shared the responsibility.

That broke Joseph down. Evidence of the emotional strain under which he had been labouring ever since his brothers first came to Egypt crops up from time to time as the story

unfolds. Now, his purpose achieved, satisfied that his brothers had truly experienced a change of heart, he broke down completely and revealed to the amazed group his true identity. At first they were terrified, as well they might be, but Joseph allayed their fears and with true magnanimity asserted that the whole sequence of events had been overruled by God as a means of getting Jacob and his

family into Egypt to save their lives, in this time of famine. That does not mean that God was responsible for the evil thing that the brothers had done; it does mean that God can take hold of the position that has been created by evil and make of it a means contributing to the accomplishment of His own eternal purpose.

(To be continued)

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (Part 2)

Matt. 18. 33-34 "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every man his brother their trespasses" (A.V.).

"And so angry was the master that he condemned the man to torture until he should pay the debt in full. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you, unless you each forgive your brother from your hearts" (N.E.B.).

The hypothetical teenagers who are expected, so it is claimed, to find this version more understandable than the A.V. might be forgiven if they take this verse as teaching quite definitely that God will condemn to eternal torture those who do not attain the salvation of the righteous; and will probably turn away from such a God in disbelief or disgust. The word "torture" should not have been used; it by no means conveys the meaning of the word employed by Matthew, which is *basanistes*, from the noun *basanos*. Now although *basanos* is rendered "torment" in most of its occurrences, the root meaning is that of making trial or test, the idea of torment or torture having been associated, in general thought, because inquisition into crimes in the days of Rome at the First Advent was usually accompanied by torture in order to elicit confessions. But the primary meaning is that of testing or trial. *Basanos* is actually the word for "touchstone", the mineral by which the purity of gold or other precious metals was tested. Hence it came to mean any process of stringent trial or endeavour. In the New Testament the verb of the word, *basanizo*, is rendered "toss" in Matt. 14. 24 "Tossed with winds, for the wind was contrary", "vex" in 2 Pet. 2. 8 "That righteous man vexed his righteous soul", "toil" in Mark 6. 48 "He saw them toiling in rowing" and even in some of the eight occasions where it is rendered "torment" the implication is not physical torture. The sense of the passage in Matt. 18 is that the unforgiving servant was

sent to prison, to the custody of the jailers, in order that proper enquiry into the heinousness of his offence might be made, and steps taken to enforce the payment of his debt. And that is the principle, says Jesus, upon which the Heavenly Father works in the case of the unforgiving of mankind; they too will find that "as a man soweth, so shall he reap."

Matt. 24. 34 "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things shall be fulfilled" (A.V.).

"I tell you this: the present generation will live to see it all" (N.E.B.).

It has often been urged by sceptics and by "modernist" Christians alike that Jesus was unreliable in this statement or else mistaken, for that generation *did* pass away without all that is prophesied in the 24th chapter being fulfilled. The N.E.B. missed a golden opportunity to correct a wrong impression of long standing here. The word rendered "fulfilled" has a wide variety of meaning but rarely has so definite an application as would justify the word "fulfilled" in its completed sense. "*This generation shall not pass till all these things begin to be*" would be more correct, and this sets the seal upon the accuracy of Jesus' words. The long catalogue of events and happenings listed in Matt. 24 at the end of which His Second Advent was to take place certainly did have its beginnings with that generation, but its ending has not come even yet. The word "fulfil" in the New Testament is almost always from *pleroo*, to make full, or *teleo*, to bring to an end. In this instance only and in Matt. 5. 18 it is *genetai*, a form of *ginomai* which indicates the origin or beginning of a thing or the commencement of a continuing process, used very often in the N.T. for the onset of day or night. It certainly does not involve the idea of completion any more than our expression "dawn of day" involves the entire sweep of daylight ending with evening, and the N.E.B. "will live to see it all" is incorrect and conveys the wrong impression.



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hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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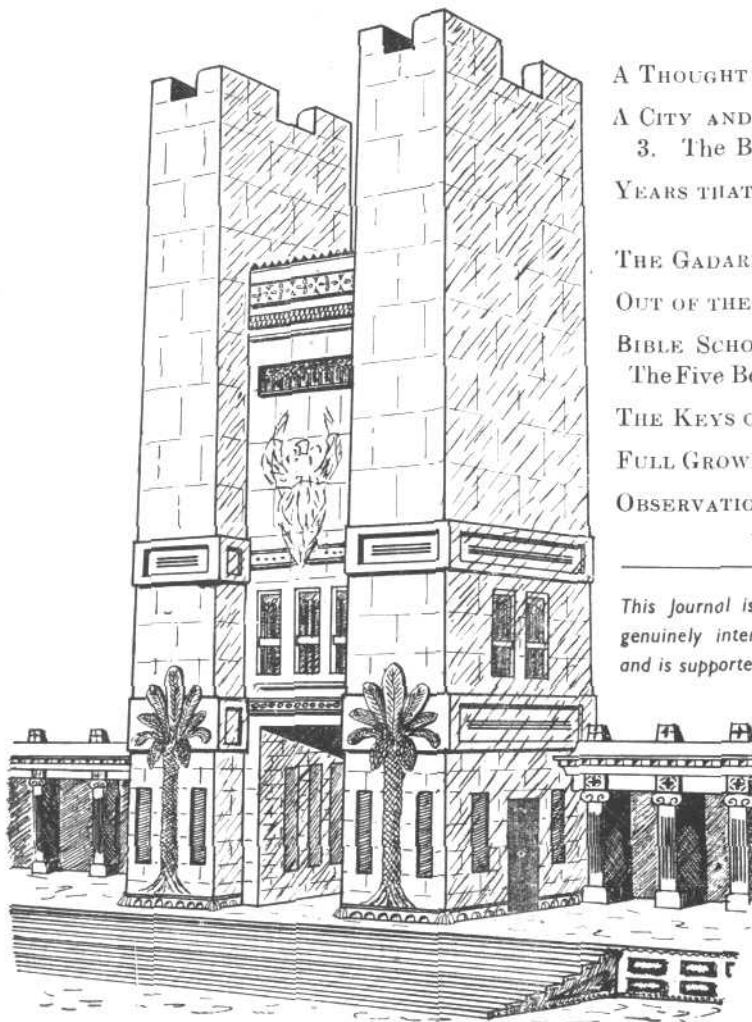
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the month

A certain amount of indignant and—let it be said—self-righteous comment appeared in the British and American Press when Mr. Kruschew announced that Major Gagarin, on his expedition into space, failed to find any trace of Heaven or of God. Of course he was talking with his tongue in his cheek; Mr. Kruschew is too long-headed a man really to believe that his astronaut's little jaunt a couple of hundred miles above the earth's surface could possibly prove or disprove the existence of heaven. He probably intended a sly dig at western politicians who, despite any profession they may make, have been singularly unsuccessful, as politicians, in finding any place for God or for heaven upon this earth either.

What is more serious than the Soviet Premier's rumbustious humour is the thesis now being promulgated in the popular press by certain scientists and "space experts" to the effect that man's increasing knowledge of the universe outside this earth is demonstrating that religion and belief in a personal God is a fallacy. Says one such "*We must prepare ourselves for painful shocks that will involve our philosophical and religious beliefs . . . We will ultimately come into contact with races*" (on other planets) "*more intelligent than our own. The rash assertion that God made man in His own image is ticking like a time bomb at the foundation of many faiths.*" This writer, like so many of his kind, has evidently not kept so up-to-date with his theological studies as he has in astronomical research. Not many knowledgeable Christians believe that man is a physical image of God. It is perfectly conceivable that God could create physical beings adapted to life on other planets, with forms very different from those of man upon earth, and yet still in His own image and likeness. The citizens of the celestial world, the angels, are in the image and likeness of God. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the Son is the effulgence of

the Father's glory and the express image of His Person. It is not difficult to conceive an entire Universe of intelligent creatures, characterised in outward appearance by that infinite variety which is so pronounced a feature of all God's creations, and yet all made in His image and likeness and all serving His purposes in loyalty and happiness.

Says another expert "*Man will see himself as one agent by which the whole universe of matter is slowly becoming conscious of itself . . . His reaction to these impressive experiences will find its expression in a pantheism which will at last provide a philosophy of life and an attitude to existence which is in harmony with science.*" Pantheism is the belief that the Universe itself is God; that writer's claim is that God is "slowly becoming conscious of himself" by reason of the evolutionary development of man, among other hypothetical beings elsewhere in the Universe. Looks suspiciously like God being made in the image and likeness of man and that is where these oracular pronouncements usually lead. In fact, of course, the instructed Christian is the real space expert; he knows, far more accurately than do these investigators who rely upon their instruments to tell them what lies beyond this earth, just what is the nature of that Power which dwells out there beyond the reach of human sense. He knows just what "races more intelligent than man" do exist at present, living their lives in the presence of God, hasting to carry out His commissions and discharge the function in creation to which He has assigned them. And he knows that so far from the universe making God, it is God who made the universe, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

It is regretted that an unavoidable circumstance has precluded the appearance in this issue of the third instalment of "*The Almighty—the Eternal*". It is expected that this series will be resumed in our next issue.

A CITY AND A TOWER

The story of the
Tower of Babel

3. The Building of the Tower

"And they said 'Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime (bitumen) had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen. 11. 3-4).

A broad, level stretch of greensward dotted about with date palms and bordered on its western side by the smoothly flowing waters of the Euphrates. That was the spot upon which the builders decided for the execution of their design. Untouched as yet by the hand of man, undefiled by buildings and unblemished by cultivation or irrigation, it was virgin ground, a fitting place for the tower they would create to be the centre and the symbol of their new religion and the false gods they would set up. They had left the God of Noah and of Shem behind them in the mountains; here in this new and sunnier land, so much more prolific and fertile than the one they had left, they would forget the obligations and duties they had been taught were theirs, forget the God who had delivered their fathers with so great deliverance in the days of the Flood, forget the command to spread over the earth and populate it and bring it into subjection. Here they would settle, in this delightful plain, where the sun shone warmly all day and the blue waters of the ever-flowing rivers brought forth vast yields of rich golden grain and delicious summer fruits. Here they would become a mighty people, living and ruling in denial of God's authority, and making for themselves a name which should indicate their own assumption of power to decide and plan their own destiny, without God.

That seems clearly to have been the intention. God's command to the sons of Noah after the Flood was "*be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . . bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.*" God had made a covenant with them, one that was to be for the benefit of their seed after them. (Gen. 9. 9). Quite evidently men were conscious of certain obligations toward God, and particularly that they were to spread over the face of the earth in order that it be adequately populated and brought into subjection. It is a strange thing that just as the first man failed to carry out his commission to

subdue the earth and chose instead the way of selfishness, so did these. Rather than separate in obedience to God's command they elected to remain together and trust in their own strength and prowess to hold their own.

Verse 3 may indicate that this settlement in the plain of Shinar marked their transition from a wandering, cattle-rearing people to a settled, agricultural one. This mutual exhortation "let us make brick" seems as though they were embarking upon something new. Nomad peoples have no use for bricks and building materials. They live in tents and move easily from place to place following their flocks and herds wherever fresh pasture may be found. An agricultural people, on the contrary, tends to live in permanent dwellings, and with such communities it is not long before towns and cities make their appearance. It was so with Cain and Abel; Abel was a keeper of flocks and Cain a tiller of the ground; and it was Cain who built the first city. Here again history repeated itself in a remarkable manner. The sons of Shem for a number of generations after the Flood were keepers of flocks and covered all Syria and Arabia with their encampments; to this day many of their descendants follow the same calling. The sons of Ham, on the other hand, remained in Mesopotamia as tillers of the soil, developed a highly organised agricultural communal life, built great cities, and became famous for their artistic and industrial skill. It is hard to resist the thought that the family of Ham must have been the leading influence in this proposal to build a city and a tower, and such conclusion is reinforced by the fact that after the disruption that followed the attempt, the families of Shem and of Japheth left the plain of Shinar; the family of Ham remained and populated the land.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the leader in this enterprise of building the Tower was the celebrated hero Nimrod, described in Genesis 10 as a "mighty hunter before the Lord", a descendant of Ham. Flavius Josephus wrote his history during the latter half of the First Century A.D.; his material was drawn partly from the Old Testament and partly from Jewish tradition and such other records as had survived. Relating the story of the Tower he says "*These*" (the sons of Noah after the Flood)

"first of all descended from the mountains into the plains, and stayed there . . . the plain in which they first dwelt was called Shinar. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth . . . but . . . they did not obey God . . . Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah—a bold man, and of great strength of hand . . . He said that he would be revenged on God if he had a mind to drown the world again, for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach . . . Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God, and they built a tower . . ." (Jos. Ant. 1. 4. 2). The narrative relates the sequel very much as does Genesis 11, but there is no support anywhere in Genesis for this statement of Josephus. The tradition upon which he drew for his authority does however find some support from another quarter, the field of Babylonian and Sumerian folklore, according to which the Tower was built by the spirits of heaven and earth at the behest of the god Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. Professor T. G. Pinches, one of the great Assyriologists of the 20th century, has shown that the name "Nimrod" is the Hebrew form of the Babylonian "Marduk". The hero of Genesis 10 must have been an early celebrity among the Sumerians, a man of such fame in his own time that after his death he became deified and in later ages remembered in legend as a god. There may therefore be some solid foundation for Josephus' story.

"Let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly" they said. For many centuries the bricks of the ancient Babylonian cities have been used by the people of later generations for new buildings. It is said that the present city of Baghdad is almost entirely built of bricks taken from the old ruins, and that the names of Babylonian and Assyrian kings well known to Bible readers and students of history are continually met with, stamped on the bricks of which private houses in Baghdad are built. So thoroughly did those grandsons and great-grandsons of Noah burn their bricks that there is no reasonable doubt many exist to-day built into the structure of modern buildings. Babylon has been a brick quarry for generations, and such is the excellence of the bricks that are still dug from the ruins that only a few years ago the market price of Babylon brick stood at a considerably higher figure than modern bricks manufactured in

Iraq.

Now about this city and tower which they so rashly essayed to build. First of all, the Hebrew text does not justify the translator's italics, "whose top *may reach* unto heaven." The expression only means a tower whose top should reach into the heavens, that is to say, a tower to be celebrated for its extreme height, a height so great that it would seem as if it penetrated into the upper skies. If the records of the Greek travellers who saw the Tower before its destruction are correct, the builders certainly achieved their ambition. It is possible that the height of their edifice was not equalled by man until the building of the modern "sky-scrapers" in New York.

It is of course impossible to determine just what the Tower looked like when it was built. There are several descriptions in the writings of classical authors who either saw it for themselves in the fifth century B.C., or who copied the descriptions of those who had, but these describe the Tower as it appeared in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and onward. Since, however, the Babylonians had a rooted objection to altering the structures of their sacred edifices, contenting themselves with repairing, rebuilding and embellishing them as king succeeded king, it may well be that the Tower seen and described by Herodotus in B.C.440 presented much the same appearance as the original one which, we are told in Gen. 11, God Himself "came down to see".

The Greek historian Herodotus (often called the "father of history") about 440 B.C.; Strabo, the Greek geographer of the time of Christ; and Diodorus Siculus, a Greek writer of fifty years earlier, are among the principal sources of information, although of these Herodotus was the only one who actually saw the Tower before its destruction. There is also a clay tablet known as the Seleucid Tablet, dating from 229 B.C., discovered by George Smith about 1875, lost, re-discovered in a private collection and tentatively deciphered in 1913, deposited in the Louvre at Paris and more correctly deciphered in 1950. This tablet purports to give details of the construction and measurements of the Tower as it existed in late Babylonian times—in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. It does not agree in all points with the descriptions of Herodotus and Strabo, and in any case was written after the Tower itself had fallen into ruins, but it remains a valuable guide. The combined testimony of these witnesses conclusively established the identity of the ruins explored by Koldewey in 1912 with the building of which Genesis 11 relates the origin.

The Tower stood in the centre of a great paved courtyard, measuring one-third of a mile each way. The western wall of the courtyard was washed by the River Euphrates; its other walls faced upon three of the main roads of the city. Twelve gates gave access to this spacious area, gates which had portals and side chambers very much of the design described by the Prophet Ezekiel in the vision of his Temple (see Ezek. 40). There was another respect also in which this ancient building bore resemblance to Ezekiel's Temple. Lining three sides of the courtyard there were a great number of small "chambers", or dwellings, similar to those described by Ezekiel as surrounding the Outer Court of the Temple. Something like forty or fifty of these dwellings—or, rather, of their foundations—have been excavated; the signs are that there may have been several hundred in all. It is surmised that here dwelt the priests who served in the ritual and religious services associated with the building.

The Tower itself stood on an elevated platform six hundred feet square and fifty feet high, and was built, like all the "ziggurats" of Babylonia, in a series of stepped stages or terraces, each stage being smaller than the one below. The first stage was three hundred feet square, and was ascended by means of three wide stairways on the south side. The successive stages, each ascended by stairways, diminished in size until the topmost, the seventh, about eighty feet square, was reached. Upon the top of this last stage, say the historians, there stood a sanctuary to Marduk or Bel, the god of Babylon, built entirely of gold, which caught and reflected the sun's rays to the sightseers standing far below. The height of the edifice is to some extent a debated question; according to Strabo and Herodotus it was one stade—six hundred or more feet—in height. The many references to the Tower in Babylonian literature—"to reach unto heaven" "to rival heaven" and so on indicate that it must have been by far the tallest building in the city, and since it is probable that the outer walls at least were of the order of three hundred feet high it follows that the Tower must have exceeded that figure at least by an appreciable amount. The Seleucid Tablet, on the other hand, whilst imperfect in its presentation, appears to indicate the height as about three hundred feet. Of all the authorities Herodotus is the only one who saw the Tower with his own eyes; Strabo, four centuries later, probably took his information from Herodotus. Although a great deal of weight has been attached to the

testimony of the Seleucid Tablet during the last twenty years, it does possess internal inconsistencies and omissions which render it somewhat suspect where it conflicts with other evidence. On balance the data available seems to favour the six hundred feet height rather than the alternative; in either case the building was gigantic even by modern standards.

The whole of this enormous building was constructed of brick. Koldewey found that the central core, a mass of nearly two hundred feet square at ground level, was of sun-dried brick, and the outer casing, fifty feet thick all round, was of hard burnt brick—the oldest baked bricks in the world. Thus is the Scripture record confirmed to the smallest detail; "let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly" (thoroughly). The Seleucid Tablet indicates that the lowermost stage, one hundred and ten feet high, was ornamented by gigantic buttresses reaching up the sides; in 1914 excavations on the north side of the Tower revealed the foundations of twelve of these buttresses. Buttresses, tower sides and stairways alike would most certainly have been embellished with enamelled bricks of various colours, and sculptures of the gods of Babylon and mythological monsters; although no traces of these remain, similar ones have been found in other ruins in Babylon.

This great structure was called by the Babylonians "*E-temenanki*", "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth". Its foundation, they believed, was rooted in sheol, the underworld, and its top was the place of contact and communion with heaven, the habitation of the gods. Thus set, they believed it could never be overthrown nor destroyed, but would endure to all eternity. The inscriptions of successive kings, even so late as in the days of the prophet Daniel and after, repeat this belief time and time again, a striking testimony to the prevalence of that first object with which the Tower was built, as recorded in the Scriptures, "whose top shall reach unto heaven".

Thus did the Tower stand, century after century, in all its ornate splendour, the meeting place between man and his false gods. To the south of the structure in later days stood its associated Temple, known as *E-sagila*, a magnificent building with four gateways each flanked by two gleaming bronze *sirrusu*, the mythological serpent-creatures which to the Babylonians were symbols of life, and a central shrine in which was a golden image of Marduk, weighing, according to Herodotus, nearly four tons. Once in every year Marduk

was taken for an outing. Seated in his royal conveyance, and accompanied by his son, the god Nebo, who had been specially conducted from his own temple (the now ruined Birs-Nimrud) at Borsippa fourteen miles away, he was conveyed along the Royal Road past the East Gate of E-temenanki, to the royal palaces and the gate sacred to the goddess Ishtar (Venus). Having paid his respects to this very important lady, he went on to the Euphrates where the state barge was in waiting, and having been duly installed in the same, travelled by river to the West Gate of E-temenanki, where he landed and proceeded to his own special lodging, a shrine standing on the west side of the Tower. Here he remained for eleven days while ceremonies were performed in his honour, and at the end of that time he was carried back by the way he had come. It was this ritual conveyance of Babylon's gods from place to place that was referred to so scornfully by Isaiah when he said "*They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he*

standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet shall he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble." (Isa. 46. 7).

So the builders went on with their work, heedless of the watching eye of God, confident in their own powers and ability to achieve their design. Words not to be penned for another two millenniums might well have been spoken prophetically of them as they laboured. "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*" (Psa. 2. 1-5).

So, watching their works, and listening to their words, and knowing the thoughts and intents of their hearts, when the time was ripe the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

(to be continued)

YEARS THAT THE LOCUSTS HAVE EATEN A Reflection

"*That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten, and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten, and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.*" (Joel 1. 4).

A sad and sorry tale indeed. To an agricultural and pastoral people such as Israel it was tragedy. All their labours of the past gone for nothing, their crops destroyed, their pastures barren, their flocks and herds perishing for lack of food. These four ruthlessly destructive forces, the palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm and the caterpillar, the Lord's great army which He had sent amongst them, had completed their mission and become the instrument of Divine judgment on Israel. Because the nation had forsaken the covenant, apostasised from the true faith, and gone after other gods, the Lord had done according to His Word and brought blight, mildew and decay upon all their goods and leanness into their souls. The land that once had been so goodly a land, rich in vines and fig-trees, flowing with milk and honey, had become a sun-scorched and barren waste, offering no sustenance to man or beast. All the work of years and all the achievements of the past were as nothing, for God had hidden His face and the

glory of Israel was departed.

It is easy to dismiss all this as the penalty of Israel's unfaithfulness and to leave it so, but the problem is not so simple as that. Israel was not wholly unfaithful and not all her people were apostates. There were many faithful hearts in each generation, men and women who truly loved God and sought so far as in them lay to honour and keep the covenant made with their fathers. And even of those who turned aside from the way and served other gods there were many who repented and turned back again to renew their vows to the Lord of hosts. Israel was not wholly bad and the light of God's truth was never entirely extinguished. In even the darkest times there was a Samuel or an Elijah to hold aloft the sacred standards and seven thousand beside who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Yet in spite of all this the calamity was all embracing and complete. The good as well as the bad were included in the common ruin. All alike looked up to heavens that were as brass and upon an earth that was dry and barren. All alike beheld their enemies invade their land, capture their cities and spoil their goods. All alike at the last went into captivity and saw their land no more. And although the bitter-

ness of loss was no sharper in the hearts of the righteous than in the hearts of the evil, the righteous did have the added realisation that their suffering was not of their own making. Nothing they had done deserved the fate that was theirs and all the work they had done for God in past years was now as though it had never been. The Temple was destroyed and no more would the sweet singers of Israel beautify the holydays with the strains of sacred song and the notes of harp and trumpet. The priests had been slain and no longer would be holy sacrifices be offered that the people be cleansed from sin. The young men had been taken into captivity and never again would the schools of the prophets attract the fervour and enthusiasm of youth, pupils sitting at the feet of some saintly prophet or teacher that they might in their turn go forth and keep the faith of the one true God alive in the land. All these things had gone and it must have seemed to Joel, as it did to so many of his contemporaries, that God had forsaken His people and made null and void all the glorious things that had been done in His Name, and all the triumphs that had been achieved in years that were past. Like a swarm of all-devouring locusts, the judgments of God had visited Israel and left them nothing but desolation and the bitterness of memories.

But God always delivers at the end. His wrath does not endure for ever, lest the spirit should fail from before him and the souls that He hath made. (Isa. 57. 16). In wrath He remembers mercy, as Habakkuk pleaded with Him. So it comes about that Joel was not only a prophet of judgment but also a prophet of deliverance. The dark night would eventually pass and the fair morning come, the brightness of the day when God would regather His people and pour out His spirit upon all flesh. He waits only for the repentance of those who have strayed away from Him and so brought His judgment upon themselves. So we have it that when the priests and the people obeyed Joel's fervent summons to assemble before the Lord, to weep between the porch and the altar, to acknowledge their sin and beseech the Lord for the deliverance that only He can give—God delivered. He removed far off from them the great army of judgment that had destroyed their land, He promised peace and plenty for the future, and a wiping out of all the sorrows of this time of trouble. "*I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten*" He told them. The work and achievement of past years, so ruthlessly destroyed by the invaders, was not lost after all. God would restore it and set all things that are good in

their former places. What a heart-cheering message that must have been for those in Israel who had laboured long and faithfully in the Lord's service only to see their life's work vanish like smoke in the troubles and desolation brought about by the judgments that came upon the nation.

What a parable for our own times! We too, we who are the Lord's ambassadors in the world, have seen so much of our life's work wither away and die in these last times. We look back to our earlier days in the way of the Lord, the fervour and enthusiasm with which we preached the message, the numbers who came to listen to our presentations, the meetings, the activities, the joyous gathering together for study and worship, the convocations and conventions and the many-sided aspects of our fellowship together. To-day we sadly write "Ichabod" across that colourful page of our lives' experience, for truly the glory has departed. And the more thoughtful amongst us must surely at times ask themselves "Has it all been wasted? Was it all really so important and momentous a period in the history of the Church, and the world, as we were led to believe? What has become of all that was said and done in those halcyon days; has it all vanished into oblivion as though those things had never been? Has God made no use of all that was done after all?" To all those questions that thus intrude themselves from time to time there is one answer. "*I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.*" It matters not that the increasing apathy toward Christian faith and teaching so characteristic of this generation makes a work of the dimensions we knew in times past quite out of the question. It matters not that increasing age and the failure of the youth of this generation to pick up the flaming torch from failing hands gives small hope of any such work being done again in our time. It matters not that our own failure to measure up as much as we might have done to the tremendous concept of a Christian brotherhood fully illumined by an accurate knowledge of the Divine Plan standing before the world as a living witness to the coming Kingdom has found us out at the last. We have not done all that we might have done; we have done many things that we ought not to have done; but we have at least tried to manifest the Kingdom in measure. And nothing of all that has been done is wasted. We are living in the time of Divine judgment on the world for its evil and we cannot help but be involved in those judgments. The locusts are abroad in the earth and our own work must needs be

affected by that fact. But we have the promise. "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." In that confidence we can wait in quietness and confidence for the deliverance the Lord has promised, knowing that when it comes it will mean the outpouring of the Divine Spirit upon all flesh.

Holy men of old knew this experience. It was the lot of most of the heroes of faith of Old Testament times to see their life's work vanish away and to die in comparative obscurity if not disappointment. Elijah converted the nation and wrought a mighty work in Israel. Kings quailed before him, courtiers and priests were silent in his presence, the common people adored him. Yet at the close of his life, spectacular as it was to Elisha the only onlooker, the nation was already in great measure relapsed into idolatry. Samuel the uncrowned king, the last of the Judges, at the height of his career went from place to place every year administering justice, and all Israel hung on his words. But the last we see of him is an old man living obscurely in a country village teaching the ways of God to a few young lads while another reigns as king over Israel. Moses led Israel forty years in the wilderness and nurtured a virile and unconquerable generation in the desert preparatory to the victorious assault on the Promised Land which gave Israel a land they could call their own. But Moses was destined not to enter that land himself. He died, alone, upon a mountain top under conditions of such obscurity that no man knoweth of his grave to this day. John the Baptist had kings and people paying him court; to his desert retreat there came Jerusalem and Judea, hanging upon his words and being baptised of him. It is probable that his short ministry of six months was more successful outwardly than that of any other of the prophets. Yet he ended his days in prison under the hand of the executioner. Jeremiah strove hard to preserve a remnant who retained faith at a time when the whole nation was going to pieces, but he spent his last days an exile in Egypt. The Apostle Paul, the greatest of them all, and perhaps the man who had done the greatest works for God and suffered more than any for the sake of his mission, knew that most certainly his work would be vitiated after his death by "grievous wolves, entering in among you, not sparing the flock," and when, on that spring morning in A.D.61, he walked out of Rome along the Appian Way to the place of execution, and bent his head to the executioner's axe, he died knowing that the glory of Christianity as he had preached it was already overshadowed by

the superstition, error, faithlessness and fanatical hatred that was to endure for so many centuries. But to all of these faithful stalwarts the promise holds good "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" and in a time yet to come the real fruitage of all that they have done will be manifest to the glory of God and the blessing of redeemed humanity.

These are our examples and the stories of their lives should give us courage. No matter what discouragement and disappointment this present "day of small things" brings to us we have always to remember that the day is still to come when God arises to pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and in that day we ourselves will have restored to us "the years that the locust hath eaten".

British visit of Brother P. L. Read

The "Monthly" has no responsibility for these visits, which have been arranged by Bro. Read himself, but we will gladly answer any queries within our ability, or pass on to Bro. Read requests for further details.

June	10	Leicester (Convention)
"	13	Welling
"	17	Yeovil
"	28	Hoddesdon (Maranatha Convention)
July	1	Lincoln
"	7-8	Glasgow
"	9-10	Belfast
"	11-12	Dublin
"	16-17	Bexhill
"	21-22	Warrington
"	24	Ipswich
"	29	Cardiff
Aug.	4-6	Conway Hall (London Convention)
"	7-8	Aylesbury — Oxford area
"	11-12	Rugby
"	19	Aldersbrook

* * *

Just as the potter, however skilful he is, cannot make a beautiful vessel out of a lump of clay that is never put into his hand, so neither can God make out of us a vessel unto his honour unless we place ourselves in his hands. We, who have heard the call of our God to a life of entire consecration, must come out from the world and be separate. "Be not conformed to this world," Paul says. (Rom 12. 2).

THE GADARENE SWINE

*An Incident
in Jesus' life*

The story of the Gadarene swine who were possessed by a legion of demons and in consequence drowned in the lake is an interesting sidelight upon the general Scriptural presentation regarding the "fallen angels". The incident itself is well attested, having been recorded by all three synoptic writers—Matthew (8. 28-36), Mark (5. 1-20), and Luke (8. 20-34). The three narratives agree in all main points except that Matthew declares there were two demoniacs involved and the others tell of only one. The probable explanation is that two men were in fact concerned but one became the centrepiece of the incident and the demons spoke only through this one.

This short note will not touch upon the general subject of demon obsession, which would require much more space for anything like adequate treatment. It will merely be remarked that according to the New Testament it was a very real thing, and trained observers in this present century have come across cases in their own experience where it has been a very real thing also. It is not suggested therefore, that the unfortunate victims in this incident were simply cases of epilepsy or psychological unbalance. Their brains were in sober fact under the control of malevolent spirit creatures, angelic beings living in a state of active rebellion against God and only deterred from their evil course by such restraints as God placed and enforced upon them.

The wider view of this matter is well known to students of the Old Testament. There has been at some remote past time a rebellion against God and righteousness by certain of the angelic creation, which rebellion was dramatically arrested by the Most High at the time of the Noachic Deluge. The story in Genesis 6, coupled with various New Testament allusions affords a sufficiently detailed picture of what happened. The angels concerned, already in a state of rebellion, "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" to use Jude's words, and after materialising into physical bodies lived a lawless life as men upon earth. The Flood came and thereafter they were deprived of the power thus to materialise again, but at the same time were excluded from the spiritual world which is the place of the Divine throne (see Jude 6, 1 Pet. 3. 19-20 and 2 Pet. 2. 4). The history of witchcraft and spiritism through the ages

since has been largely the history of these rebellious spirits endeavouring to break through the restraints that have bound them, and continue their evil ways. Hence these two men, like so many before and since, having at some time or other willingly given themselves over to the influence of the evil spirits, found their brains so controlled by them that they no longer had any will-power or volition of their own. Outwardly they manifested all the characteristics of incurable and violent insanity; but the insanity was not the result of a physically diseased brain. It was due to the operation of many supernatural intelligences—a "legion" we are told in the accounts—all working simultaneously on the one human organism.

This was the state of the crazed wretch who met Jesus as He walked up from the shore of the lake. The local inhabitants would be keeping their distance; the madman had been kept habitually manacled but such was his demoniac strength that he continually broke free from his fetters and did quite a lot of damage before he could be overpowered and restrained again. He appears at this time to have been free and the impression given is that he rushed upon Jesus immediately the latter had stepped ashore from the boat. Perhaps there was in the madman's dark mind some glimmering realisation that here was the means of deliverance from his fearful plight if only he could get near to the Man of Nazareth. But to speak of his own volition was evidently beyond his power. When his lips did move, the words were controlled by the evil influences that possessed his mind and they were words not of pleading but of resentment. "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come thither to torment us before the time?"

Now that is a most important statement in Christian theology. "Before the time"; what means this frank avowal, first of Jesus' Divinity and Messiahship at a time when His own friends and followers had not as yet realised the fact, and second of the fact that a future judgment awaited them but that the time had not yet come? "Torment" in all three narratives is "basanizo", which means trial and testing and judgment as well as the execution of the consequent sentence. These evil angels, speaking through this crazed man's lips, admitted their knowledge that the Man before

whom they stood was indeed the Son of God and tacitly admitted His authority over them. They admitted their realisation that judgment and sentence upon their evil course had yet to be passed but asserted that the time was not yet. In short, they accused Jesus of coming upon them for judgment before the time that had been pre-set in the Divine purposes. All of that implies that we are dealing here with definite super-human intelligences who, despite their admitted evil, did possess some detailed knowledge of the Divine Plan.

The Apostle Paul had some such knowledge when, twenty years or so later, he told some of his disciples that, if faithful, they were destined to "judge angels" (1 Cor. 6. 3). He was thinking of the "time" to which these referred in their question to Jesus, the Millennial "Day of Judgment" when not only evil amongst mankind but evil amongst the angelic creation is to be rooted out and all wilful evildoers, human or angelic, finally destroyed.

A significant expression in this narrative takes us back to very early times in human history. Two out of three accounts represent the evil spirits as using the expression "the Most High God" in referring to the Deity. "*Jesus thou Son of the Most High God.*" It is significant because so far as men are concerned this particular name for God dropped out of use several centuries before Christ. It seems to have been the earliest appellation by which men knew God, in its Hebrew form of "*el elyon*", being succeeded then by *El Shaddai*, "the Almighty", and later by the incommunicable name quite incorrectly transliterated into English by "Jehovah" but meaning "the Eternal". These fallen angels, addressing Jesus, used the term that was current in the days that were before their restraining, the days before the Flood. It is significant that the angel who appeared to Mary at the Annunciation (Luke 1. 32-35) and those who sang to the shepherds (Luke 1. 76) used the same expression (Greek *hypsistos*, equal to the Hebrew *el elyon*).

So the demons, perceiving that Jesus intended to bring their domination of this unhappy man to an end, "*besought him*" according to Mark "*that He would not send them away out of the country*", but according to Luke "*that He would not command them to go out into the deep*". Be it noted there was no attempt at defiance or resistance. They recognised the authority of Jesus and would obey, but they endeavoured to get the best terms they could. In Mark, "country" is "*choras*", meaning one's own proper place or where one should rightfully be, hence, one's own country. In Luke,

"deep" is "*abyssos*", the English "abyss", the same as the "bottomless pit" of Rev. 20. 1, into which the Devil is cast for the whole period of the Millennium. Neither Mark nor Luke were present at the time; all their information must have come from one or other of those disciples who were there. It may well be that both expressions were used; the accounts are quiet likely to be abbreviated and Mark may have had his information from one, and Luke from another, of the witnesses.

By the "abyss" the demons may well have meant the same thing as Peter refers to in 2. 4, of his second Epistle "*God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*". *Tartarus* in Greek mythology was the prison of the Titans, who rebelled against the gods and were overthrown and imprisoned forever in a place "as far below Hades as earth is below heaven"—an apt description of the "bottomless pit" or "abyss". It would almost seem from these and other allusions in Scripture, that these "fallen angels" are constantly seeking to evade their restraints and sometimes partially succeeding. In this case it would appear as if Jesus acceded to their request not so to use His power to return them to "*Tartarus*" or the abyss, but definitely to command them no longer to obsess the man. So the "legion" of spirits "came out", and in the absence of any prohibition by Jesus—with His permission—they took possession of the nearest living creatures in view, a herd of swine which happened to be feeding in the vicinity.

Whether this is a unique case of demon obsession of brute beasts and just what such a thing involves we have no means of knowing. It can only be assumed that, as with the men, so with the beasts, the effect on the brain was similar to that of madness. The herd exhibited all the signs of sudden terror and panic and in a mad gallop they raced across the greensward, over a little cliff, and into the water, where they quickly drowned. Mark, with all his usual passion for descriptive detail, tells us there were about two thousand of them.

The question has often been asked; is such a proceeding in keeping with the known character of Jesus? Was it thus necessary to encompass the death of two thousand dumb creatures? In another place Jesus had said not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without the Father's knowledge. We may not intrude into the Saviour's motives for acting as He did, but we can assemble a few related facts.

How did the swine come to be there? The use of swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews and even though the religious observance of many had become perfunctory their inherited antipathy to swine's flesh remained. The explanation is that the district around the sea of Galilee was largely cosmopolitan; five sizeable towns contained a considerable Greek and Roman population and there was a good demand for pork. Here in Gadara certain not over scrupulous Jews were making a good living rearing pigs for market. The quick death by drowning of this particular herd only anticipated a much more painful death that would have been their fate a little later on. Viewed against that background, Jesus' act was one of mercy.

But the people of the district thought otherwise. They came to Jesus and they besought Him to depart. They evidently feared He would do the same thing to more of their herds and they were more concerned over the preservation of their vested interests than the casting out of demons from the obsessed. It is an ironic comment on the hard heartedness of mankind that whereas at first they all went in fear of the madman who infested their cities they now went in fear of the One who had delivered them from that scourge. In their eyes the remedy was worse than the disease. The casting out of demons was one thing, and a very acceptable thing it was, and all honour to the stranger who had landed on their shores to do this thing. But when it came to touching their financial interests and causing them to lose trade and money the whole attitude changed. That was too heavy a price to pay, and so "the whole multitude" *"besought Him to depart from them"*.

That part of the story is a parable indeed. There are plenty in this world to-day who would gladly be delivered from the bondage and oppression of sin, but when they learn what the after obligation will be they turn away. True it is that the saving power of God is free to all, but then that is not the whole of the story. God does not just forgive sin so that man can make a clean start and sin again. God created man in the first place to have definite obligations toward Him and to assume definite responsibilities in and towards God's universe. No man will ever attain everlasting life without willingly taking upon himself these obligations and so fitting into the pattern of life which God has devised for him. So, after deliverance, there is a price to be paid, and even although the service of God is perfect freedom, it is still service and man must enter and remain in it.

The man who had been healed realised that. The story closes with the one-time demoniac, clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. He, at any rate, having come in contact with the power of God which is unto salvation, was not going to lose touch with it again. Luke tells us (8. 38) that this man also besought Jesus. But it was not that he *"besought Him to depart from them"*. He *"besought Him that He might be with him"*. He wanted to give his life, for what it was worth, to Jesus. He wanted to be a disciple.

Jesus accepted him. It is true that the text says "but Jesus sent him away, saying, return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee", but that does not mean that Jesus rejected his proffered service. He accepted it, and sent the man straight away to be a missionary to his own people. Obviously his preaching would be much more effective in a circle where his past history was known than in a strange environment where he was just another convert to Jesus of Nazareth.

There the story ends, as so many of these stories do end, on a missionary note. The man who is first sighted coming forth out of the dead world of the tombs, exceeding fierce so that none could approach him, naked and demented, is last seen going forth into the world of living men, childlike and peaceable, clothed, in his right mind, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of peace. Jesus has done that same thing for so many in every generation. *"Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"*. There is a price to pay, yes, but *"take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . for my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and ye shall find rest unto your souls"*.

Christian experience is something entirely different from experience as it is known to the unconverted. As a Christian looks back over his life, he can find countless illustrations of the way in which the Lord has caused good to come out of evil, and of the way in which events that were thought at the time to be heralds of misfortune have turned out to be as a door opened in heaven.

* * *

"The universe is not a steel gauntlet, hard and inflexible. It is a silken glove. And what is more wonderful still, it is a silken glove with the hand of God in it." (Prof. Cairns)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

Our Daily Bread (Matt. 6. 11)

The word used by our Lord in His wonderful model prayer for "daily" provides a hidden link with the every day cares of the housewife. It is a word not used elsewhere in the Scriptures and not found at all in the language of the educated sections of society in our Lord's day. It was a word in popular use among the peasants and fishermen, referring to the provision of mundane necessities for the day, and has been found to have been used in Egypt at the same time by the women to head their list of commodities to be purchased in the market for the day's needs. It is as though a wife to-day in making out her "shopping list" were to head it with a word such as "dailies" and enter below it the list of vegetables and other things she must shortly buy for the household's current needs. So our Lord, with His intimate knowledge of the lives of His followers, gave the promise of Divine provision for our temporal needs by the one word which could fitly describe how truly every little and seemingly insignificant need of ours is provided for by our God.

* * *

Superscription on the Cross

Some have wondered why the writers of the Gospels differ in their record of Pilate's inscription placed above the Cross. Matthew records it as "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27. 37) Luke, "This is the King of the Jews" (Luke 23. 38) John, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19. 19) and Mark, "the King of the Jews" (Mark 15. 26). It would seem at first sight that the Evangelists had been guilty of carelessness in compiling their records, but such is not the case. It will be remembered that the inscription was written in the three languages current in Palestine at the time—Hellenistic Greek, Aramaic Hebrew, and Latin. Luke, being himself a Greek, would probably record the Greek inscription, Matthew, a "Civil servant" of the Roman Government, accustomed to rendering his accounts and reports in Latin, would take note of the Latin form, whilst John, a Galilean fisherman, would of course read the Hebrew. Mark, a mere lad at the time, has apparently preserved only part of the inscription. On this supposition, the Latin inscription would consist of twenty-two characters and the Greek and

Hebrew of twenty each. Thus the inscription in each language would occupy an equal amount of space.

* * *

Venus in the news

Russian scientists in the Crimea have detected oxygen in the upper atmosphere of Venus. The importance of this discovery, toward which astronomers have been working for many years, is its indication that the planet Venus is on the way to a state where it will be able to support life of the type with which we are familiar on earth. It has been known for many years that Venus has an atmosphere consisting almost entirely of carbon dioxide, good for plant life but fatal to animal existence. Hence it has been conjectured that Venus to-day is in much the same state as was the earth in the Carboniferous Era about two hundred million years ago, when there flourished the giant vegetation which now forms our coal and oil deposits. One authority (Nelson) says that Venus "*may be a world of primitive vegetation, fishes and perhaps amphibians*" (creatures living on both land and in water) and another (Cleator) that it is "*a drowned world of low-lying swamps and steaming tropical jungles, a world in which life, at least of a high order, has yet to develop*". It may yet be found that the "morning star" is but another stage being set by the Almighty for the wonder of intelligent beings still to be created, a creation which maybe waits for the conclusion of the great purpose of God in the permission of evil upon this earth amongst men, and for the final elimination of evil from all His realm, that future races yet to come into being may profit by the experiences which have befallen men upon earth, experiences which can form object lessons for all time of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

* * *

Chapter and Verse

The Old Testament was first divided into chapters during the 13th century by Cardinal Hugo, and then into verses by Rabbi Nathan, and first incorporated into the printed Bible by Robert Stephens in his edition of the Vulgate, published in 1555.

Bible School *THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES*

Part 9. Gen. 45-47

"*God hath made me lord of all Egypt*" (45. 9). That was the message Joseph charged his brothers to take back to his father. It must have been with a thrill of pride—of an eminently proper pride, for he acknowledged the hand of God in his exaltation to power—that Joseph uttered those words. God had made him a father to Pharaoh (the allusion is in the sense of a protector to Pharaoh, inasmuch as Joseph had saved the nation) lord of all his house, a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. In all this the character of Joseph remained unspoiled; he was still the same genuine, artless young man who had won the hearts of his jailors in the prison and later on impressed Pharaoh with his open sincerity and candour. Now that his brothers were before him and in his power there is no hint of malice or of revenge, not even reproach or recrimination for their dastardly deed of the past. Even that dark happening he attributed to the over-ruling power of God, bringing good out of evil. "*Be not grieved or angry with yourselves that ye sold me thither, for God did send me before you to preserve life*" (45. 15). Joseph was large-hearted enough and clear-thinking enough to realise and admit that the consequences of his brethren's jealousy and hate had, under God, resulted in the salvation of a nation from starvation and the preservation of his father's family. To what extent Joseph knew of the Divine intention to develop from Jacob's family whilst in Egypt a great nation, one which has profoundly affected human history ever since, we do not know, but there is not much doubt that he well knew of God's promise to Abraham respecting the going down of his seed into Egypt and their coming out again, "in the fourth generation". (Gen. 15. 16) That Joseph firmly believed this is evidenced by his own dying injunction, one which concludes the Book of Genesis, in which he reiterated his faith in God's covenant with Abraham and enjoined his fellows to embalm his body that it might be taken to Canaan for burial when the promised return to that land should take place.

An interesting digression in Chap. 45 tells how Pharaoh himself intervened to assure Joseph of the welcome he was pleased to extend to Jacob and his dependants. "*Take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good land of*

Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land" (45. 18). That the ruling monarch of Egypt should take such notice of one Canaanite family is noteworthy in itself; obviously the fact that the family involved was that of his own Chief Minister had something to do with it, but there could also be an element of policy in his attitude. If this Pharaoh was, as seems likely, one of the Semitic Hyksos rulers, he would clearly be more than amenable to the idea of a family of fellow-countrymen coming to settle in his domains and to that extent assist in the consolidation of Semitic rule over the native Egyptians. The land of Goshen, to which the immigrants were directed, was in the vicinity of Tanis the Hyksos capital—perhaps Pharaoh prudently saw in this an opportunity of surrounding himself with a few more friends and supporters of his own race.

For the third time the band of brothers made their way back to Canaan, but this time without any overhanging cloud. Benjamin was with them; there was no reluctance to appear before their father on his account. True, there was an explanation to be made regarding Joseph and although the Genesis record says nothing about it there is every probability that in the ensuing explanations every bit of the sorry story came out and for the first time Jacob was made aware of what really happened fifteen years earlier in Dothan. At first the old man could not take it all in—at an hundred and thirty years of age that is not surprising. The chronicler says "*Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not*". The story that his long-lost son, whom he last saw as a raw youth of seventeen, was governor over all the land of Egypt, seemed so utterly incredible that he probably thought his sons were romancing. But outside his tent stood the Egyptian wagons which Pharaoh had sent for his transport; there was no romancing about them; they were real and solid enough. So Jacob was convinced. "*It is enough*" he said "*Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die*".

It is noteworthy that before setting out on this momentous journey the old man stopped first at Beer-sheba, the place made sacred by Abraham when he instituted a place where God might be worshipped. There he sought by sacrifice and supplication to know whether what he was doing had the approval of God. Jacob had come a long way since first he had

fled the land of Canaan for fear of Esau his brother, but he had remained faithful to his vow made those many years ago, "If God will be with me" he had vowed "and will keep me in this way I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God" (Gen. 28. 20).

God had kept his word; Jacob had kept his. Now at the end of a long and arduous life he refused to leave the promised land of Canaan, promised by covenant to his seed for ever, even though famine stared him in the face and all the food and luxuries of Egypt were his for the taking, until he knew that what he did was in line with God's will for him. So he came to Beer-sheba and put his case before the Lord. "Fear not to go down into Egypt" came the answer (46. 3) "for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again". Here is reiterated the word of the Lord to Abraham his grandfather nearly two centuries earlier, "thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, . . . and afterwards shall they come out with great substance . . . and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again". (Gen. 15. 13). One of the great happenings of history was that descent of a Hebrew tribe into Egypt, and its emergence little more than two centuries later as a nation, a nation which has suffered perhaps more than any other nation in all ages since, a nation which has clung desperately to its promised inheritance and refused to give up hope even when forcibly parted from that land for nearly two thousand years. The rapidity with which the members of the present generation of Jacob's descendants are assimilating themselves to the homeland they have at length recovered is an evidence of the mystic link which binds that particular people to that particular land, a link which because it was forged in the first place by God himself and certified by His covenant, can never be broken though all the nations of the earth be ranged against the people of the promise.

Re-assured, Jacob took the journey into Egypt; he, and his sons, his sons' wives, his daughters—and their husbands without doubt—his grandchildren, and all that he had. That would most certainly include his cattlemen and shepherds, and their families too, and his household servants, in all a larger company than the seventy souls enumerated in Genesis 46 as accompanying him. That account is intended only to preserve the genealogy, to record the names of his sons and his sons' sons

for the sake of posterity and to keep alive the constant watch for the Messiah who should come through the line of one of the sons. Jacob had more to say about this when giving his dying blessing to his twelve sons, directed as he then was by the prophetic vision which for the last time illumined his mind and showed him the outline of things to come. He was not at that stage yet; now he was in Egypt and in process of adjusting himself to this new turn of affairs in what must surely have been one of the most varied and colourful lives on record.

Joseph went in his chariot to meet his father, and directed the whole company into the territory they were to occupy, the fertile land of Goshen, between the eastern arm of the Nile delta and the present town of Ismailia. Here, under the immediate surveillance of the friendly Pharaoh in his palace not far away, inhabiting a district adjacent to the frontier with Canaan and therefore with native Egyptians in contact with them only on their southern and western borders, the children of Israel lived and increased and became a nation. Whilst Jacob lived, they constituted nothing more than a Hebrew tribe, a family clan of which the patriarch himself was the titular head but probably long past taking any part in the active direction of affairs. His eleven sons—for Joseph in his official position could hardly be expected to have very much to do with his brothers—administered the affairs of the community, and his grandsons, something like forty or more, did most of the work, assisted of course by a probably quite numerous contingent of field servants and household servants, with their own womenfolk, who had come down into Egypt with them. This was the true commencement of the nation of Israel even although the people were probably hardly conscious of nationality until Moses led them out into the wilderness and onward into the Promised Land.

One more evidence of the favour with which the ruling Pharaoh regarded these Semitic kinsmen of his valued Chief Minister is offered in 47. 6. Joseph had presented five of his brothers before Pharaoh. In consequence of that audience Pharaoh reiterated his wish that they should dwell in the coveted land of Goshen, and moreover that any of them whom Joseph considered suitable should be put in positions of responsibility on Pharaoh's own stock farms. Following his sons, Jacob himself came before Pharaoh and invoked the Divine blessing upon him. Thereafter the family of Israel dropped out of official notice so far as

the Genesis record is concerned. Most of chap. 47 is concerned with the manner in which Joseph administered his public responsibilities during the remainder of the years of famine, five years in all. It was not long before the Egyptians, impoverished because of the continual failure of their crops—for the whole national economy of Egypt in those days was based on agriculture—had spent all their money with Joseph for the purchase of corn. The famine continued, and Joseph took what was left of their cattle; finally they yielded up their land, all they had left, in exchange for the means of life. By the end of the famine all the population were the virtual tenants of Pharaoh; they were given seed for sowing each year and repaid Pharaoh on the scale of twenty per cent of their harvests. Joseph has sometimes been criticised and accused of virtual slave-owning, but the true position is that he set up an organised administration which gave every peasant in the land the help necessary to earn an adequate living and contribute his quota to the establishment of a well governed community. So far as can be discerned, Joseph was the original inventor of the Welfare State, and the inhabitants of Egypt knew greater security and a higher standard of living under his administration than for many years either before or since.

Here the story of Joseph the Chief Minister of Pharaoh, the First Citizen of the land of Egypt, comes to an end. Nothing more is said of Joseph's official duties or his position after the end of the famine, although he lived another sixty-six years. During that time he served under at least three Pharaohs—the

Egyptian records of the period are confused and he might well have seen the reigns of five successive Hyksos Pharaohs before he died. Apparently he remained an honoured and trusted highly placed Minister of State at least until Jacob's death seventeen years after his coming into Egypt, for the Egyptians themselves conferred great honours upon the funeral cortege of the deceased Jacob. But the Bible gives no details whatever of affairs in Egypt once it has achieved its purpose of relating the circumstances in which the Israel nation obtained its first lodgment in the land. After that, and until the end of the Book of Genesis, the narrative is concerned only with the relation of Joseph to his own father and his own brethren, not with his official position in the court of Pharaoh.

And now the long story is drawing near its close. A few more incidents, a few more years, and the narrative which began so long ago in Eden, traversed the long span of the antediluvian world, told of the Flood and the new age which followed it, found Abraham the man of faith in Ur of the Chaldees and brought him into the promised land of Canaan, traced the lives' histories of his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, arrives at the time when the stories of the patriarchs must finish and the story of the Israel nation commence. That point marks the dividing line between Genesis and Exodus. The chronicler has but to tell of the death, first of Jacob and then, half a century later, his son Joseph, and the book of Genesis is closed.

(To be continued)

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

An examination
of Matt. 16.19

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16.19).

The words of Jesus to Peter in this verse take us back to the Old Testament. Peter had just uttered his memorable declaration "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" and Jesus knew that here was the man who would take the lead after His own death and be the acknowledged captain of that little band which was to lay the foundations of the Christian Church. Hence His words "Thou art Peter (petros, a piece of stone or rock) and upon this rock (petra, a great mass of rock—

the body of disciples and believers at that time) I will build my Church". Peter's preaching at Pentecost saw the beginning of the fulfilment of those words, a fulfilment which has proceeded throughout the entire Age.

Now with this picture in mind we need to turn to the Old Testament. Jesus was thinking of Isaiah's words in Isaiah 22. 22. *"The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so that he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."* Under figure of Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured here. In the time of Israel's unfaithfulness God has condemned them to captivity, and the sentence pronounced on Shebna the unfaithful steward over the

house well fits Israel's national experiences in Babylon. The promise then is that God will call "Eliakim" and clothe him with the "robe" and "girdle" (both priestly terms indicative of Aaron's "robes of glory and beauty") and commit the "government" (a word is used here meaning complete sovereign power as of a king) into his hand. This Eliakim is to be a father to Jerusalem and Judah, and the key of the house of David is to be laid upon his shoulder. In other words, the priestly kingly rights are to be vested in this one person pictured by Eliakim.

He is then to be fastened as a "nail in a sure place", and all that is in the house shall depend upon that nail. (vs. 23). Now here comes a strange word. *"In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in a sure place be removed, and cut down, and fall; and the burden that is upon it shall be cut off."* (Vs. 25). This was fulfilled when our Lord, the "nail in a sure place" during His First Advent, was "cut off out of the land of the living". (Isa. 53. 8). During that First Advent He had appeared both as Priest and King, and although He was rejected by the people, His right to both those offices remained unimpaired. He, the rightful heir to the throne of David, and in whom the covenant made with David was fulfilled, held the "key of the house of David", and used that key to "shut" the Jewish Dispensation and "open" the Christian Dispensation. Three and one-half years after His death the exclusive call to the Jews ended and the call to the Gentiles went out.

But that key has yet to be used again, for in Rev. 3. 7 our risen Lord declares Himself to be *"He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth"*. He must yet "close" the call of this Gospel Age and "open" the call of the Millennial Age.

Now perhaps we can begin to see Peter's privilege in all this. His Lord was about to go away; He had laid the foundation principles on which His Church must be built, but there was as yet no work done. It was as if the architect's drawing of the building had been prepared and the ground cut for the foundations, but only the first twelve foundation stones had been laid. And so our Lord, because of His impending departure, laid upon Peter the responsibility of using the key which was rightfully His own. "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven"; knowing that Peter would use those keys in harmony with his Master's will, Jesus declared in advance that Peter's actions would be honour-

ed by His Master away at the right hand of God. Just as the Heavenly Father had entrusted the key of David to our Lord to execute all the details of the Divine Plan as promised to David, so did Jesus entrust to Peter the key which enabled him to enter upon the commencement of that great work which has occupied all the Gospel Age.

To this day the standards set out in the New Testament by Peter and Paul have been the laws which determine entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom, Paul, with all his learning and ability, must needs go to Peter before he could commence his own ministry, and so it is true to say that Peter opened the Kingdom of Heaven even to Paul. The writings of these two men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have "bound" and "loosed" the things which can either help or hinder us in our pressing toward the mark of the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, and what has been thus written on earth has had the sanction of Heaven.

At the end of this Gospel Age Peter's use of the "keys" comes to an end. His commission to act expires with the completion of the Church which he proclaimed at Pentecost. Our Lord then comes upon the scene in all the glory of His Second Advent, and proceeds to the execution of the next phase in His Father's Plan—gathering His saints together to Himself and opening the doors of blessing to the redeemed hosts of mankind.

"At length by the mercy of God I observed the connection of the words that therein is the righteousness of God revealed. Then I began to understand the justice of God to be that by which the just man lives by the gift of God, namely by faith, and that the meaning was, that the Gospel reveals that justice of God by which He justifies us as beggars through faith. Here I felt myself absolutely born again. (Luther)

* * *

This soul of ours hath love, and cannot but love some fair one. Put the beauty of ten thousand worlds of paradises like the Garden of Eden in one; put all trees, all flowers, all sweet smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness, in one. What a fair thing that would be! and yet it would be less to that Well-beloved Christ than one drop of rain to the seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. (Samuel Rutherford)

FULL-GROWN-MATURE-PERFECT

An
exhortation

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." (Heb. 5. 14).

"Solid food belongs to them that are full-grown" so runs the R.V. and other versions on this text. Others translate it "them that are mature", or are of "adult" stature. Any of these words would stand, in this setting, as the equivalent of the Greek "*teleios*". In other settings it would be right to use the word "perfect". It is derived from the word "*telos*" which means "end", "consummation" or "conclusion". "Full-grown" or "mature" is a good word to stand over against the word "babes" in the context here, and to indicate that the growing process has reached its climax and consummation as Nature intended it. And to these "strong meat" or "solid food" is the appropriate nutriment. The A.V. frequently renders the Greek "*trophe*" as meat—an indication of the general usage of the term in former Elizabethan days—but most modern translations use instead the word "food". "*Trophe*" denotes "nourishment, food,"—(akin to "*tropho*" to rear, nourish, feed) says Vine in his "*Expository Dictionary*" hence does not of necessity mean animal flesh, though it would not exclude that if used in the wider general sense of food.

"Strong" meat or "solid" food, is food which can make hard, firm, or solid, (from *stereo*—to make firm) and is a variant from the thought in our word "establish". "Strong meat" or "solid food" stands for an advanced form of teaching or doctrine in contradistinction to the elementary matter alone suitable for babes. Those therefore for whom solid spiritual food is appropriate and necessary are the full-grown, the adult, the mature, the spiritually perfect, and these are they whose senses can be exercised to discern or discriminate between good and evil.

It is with the sense of being full-grown, mature or perfect that this present study is concerned. This is a theme on which good-intentioned men have stumbled grievously, especially those, jealous of the Mosaic Law, who claimed not to have sinned or stumbled over considerable periods of time. Imagining the Law of Christ (Gal. 6. 2) to be identical with the Law of Sinai, these have often come to think because they have not openly dishonoured their parents, nor killed a fellow-man, nor committed adultery, nor engaged in theft, nor borne false witness, nor coveted

their neighbours goods, they are therefore without sin, and may claim a standing as perfect men in the sight of God. Now while there is a standing in God's sight, denoted by that term, and possible to men, it is an easy thing to fall into grievous error over it by pressing our own significance and definition into it, and erecting a standard of conduct thereby which we may claim to attain and fulfil.

Christian perfection or maturity is often defined as a state of sinlessness in moral things—a state of abstinence from doing forbidden things. But Christian perfection is more than that—it is much more than a mere negative attitude to evil and to evil things! It is one thing to hate evil—but that in itself is not enough. Of our Lord Jesus it is said He loved righteousness as well (Heb. 1. 9). It is on this side of the relationship—the really positive side of the basic principles—that the true nature of the Christian perfection is to be found. And for this standard of perfection our Lord Jesus is the one and only pattern. A man may not actually have killed or robbed his fellowmen, but if in his heart, at times of intense provocation, he may have felt that he could have done so, in the sight of Heaven the act has been performed. If at any time he has looked upon a woman to lust after her, the transgression is accounted to have been committed. The merely negative withholding from the deed is not sufficient to fulfil the Law of Christ—there must be a positive attitude manifested thereto, so that if the opportunity really came, the act would not take place.

Absolute perfection is not possible so long as we lack complete knowledge, for as our knowledge grows we constantly discover evil in the things which formerly we did, or allowed, without qualms or misgivings, and as we continue to grow older, and to grow in grace, we shall yet come to see impropriety, or un-Christianlikeness in things which we do to-day, so that we can never say we have reached full and complete attainment in moral things. Paul knew right well that he had not apprehended that for which Christ had apprehended him, and if he, giant that he was, had reason to say that for himself, surely we of lesser stature must say the like things for ourselves.

Whether we confess them or not, our shortcomings in God's sight are none the less real and none the less censurable.

Yet on the other hand, in spite of our shortcomings and defects there is a state of perfection accredited to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, but in each person, and each case, the term must be applied in accordance with its setting and with its context "*The man of God must be perfect*" said Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 3. 17) but here it is the perfection of the workman with his tools. It implies the full kit of tools, and an efficiency and dexterity in using them. And the tool-kit here is holy Scripture; the dexterity the ability of the man of God in using it for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. But the possession of the tool-kit and the dexterity in the use of each tool does not imply absolute sinlessness in the man of God himself. Again when Jesus bids us be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, He bids us use the same impartiality in the distribution of our bounty, so far as in us lies, which like God's, shows no distinction as between the just and the unjust, but distributes its rain upon all everywhere (Matt. 5. 48).

When God called Abraham to walk before Him and "be perfect" surely it did not mean that Abraham was to walk before God sinlessly. (Gen. 17. 1). That was impossible for that patriarch to attempt, but to walk before God with a whole-hearted devotion was another thing, and was definitely possible. And that is what God seeks always, everywhere, according to ability. The standard is more a matter of "what we would if we could" than of actual explicit deed, though be it promptly said, the "what we would" of tomorrow must exceed the "what we would" of to-day. There must be growth to attain the "full-grown" estate.

If then God is graciously pleased to accept the "will" for the "deed" and it is our will to offer Him the utmost devotion of our soul, that act of worship and surrender is the state of soul which God accounts as "perfection"—"perfection" at our present stage of growth. It indicates the attainment, assisted by the Holy Spirit of God, of the utmost of which our "new-man" is capable to-day, and will help us to become assured that God will not look for more from us, till we have had time and training to grow up more nearly to full maturity.

Paul tells us in Eph. 4. 11-12 that God gave to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers for the purpose of the perfecting of the saints, which was to be a continuing procedure until each believer had attained through unity with his fellow-brethren, and a deepening knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (*teleios*, mature)

man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. All the service of this God-given ministry is intended to promote development and growth in each individual saint, as well as in all saints collectively, till the "full-grown" Christ-like condition is attained.

This growth and development manifests itself along four principal lines—of faith, of knowledge, of holiness, and of love—each part, though separate inter-linking itself with each other part to produce the ideal perfection of Christlikeness.

Paul writes to his Thessalonian friends assuring them that night and day he was praying intensely to see their face in order that he might help to "*perfect that which is lacking in your faith*" (1 Thess. 3. 10). They needed to be informed more fully concerning the purpose of God to enable them to grow up from the "milk" stage to that of the "solid food". In this acquisition of the necessary information their faith would attain perfection.

But any kind of information would not attain that end. Only that which set the Love of God, and the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord before them would be effective for their growth. To the Colossians Paul wrote "*We . . . do not cease to pray and make request for you that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*" Peter also adds his admonition to the saints to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Items of knowledge which do not enhance our knowledge of our Lord Jesus are not likely to increase in us a likeness to Himself.

Increasing knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4. 13) plus a maturing of faith, will then lead to the next step of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. "*Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" (2 Cor. 7. 1) As the knowledge of the Lord Jesus is received by a deepening faith into a good and honest heart it will be to us as the reflecting mirror in which we behold the glory of the Lord, and by means of which, as we gaze therein, we shall be changed (another picture of our growth) into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is only as we come to "know Him" (Phil. 3. 10) that this transforming work proceeds apace.

The crowning feature of this perfecting process is that of Christ-like love. John says "*If we love one another God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us.*" (1 John 4. 12). "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John 4. 18)

and this perfect love, says Paul "is the bond of perfectness"—the bond that binds and holds every grace together into a perfect Christ-like unity.

Grouping all these things together—faith, knowledge, holiness and love—John says "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect . . ." (1 John 4. 16-17).

Thus belief (faith) based on knowledge (of the right kind) leading us to dwell in God and to have God dwell in us (holiness) results in perfection of love, and this matured and full-grown love is the hall-mark of perfection in the sight of God. Of all such John says "whoso keepeth His word (after learning it) in him verily is the love of God perfected." (1 John 2. 5).

To this full grown maturity, perfection, both the Word of God in precept, and the indwelling Spirit of God in practice urge us on. It is no more thinkable that the Christian believer should desire to remain a babe, feeding only on "milk", than that a lad should lack

desire to grow up to be a man. The inward "urge" which turns bud into flower, child into adult, should prompt the desire, and promote the activity in every Christian's "inner man" to attain maturity, and be thus able to absorb and assimilate "strong meat". Christian perfection is not a perfection of the flesh, but a maturing of the New Creature into the likeness of Christ Jesus the Lord. When believers come to understand that God's great desire for them is their sanctification, and that "Christ should be formed in them" and that this perfecting is the work of God who will both "will" and "work" in them according to His good pleasure, (if only they lie responsive in His hands) they will then realise that all that God asks of them is to present themselves a living sacrifice to Him that they may prove—in actual experience—what is "that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God" concerning them. This will work perfection in them, and bring them up to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. "Now he that hath wrought this self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (Part 3)

Perhaps the most striking error of judgment in the entire work, and certainly a *faux pas*, is the surprising statement in the story of the darkness at the Crucifixion (Luke 23. 49) that "the sun was in eclipse". It is, of course, an astronomical impossibility for there to be an eclipse of the sun when the moon is at the full, as it always is at Passover. In any case the darkness was "from the sixth to the ninth hour" i.e. from midday to six p.m., whereas a solar eclipse cannot last longer than seven minutes. The Synoptic writers call it a "darkness"; the cause of the darkness is quite unknown and is best classed as one of the unexplained operations of Divine power. It is noteworthy that various Greek writers of the First Century record such an event at the time. Phlegon, a Greek historian more or less contemporary with the last days of the Apostle John, declared that there was a mysterious and unexplained darkness, accompanied by an earthquake, in Bithynia in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, which corresponds to June A.D. 32 to June A.D. 33. The Crucifixion took place in April of 33.

An unwarranted concession to popular interpretations is found in Heb. 11. 5 where the A.V. "by faith Enoch was translated that

he should not see death" becomes ". . . was carried away to another life without passing through death". The idea sometimes met with to the effect that Enoch went to heaven without dying is altogether unscriptural—the Christian faith demands as an essential principle that the life of the future can only be attained by means of a resurrection from the dead, and only through intelligent faith exercised in Christ, in whom alone resides the channel through which that life can come. Neither of these conditions could be met until Christ had come to earth, and died for man, and ascended again upon high. Neither is it possible for flesh and blood, man in his human nature and form, to inherit the heavenly kingdom; St. Paul makes it plain in 1 Cor. 15 that a change of nature is necessary and that only after Christ Himself has risen from the dead and so "become the first fruits of them that slept". The reference in Hebrews says that Enoch was translated, which merely means being taken up from one place and put down in another. That was the Jewish understanding of the similar reference in Genesis. that he was taken away from the abode of men and set down in another part of the earth where he continued to serve God in isolation

until the day of his death. Like all men, Enoch died eventually, even although his death is not recorded as was that of each of his fellows in the Genesis account.

It seems rather disturbing to find in 1 Tim. 5. 17 that the elders who "rule well" are to be accounted worthy, not of double honour as in the A.V., but of double stipend, according to the N.E.B. It is true that the Greek word here, although usually correctly translated "honour" in the A.V., can on occasion have a monetary application, but its basic meaning is that of an assessment of value and it should therefore always be rendered in harmony with its setting and context. Such expressions as "A prophet hath no honour in his own country" (Jno. 4. 44) "They who seek for glory, honour and immortality" (Rom. 2. 7) "In honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12. 10) "He received from God the Father honour and glory" (2 Pet. 1. 7) cannot possibly be understood in terms of cash reward. The same consideration ought to apply here. The elders of St. Paul's day were not paid a cash salary for their services; like himself, they laboured with their hands at their several occupations and the most any of them received of material recompense was hospitality and lodging when they proceeded on their journeys. The word stipend, which means simply and solely a salary received for services rendered, particularly ecclesiastical or professional services, is an unfortunate one, for it does not convey Paul's meaning, and it obscures what he did mean, to exhort the holding in great honour of those faithful fathers in God—and there are such in every generation—who labour in the ministry not for material gain but for the sake of the God they serve and the people to whom they are pastors.

In a different sphere altogether a certain lack of dignity is apparent in a few instances where the endeavour to substitute modern

colloquialisms for the traditional expressions may have gone a little too far. To read in Jno. 12. 14 that "*Jesus found a donkey and mounted it*" imputes a touch of the ludicrous in a connection where anything but the most solemn dignity is entirely out of place, even although that sentence is as correct a rendering as the A.V. "*And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon.*" The Book of Acts appears to be the worst offender in this direction. Cornelius says to Peter in Acts 10. 33 "*Thou hast done well that thou art come*" in the A.V., but in the N.E.B., "*It was kind of you to come*" which is a weak and puerile climax to an important speech on a most momentous occasion. Similarly in Acts 14. 6 Paul and Barnabas, potential victims of a murder plot, "*were ware of it*" (A.V.). According to the N.E.B. "*they got wind of it*"—quite a modern slang expression but somehow not fitting in with the narrative. And when the Roman Procurator of Judea says to his audience of the Jewish monarch, officials and guards, Jewish Rabbis and others, in Acts 25. 24, "*King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present . . .*" the mental vision almost inevitably transforms that Eastern scene into terms of a company meeting where the Chairman is facing a concourse of dress suits and white shirt-fronts. Perhaps, though, the N.E.B. makes amends for these slips by a masterly expression in 1 Tim. 6. 4, where Paul says (A.V.) regarding the man guilty of unwholesome teaching "*he is proud, knowing nothing*" and the N.E.B. comes out with "*I call him a pompous ignoramus*". That sounds just like St. Paul.

And with that we do well perhaps to pass to some of the points in the N.E.B. which seem worthy of commendation, and which do play some part in leading to a better understanding of the Divine message in the New Testament.

(To be continued)

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 42

gave life to man and all living things, so that it is in Him that we live, and move, and have our being. It is true enough that some men are in "for some painful shocks" that will "involve their philosophical and religious beliefs" but it is not the Christian so much as the intelligent and intellectual non-Christian who is going to get those shocks. A day is yet to dawn when God turns to command all men

to listen to Him; in the long-promised reign of Christ over the earth, when Satan is bound and the nations deceived no more, when God turns to men a pure language that those who will may call upon him to serve Him with one consent, there will be seen by all men the greatest fulfilment ever of a word that was spoken many years ago: "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*" (1 Cor. 1. 19).



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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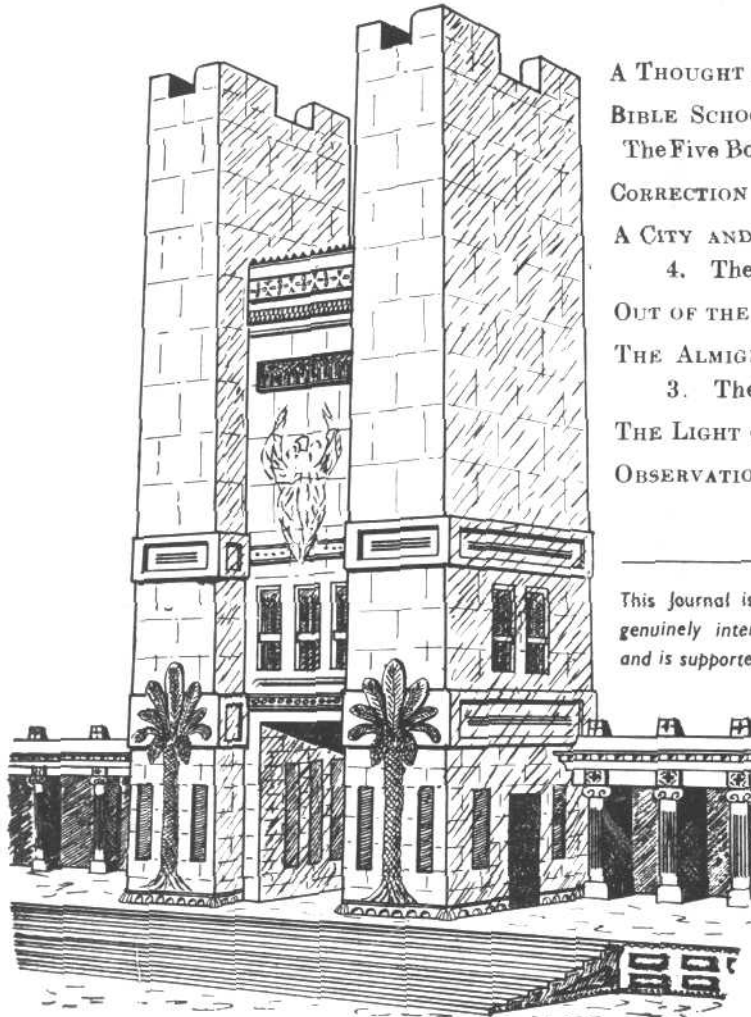
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the month

"That the forlorn and the downtrodden may have justice, and mortal man may no more be a terror" (Psa. 10, 18 Moffatt).

Dr. Moffatt might be said almost to have had a flash of prophetic inspiration when he selected those words for his translation. With mankind to-day living in daily apprehension of the hazards being created by the "defence experts" it is glaringly obvious that there are in our midst mortal men who in their potentialities for bringing sudden destruction upon mankind do truly earn the epithet "terrors". It is understandable that men and women who themselves have no vital faith in the power of God, no real belief that He exists or at least cares, live in a state of fear at the prospect of a doom from which they see no way of escape.

The Psalmist had the right outlook when he reminded us that this man of terror is, after all, mortal man. There is a limit to his life and his powers for evil—for despite all the pious talk about "harnessing science for the defence of freedom" the fact is that these agents of destruction are blatantly and unashamedly evil—but there is no limit to the power of God. He will not suffer the works of man to wreck the creation He brought into being and, looking upon it, "saw that it was good". Just now they want to set off a blast that will destroy part of the "Van Allen layer", the envelope of ionised particles which surrounds the earth several hundred miles up. They do not know what damage, if any, might be done to earthly processes in consequence; the function of that envelope is still unknown, but that it must exert some influence on the planet is certain. And none among the masses of men, none among the forlorn and downtrodden, can stop this madness; only God. And in His own time and way He will. "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but by means of his chosen ones those days shall be shortened". That is what Matt. 24 really means. It may yet be the work of the Christ

ian Church in the next Age to remove this terror from mankind.

There stands in the town of Urfa, in northern Mesopotamia, two stone columns, relics of Roman or Greek days. Local legend has had it for ages that one of these columns is filled with gold and fabulous treasure, ready for the taking. But the other column stops up the hole from which the Flood of Noah's day broke out to devastate the earth. And no one knows which is which. So to this day the treasure remains intact, for no one will run the risk of breaking open the wrong column and letting the Flood loose again on the earth. Perhaps those clever scientists who want to knock holes in the Van Allen belts would do well to consider the simple Arabs of Urfa.

Bro. P. L. Read

June	28	Hoddesdon
July	1	Lincoln
	7-8	Glasgow
	9-10	Belfast
	11	Londonderry
	12	Dublin
	16-17	Bexhill
	21-22	Warrington
	24	Ipswich
	29	Cardiff
Aug.	4-6	Conway Hall
	7-8	Aylesbury — Oxford
	11-12	Rugby
	19	Aldersbrook
		* * *

It is regretted that our last issue was numbered 4 in error instead of 3.

Gone from us

Sis. M. Hamer (Stockport)
 Sis. A. Macaulay (Darlington)
 Bro. J. R. Redwood (London)
 Sis. L. Sayers (Macclesfield)

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

Bible School *THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES*

Part . 10 Gen. 47-50

STUDY 12 GENESIS 47. 27 - 49. 23

At this point Jacob and his family passed into a state of quietude and prosperity they had never before known. Settled in the land of Goshen in the north eastern corner of Egypt, the threat of famine passed, plenty of fertile land for their flocks and herds, they were able to settle in comfort and enjoy their prosperity. From this time the nation sprung from Jacob's twelve sons began to increase rapidly. It is very probable that their numbers were added to by other Semitic immigrants from Canaan; there would also be some intermarrying with the families of the servants and slaves who constituted the households of the eleven sons, and in some manner it is certain that the children of Joseph, the twelfth son, became identified with and absorbed into the body of the newly created nation. How this latter was brought about is not told and is not clear. Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, must have shared their father's exalted position in the land as Egypt's Chief Minister; since it is said that Joseph saw his descendants to the fourth generation it is probable that until his death at least they had more to do with Egyptian official circles than with the Semitic colony in Goshen. Probably after Joseph's death, and particularly after the advent of the new "king over Egypt who knew not Joseph", and the beginning of Israel's disfavour and oppression, the children of Ephraim and Manasseh became completely identified with their Israelitish brethren. That could have been as much as seventy years after Jacob's death.

Jacob himself did not enjoy the new regime in Egypt very long. He had suffered many vicissitudes and sorrows in the course of a long life and the rigours of the famine and the final journey into Egypt must have taken their toll. He felt that the end was near and he sent for his son Joseph to secure a promise that after his death his body would not be buried in Egypt but taken back to Canaan and laid to rest beside his father and mother Isaac and Rebecca, his grandfather and grandmother Abraham and Sarah, and his own wife Leah, in the family tomb at Machpelah. Joseph gave the required promise and the old man was content.

Jacob was seventeen years in Egypt in all.

It could not have been long after the promise, therefore, that signs of the approaching end became manifest and Joseph realised that he must do something to ensure the acceptance of his own two sons into the family of Israel before it was too late. Born in Egypt, of the daughter of the High Priest of another religion, there could understandably be some prejudice against their acceptance. Chapter 48 tells how Joseph therefore took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, lads of about eighteen or twenty years of age, into his father's presence. The care and dignity with which the ensuing transaction is recorded, in the whole of chapter 48, betokens its importance. In point of fact it is the evidence for all future ages of Jacob's formal acceptance of these two lads into his family. Jacob commenced (vss 3 - 4) by recounting the promise God had made to him at Bethel in the early days of his travels to the effect that He would make of him a multitude of people and give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. He then declared that Ephraim and Manasseh were to be his sons in place of Reuben and Simeon who were his actual eldest sons—both rejected as chief heirs because of their crimes in earlier days. In 48. 6 he goes on to tell Joseph that his further children, born after Ephraim and Manasseh, were to be his own heirs. There is no record in the Scripture of Joseph and Asenath having any more children but this silence does not necessarily mean that they did not. To what tribe the descendants of such children were accredited would be a matter of conjecture. The effect of the whole episode was that Joseph, as the eldest son of Jacob's favourite wife Rachel, was accounted by Jacob his firstborn and chief heir, his own two sons—probably twins—each assuming the position as head of a tribe in Israel, probably in recognition of the fact that Joseph's official position at court made it impracticable to assume the headship of a tribe himself. This would then make thirteen tribal heads, but since in after days the descendants of Levi were deprived of tribal status and constituted a body of priests to live among all the tribes and serve them in the things of God, the number of actual tribes possessing definite tribal territory in the land of Canaan remained at twelve; hence for all

subsequent time there were always twelve tribes in Israel.

A very human note is struck in 47. 7-8 where the aged Jacob evidently wanders a little in his thoughts and speech, from the matter in hand to time long past when he lost his beloved wife Rachel at the birth of Benjamin. He is so evidently lost in the past at this moment; then, coming back to the present, has obviously momentarily forgotten what he had just been saying regarding the two lads before him and asks Joseph again "Who are these?" Patiently Joseph told his father "These are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place" and Jacob, content, proceeded to confer his patriarchal blessing upon them. Verse 12 indicates that a very ancient ceremonial was enacted here. Jacob had the two lads stand between his outspread knees as he sat, in token that he had accepted them as his own sons; Joseph then brought them away from Jacob and caused them to bow low before Jacob (the singular "he bowed himself . . ." in vs 12 should really be rendered plural "they bowed themselves") in token that they in turn accepted the obligations devolving upon sons of Jacob. In that position Jacob laid his hands upon their heads and repeated his blessing upon them. Joseph was not altogether pleased that Jacob's right hand, indicating the chief blessing, was laid upon the head of Ephraim who was the second born but Jacob insisted that he knew what he was about. True to his prophetic instinct, the tribe of Ephraim became predominant relative to that of Manasseh in Israel's later history.

These two having been thus constituted the heads of tribes in Israel, Jacob told Joseph that there was reserved for him one portion above his brethren—a special inheritance in the land, one which Jacob had himself captured from the Amorites. The reference was to Shechem, which was not, strictly speaking, an Amorite city; although there were several different races settled in various parts of Canaan, the whole land was known generally as Amurru, the land of the Amorites, so that Jacob was probably speaking in accord with the general practice here.

Chapter 49 records Jacob's dying injunctions and warnings to his twelve sons. Here again he spoke to some extent by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Gather yourselves together" he said "that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days". In general his words reflect the individual characteristics of the sons, sometimes laudatory and some-

times condemnatory. Reuben, his firstborn, who had been guilty of a serious crime against one of his father's wives, Bilhah (Gen. 35. 22) for which reason he was deprived of the birthright by Jacob, was branded "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel". There were nascent signs of goodness in his nature, as is shown in the story of Joseph's betrayal, but he was weak and deficient in self-control, no fit person for the headship of the tribes after Jacob's death. Simeon and Levi, the next two in order, were likewise dismissed as men of blood and cruelty. These were the two who treacherously massacred the men of Shechem over the affair of Dinah, and they too were passed over in the choice of the headship. The next eldest was Judah,—all these four were children of Leah, Jacob's first wife—and for this son Jacob had no word of reproof. "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise — — thy father's children shall bow down before thee". So Judah became the heir of the birthright, the head of the tribes of Israel, and the one through whom one day the promised "Seed of Abraham", the Messiah, should come. The rights of royalty and kingship were thus confirmed to Judah and his descendants for ever. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come —" (49. 10). This name in the Hebrew is *Sheloh* and means "whose it is"; the sense of the expression is more easily grasped by reference to Ezek. 21. 26-27 where the prophet declares the end of the Jewish Kingdom in Zedekiah's day in the words "Remove the diadem and take off the crown—I will overturn it and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him". The Divine intention to hold the throne of Israel vacant until Messiah comes to take His power and reign is indicated there and the same vision of a coming Messiah to assume headship of Israel was in Jacob's mind when he used the word.

The rest of Jacob's sons received messages which concerned either their personal characteristics or references to the territory their descendants would afterward inherit. Many efforts have been made to fit these words in vs 13-27 to the subsequent circumstances of the tribes but the details given are really altogether too vague and shadowy to afford a satisfactory basis for any clear presentation. It is much more likely that Jacob, approaching the gates of death and in his mind still experiencing some flickering of that prophetic insight which was manifested from time to time throughout his life, recounted the frag-

mentary visions which flashed across his mental horizon, but nothing that was at all detailed.

So Jacob yielded up his breath, an old man and full of days. He was the third of the patriarchs who carried the Divine promise and covenant in the line of the promised Seed that shall eventually bless all the families of the earth. With the death of Jacob the pattern of God's purpose began to take more definite shape. He left the nucleus of a nation, a nation that in after days was to be honoured by selection as the chosen people of God, through whom the Divine laws were to be promulgated, a people destined to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. That destiny has not yet been fulfilled and the modern descendants of Jacob are not yet ready, as a people, to accept that destiny; nevertheless the word of God standeth sure and what He has promised will surely come to pass.

Conforming to his father's injunction, Joseph arranged for Jacob's body to be embalmed in the Egyptian fashion and taken to Canaan for interment alongside his wife and forefathers. The first fourteen verses of chapter 50 tell of the funeral and the wonder of the native inhabitants of Canaan at the impressive cortege which made its way through their country. It is probable that the route lay across the Sinai peninsula into Edom, the territory of Esau, Jacob's brother, long since dead, and then northward into Moab and across Jordan to Jericho. Before proceeding to Hebron where the tomb was situated they halted near the Jordan for a seven days ceremonial mourning, which so impressed the Canaanites that they named the place Ebel-Mizraim—the mourning of Egypt. Finally they came to the field of Ephron which Abraham had purchased for four hundred silver shekels a century and a half earlier to establish his family sepulchre. It says much for the respect for rights of property in those days that the land and tomb were still the unchallenged property of the family. There they left the illustrious ancestor of all Israel and returned to Egypt.

It is a fascinating thing to reflect that the mummified body of Jacob may still be there. The remains of Egyptian notabilities of even earlier times are still in existence. The tomb in which Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, were buried is still in existence and is one of the few ancient sites about which there is no doubt. Ironically

enough it owes its preservation during the last twelve centuries or so to neither Jew or Christian, but to the Moslems. Throughout Old Testament times the tomb was of course kept inviolate by the Israelites. After the Saracen conquest of Palestine its sanctity was preserved by the followers of Mahomet, to whom Abraham meant as much as he did to Israel. No "infidel" (Jew or Christian) has ever been permitted to enter the cave, which is now surmounted by a mosque, and this prohibition is maintained to this day, Hebron being in Arab territory, part of the Kingdom of Jordan. The only non-Moslem known to have set foot in the tomb itself was an officer on the staff of General Allenby during the 1914-18 war. During the advance into Palestine and the capture of Hebron Colonel Meinertzhagen entered the mosque in search of the city headmen and finding it deserted penetrated into the cave below, where the patriarchs were buried. Having only matches with him he was unable to see more in the darkness than the outline of a stone coffin, and then, hearing the voices of the returning guards, judged it expedient to leave without delay.

This is the virtual end of the Book of Genesis. It is as if the author felt he had achieved the purpose of his narrative when the death of Jacob had been reached. Although some fifty years were to elapse before Joseph followed his father into the grave the entire period is dismissed in twelve short verses. Nothing is said of the progress of events in Egypt or the welfare of Israel in that period. There is only Joseph's assurance to his brothers, apprehensive that after their father's death Joseph might no longer be friendly towards them, that they had no cause for fear. He bore them no ill-will; he would still be their protector and friend. The families of the sons of Jacob began to increase and Joseph saw his great-grandchildren before he died. There is wonderful dignity in the last recorded words of Joseph. He gathered his brethren about him—it is certain that Levi outlived him by a few years and probably so did some of the others—"I die" he said "*and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob*". That was his parting injunction; they were never to forget that they were only strangers and sojourners in Egypt. Attractive as the land was to them, they were not to forget that their Divine commission was indissolubly connected with the country from which they had come; one

day they must go back. And to stress the sanctity of that obligation he made them swear on oath that they would preserve his mummified body and take it back with them when the day should come. Joseph intended that his own remains should eventually rest in the hallowed land of Canaan.

He had both his wishes. When at length the Exodus took place, his body in its sarcophagus was taken with the host of Israel, accompanied them in their forty years' wandering in the desert, was carried across Jordan and eventually interred in Joseph's own tribal territory at Shechem—the special inheritance which Jacob had given him at his death. And Israel never have forgotten that they were sojourners; their passionate attachment to the land which was theirs at the start has become proverbial. "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning" was always the cry of the Jewish exile. To-day, in our own time and generation, we have witnessed the tenacity with which the present descendants of Jacob have fought to attain and retain that little strip of land which in the year 1948, out of all the possible names that might have been chosen, was renamed "Israel"—the name of the man whose sons, thirty five centuries ago, gathered around the death-bed of the brother who, under God, had preserved their lives and made the creation of that nation possible. It was because those Hebrew tribes-

men, settled in north-eastern Egypt in the latter years of the Hyksos Pharaohs, with all their faults and unbelief never did really forget that they were not Egyptians, but sons of Israel, the Prince of God, custodians of a Divine commission to become a means in God's hand for the eventual blessing of all the families of the earth, that there is an Israeli nation to-day. And the full implications of that national destiny for the wider world have yet to be seen.

So Genesis closes, the end of a long chapter and the falling of the curtain upon the first stage of God's redemptive plan. The day of the patriarchs was ended; a few decades were to intervene and when the curtain rises upon the Book of Exodus the old order has changed. The friendly Hyksos rulers have been driven out and the "new king which knew not Joseph", Ahmose the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, has come to power. Israel is now a nation, groaning under servitude, and ready for deliverance. But that is the story of the Book of Exodus.

* * * * *
THE END OF GENESIS
 * * * * *

In the interests of other planned features there will be a few month's intermission before the Bible School on the Five Books of Moses is resumed with notes on the Book of Exodus.

CORRECTION WITH JUDGMENT

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." (Jer. 10. 23-24).

Wonderful words, to come from the lips of a man who lived six centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ came to open the "new and living way." We tend sometimes to regard the whole thought of men in Old Testament times as hopelessly enmeshed in the mechanical framework of the Mosaic Law. "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" the people had cried exultingly when Moses gave them the Divine Covenant, and although none of them ever succeeded in fully meeting the requirements of that covenant by works, very few of them ever realised why. They thought they could do it; the Ten Commandments must have seemed a very simple set of regulations by which to

govern their lives; it must have come as a shock to many of them to find that, after all, they had not gained the everlasting life of promise. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus was one such. "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" There must have been a constant voicing of that question all the way from Moses to John the Baptist. Not many discovered the reason why. Jeremiah was one of the few who did. The way of man is not in himself. He has not the power rightly to direct his steps. So Jeremiah prayed to God that because of man's inability, God would not be harsh with man. Send correction, yes, by all means, for man sorely needs correction. Jeremiah knew that. But let it be with discretion, with judgment: not with severity or harshness, or man would speedily be reduced to nothing. And Jeremiah knew that God did not desire that. He knew that God had made man for a purpose and he

prayed that the purpose might be achieved.

Man needs a shepherd, here and now in this life. We get so accustomed to thinking of the future Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, when God will set Himself to teach all men the principles of His laws, that we do perhaps forget the fact that to-day also is a time of man's experience. True, the coming Age is set aside for man's instruction in the effects of righteousness under a righteous government, but the present has been set aside just as certainly for man's instruction in the results of evil when sin is permitted to flourish unchecked. It is in this time of man's liberty to sin that Divine shepherd-care is needed. We do not well to think of the Father-Creator as bringing the earth to Edenic perfection and then washing His hands of the human race completely at the very time they need Him most. He has permitted man to go his own way and has allowed men to ignore the fact of his existence; nevertheless He has always held the controls in his own strong hands and intervened whenever it has been necessary to save men from themselves. The Flood was a supreme example; other lesser examples are known to us from the sacred records and there must be many more unwritten and unknown except to those directly affected. Even although Satan has arrogated to himself the title of "god of this world", he has not been allowed to have everything his own way. The same Power that brought into being all the mighty works of creation and evolved life on this planet in all its myriad forms has never ceased to watch over the interests of the helpless creature, man, who has it not in him to direct his own steps.

As natural men and women, even when born into one of the so-called enlightened and civilised nations, we know very little of our surroundings, of our past, of our future. Confined as we are to this one little planet, we know next to nothing of the remainder of creation. Until three hundred years ago even the whole of this earth had not been explored by man. Only in the last few generations have the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Australia, and the wastes of Antarctica given up their last secrets. We still look at our nearest neighbour in space, the planet Mars, and wonder whether or not life exists on its surface. Our astronomers feel fairly certain that there are mosses and trees, but that is as far as they are prepared to go. Our geologists look back over the vast space of time—calculated at three thousand millions of years—which separates us from the coming into being of

this earth, and can tell us absolutely nothing of what went on during over two-thirds of that period. Definite knowledge covers only the veriest fraction of that enormous time-span; we are so recently arrived on this our home. If the period that has elapsed since God said "Let there be light" is likened to the length of one week, then the animal creation has been on earth for about twelve hours and man only three seconds! The last three seconds at the end of a week! That is man's experience of his earthly home. He has hardly had time to learn much about it. If man then is so recent a creation of God, we would hardly expect God to get impatient yet. Long though the dark reign of sin and death appears to us, to God it has lasted only three seconds out of his creative week. Jeremiah's confidence was surely rightly placed when he besought God to administer his correction, not with anger, but with judgment; not to destroy, but to save.

That is the principle behind the Divine scheme of redemption. It is not for nothing that we have dismissed the Hell-torment Deity of the Dark Ages as a figment of theological imagination. It is not for nothing that we insist on the Scriptural truth that not until a man has had every possible opportunity to learn of God, and in full knowledge and recognition of all that is involved does deliberately reject God, can he be eternally lost. Some there are who slightly speak of such a conviction as the "gospel of the second chance". They speak truly; it is the gospel of One Who spake the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the prodigal son most assuredly did have a second chance. When Jesus told Peter to forgive his erring but repentant brother seventy-seven times we can hardly believe that He would refuse any man one more chance to make amends, if hope there be that this time the man would see the light. Many Christians have never put to themselves the question of God's response to one who has passed through the gates of death and then, standing before the Throne, at last sees the light and repents. Would the Most High condemn such an one out of hand because it took the supreme experience of death and resurrection to effect the conversion? It is because our God knows the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man unaided to direct his steps, that He waits and watches in full confidence that, for the vast majority of men at any rate, the lesson will one day be learned and His ultimate purpose achieved.

So the Divine Plan is not one of harsh anger, of a jealous, wrathful God bent on displaying

His omnipotence by the ruthless slaughter of those who are slow to understand and do His will, or rash enough and short-sighted enough and ignorant enough to set themselves against Him. But neither is the Divine attitude towards men and God's treatment of men correctly described by the common phrase "justice tempered with mercy". Divine justice is not modified or qualified in any way. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?". There can be no qualification of that which is right. The weakness of man calls for strength, and strength will be given. The ignorance of man calls for knowledge, and knowledge will be imparted. The sin of man calls for retribution, and retribution will be inflicted. But all these things come for the furtherance of the Divine ideal in man and not for his destruction. That is why Jeremiah prayed for the correction which he knew had to come but prayed that it might be in judgment and not in anger.

To-day we know that his prayer is being fulfilled. Peter at Jerusalem and Paul at Athens ushered in the new order of things in which God both commands all men everywhere to repent and invites those who will, to give themselves in sincere consecration of heart and life to be dead with Christ. For these two thousand years of this Gospel Age that latter work has predominated and the Church of Christ has been gathered out of the nations "a people for God's name". The other work has not been neglected. The Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world and in conformity with the injunction first voiced on Mars Hill there are many who have repented and experienced justification by faith in Jesus Christ without necessarily going on to consecration of life and entrance into the High Calling. The Lord knows what use He can make of such when the Millennial Age opens and God's final time of "correction with judgment" runs its course in the presence of all mankind.

The "Shekinah glory", that God-given supernatural light which dwelt in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was a source of confidence and life to all Israel. It held no terrors, but only joy and peace, for the High Priest when he entered with the offering that spelt Israel's deliverance from condemnation for another year. It was a pillar of fire by night to lead them in their desert wanderings and it went before the host to guide them safely into their Promised Land. But it was also a flaming fire to defend them from their enemies and it was a blazing radiance that swept out from the Tabernacle to

execute the Divine decree when some of Israel had sinned. So it is with Divine judgment. It is remedial and educative to the one who is capable of reformation, leading such an one back into full reconciliation with God; it is consuming, and a destroyer, to the one who is determined to resist every inducement and every persuasion put forth for his reclamation. The Lord is a Shepherd to all who can be persuaded to accept willingly and sincerely of the green pastures and still waters of His providing; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God when there is nothing in the heart but black sin to confront His white-hot purity. It is and must always be true that the incorrigible sinner will be consumed by the Divine wrath when all possibility of conversion has gone. There is a profound and fundamental truth, descriptive of the Divine dealings both with those who attain everlasting life and those who shall not see life, in Jeremiah's heartfelt entreaty: "correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."

There is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have us do or be. God knows our hearts, and how soon we begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. But Christ is our Object, not the joy. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him who has loved us, who has given Himself for us, and who is ever present with us. (J. N. Darby)

* * *

Who hath despised the day of small things? While the pride of man boasts itself in multitudes and in abundance, it is the small things which God selects to fulfil His purposes. It was but a little oil in a cruse, yet it failed not; a handful of meal in a barrel, yet it wasted not. It was a little cloud arising out of the sea, the size of a man's hand, that prepared Elijah for the abundance of rain his ear of faith had anticipated. Upon Mount Horeb, God spoke, not in the mighty wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but in a still, small voice. For it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts".

A CITY AND A TOWER

The story of the
Tower of Babel

4. The Lord Came Down

"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded" (vs. 5).

The last great rebellion against the authority of the Most High had been of the sons of God, those "angels who kept not their first estate" (Jude 6) just before the Flood. Now here there is another rebellion, this time by the children of men. Not many centuries had passed since that previous colossal Divine judgment had fallen upon the world; it is likely that the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, who had passed through the cataclysm, were still alive, and must certainly have warned their younger fellows of the certainty of retribution. But if so, their expostulations were of no avail. The rising generation, arrogant in its selfwill, was determined to set itself against God, to challenge His authority, heedless of the lessons of history; this within two or three generations of the time when He had made a clean sweep of sin and unrighteousness in the earth. How true is the Scripture which declares that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! The antediluvians scorned and rejected the preaching of Noah and perished in their unbelief. These had had the preaching and warning of that same Noah, intensified by the experience of the Flood through which he had passed, but they rejected him just the same. God sent the judgment of the Flood from his place in heaven; this time, the story tells us, He came down to earth to see, and pass sentence, and execute judgment.

Did God really come down to earth in person? The account certainly says so, but then so does the Book of Exodus, in the story of Moses at the burning bush, say the same thing respecting God's purpose to deliver Israel from Egypt. "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exod. 3. 8). There are a number of occasions in Old Testament history where God is said to have come down to earth but the expression is almost always recognisable as a figure of speech indicating that God turns His attention earthward to perform a particular act or work. It is possible, of course, that there was an actual appearance of a messenger from above, coming in the authority of the Most High, just as there was in the case of Abraham at the time of the destruction of Sodom and

Gomorrhah, and as there were on numerous occasions in later Old Testament history. Once we admit the existence of another, a celestial world having its own citizens busy about the work of God, we have to admit the possibility of actual communication between the respective worlds, celestial and terrestrial; the Bible certainly takes the position that such visits have taken place on certain momentous occasions. And this incipient rebellion of men so soon after God had cleansed the earth by means of the great Flood was certainly momentous enough. In such case the visitant to earth, coming in the Name and power and authority of God the Father, the Most High, would surely be the Son, the Word of God, who was afterwards born of Mary to be known on earth as the Lord Jesus Christ. There is good basis for the belief that upon all occasions when God is depicted as coming down to earth or as speaking with man, the actual means of communication, and the actual visible manifestation when anything visible was involved at all, was the Son, the Word, Who in Himself is at all times the manifestation of God to man. An understanding of the precise manner in which God "came down" to see the city and the tower is not important; it is the outcome which has to engage our attention. Just as the Lord pronounced judgment upon the antediluvians at the time of the Flood for their impiety, so now He comes down to pronounce judgment upon the builders of the Tower.

"And the Lord said 'Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language: and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.'" (vs. 6). Compare that last sentence with the expression in Gen. 6. 5 "every imagination of the thoughts of his (man's) heart was only evil continually". It is once more the imagination of man's heart that is the cause of the mischief; God knows that the course of sin must inevitably continue and flourish measurably unchecked until His due time for taking firm control of all mankind and imposing upon them that rule of the shepherding rod which will at last wean them away from sin and make of them convinced and unchangeable servants of righteousness. But back there at the time of Babel nothing of this could be done; indeed it became necessary

for God to do something to expedite and hasten the essential developments which must take place in the earth before men could be ready to listen to the voice that will speak from heaven. So God acted there and then to scatter them over the face of the earth. They would not go willingly; He would see to it that they went of constraint.

The evident unanimity of purpose in the building of the city seems to betoken the presence of a chief one, a leading spirit to whom all would owe allegiance and loyalty. Reference to the old tradition that the ancient hero Nimrod was the instigator of the project has already been made; if in fact there is any basis of truth in this tradition we can see a very definite meaning in the expression "a mighty hunter before the Lord". We can imagine Nimrod standing forth before the people to defy the Word Who had come down from heaven to see the city and tower and to pronounce judgment. We can picture him persisting in his defiance just as Satan at the head of his fallen angels must have persisted in his defiance of God right up to the moment of the Deluge; and we can visualise to ourselves the change that came over the scene when the Divine judgment had gone forth and the schemes of these men were frustrated, that they could no longer work together in the execution of this enterprise to which they had pledged themselves.

"Go to" said the Lord "let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city" (vs. 7-8).

It should be noticed that there is no indication here of the differentiation of language occurring at the Tower, before the scattering. It has so often been assumed that the story narrates the suspension of building activities consequent upon a miraculous confusion of language making it impossible for any man to understand his fellows. Nothing of the sort. "Let us confound their language" says God. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of all earth." The scattering was the cause of the language differentiation, which came as the logical result, and what the Lord did in order to effect His purpose was to divide and scatter them. The development of divergent languages was the inevitable result, a process which has continued ever since, and is still continuing as tribes and communities separate and migrate into new territories. It ought not to

escape notice, though, as a sign of the significance of current events in their relation to the Divine purpose, that in these latter days the contrary influence is at work in that the growth of world travel and communication with its consequent intermingling of peoples is having the opposite effect in inducing a growing uniformity of language and speech. It is possible to travel almost to any part of the world and find English and several other European languages spoken without much difficulty. It might well be that the purpose for which differentiation of language was employed has been served and that the time has come for all humanity to be brought together again; that at any rate is the purpose of the Messianic kingdom.

How was the separation effected? Probably by reason of the same influence that has frustrated so many of the schemes of men in days since then—the development of differences of opinion on methods, on policy, on all that had to do with the project in hand. The process of scattering may have been a long one. The Semitic writer of Genesis 11 can trace Japheth's children only to the second generation but Ham's to the third. That may indicate that Japheth's "tribe" moved off first and that the break between Shem and Ham came a generation later. What is fairly certain is the fact that Ham's descendants remained in possession of the land—a few centuries later we find that Shem's children, having settled and multiplied in Syria, were pressing on the sons of Ham and invading their territory. Of Japheth we hear no more—he and his went north, following the River Tigris in all probability, to settle in lands farther north. In after years they had little or no contact with the other two peoples, and are mentioned hardly at all in later Scripture history. Shem and his house went up the Euphrates and settled in what is now North Syria, from whence their descendants in the fourth or fifth generations began to spread, some southward into the great peninsula of Arabia,—the sons of Joktan; some of their names as recorded in Genesis 10 survive still as names of South Arabian tribes—and others back along the Euphrates to the plain of Shinar itself, where they met and began to fight with the sons of Ham who had remained there all the time. These invaders were apparently the sons of Peleg the brother of Joktan, for six generations later we find Abraham, with Terah his father, of the line of Peleg, living in Ur of the Chaldees in the very south of the land, on the then shore of the Persian Gulf. But by that

time the invading Semites had so intermarried with the native Hamites—the original Sumerians—that the two races had virtually become one. By that time also Babylon had become a relatively great and powerful city.

The narrative says that they left off to build the city. That may very well be literally true. The earliest notice in secular history that we have of Babylon is in the time of Sargon of Akkad, and that must have been at least four or five centuries after the frustration of the original project. In Sargon's day Babylon was a holy city sacred to Marduk and it was conspicuous both for the Tower, E-temen-anki, and the Temple, E-sagila. At some time between, the building of the city must have been resumed by the sons of Ham, and this is in harmony with the Genesis 10 account, which declares Babylon to have been the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod, who was a Hamite. After the sons of Shem began to invade the land, however, Babylon became a Semitic stronghold and retained that Semitic character during the rest of its existence.

This is the end of the story as such. The writer has achieved his purpose, to explain how men were scattered over the earth and how they came to speak different languages. In Gen. 10 he has described the different nations and their geographical distribution, each having its own language, and in Gen. 11 he tells how that distribution came about.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth." (vs. 9).

This verse is a comment upon the story. It may have been written at the same time as the original account was written or it may have been added at a later time. We do not really know just when the story was first written down. It may have been as early as the time of Joktan's sons and the invasion of Sumeria by the Semites; this is deduced from the fact that in Gen. 10 no descendants of Joktan after his own sons are named, as though at that time the writer of the account lost touch with that branch of the family. But the account may well have been written much later. In any case we can reasonably assume that it was committed to writing by one of Abraham's ancestors and that was how it came into the patriarch's hands in due course. Verse 9, at any rate, could not have been written more than one generation before Abraham, for it was not until then that the city became known

as Babel. ("Babylon" is the Greek form of the word, "Babel" is the Hebrew form, and "Bab-ilu" the native form). When the city was first built the name given to it was *Tin-tir-ki*, meaning "the place of life". One can appreciate the significance of such a name if it was in fact bestowed by the sons of Noah when first they settled at this spot, ceasing from their travels, and determined to make themselves a name. Many centuries later the name of the city was changed to *Ka-dimirra*, which in the Sumerian tongue means "The Gate of God". The native Semitic equivalent for the same expression is *Bab-ilu* and as the Semites obtained the ascendancy in the city that became its name and has remained the name by which it has always been known. *Bab-ilu*; Babylon the Great!

The observation in verse 9 is due to a play upon words—a pun! The Hebrew word for "mingling" or "confusion" is *balbal*. The pronunciation is sufficiently like "Babel" for the writer to say "Therefore is the name of it called "The Gate of God" (*Babel*) because the Lord did there confound (*balbal*) the language of all the earth" By our English standards it may not be considered a very good pun; but it afforded the writer of the account an opportunity to show his contempt for the idolatrous city, and what is the inevitable end of that which is erected in honour of false gods—confusion.

We have therefore in the first nine verses of this chapter a scrap of history which commences shortly after the Flood and ends shortly before Abraham. It pictures the descendants of Noah, at first living and travelling together in primitive simplicity, finding a pleasant and productive place in which to dwell and promptly giving way to overwhelming ambition and going on from that to active rebellion against God. It describes the first recorded deliberate alliance of men with the Evil One after the Flood. It tells how God intervened from above and frustrated the scheme, and in that it gives assurance of the Divine intention so to overrule the deeds of men that His own Plan will go forward into execution as He has ordained. It does not profess to tell the end of the story; the rest of the Old Testament bears eloquent witness to the fact that this was only a temporary reversal of the powers of sin. Men soon took the path of rebellion again and the Tower whose building had been halted by the intervention of God was after all completed and dominated Babylon for many generations. But God is not mocked. That Tower is not there to-day. And

in like manner the time will come when the evil that the Tower symbolised will be no more, and the shadow of rebellion no longer fall across the sunlight of Divine rule over men. The remainder of the history of the

Tower, gleaned as it must be from the pages of history, is itself a parable to this end and bears testimony to this truth.

(To be concluded)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit"

It is said that this expression was included in the evening prayers of every Jewish boy. If this be so, we can well imagine the boy Jesus repeating these words nightly, and then in perfect confidence laying himself down to rest. So when the shades of death were closing round Him He repeated the same hallowed words, knowing that the Father in Whom He trusted would indeed put forth His mighty power to raise His Son from the dead.

* * *

Worship

"I fell at His feet to worship Him." (Rev. 22. 9). This act of worship so often mentioned in the Scriptures was in fact merely a humble obeisance or act of reverence. Even to-day in the Holy Land the recipient of a favour will throw himself on his knees, bow his head to the ground, and kiss the lower part of his benefactor's clothing. Thus did Cornelius fall down and worship Peter (Acts 10. 25) and the servant in the parable worship his Lord (Matt. 13. 26) and the three wise men worship the infant Jesus (Matt. 2. 11). To the Philadelphia Church came the promise that their enemies would come and "worship before thy feet" (Rev. 3. 9) and probably this is what is meant when Satan desired Christ to fall down and worship him (Matt. 4. 9) to submit to him, to engage in his service, and to acknowledge him as overlord.

* * *

A note on Luke 15, 16

The "husks" which the swine did eat, and with which the prodigal son would fain have eaten also in his extremity, were large, fleshy pods about ten inches long and one inch across, the fruit of the "kharub," a small bushy tree, which grows in profusion in Syria. The swine eat this fruit with relish, and the natives in the East used to grind up the pods and make a species of sweetmeat from the thick, sticky juice which was thus obtained.

Thus to partake of the food which was gathered for the swine was degradation indeed to any honest hearted child of Israel, and so it was that when he found himself reduced to this state, the prodigal "came to himself" and realised at last how far he had fallen from his former estate.

* * *

Prophetic Words

"All confirm one conviction, that we are now at the verge of the pouring out of the Seventh Vial. Our children, if not we ourselves, are destined to see events and manifestations which sceptics may sneer at, and even reluctant Christians undervalue; but thereby they only confirm the truth, 'For as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the Advent of the Son of Man.' 'Behold I come as a thief,' is the watchword of the present hour. God grant 'the Lamb's wife,' may make herself ready."

(Rev. John Cumming, D.D., 1848).

* * *

Bow of Promise

The ancient Peruvians had a legend to the effect that the sea was prevented from overflowing the land and drowning all the inhabitants only by virtue of the rainbow, the two ends of which were continually pressing upon the ocean and holding it down. This legend is quoted on the authority of Francis Lenormant, the French archæologist. To those who are acquainted with the Biblical story of the Flood the story has interest when it is remembered that Gen. 9. 12-26 tells of the rainbow being given as a sign of God's promise never again to destroy the world with water. Some dim memory of those days immediately after Ararat, handed down through the generations, has survived in this legend and creates a connecting link between Father Noah and his sons, and the Peruvian Indians of South America.

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

"Whom no man hath seen,
nor can see"

3. The Word made Flesh

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Those words, spoken to the Pharisee Nicodemus and recorded in John 3. 16, have become what is probably the most familiar verse of the Bible. But they enshrine a profound mystery none the less. Who is the only-begotten Son and in what relation does He stand to the Father?

First of all it must be accepted that this giving of God's Son was a very real transaction and no figure of speech. The basic truth of the Christian faith, one plainly and unequivocally attested by Jesus Himself, is that the Son of God came down from heaven and took upon Himself human nature in order that He might die for the sin of man and thereafter release man from the condemnation under which he lay. The words of St. Paul admit of no other construction "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all . . ." (Rom. 8. 32). This was a real giving and a real death, and the measure of the Father's love for mankind is comprehended in the reality and the severity of that parting and that loss. Unless there was a real giving and a real sacrifice, to use a human word, on the part of the Father in this matter then John 3. 16 has no meaning. Our Lord attested the truth of his death and resurrection by Rev. 1. 18 "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."

The identity of the only-begotten Son with the Word of God, who was with the Father from the beginning, is plain from John 1. 14 "And the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." The Word made flesh possessed title to two names, the Son of God, relative to His Divine origin, and the Son of Man, relative to His human nature through Mary from David. In another place He called himself David's son and David's Lord, an apparent paradox which proved an insoluble enigma to the Pharisees and Scribes who were presented with the problem of its solution.

It is necessary to guard against a too literal application of the human analogy here. Jesus did not become the only begotten Son by reason of His humanity. He was the Son of God, supreme over all Divine creation, from the very beginning. *Monogenes* is a word indi-

cating the principal son or heir, hence the association with the idea of firstborn or only son, and it is the idea of primacy which has to be borne in mind. Isaac is called the only begotten son (*monogenes*) of Abraham in Gen. 22. 26 although he was not the only or even the eldest son of the patriarch—but was the heir. Scripturally God has many sons. The angels are called sons of God. Adam in his perfection was called the son of God. Reconciled Christian believers are called sons of God. In fact it would seem that the title is properly applicable to every one who is in a state of sinless perfection or by means of the justification by faith which comes from acceptance of Christ has been accepted of God as such. But the sonship of the Word is something different and on a higher plane. Angels and humans are sons of God by creation, because God has given them life. The Word is the Son of God because He is of the Father, and stands in a relationship to the Father which is neither shared by angel or man nor can be understood by man. He is the firstborn Son of God, one with the Father in thought and action, executive agent of the Father in all that is done, the sole manifestation of the Father to His human creatures. With that definition we have to be content.

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . ." (Rom. 8. 3) is one of the Scriptural allusions to the manner in which the Word "became flesh". This one passes over the fact that He was born a babe at Bethlehem and stresses instead the departure of the Word from His heavenly glory with the Father, and His sojourn on earth as man. That manhood was real; certain heresies in the Early Church pictured the Word as inhabiting the human body of the man Jesus of Nazareth and leaving that body to its fate as it expired on the Cross. The New Testament is positive on the point of dogmatism against any such understanding. The One who came from above became man, even although in doing so He by no means renounced His Divine Sonship, His relationship to God the Father. Whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, says the beloved disciple John (1 John 4. 2-3) is not of God. The writer to the Hebrews goes a little deeper when in his second chapter he declares that He took hold not of the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abra-

ham; because men are sharers together in flesh and blood, he also snared in the same. That he definitely means a true snaring of human nature is made plain in the same chapter where, after quoting David in the Psalms describing man as "created a little lower than the angels" and nevertheless "crowned with the glory and honour" of human nature, he says that Jesus was likewise made "a little lower than the angels" and similarly crowned with glory and honour. He goes on to explain that this was in order that He could be made subject to the suffering of death, "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." St. Paul, writing to the Philippians, goes deepest of all. "Christ Jesus" he says "although in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (this is the R.S.V. rendering; the A.V. "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." has been long since recognised a poorly defective translation) "but emptied himself, . . . being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2. 5-8). One common theme runs through all these allusions; it was necessary that the Son of God become man and die as man in order that Adam's race of men could be redeemed. Whether we understand the philosophy of the Atonement or not, whether the necessity of Christ's death on the Cross for man's salvation is apparent to us or not, we must accept the plain, uncompromising statement that "since by MAN came death, by MAN also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15. 21). The death of Christ on the Cross was no metaphor, no pantomime action having no reality behind it. It was no crucifixion of a mortal man whose body had been temporarily inhabited by a Divine Spirit which vacated it again at the moment of death. This death was reality, as real as the death of any man of Adam's race who in his own turn and time has returned to his dust, his spirit going back to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12. 7). Christ's death as man constituted the *anti-lutron*, the corresponding or equivalent price paid for the redemption of slaves in the Roman world ("the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom—anti-lutron—for all" (1 Tim. 2. 6) by which He fulfilled His promise to give His flesh for the life of the world (Jno. 6. 51). It was after He had thus been "delivered up to death for us all" (Rom. 8. 32) that the Father put forth His "mighty power" and "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand" (Eph.

1. 19-20), not now as man—for His humanity had been given "for the life of the world"—but restored to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (Jno. 17. 5) and with the addition of that supreme exaltation described in Phil. 2. 9-10 "Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord . . ."

These are the facts. We do not understand, we cannot hope to understand, just how it was that the Word of God, the Father's agent in all creation, resplendent in the glory of His heavenly station, "emptied Himself" and became the child of Mary, growing over the term of some thirty years to the full estate of man. We do not understand how Jesus of Nazareth lived His life within the limits of human manhood and yet maintained that link with His Father which enabled Him to say, as He did to the Jews "I and my Father are one" (Jno. 10. 30), to remain aware of the circumstances of what for want of a better term we must call His "pre-human existence", and to manifest powers which belong, not to man, but to God. Neither do we understand the nature of the happening, three days after the lifeless body had been laid in Joseph's tomb, when He rose from the dead "in the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7. 16) and "appeared in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9. 29). We may not understand, but there are enough positive Scripture declarations to enable us to grasp the elemental truth; the Word, the Son of God, came from the Father into the world and was made flesh; He gave that flesh for the life of the world and died upon the Cross; he went out of the world and returned to the Father, and now is Lord over all things in heaven and earth.

This is where those texts which speak of the Son as bearing the image of the Father have their place. It is a truth not always readily appreciated by Christians that upon His ascension into Heaven our Lord left the body of flesh behind for ever. In mediæval times the incongruity of a human body existing to all eternity in the spiritual courts of the celestial world was not realised; even today the implications of such a belief are not always faced and considered. He was raised from the dead, not to a renewal of the human nature and body which He had given for the life of the world, but to the glory of the celestial state of being which had been His before He came to earth, and with added glory con-

sequent upon His triumph over the forces of evil. Nothing less is demanded by His own words "and now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Jno. 17. 5). St. Paul in 1 Cor. 15 explains that there is a fundamental difference between earthly (terrestrial) and spiritual (celestial) bodies, and lays down as a maxim that the terrestrial body—flesh and blood—cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is necessary therefore to think of our Lord in His exaltation as being in the image and likeness of His Father in the celestial sense and not in the terrestrial. Several texts assist in this understanding. The writer to the Hebrews refers to Him as "*being the brightness (effulgence) of his (God's) glory, and the express image (exact impress, says one translator) of his person*" (Heb. 1. 3) and that this refers to a time prior to His coming to earth is supported by a very similar expression applied to the Wisdom of God—synonymous with the Word of God—in the Apocrypha ". . . the breath of the power of

God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty . . . the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the glory of God, and the image of his goodness." (Wisdom 7. 25, 26). Writing to the Colossians, St. Paul said "*He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation*" (not "every creature" as in A.V.; Col. 1. 15). And it is this Christ, who is the image of God and shares His glory, who comes in that glory at His Second Advent. He does not return in the form of man, for He is no longer man; He returns in His other-world glory, the glory of the Divine nature, a glory which cannot be discerned or apprehended by the natural sight, for the sense organs of men are incapable of perceiving that which belongs to the celestial world. A reasoned view of the principal hope of the Church of earth, the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom, reign over the nations, and judge the world, has to take that into account.

(To be concluded)

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

It was near the beginning of the great age of Hebrew prophecy that "light" became generally symbolical of knowledge and understanding. Allusions to blindness and darkness were made much earlier than that by Moses in his last discourses to Israel recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. In the Psalms there is a rich profusion of praises like "The Lord is my light and my salvation". The same theme recurs in the colourful language of Isaiah who saw so clearly the conflict between good and evil and contrasted it in the analogy of light and darkness. He readily understood the condition of his own people Israel and how blind they were to the goodness and truth of Almighty God. He realised how depraved they had become and that they stood in need of the light of God's Word to reveal their sin. Isaiah was given wonderful visions of a brighter day when Israel's eyes would be opened to the splendour of their God; when they would live in the light of his perfect law. More than this, the prophet visualised the great missionary work which Israel as a nation would do in taking the Word of God to the Gentile nations. Upon them the light of truth had never dawned; to them the revelation of God had been limited to a hazy knowledge of the material creation around them. For long centuries they had stumbled along, one here and one there yearning for enlightenment and

searching for truth. It is equally clear from the records of Israel's prophets that the "chosen people" were for the most part as blind as their heathen neighbours. They did not realise that traditions and customs of long past ages were inadequate to solve the problems of their own day. They failed to appreciate the increasing light reflected in the message of their lonely seers.

Isaiah saw the broader vision of the Messiah's work in that he would reveal God to all peoples. This is shown in chapters 42 and 49 when the prophet wrote those memorable words "*I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*" Israel never attempted in any degree to fulfil that prophecy. After the return of the exiles from Babylon and Persia there came the development of Judaism, and the associated hatred of all foreigners. So intense was this hatred in the days of the Early Church that when Paul was addressing his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem (Acts 22) the mere mention of the word "nations" kindled an uproar among the crowd. Because he declared that the Lord had sent him to preach to the Gentiles, they sought Paul's immediate death. They were spiritually blind to the purpose of God and therefore knew nothing of His great love for all mankind.

When Jesus was taken as a baby into the temple to be presented to God according to the Law, the old prophet Simeon took the child in his arms and quoted from Isaiah thus: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." Simeon had been like a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, waiting for the first gleams of the "Sun of righteousness". Now he had seen and proclaimed and his task was done. He was happy to depart and await the glorious shining forth of the Messiah in His Kingdom when darkness will be dispelled for ever.

Quite early in His ministry, Jesus preached in his home town of Nazareth and He read from the words of the prophet Isaiah, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" As Jesus sat down He informed his audience that the prophecy He had just read was now being fulfilled. Then He went on to remind them that when the prophet Elijah needed lodging, he did not find refuge in Israel but went to a widow in Sidon. Likewise, Elisha could have healed many lepers in Israel, but instead he healed Naaman from Syria. With but a few words Jesus had swept away the racial and social barriers of his day and showed that God was interested in men and women of all nations. This was manifest in Jesus' attitude to the various people He met during his public ministry. His interview with the woman at the well, near Sychar in Samaria, is a very remarkable example of this fact. That he, a prophet, of the select Jewish race; and the woman, a foreigner with a bad reputation, was sufficient to keep them on opposing sides of the road. Yet He talked with her and she became an evangelist on his behalf, taking the "Good News" to her own people (John 4. 39). Jesus also readily agreed to heal the centurion's servant and commended the Roman officer for his great faith, the quality of which, he said, he had not found among the people of Israel. (Luke 7. 9). Towards the end of his life, Jesus went to the borders of Phoenicia. While there a Gentile woman pleaded with the Lord to heal her daughter. Jesus' answer implied that his healing power was reserved for his own people. Yet it is clear from his final words to the woman that He was really interested in a demonstration of her faith. The response to that faith irrespec-

tive of race or colour was his compassion. Incidents like these laid the foundation of the missionary work after Pentecost by the early Church. It is not true that Christ's message was originally confined to Israel, and that the broader evangel was an after thought conceived by the Apostle Paul. The directive for the witness of the early Church is to be found in the Gospels by our Lord himself, and confirmed by Him just before his ascension. (Acts 1. 8). When preaching his last sermon upon the "end of the age" Jesus made it clear that "*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations*" (Matt. 24. 14). This statement was enlarged upon in post-resurrection talks to the disciples, recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, each account emphasising the instructions that the first disciples were to go to preach and teach all nations, making new disciples and witnessing to everyone. Of this they could have had no doubt for He had set them the example, and if they were to follow in his steps they must likewise spare no effort to broadcast the message of salvation.

On several recorded occasions Jesus described himself or was described as the "light of the world". Thus John opens his gospel (John 1. 4) "*In him was life and the life was the light of men.*" and a little later "*That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" Towards the end of his ministry Jesus said publicly "*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" (John 8. 12) and again "*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.*" (John 12. 46). Such words angered the Pharisees and religious leaders of the Jews, for they looked upon themselves as the only source of enlightenment concerning the Word of God. Yet their teachings offered no solutions to the problems which worried ordinary people. The teachers and lawyers were more interested in disputes about words and abstract ideas which were only remotely connected with a true understanding of God and his purpose. Consequently authoritative statements of Jesus, and the stories which He used to illustrate his points, came as a great flood of light on the experiences and difficulties which men and women encountered in their daily routine.

Through the ages God had sent prophets who were each permitted to reveal a little more of the purpose of God. They lighted lamps which burned through the centuries, lighting the path of men. They were beacons

guiding men to the "glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ." His light uncovered the hidden mysteries of men's own sinful hearts. His light revealed the love in the heart of the Creator. His light shone down the ages, pointing men to a day when the glory of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He used language which the common people understood. His message was simple and clear, impressed upon their minds by pictures from Nature with which they were familiar. His sermons were full of life and movement, yet his manner was gentle and peaceable. This was not the oratory of Cicero, nor the philosophy of Aristotle, for Jesus never had the formal education of the learned doctors of his day. Yet the power of his Word was such that it turned the tide of evil of the first century A.D. But for the spread of the Gospel the condition of that society must have brought a calamity that would have destroyed the human race as it had done in the days of Noah. More than that, the sayings of Jesus were the source of inspiration to the Apostles and early Fathers; from his sprang all that is noble and great in this world.

Just as Jesus was the reflection of his Father, so his disciples have reflected Him. They too have become the "light of the world" being shed forth, as He said, first in Judea and Samaria, then to Syria, Asia Minor and Rome. The light beamed forth eastward to the ancient civilisations of India and China, northwards to Russia, southward to Africa, westward to Britain. As Paul proceeded in the earliest of these movements from Jerusalem, he stood one day in a synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia and quoted again the words of Isaiah which the aged Simeon had said when Jesus was taken as a baby into the Temple. "*For so hath the Lord commanded us saying 'I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be salvation unto the ends of the earth.'*" (Acts 13. 47).

In his second letter to the Corinthians (chap. 3) Paul tells his Gentile readers of the story of Moses when he went up the mountain to meet the Lord. Not only was there a wonderful revelation of the law and purpose of God to the great leader of Israel, but his actual physical face caught some of the effulgence of light which came from the presence of the Lord. His face so shone that the people of Israel could not bear to look upon him. The Apostle uses the story as an illustration of how the glory of God is reflected from the true believer. He concludes with these words, as translated by Phillips, "*We are transfig-*

ured in ever-increasing splendour into his own image, and the transfiguration comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

The Christians at Ephesus, prior to their conversion, had lived in depravity such as is only known in heathen lands. In chapter 5 of his letter to them Paul reminds these believers of their earlier lives and then, again quoting from PHILIP's translation, goes on in verse 8 "*Live then as children of the light. The light produces in men quite the opposite of sins like these—everything that is wholesome and good and true. Let your lives be living proofs of the things which please God. Steer clear of the activities of darkness; let your lives show by contrast how dreary and futile these things are . . . It is even possible (after all, it happened to you!) for the light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also.*"

Those who have really caught the vision of the crucified Saviour, and who live daily in the presence of God, cannot help being radiant Christians. Many unbelievers will be like the Israelites of old who could not endure the brightness of Moses' face. They will make any excuse to turn away from the light of the knowledge of Jesus because, as Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 4. 4, "*the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*". The conflict between light and darkness has continued through every age. Some, like Paul on the Damascus road, have seen the light and been temporarily blinded. The purity and power of that light has convicted them of their sin, and they have been led to ask the question "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And in turn, those so converted have gone forth to spread the light until it has found its way into every corner of the earth.

The gospel of Jesus has stopped at no human barriers, and has been the means of bringing together true believers of every social and racial group. Rich and poor, old and young, irrespective of colour, class and national roots, have been bound as Christian brethren together in one family, showing up the darkness which is in the world. But the Church has often withdrawn into the shadows, and the light of truth has been interrupted. To off-set this there have been those radiant souls, empowered by the Holy Spirit, who have spread the light wherever they have gone. By their self denial and courageous testimony they have dispelled the darkness of sin and given new life and hope to those who were blinded by Satan. Much darkness yet remains in the world as selfishness and strife bear witness every day. No one tries longer to hide

the awful fact that men cannot live alongside each other in peace and contentment. Compassion and humility are as disdained to-day as they were in every generation before. But these conditions which prevail now are not a signal for gloom and despondency among the Lord's people. The prevalence of sin and darkness is an indication that the first rays of sunshine cannot be long delayed over the hill-top. This is but the intense darkness before the dawning of a bright and happy day, when men and women will be awakened from their long sleep in the darkness of the ground and come forth to the call of the Saviour of the world. Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising." (Isa. 60. 1-3). There is a reference back to this prophecy of Isaiah by John in the Revelation

when in chap. 21. 23-24 he writes "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 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 into it." These words have yet to be fulfilled. God's ancient people Israel have never enjoyed the full light of the glory of God. The remainder of the nations of the earth have remained, for the most part, in darkness since the days of the Flood. But God has provided, at great personal cost, the means whereby all peoples of every tongue shall have a full and fair opportunity to rejoice in the light of his Word. In that day there will never again be those things which must be done in secret; matters of shame in darkness. When the "Sun of righteousness" shall reign over the earth, light and joy shall flood every heart, and every body that is broken shall be made whole. All men everywhere shall gladly give allegiance to the King of love and light.

Blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15. 14-15)

The force of our Lord's words "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" is better appreciated when it is explained that this expression "blind leaders of the blind" was an everyday catchword in Israel. The Pharisees and Rabbis were often referred to—quite respectfully—as "leaders of the blind" in recognition of their reputed ability for leadership in things of God. The fact that these dignitaries had moved largely out of touch with the common people and their problems resulted in their being often referred to in popular conversation as "blind leaders of the blind" and Jesus quoted this everyday proverb in His teaching, adding thereto His own telling comment "And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch". Elsewhere (Matt. 23) He calls them "blind guides" and it would almost seem from the words in John 9. 40 that the Pharisees, knowing of this customary saying aimed against them, asked Jesus if He supported the proverb or not. It is certainly clear that Paul in Rom. 2. 19 makes allusion to the same proverb, which he, as a Pharisee, must have had good reason to remember.

Amen

"Amen" is a Hebrew word meaning literally FIRM, SURE, FAITHFUL. Revelation 3. 14 says *And unto the angel of the church of the Loadiceans write: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness."* Hence it came to be used as an adverb of confirmation, placed either at the beginning of a statement to give emphasis or at the end of prayer or some important statement where it is used as a sort of spoken signature by which the speaker or hearer attests and adopts as his own what has been said. An example is found in John 1. 51. "Verily, verily, (Amen; amen.) I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Again in John 3. 3 "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In 1 Cor. 14. 16 it is used as a signature. Paul says in effect that if we use not our gifts so that they are easily understood "how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, (add his signature), at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" The Psalmist adopts what has been said (Psalm 41. 13), "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen."

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (PAR 2)

There are quite a few instances where the translators seem to have caught a slant on the meaning of the text which was missed by the A.V., and have enriched the sense in consequence. Quite often this is due to a better grasp of the Greek idioms. For example, in John 13. 1, A.V., the familiar words "*having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*" has always been taken to mean that His love continued until the moment that He died upon the Cross. The N.E.B. has it "*He had always loved his own who were in the world and now he was to show the full extent of his love*". It is usually considered that "*telos*" refers to the completion or limit of an act or condition and not to time; in this instance there is a peculiar fitness in thinking of *telos* as referring to the full limit of the Saviour's love ("*greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*") rather than the mere idea of duration. His love, anyway, has endured beyond the gates of death and will endure everlastingly. The Cross was a demonstration of the full limit of His love and the Johannine narrative is made more appealing by this rendering.

In Acts 3. 21 the N.E.B. has the Lord "*received into heaven until the time of universal restoration comes*" instead of "*times of restitution of all things*" as in the A.V. Much the same expression but a little more suited to the modern ear, provided that it is remembered the original word denotes really the restoration of the *kosmos*, the "new heavens and new earth" of Peter's epistle, the restoration of all that was lost in Adam, but not necessarily that all men are saved willy nilly, ignoring the necessity of conscious and intelligent repentance and individual reconciliation to God on the basis of Jesus' death. The word means restoration to the former or primitive state; so far as man is concerned it can only denote recovery of the position lost in Adam, but just as eternal life in the case of Adam depended upon obedience and allegiance to God, so must it in the case of men in the "times of restitution". Salvation can only be on the basis laid down by the Apostles; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

"*The created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed*" (Rom. 8. 19 N.E.B.). This is more intelligible than the A.V. "*The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the*

sons of God". It shows so much more clearly one of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament, viz., that the Church of Christ, composed of all true believers of this Age, is to be revealed in glory at this Age's end, in association with Christ, for the blessing and salvation of the "remnant of men", of all of humanity who can be reached with the saving power of the Gospel. It might be rather an exaggeration to read modern knowledge of the extent of the universe into the expression here; Paul's word was *ktiseus* which only means the creation generally and in Paul's mind as in those of his readers could hardly have meant more than the human creation which men knew at that time. To speak of "eager expectation" in this setting is logical enough when one recalls Isaiah's words (9. 25) "*It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him and he will save us . . .*" Men do not know they are waiting for that wonderful manifestation of God's love and wisdom which is to come when the Second Advent of the Son of God is revealed to them, but when that day does dawn they will say "this is what we wanted all the time—but we knew it not".

A shaft of light on an obscure rendering is offered in 1 Tim. 5. 24 where the A.V. "*Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after*" is improved to "*While there are people whose offences are so obvious that they run before them into court, there are others whose offences have not yet overtaken them*". That is a piece of plain English which almost anyone could be expected to understand.

In a different sphere and touching upon basic doctrine the translation of 1 Tim. 6. 15-16 is sublime in its dignity. Speaking of the time of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent, Paul says "*That appearance God will bring to pass in his own good time—God who in eternal felicity holds sway. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; he alone possesses immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light. No man has ever seen or ever can see him.*" That single definite statement alone should be sufficient to discredit the (nowadays) somewhat outworn idea of inherent human immortality, which in past time was held to be an almost essential article of faith. These words to Timothy stand at the head of those few New Testament references to immortality, all of which show that the attainment of what the Pauline epistles

mean by the word is by decree and conferment of God and not by reason of anything already inherent in human nature.

Heb. 11. 3 "*By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible*" in the N.E.B. is a great deal more lucid than the rather archaic language of the A.V. and is definitely in line with the pronouncements of modern scientific thought. It is agreed that the atoms which compose the visible universe came into existence from nothing at a time not infinitely remote but no scientific observation can show by what means. Heb. 11. 3 gives the answer to that enigma. The parallel Old Testament text to this trenchant word in Heb. 11. 3 is Isa. 48. 13 "*My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them they stand up together.*" In both those texts the responsibility of God for all material creation is

clearly expressed.

A verse usually difficult of understanding is 1 Pet. 3. 18-19 but in the N.E.B. the meaning seems more definite and understandable. "*In the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits*". The nature of His preaching to the "spirits in prison" to use the A.V. expression, is nowhere else in the New Testament alluded to directly and is therefore necessarily a matter involved in some obscurity; but that His humanity, His flesh, assumed at His birth "for the suffering of death" and given at the Cross "for the life of the world" was left there, and that He rose from the grave in the glory that was His "before the world was", a glory of the Spirit altogether too vast to be comprehended in a body of flesh, is demanded by all Scriptural doctrine and is quite clearly expressed in this N.E.B. rendering.

(CONCLUSION)

The route of the Exodus

According to Exodus 13. 17, when the Israelites left Egypt to travel to the Promised Land, "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent *when they see war*, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea". The regular road from Egypt to Canaan lay along the sea-coast and was known as the "Way of the Philistines" because it ran through their land. It was a main trade route and had been so for centuries; it was along this road that the Midianite merchantmen had taken Joseph to sell him as a slave in Egypt, centuries before the Exodus. Why then did Moses lead his people by such a tortuous way through the mountains of Sinai, involving that fearful trek of forty years, when they might have travelled on the high road, by which the distance from Egypt to Canaan was only about two hundred miles—the distance from London to Manchester—and completed their journey in a few weeks? The answer is in this verse and in the records of history. God led them not that way "lest the people repent when they see war". During the half century before the Exodus the reigning Pharaoh (Thothmes III) made no less than seventeen

warlike expeditions into Canaan. That high road was the almost continual scene of invading armies, marching and counter marching. Canaan, for many years a colonial possession of the Egyptian power, was in open rebellion. Israel, hidden away in the fastness of Sinai and Kadesh for forty years, was mercifully spared all that, and by the time they stood on the plains of Moab waiting to cross Jordan into the Land of Promise, both Canaanites and Egyptians were exhausted by long years of conflict, and in no degree disposed to resist this new and virile people coming in from the desert. That was the principal reason that Joshua and his hosts were able so easily to subdue the Canaanitish tribes and take possession of the land.

Avoid the spirit of fault-finding, criticism, uncharitableness, and anything inconsistent with His perfect love. Go where He is most likely to be found, either where two or three of His children are gathered, or where the lost sheep is straying. Ask Him to wake you morning by morning for communion and Bible-study. Make other times in the day when you shall get alone with Him, telling Him all things, and reviewing the past under the gentle light that streams from His eyes.



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

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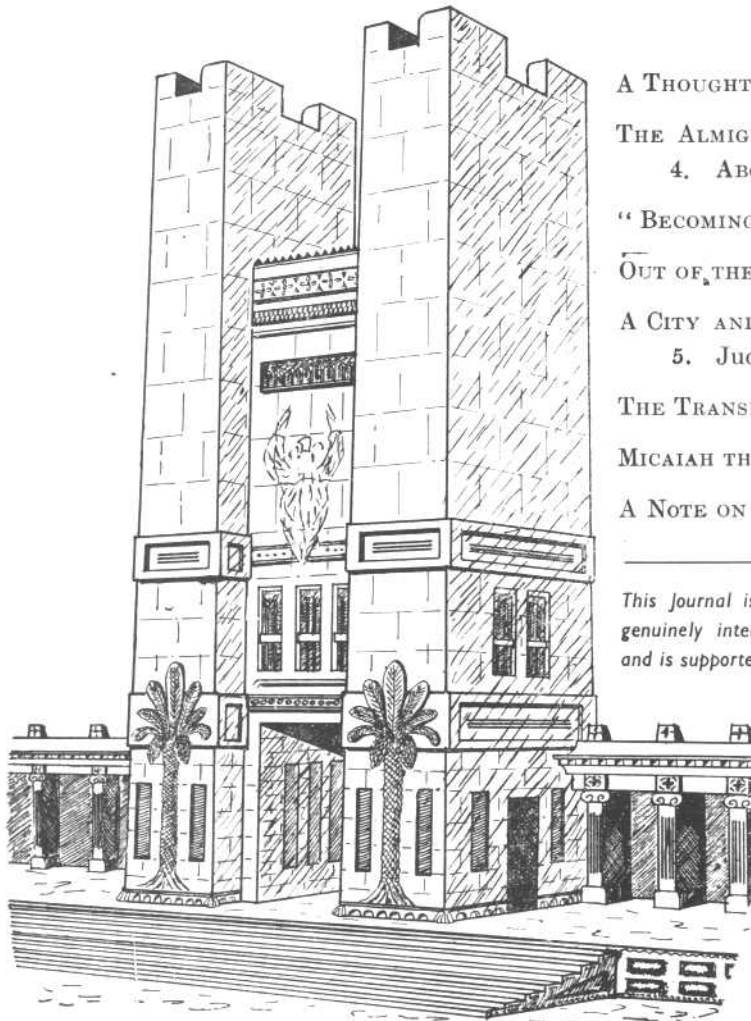
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the Month

"And there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service . . . and who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chron. 28. 21 & 29. 5).

The great Temple of Solomon, classed by the ancients as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, was made possible and built by voluntary service, by men imbued with an ideal. King David knew that this, the dream of his life, would not be achieved by himself; in these words he told his son the Crown Prince Solomon that there would be an army of voluntary workers at his disposal: turning then to his counsellors and elder statesmen he appealed through them to all Israel to give of themselves and their property to help forward this great work.

This materialistic age looks with some scorn upon people who render voluntary service. The whole idea is out of date. If Solomon's Temple was to be built to-day there would be half-a-dozen big "property development" concerns scrambling for the contract, and no matter which one got it the price would be pretty high. Solomon's Temple was a marvellously ambitious structure. It has been calculated that with the gold and silver, copper and iron, rare woods and hewn stone used in its construction it must have cost the Israelitish king the equivalent of twelve million pounds (thirty-four million dollars) of to-day's money for material alone. And the labour at to-day's trade union rates would have set him back another seven million pounds. Then there would have to be the contractors' profit and the architect's fees and compensation for all sorts of people whose real or imagined rights could be shown by their legal representatives to have been infringed by the project, and of course those same legal men's expenses and some associated court costs. Solomon in later life did most regrettably inflict some heavy taxation on his

people but had the Temple been built by modern methods he would probably have had to extract some thirty or forty millions from those same long-suffering subjects on the Temple project alone before the contractors would hand over the key. King David knew a better way. "Every willing skilful man . . . for every manner of service . . . willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord". That was how the most magnificent place of worship the world has ever known—with the possible exception of Herod's Temple, later erected on the same site—was built.

Even among many Christian communities the ideal of voluntary service for the Lord is not exemplified as it should be. How many churches and chapels there are surrounded by a tangled mass of grass, weeds and overgrown shrubs which by the efforts of a dedicated band of amateur gardeners from the congregation could be turned into little oases of beauty in what are only too often drab and unprepossessing surroundings! How many ministers and pastors could intensify their powers for good tenfold with the aid of a small group of helpers devoted to taking the more mundane tasks of his ministry off his shoulders! If the local place of worship is an earthly outpost of the Kingdom of Heaven—and it should be—then surely even physically it should reflect some of that beauty which is an attribute of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" was the Apostle's admonition. Many of our readers are members of minor groups where some of these ideals are put into practice—there is room for much extension of this among Christian bodies. The outside world might even take notice at last and wonder if, after all, there might not be something in the idea of doing something for nothing. The pulpit is not the only platform from which sermons are preached.

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

*"Whom no man hath seen,
nor can see"*

4. Above all heavens

The one who ascended is the same who once descended to the world of man, and now is returned from whence He came. That is a very bald statement of what is perhaps the most profound mystery of the work of Christ. His life on earth as Man is tolerably easy to visualise, the manner of His death and subsequent appearance to the disciples. That He came from God, having laid aside the celestial glory He possessed with God, and for a short time accepted the limitations of human nature, is a belief which can be accepted even if there be only a partial understanding of what the words imply. But what is the truth behind the statement in Ephesians 4. 10, a statement which summarises all that the Scriptures have to say regarding Christ's post resurrection glory, to the effect that He "ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things"? The relatively frequent mention, in the New Testament, of His ascension and of His participation in the "fulness" which is otherwise ascribed to the Father makes clear that these are no casual words: they are indicative of a fundamental truth.

The elementary statement that Christ since His ascension is seated at the right hand of God is a figure of speech which provides a convenient visual image to the mind but does no more than sketch a very broad outline of the basic truth involved. No instructed Christian nowadays believes that God exists in the form of a venerable aged king seated upon a great throne set somewhere in the midst of the stellar heavens, with the Lord Christ eternally passive upon a somewhat lesser throne beside Him. It may be a closer approach to the reality to picture Him as a radiantly glorious being "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto," but even so we cannot with our human minds hope to formulate a picture which comes anywhere near the truth. The nature of the Divine Creator remains for us an impenetrable mystery. And to some extent the Person of Christ must share that mystery. We should no longer think of Him in the form of the Man Who was crucified, rather as the "Lord that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3. 17. 1 Pet. 3. 18 N.E.B. and R.S.V.) partaker of the Divine glory.

"Far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4. 10). This is a more profound and comprehensive truth than the simple and

matter-of-fact statement in 1 Pet. 3. 22 "*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*" but both texts refer to the same thing. The words of Peter are capable of interpretation in terms of space and time and open up to view a picture of Christ sharing the glory of the Father in heaven, the while He is waiting for the "due time" in human history when He is to return to earth again, and that is about the easiest manner in which human beings can grasp the great truth. St. Paul goes deeper; whether by inspiration of the Spirit, or by an inward knowledge of a nature not possessed by any other of the intellectuals of his day, and gained perhaps by reason of the "visions and revelations" which had been his experience, he was able to declare that Christ ascended not into a place inside the heavens, but outside all heavens. He goes outside the creation His own hands constructed in the beginning and that links Him in a very definite manner with the omnipresence of God the Father. That is a state of being men find hard to conceive; the space and time characteristics of our environment constitute for us the only conceivable attributes of existence. Perhaps the nearest approach we can make to an understanding of St. Paul's words in this text is to reflect that just as the Word existed "with God" before anything of our material creation was brought into being and was therefore of necessity "outside" the bounds of that creation, just as the same Word came "inside" this creation in order to be made flesh for the suffering of death, so at His ascension He went outside the creation again, "far above all heavens", to be re-united with the Father and enjoy once more the glory He had with the Father "before the world was" (Jno. 17. 5). At that moment when the ascending Lord, watched by the little group of disciples on Olivet, entered into the cloud which received Him out of their sight, He must of necessity have discarded the material trappings by means of which He had been able to talk and deal as man with men, and entered immediately into that condition of union with the Father in His control and government of all creation which Paul here defines as "*far above all heavens, filling all things*" and elsewhere in 1 Tim. 6. 16 "*Dwelling in the light*

which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." It is from that condition He comes back into our material creation and our world at the time of "His appearing and His kingdom."

The entrance of the Son "far above all heavens" in order to "fill all things" provokes the question whether the Son did at any past time "fill all things" or was this, on the contrary, an aspect of that additional exaltation which according to Phil. 2. 9 was conferred upon the Son at His ascension. The expression "fill all things" is based upon the idea of pervading or diffusing through all creation that which makes it complete. The Greek word *pleroma* which is at the root of "fill" and "fulness" in a number of related texts in the New Testament indicates the filling of a vessel or a space so that it is completely occupied. It would seem as if, basically, creation itself is not complete until the ascended Christ has been re-united with the Father and partaken of that "fulness" or all pervading power which in Col. 2. 9 is expressed as an attribute of God. "For in him" (that is, Christ) "dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity bodily" ("Godhead" in this verse is a mediæval term for Deity and a rather clumsy one) "It pleased the Father" says St. Paul again in Col. 1. 19 "that in him" (in Christ) "should all fulness dwell." At the very least this declaration in Col. 2. 9 means that all which makes the Father what He is, the Almighty, the Eternal, is manifest also in the Son in his embodiment of the Father toward all created beings. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" said Jesus (John 14. 10-11). It might well be therefore that the Son by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made; the Son, who is the Father's right hand agent in all the works of creation, could not and does not finish that creative work, filling it up to completion, until He has visited earth, suffered and died, risen again, and by those things conquered and made an end of evil and sin. In such case the "filling all things" is still going on, for not until the Second Advent of Christ has finished its work of eliminating sin and sinners from all creation can it be truly said that the fulness of Christ has "filled all things" Perhaps, then, creation is not yet finished, man is still in the formative stage, and God has yet to look upon the work of the seventh creative day and pronounce it, as Genesis says He did pronounce the work of six creative days, but not, at that time, the seventh, "very good".

This is where Phil. 2. 9 is apposite. "God

also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This quite evidently implies an addition to the glory which Jesus enjoyed with the Father "before the world was"; the heavenly chorus in Rev. 4. 12 "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" indicate that. The difficulty is in conceiving the nature of that greater Name or higher exaltation which can justly be said to be the possession of the Son now which was not His before. There is an element of advance, of development, here which might not accord at first thought with the customary view of the Son, the Word of God, as already supreme over all created things at the beginning.

Does the answer lie in the realm of His conquest of sin? Explain it how we will, there is much in the philosophy of the permission of evil and its relation to the Divine purpose which is still mysterious, and there are questions posed which are still unanswered. That Divine creation, celestial and terrestrial, was sinless at the start, and that sin is a later intrusion, is fundamental to a correct understanding of the Scriptures and the nature of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That sin and evil will, one day in history, be eliminated and all creation continue into eternity in full harmony with the ways and laws of God, is demanded alike by the vision of the prophets, the teachings of the Apostles, and our own common sense. It is inconceivable that God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1. 13) could allow this marring of His own handiwork to all eternity. And that the earthly life and death of the Lord Christ was, in a manner we do not fully understand despite all our theological definitions, a necessary prelude to the overcoming and eliminating of sin from both the earthly and the heavenly worlds is also a fundamental of Scripture teaching. ". . . having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself . . . whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." (Col. 1. 20). It might well be, therefore, that the greater glory and the higher exaltation devolving upon our Lord at His return to the heavenly courts was the glory and exaltation of sin challenged on its own ground, the power of sin overcome and con-

quered, the fate of evil definitely sealed, and what might yet be demonstrated to be the final phase in the progress at least of earthly creation triumphantly achieved. St. Paul did describe the nations as at one time "*having no hope, and without God in the world.*" (Eph. 2:12) but at the ascension of Christ that grim prospect was turned into the triumphant certainty of a glorious eternity for "whosoever will". In a very real sense, therefore, the ascension of Christ to the presence of the Father set the seal upon the work of creation and made certain in the eyes of all beholders the attainment of God's purpose in that creation. Reason enough, surely, for high exaltation and a Name above every name.

Even so, there is a headship of the Father upon which the station of the Son does not infringe. St. Paul, in his famous "resurrection chapter"—1 Cor. 15.—referring to the consummation when Christ shall have destroyed all sin and evil and all incorrigible sinners, and shall have reconciled to God all who can be reached with the saving power of the Gospel, declares that "*when all things are put under him (the Son) it is manifest that he (the Father) is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*" (1 Cor. 15:27-28). There can be no dispute that the subordination of the Son to the Father is indicated in this verse: great as is His exaltation and unique as is His Name, the oneness and unity of the Father and the Son still permits the difference in degree that is implied by this statement. The Father is still the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose own majesty as the Great First Cause He will by no means share with another. There seems little doubt that at the end of the Messianic Age, which all prophetic Scripture unites in looking upon as the full end of the course of sin upon the earth, the Lord Christ relinquishes the commission which brings Him to earth for the whole period of His First and Second Advents, presents the reunited human race to the Father to whom they have been reconciled, and turns as it were to manifest His Father and execute His Father's will in whatever other sphere of Divine activity is then due in the Divine purpose to be opened up.

Perhaps Eph. 2:7 contains just a hint of those future activities. "*In the ages to come*" writes St. Paul of the times which lie beyond the glorification of the Church with Christ,

God will "*show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*". "Show" is a word meaning to demonstrate, manifest, give evidence. "Kindness", likewise is moral goodness, integrity, from a root word meaning virtuous. "Exceeding riches" is better read to-day as transcendent wealth. In ages yet to come God is going to demonstrate and give evidence of the transcendent wealth of His own grace and favour, of His own moral goodness and integrity in the evident exercise of that same goodness and integrity toward the Church of Christ which He has taken out from amongst mankind. But to whom is the demonstration directed? By that time all mankind will themselves already have become subjects of that same goodness and integrity and have received of the surpassing wealth of His favour. They will already have received of the ministrations of Christ and the Church during the long period of the Messianic Age then ended. The conclusion is almost irresistible that St. Paul had in mind other races of intelligent beings yet unborn, creations which the Most High has not yet brought into existence, the subjects of purposes which for aught we know may well constitute part of the original plan of God but the execution of which must needs be deferred until the dark history of sin and death has run its course and closed in a triumphant demonstration, for the benefit of all who should know life in future time, of the beneficent qualities of righteousness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is hardly likely that, even on the material plane, the creative activity of God is going to be satisfied with the glory and the potentialities of life on one world out of all the immensity of this vast universe. Hardly likely that life as we know it is the only kind of life possible within the power and the purpose of God. Much more likely that in a fashion we cannot be expected to understand at this stage of our experience the fact and the record of sin and death on this planet in human history will be the means of so enlightening future created beings that none such will ever embark upon the same disastrous course; all will be persuaded of the rightness of God's ways. And if this be so, what is more logical than to expect the Church, joined in eternal association with Christ her Lord, to become the means throughout all ages of demonstrating, and being a demonstration of, the goodness and integrity of God and the transcendent riches of His grace?

This then is our God; wise beyond all

understanding, loving beyond all comprehension. In His power, infinite; in His justice, terrible toward all sin but infinitely patient toward the sinner. In the far distances of past ages He commenced to fill His creation with life; the work has as yet hardly commenced, for the basic principles upon which alone life can eternally endure have as yet only imperfectly been comprehended by those first few who have experienced life. One day in the future that comprehension will be complete, and the purpose of God will take a great step forward as life begins to fill every recess of this vast universe.

"To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? It is he

that sitteth over the sphere of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." (Isa. 40. 18-28).

THE END

" BECOMING "

"And are become such as have need of milk and not of solid food." (Heb. 5. 12).

The Christian life is one of "becoming". It is not static or stationary. Either there is growth and progression, or there is decay and retrogression. In the text the Apostle addresses some who had "become" such as had need of milk again and not the more solid food. And for this he felt it needful to administer words of reproof, for by that time they to whom he wrote ought to have become teachers of the Word. Instead of having progressed to that more favourable state they had retrogressed from an intermediate stage of development until now they were back at the point where their Christian growth began.

Naturally in the first phases of the Christian life milk is the proper food for all believers. And the more developed and mature rejoice exceedingly to see the new beginner imbibing and absorbing milk, but it must be cause for much concern and regret for them to see believers who have had the Truth for years retrogressing and becoming such as have need of milk again.

It would be cause of considerable concern and alarm in our domestic life if our boys and girls of "teen-age" growth were becoming such as had need of milk again. We hold it right that they should have milk—good milk indeed—in the first few months of life, and even good supplies of milk along with solid foods for the first few years, but should they once have reached the first threshold of adolescence and puberty and then begin to retrogress and become again such as had need of milk—all milk—this would be to us a very

serious matter indeed.

That is exactly what had happened, in a spiritual sense, with the brethren of the text. A rather considerable period of time had elapsed since they first believed and were fed with milk, but now by reason of that stretch of time they ought to have been developed as far as "teacher-hood". Instead of that there had been malnutrition and decay, and they were neither able to be of service to others in the teaching capacity, nor could they be taught the deeper things which a Christian needs to know.

If these Christian brethren were of the "first" generation of believers some thirty years would have elapsed since they began to imbibe that milk of the Word, and, in that span of time (or even in one-third that span), they surely ought to have grown up to teacher-hood, and have been able to pass on the milk to other new believers any day, and every day, of their lives! They ought to have been teachers of the Word! Yes, God counts the time from when we first believe, and rightly expects to see progression and development in the way of the Truth, and if, as the years go by, there is no such development, He may want to know the reason why!

The brethren in the text had become "dull of hearing", apathetic, sluggish, and somewhat indifferent to the Truth in its deeper, wider fulnesses. Teachings which the Apostle wished to impart were to them "hard of interpretation". Not that they ought to have been hard to impart had the brethren been alert, with their senses spiritually exercised. They were "hard of interpretation"—hard to put over by

the teacher, solely because the brethren had become dull of hearing, and could not exercise their senses enough to discern the good things of the Truth, and the evil nature of their lethargy. That was the tragic side of their Christian life, for while they drifted backwards and became as babes again, the deeply flowing currents of their day and nation were sweeping onwards towards the crisis-hour of their national and religious overthrow. Every day and month was carrying them nearer to that national catastrophe concerning which the deeper truth they could not learn would have been deeply instructive. In the vortex of the swiftly moving current they were likely to be as helpless and useless as children caught in the rapids of a river in spate.

Perhaps nothing is so pitiable in human experience as the decline into a second childhood. In the first childhood—the infant childhood—the vital powers are expanding and developing; the days of milk are followed by the days of “the crust”, and then of “meat”. Here the days of milk are temporary and in proper season—and indeed this is Nature’s way; but in the second childhood the vital powers are spent. Degeneration and decay become paramount, and senility and death loom ahead.

So also with those who, after juvenile growth spiritually “become” such as have need again of spiritual milk. They are “becoming” old, decrepit, and senile—old-age babes.

There are certain marks which are indicative of babyhood which can become accentuated in a second spiritual childhood.

First, it is right and proper for an infant babe to be carried about from place to place, and even to be tossed about in parental hands. Correspondingly it is a sign of immaturity to be tossed about by any and every wind of doctrine that blows about (Eph. 4. 14). This is often seen after some long-trusted teacher is removed by death or other circumstance. Such growth as there may have been is arrested and the reverse procedure begins. Uncertainty and insecurity replace conviction and trust, former beliefs are relinquished and new ones take their place with every shift of wind.

Secondly, the babe tends to “belong”—as a baby claims to have its crib, its toys, etc. The religious babe has its denomination, its church, its sect, its class, and is very careful to “belong”! “My church”, “my class”, “my people”, is its watchword. And this becomes very obvious as its inner helplessness becomes complete.

Next, the babes in spiritual things tend to glory in men, to rhapsodise over “so and so’s” preaching or “so and so’s” ideas. Like the Corinthians, they can say “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos”, or in modern terms “I am of Wesley” or “I am of Calvin” or “I am of Brother——”. Paul had to treat the Corinthians as babes in Christ, whom he had need to feed with milk, because they had turned aside from deeper things. “*Are ye not carnal*” he asks them. Yes, carnal Christians—Christians who had “become” carnal! Not necessarily wicked Christians but Christians living on the level of the flesh. Christians dividing up into groups exactly as the politicians do; or professing preference for this leader or that. When seen at work this attitude is always indicative of the fact that the great central truth of the Church’s oneness in Christ is either lost, or is become obscured, and so likely to become lost in future days.

Again, babes need much sleep. So do some decadent and relaxed Christian souls. The vigour of youth is spent, the fires of enthusiasm are dying (or have died) out, and a spirit of slumber and lethargy creeps slowly over the soul. The sense of ambassadorship is lost, the spur of the ministry of reconciliation is spent, and the tired one lies down to vegetate till senility damps out the fires.

It is an inescapable fact that every one of us is “becoming” this or that. Either we are “becoming” strong in the Lord and in the power of his might with all the senses rightly exercised to discern both good and evil, or we are “becoming” weak and need only milk for our sustenance. There is nothing to-day exactly as it was yesterday, nor will it be tomorrow exactly as it is to-day. It is either growth or decay, vigour or decrepitude, health or disease—a matter of daily change, for good or ill. It behoves us all to give attention to this matter of “becoming”, for

To sow an act is to reap a tendency;

To sow a tendency is to reap a habit;

To sow a habit is to reap a character;

To sow a character is to reap a destiny.

God grant us to be found among those who are being changed from glory unto glory with every passing day, and so “becoming” Christ-like in consequence.

All things are possible to him who *believes*; they are less difficult to him who *hopes*; they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

The Golden Door

On the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour is chiselled these lines from the "New Colossus", a sonnet by Emma Lazarus, who saw this monument as the "mother of exiles" speaking to ancient lands.

*"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free;
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed,
to me;*

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

That was the welcome America set out to give to the oppressed and down-trodden of the Old World. What an apt symbol is that of the welcome that will be extended to all mankind when the gates of the Millennial Age are opened to them, and the voice of the King is heard saying "Whosoever will may come". "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation" shouts Isaiah triumphantly. And we who in these last days of the old world of sin and death are trying to maintain a witness to that new Kingdom, surely we can stand and say, as does that symbolic figure over there in the waters of New York harbour, "I lift my lamp beside the golden door". That might be a very good watchword for our continuing witness; though men may take little heed of what we say, though faith and hope in the Kingdom seems to be confined to only a few—yet—day in, day out, as year succeeds to year and decade to decade, we who see the glories of that coming Day and know that it must surely come can well proclaim without ever growing weary "I lift my lamp beside the golden door".

* * *

Lucifer

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." "Son of the morning" is a poetic allusion to the morning star—the planet Venus—as is indicated by the A.V. margin. The word Lucifer was not originally intended to be a proper name, having been derived from a Babylonian word meaning "The shining one". Long custom, however, now justifies its use as the name of the one who, after his fall, became known as Satan—"the adversary."

Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet (John 7. 53).

"Search, and look," cried the scornful

Pharisees. Had they been such genuine students of the ancient Scriptures as they professed to be, they would not have missed noticing that at least two prophets *did* arise out of Galilee. Elijah the Tishbite came from Tisbe and Jonah came from Gath-Hepher, both of which places were in what afterwards became Galilee. The Pharisees, blinded by expectations of Messiah arising from Bethlehem, entirely overlooked the fact that He was both of Nazareth in Galilee and Bethlehem in Judea.

* * *

Earthen vessels

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4. 7). It was a common practice in ancient times to hide valuable possessions, money, jewellery, etc., in earthenware jars buried in the earth. These jars are constantly being discovered by excavators or when the ground is disturbed for the erection of buildings. Jeremiah, buying a piece of land in token of his faith that houses and lands would again be possessed in safety in Israel, placed the "deeds" in an earthen vessel, "that they may continue many days". The priceless documents recently discovered in a cave on the shores of the Dead Sea were in such vessels. So Paul declares of the ministry we have had committed to us; it is in "earthen vessels," our own frail imperfect human natures. From a different point of view the unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents went and "dugged in the ground, and hid his lord's money". (Matt. 30. 18).

* * *

On Judgment

If any of us had been appointed to supply the list of ancients who, according to Hebrews 11 "obtained a good report through faith" how differently it would have read. Probably many would have excluded Jacob on the basis of his treachery, Rahab on her reputation, David for his heinous sin, and Samuel because he failed to "rule well his own household". If we would have failed so noticeably in the selecting of the Ancient Worthies, what folly it is for us to pass judgment on any of our fellows for whom the "better thing" has been provided!

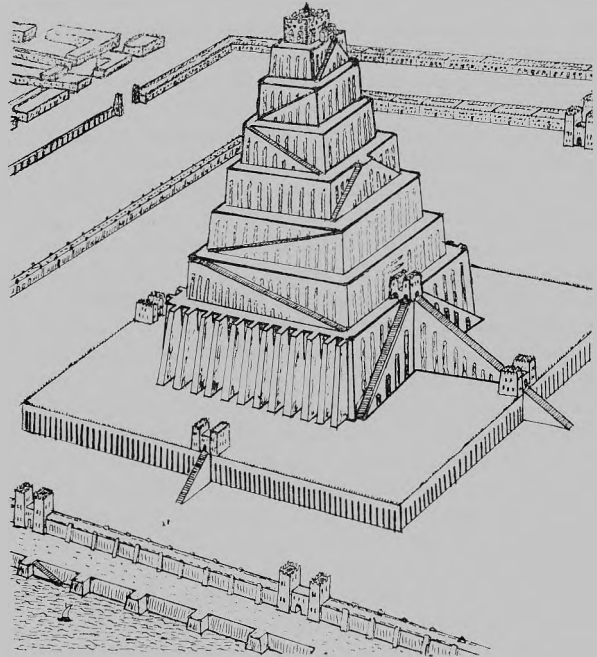
A CITY AND A TOWER

The story of the
Tower of Babel

5. Judgment

The earliest notice of the Tower in secular history is that to which reference has already been made, when, perhaps in the time of Serug the great-grandfather of Abraham, the Semitic king Sargon of Akkad took some of the sacred earth from the Temple enclosure, wherewith to endow his new city of Akkad, and because of the wrath of the god at this sacrilege, rebuilt and endowed the edifice as penance. It would seem that so soon, not more than about four centuries after its erection, the great building was showing signs of decay; and in fact that is characteristic of all its after history. The kings of Babylon were forever repairing and underpinning and rebuilding the giant Tower and recording what they had done for the admiration of posterity. It would almost seem as if this classic demonstration of man's attempt to do without God was doomed from the very start to illustrate the hollowness and rottenness of that which is erected in defiance of Him and disregard of His ways. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" sang the Psalmist. (Psa. 127. 1). That was certainly true of the Tower of Babel.

Nothing more is known of the Tower for three centuries. About the time of the birth of Abraham's father Terah, we find that Dungi, the king of Ur of the Chaldees, Terah's own city, profaned the sanctuary of the Tower, for which the god Marduk, the god of Babylon, slew him. At least that is what the history of the time declares; probably the priests of Marduk knew more about the matter of the slaying than is recorded. Those priests were in process of becoming a powerful and influential body, jealous of their interests, for there is some evidence that long before this the Tower had become a centre of scientific and particularly astronomical knowledge and research. Our knowledge of that fact comes in consequence of the conquests of Alexander the Great nearly two thousand years later. The conqueror had attached to his entourage a Greek scientist named Callisthenes. When Alexander captured Babylon in 331 B.C. Callisthenes examined the written tablets stored in the vaults of the Temple and found records of astronomical observations going back to the year 2234 B.C., which was before the birth of Abraham. While the "fath-



The Tower of Babel in the days of Daniel

er of the faithful", as yet unconscious of his mighty destiny, was still a boy playing in the streets of Ur, the priests of the false religion he was chosen to overthrow were busy in the Great Tower two hundred miles to the north accumulating the knowledge whereby they might perpetuate their hold over the people.

There was more rebuilding soon after Abraham's birth, by Zabium king of Babylon. While Rebekah was on her journey from her father's house to be married to Isaac, there was further repairing in process, at the instance of Samsu-iluna king of Babylon. At the time Ishmael and Isaac were met together to bury their father Abraham, who at last had been gathered to his fathers, the Hittites were raiding Babylon, desolating the Temple and the Tower, and carrying away the image of Marduk in triumph to their own land. Whilst Israel was captive in Egypt, Gandash king of Babylon was repairing the damage done by the Hittites and sixty years later his successor Agum brought back the image of Marduk in triumph. So through the centuries the sorry tale goes on, with scenes of strife and bloodshed, frantic efforts to restore and preserve

the crumbling edifice, seasons when the sanctuary and city lay desolate while the people and their gods endured subjection under the heel of a foreign power. What a biting commentary is this on the self-confidence of the people who at the first had said "Let us make us a name, that we be not scattered abroad upon the face of the earth"!

But despite all these vicissitudes of fate, the Tower remained. The city of Babylon and the Temple of Marduk were destroyed and rebuilt several times but the Tower was always there. It was probably much too gigantic to break down. And it may be that it was reserved by a higher Power for a more spectacular destruction in later days. At any rate, we find the Assyrian king Sennacherib destroying Babylon and, after his defeat outside Jerusalem and his death, his son Esarhaddon rebuilding the city and paying special attention to the sanctuary. A century later came the days of Daniel and that Bible book which more than any other describes life in Babylon in detail. Nabopolassar, the father of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, took the venerable Tower in hand and executed extensive repairs. This is what he says about it himself in the inscriptions that have since been discovered: "At this time Marduk commanded me concerning *E-temenanki* (the Tower of Babel), which in the times before me had become weak, and had been brought to ruin; to key its foundation firm in the bosom of the underworld, while its top should stretch heavenwards". It is noteworthy how the old ideal is reiterated "its top should stretch heavenwards". The king went on "I deposited in the foundations under the bricks gold, silver and precious stones from the mountains and the sea. I caused to be made my own royal likeness and placed it in the foundations. For my lord Marduk I bowed my neck, I took off my robe, the sign of my royal blood, and on my head I bare bricks and earth. As for Nebuchadnezzar my firstborn son, the beloved of my heart, I made him bear the mortar, the offerings of wine and oil, in company with my subjects." Nabopolassar apparently did not finish the work, for Nebuchadnezzar himself spent much of his time and energy in rebuilding and beautifying the edifice. He also left an inscription commemorating what he had done "To raise up the top of *E-temenanki* that it may rival heaven, I laid to my hand" (*E-temenanki* "the house of the foundation of heaven and earth" was the Babylonian name for the Tower.) "All the peoples of many nations I constrained to work on the building of *E-temenanki* . . . the

high dwelling of my lord Marduk I established on its summit." Daniel must have seen the work going on; perhaps he related the true history of the Tower to the king but it he did so the lesson fell upon deaf ears for the work proceeded. In the days of Neriglissar, successor to Nebuchadnezzar, there was still greater activity. Neriglissar is scathing in his comments on his predecessor's treatment of the Tower. He says that it had "sunk in its foundations, its walls were fallen down, its joints were loosened, and its base had become weak". It would almost seem, from the king's scornful description, that the ancient structure, now over two thousand years old, was on its "last legs". But the king goes on "Then my lord the great Marduk inspired me to raise up the building . . . I dug up the ancient foundation stone and read its records". (In all Babylonian buildings a clay cylinder inscribed with details of its founding was buried within the foundations. If the one dug up by Neriglissar was the original one he might have read the same story that we have in Gen. 11 but written from the point of view of the culprits) "On its ancient foundation stone I basd the building; its summit I raised like a mountain; I made firm its threshold and I fixed the doors in its doorway. . . ."

Neriglissar did his best, but the day of reckoning was drawing near. Daniel, living in retirement since the death of his master and friend, Nebuchadnezzar, might have sensed something of the approaching destruction. The end of the empire of Babylon was at hand; Daniel knew that. "Thou art this head of gold" he had told Nebuchadnezzar something like thirty years ago, and already in the East there was coming into public notice the figure of whom Isaiah a century before had prophesied that he would deliver God's people from Babylon. Cyrus was a power to be reckoned with, and in the year 538 B.C., when the great Tower presented perhaps a more magnificent spectacle than ever it had done before, and seemed sure of standing for long ages yet to come, Cyrus captured Babylon and the dominion of the men of Babel came to an end.

Contrary to popular belief, the city was not destroyed at once. Babylon remained a populous and prosperous city for another three centuries and even then it took three more centuries to die. Babylon suffered a slow and lingering death and it was not until the early years of the Christian era that the last inhabitants left the dying city and abandoned it to the owls and jackals of Jeremiah's and Isaiah's prophecies. But the Tower did not survive. We

know a great deal about it as it existed in Daniel's day when it was at the peak of its glory, but almost immediately after, it must have been, there came catastrophe, swift and sudden.

Cyrus died and was succeeded by Cambyses, Cambyses by Darius, and Darius by Xerxes, who is generally thought to be the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Xerxes plundered the Temple of Marduk at Babylon, killing the priests, desolated and plundered the Tower, according to historians, in the year 478 B.C., sixty years after Cyrus captured Babylon. Forty-eight years later still, Herodotus, the Greek writer and traveller, visited Babylon and in his writings describes the Tower as he saw it. It was still standing; Xerxes had despoiled it of everything of value but left the brick structure to take care of itself.

Of the manner of its final destruction we have no details, but what happened can be inferred. A century later, when Alexander the Great conquered Babylon, and the "brass" empire of Greece succeeded the "silver" empire of Persia, the Tower was no longer there. The whole area which once had been occupied by the ancient structure and its attendant buildings and walls and courts was a desolate mound of brick rubble. A building half as high again as the Great Pyramid of Egypt and containing twice the quantity of material as there is in the Pyramid had been levelled to the ground!

What was the cause of so great and comparatively sudden a fall? Could it have been that the building collapsed under its own weight? The stories of constant rebuilding and restoration of which the records are full, and especially towards the last, seem to show that only by almost continual repair work could it be kept safe. The river Euphrates, which in the days of the Tower flowed hard by its western side, to-day describes a wide curve to the west as though to avoid the spot, rejoining its ancient course half-a-mile further on. The old bed is easily to be traced, and still has the foundation piers of Nebuchadnezzar's bridge in position, and the curve of the river is quite consistent with the assumption that at the last the soft alluvial soil on which the Tower was built refused any longer to support its bulk, and the six-hundred-foot mass of brickwork, standing only eighty feet or so from the then water's edge, crashed across the river, damming the latter and diverting it into the course that it occupies to-day.

If that hypothesis is the true one, how apt and truly prophetic the act of Seraiah the

messenger of Jeremiah, Bidden by his master, he took to Babylon a "book"—an inscribed clay tablet—in which was written the doom of Babylon. He was instructed to read out the denunciations and then to cast the tablet into the Euphrates, saying at the same time "*Thus saith Babylon sink, and not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her*". (Jer. 51. 59-64). Now the obvious place for Seraiah to accomplish his mission would be upon the centre of the stone bridge which Nebuchadnezzar had built to span the river, and that bridge lay right under the shadow of the Tower. There, in a place as important to ancient Babylon as Westminster Bridge is to modern London—and the Euphrates at Babylon was just about as wide as is the Thames at Westminster—Seraiah could cast his tablet into the water in a fully impressive fashion. Not many decades afterwards, if the physical signs on the spot are correctly interpreted, the Tower itself followed suit and fell into the river. One wonders if the Apostle John had some vision of that when, speaking under guidance of the Holy Spirit, he said "*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all*". (Rev. 18. 21).

That was the end of the Tower. Alexander the Great determined to rebuild it and set ten thousand men to clear the site of the fallen brickwork as an essential preliminary. They toiled for two months, transporting the broken masses to a point three-quarters of a mile away, where they still remain, a quarry for every builder in Iraq who wants good bricks. But it was not in the purpose of the Almighty that the Tower should rise again. Alexander died suddenly while he was still at Babylon, his empire was divided between his four generals as the angel had beforetime told Daniel (Dan. 11. 4) and the ambitious project was abandoned, never to be revived.

There is an interesting fact associated with that mouldering hill of broken brickwork, lying where it was piled up by Alexander's workmen. When the first modern explorers of Babylon came to it they found that the Arabic name for this huge pile was "*Homra*" and that is the name it bears to-day. But the word "*homra*" in the Arabic and Hebrew dialects has a special meaning. In ancient times, and to a lesser extent in later times too, a fine, hard gritty dust for the manufacture of cement was made by rolling a heavy stone to and fro across a mass of broken pottery and small pieces of friable stone until every piece

was reduced to an extremely fine powder. That powder was called "homra" and was used for much the same purpose as Portland cement is to-day. When the Psalmist talks of the nations being "dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel" it is to the manufacture of homra that he refers, as does Daniel when in his dream he saw the great image ground to powder and scattered by the wind until nothing was left. That name "homra" must have clung to those remnants of the Tower of Babel throughout all the long ages that have passed since those ancient labourers first piled them up. It must have been given to the mound, scornfully, by men who well knew the history of the Tower, who knew of the builders' hopes and belief that it would endure for ever, a symbol of man's defiance of God, and who now saw with their own eyes the final phase of the Divine judgment which had brought to nought the work of those ancient builders.

From that time Babylon commenced to die slowly. Although the Tower had been destroyed, its associated Temple, where the golden vessels of Solomon's Temple had been placed during the Exile (Dan. 1, 2) still remained, and the priests continued, although with a constantly diminishing power and following. One of those priests, sixty years after Alexander's time, was Berosus, a learned and cul-

tured man who wrote an elaborate history of the Babylonians. His history is the source of much of our knowledge of ancient times. Another century passed, and now the Temple itself was in ruins, and in a corner of the ruins a decadent priesthood, holding still to a few remaining vestiges of its former glory, conducted worship to two deities, Marduk, the old god of Babylon, and one whom they called "the god of heaven". As late as the year 29 B.C., when to the Jewish world there was about to be presented the true Light which enlightens the world, there were still priests at Babylon serving the ruined shrines. But that is the last we hear of them. By the end of the B.C. years and the time of the birth of Christ the Tower whose top once aspired to reach unto heaven, and the Temple that stood with it as the centre and sanctuary of false religion, and the priests who for nearly three thousand years had corrupted the earth with their idolatries, were no more. The world had forgotten the people who once boasted that they would make a name for themselves that they be not scattered upon the face of the earth. The words of Isaiah, spoken centuries before, had come terribly true, "*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*"

THE END

WHAT HAPPENED TO NOAH'S WORKMEN ?

What happened to Noah's workmen? There must have been a vast army of men engaged upon the construction of the great vessel which became the means of Noah's deliverance. The transportation of the necessary material to the site of building must itself have been a task for many men; then the erection of the vessel, its interior rooms and fittings, living quarters for the family, store rooms for food, and so on. What became of these people who laboured so diligently to complete this great structure?

They all perished!

Not one of those, outside the family of Noah, who helped to build the vessel accepted the opportunity of deliverance which it afforded. There can be no doubt that the opportunity was theirs, if they would accept it in faith and belief. But not one apart from Noah and

his family, did believe. And they all perished!

We may spend a lifetime working zealously and tirelessly in the service of the Lord, helping Him build some system or organisation through which His work can be performed for a while, but that of itself does not guarantee our acceptance with Him. We can so easily become of those who have done many wonderful works in His Name, and yet be disowned by Him at the last. There is not really any salvation by works. Our acceptance with Him depends upon our own personal oneness with Him, our "deadness" with Him, our submission to His moulding our life and character into His likeness. These are the things that will endure when all our outward organisations and works, like Noah's Ark of ancient time, have disappeared into nothingness. For when they have served their purpose, and are waxing old, then are they ready to vanish away.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

A foreview of
Kingdom glory

One of the strangest incidents in the Gospels is the Transfiguration. In its nature it seems to belong to the Old Testament rather than the New and to be revelation of the kind we normally associate with the Hebrew prophets rather than Christian apostles. That it was given for a purpose there can be no doubt, and that the happening deeply impressed itself upon the minds of the three witnesses is obvious from the unanimity of the versions in each Gospel. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record it and in much the same words. Memory must have been very clear as to the precise details of what happened on that eventful day.

It was about half way through the ministry of Jesus that his disciples had this strange and thrilling experience. They had already followed him through two journeys in Galilee and the north, beside attending him on one visit to Jerusalem. He was becoming well known by now and the authorities were taking notice of his movements and his message. Jesus himself knew that the sands were running out and He must begin to prepare his disciples for the grim realisation that their immediate hopes were going to be dashed by his death, and the golden promise of the Kingdom recede into an indefinite future. But more than that, He must also commence to instil a consciousness of their lives' mission in their minds, to give them the groundwork upon which after his death they might go forward in confidence to proclaim his message in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. He must needs implant in their minds a vision that would never fade while life lasted, and the means He chose to achieve that end was a vision of another kind impressed upon their natural eyes.

The Pharisees and Sadducees had already been to him, asking a sign from heaven, a request which He refused (Matt. 16. 1-4). That incident had passed as it were almost unnoticed, but it served to show that the forces of the enemy were beginning to marshal themselves and Jesus knew that the time would not be prolonged. So he tested his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16. 13). There was a variety of answers. Apparently some had thought He was John the Baptist, raised from the dead, others, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. Still others surmised that He was

the mysterious unnamed one of whom Moses had spoken, "that prophet" who would be raised up like unto Moses, but who, unlike Moses, would be heeded by all the people. But all the opinions and reasonings had one basis; the One standing among them was a man and no more than a man, one who may have been a great man of God and a great champion of righteousness in time gone by, but nevertheless a man still, of Adam's race. It was when Jesus turned to the disciples and put his second question "*But whom say ye that I am*" that a great light dawned on Peter and he spoke out, impulsive as ever, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" "Son of man"; they had been accustomed enough to that title and thought no more of it than when they read in their Scriptures of the same appellation being bestowed upon the prophet Ezekiel. There was in Jewry at that time no real realisation that Messiah himself would be anything more than a man; a great man raised up by God admittedly, but for all that only a man. It was at this point of time that Peter saw in a flash of inspiration that Messiah was more than man; He was in verity the sent of God, come down from heaven to take human form to execute his Divine mission. He was not only Son of man; He was also the Son of God.

That sudden frank declaration was the beginning of the whole spiritual understanding of the Church. All that we, any of us, comprehend or understand of the unseen things within the Vail have their source in Peter's historic reply. Until then the ideas and thoughts, and consequently the hopes and aims, of the disciples and all of Jesus' followers were exclusively earthly. From that time their progress in the understanding of spiritual things began, and that is why Jesus, rejoicing in spirit at the evidence thus afforded him that his work was at last bearing fruit, exclaimed "*Blessed art thou, Simon . . . flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.*" A new phase of his ministry was entered upon there and then. In a very real sense Jesus began that day to build his Church. Even although Pentecost must come before that Church could be formally inaugurated by the descent and baptism of the Holy Spirit upon those first believers gathered in the Upper Room, it was here that Jesus began the gathering out of the first few. It

was here that He found some who manifested the attitude of heart and beginnings of an understanding mind that was to make them fit recipients of the Holy Spirit when the time should come. It is a very significant thing that this passage contains the first occurrence of the word "ecclesia" in the New Testament. "Upon this rock," this rock truth just enunciated by Peter, "I will build my church" (Gk "ekklesia") said Jesus. The term properly denotes the entire assembly of Christ's disciples the world over, the whole "Church in the flesh" at any one time. So it is very appropriate and very significant that here for the first time Jesus avows his intention to "build his Church."

Not less significant is the fact that immediately after this revelation of Peter's grasp of this great truth and the indication thus afforded that the minds of the disciples were getting ready for spiritual instruction, Jesus began to speak of the deeper things of his mission. Heretofore He had worked miracles, preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, and discoursed with his disciples on the virtues of his ways of life, the "fruits of the Spirit" as we might call them, the inherent value of love and joy and peace and mercy and humility and so on. Now He embarked upon a totally different style of instruction. "From that time forth" says Matthew in verse 21 "began Jesus to shew unto his disciples . . ." the things regarding his presentation of himself to the Jews as their Messiah, their rejection of him, his condemnation, his death and his resurrection. They did not comprehend fully what He was endeavouring to teach them, Peter even going so far as to say "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee" but the fact that Jesus deemed it a suitable time to speak of these things is evidence enough that they were at least in a fit condition of mind and heart to appreciate them partially. As the weeks and months passed by they became the more fully receptive to this aspect of our Lord's teaching and although even at his death they had still not sufficiently understood it all to retain complete faith in the face of that supreme tragedy, nevertheless they had imbibed enough to turn the scale when the events immediately following the Resurrection restored their faith and opened to them new vistas of revelation. The work whose beginning is narrated in Matthew 16 achieved its consummation in Acts 2, and the fruit of that which was sown at the Transfiguration was reaped at Pentecost.

One thing yet was necessary to establish

their faith in these necessarily unsubstantial and unreal spiritual promises. Although they did not, as did the Pharisees and Sadducees a little while previously, ask for a sign as evidence of his authority, Jesus knew, none better, just what tremendous value a sign would be to them at that juncture. Some visible manifestation upon which their physical senses could fasten would become a landmark in their memories to be recalled in after days and remembered as an evidence for belief and a foundation for faith that could not be overturned. Because of that necessity they were given the vision of the Transfiguration.

It was vitally necessary that the disciples' hope and understanding of Jesus' teaching be intimately related to the prophecies of the Old Testament. In after days the whole development of Christian doctrine was going to be dependent upon a full and accurate knowledge of the writings of Moses and the words of the prophets. So Jesus proceeded at once to relate his mission and their hopes for the future to the apocalyptic visions of olden times. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Vs. 27). That is about the earliest New Testament prophecy of the Second Advent that we have—in fact it is remarkable how much of the origins of Christian doctrine is to be found in embryo form in this sixteenth chapter of Matthew and the corresponding accounts in Mark and Luke. The disciples were quite familiar with the old prophetic visions. They knew that Moses had predicted the coming of a greater than himself to whom the people would hearken and by whom they would be saved. They knew that Malachi had prophesied of the same one in different terms, a Son of Righteousness who would arise with healing in his wings; and they knew too that Malachi had also promised that God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel before the great day came, to initiate a preliminary work of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. They knew all this, and they knew also that God would appear in glory and power to execute judgment on the wicked and bestow rewards upon the righteous, at the Last Day. So many of the prophets had described the events of that Day in symbols more or less lurid and they could not but have been acutely aware of the vision seen by Daniel where the Ancient of Days was manifested in fiery glory and one like a Son of man was brought before Him to receive honour and glory and a king-

dom that would never pass away. Now Jesus was clearly referring to that prophecy and telling them in effect that He himself was that Son of man who would eventually come in that glory and receive that Kingdom. They had already realised the fact and Peter had expressed it for them in words. And there was something more. They all knew of the stirring passage in the Book of Enoch where the Lord was depicted as coming with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He was not coming alone; He would be accompanied by his faithful disciples. Daniel too had spoken of the holy ones of the Most High who would possess the kingdom in companionship with their Lord, the Son of Man. It was all very exciting and thrilling and what was needed now to seal their faith was some kind of outward evidence that all these hopes were well founded and would not be disappointed.

And it was just at that point that Jesus said to them—surely He must have said it very quietly, letting the words sink into their minds . . . *“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”*

There have been endless discussions as precisely what Jesus meant by those few simple words—for it is manifest that all the disciples have long since tasted of death, but still the Son of Man has not come in the glory of his Kingdom. Some have interpreted the words to mean the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and others the inauguration of the Church on earth, the incipient Kingdom of heaven, whilst its members are as yet still in the flesh. And some, critically, have said that Jesus himself expected to return in power within a few years but that He was mistaken and so the disciples were misled and disappointed, but those who say such a thing are grievously wrong. Jesus had just been talking about his appearance in glory at the day of His “appearing and kingdom” at the commencement of the Millennial Age when his saints would be with him and the world ready to receive him and his words cannot logically be taken to refer to anything else. Without any doubt at all the few men who heard those words uttered must have taken them to mean that within the foreseeable future, while as yet they lived, they would see with their own eyes that which He had just been telling them would surely come.

So there passed, in eager anticipation, six days; then Jesus called three of them, Peter,

James, and John, and led them apart, up into a high mountain. Tabor is the traditional mountain where the incident is said to have taken place, but since Tabor was crowned by a Roman fortress at the time it is unlikely to have been the spot. More likely one of the slopes of Mount Hermon in Galilee was the place where this strange and thrilling scene was enacted.

Before their astonished eyes the Jesus they knew was transformed into a glorious Being whose countenance shone as the sun and whose whole form blazed with a dazzling white radiance. The description is so startlingly akin to that of the vision which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus that one is forced to the conclusion that Peter and James and John saw exactly what Paul saw on that occasion. Then, in company with this transfigured and glorious Lord there appeared two other figures, apparently not so glorious yet evidently not of this earth. In some mysterious way not explained in the accounts, the onlookers knew these two to be Moses and Elijah. How did they know? Possibly they were not able to explain that even to themselves. They just knew that they were gazing on Moses and Elijah discoursing with the Lord of all glory. They heard enough of the conversation to gather its general drift. It was to do with the “decease” of Jesus. That is an unusual word in the New Testament and it does not mean death. It is the Greek word “*exodos*” which means a going out or an outgoing, the leaving of one place to go to another. “Decease” meaning “to die” is a wholly improper translation. Used only three times in the New Testament, one occurrence is in Heb. 11, 22 referring to the “*departing*” of the children of Israel out of Egypt, where “departing” is “*exodos*”. (From this of course we get the name “Exodus” for the second book of the Bible).

So they discoursed not of Jesus’ death, but of His “outgoing”. The significance of that may become more apparent presently. But in the meantime Peter, quick of mind as ever, grasped, or thought he grasped, the meaning of what he saw. Here surely was the fulfilment of words spoken six days previously. Here at last was the Son of man appearing in the glory of his Kingdom, and Moses and Elijah were attending him as supporters and witnesses. Here was the sign for which Pharisees and Sadducees had asked, a sign none of them would dispute, backed as it was with all the authority of Israel’s two greatest men, Moses and Elijah. What wonder that

Peter, with all his usual impetuosity, immediately proposed that "tabernacles," booths of branches and leaves, be at once erected to shroud some of the glory which human eye could barely endure, doubtless with the further intention of bringing all of Israel who would come to pay homage to the glorified Lord and be among the first to accept his Kingship and his Kingdom.

There is not much doubt that the vision was at the first thus understood by the three disciples. They must have thought that the Kingdom was about to be proclaimed and here was the first appearance in glory. Thoughts must have raced through their minds . . . the spectacle of the three glorious Beings descending the mountain in solemn state, joined perhaps by a retinue of angels such as appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem; the running of many people to see the sight; the gathering of the twelve around their deified Master; the submission and tribute of the scribes and Pharisees and priests, of the Roman legions and of Pilate . . . their quickly-woven fancies abruptly disappeared. A radiance, brighter than before, swiftly approaching and engulfing them, so filled them with awe and perhaps fear that, like Saul in later times, they could do naught else than fall prostrate on their faces. As thus they lay, a Voice came out of that blinding Radiance "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" . . .

How long they thus lay, with covered eyes, awe-stricken and reverent before the Presence whose majestic voice they had heard, they could not have known. The moment was too solemn, the happening too tremendous, for any thought or sense of time to intrude. Peter's hasty words were forgotten; their suddenly awakened thoughts of the Kingdom were forgotten; they only knew that they were face to face with the Almighty.

A light touch, a familiar voice; "Arise, be not afraid".

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

It was a thoughtful trio that made its way down the mountainside, with Jesus, as usual, in the lead. There was no glory now, no voices, just Jesus as they had always known him. And He was saying to them "*Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*" So the Kingdom had not come in power after all! They were still in this present evil world and the Son of Man must yet be crucified and slain, and rise again the third day. One would have thought that the sudden

transition back to everyday matters and the sudden shattering of brief hopes would have destroyed all faith. Strangely, it did not. We find the disciples in a more thoughtful and serious mood than ever before. They wanted to know more about the promised sending of Elijah. They apparently understood at last the peculiar mission of John the Baptist. All the evidence goes to show that in the weeks immediately following the Transfiguration the disciples went about their duties with at least the faith they had immediately before. The impression we are left with is that the vision achieved just the purpose that it was intended to achieve.

Thirty-five years later Peter looked back to this day as a red-letter day in his life and the one that was to him the most powerful witness he had to the truth of his faith. "*We have not followed cunningly devised fables*" he said, "*but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*" (2 Pet. 1. 16-18).

"Majesty - honour - glory - excellent glory!" These are attributes of the Second Advent, of the Kingdom in power. Yet Peter says he saw them back there in the First Century. After the development and consideration and experience of thirty-five years he still insisted that he and his companions saw the glory of the Kingdom and heard the voice of God. And that is exactly what Jesus had promised in Matt. 16. 28 he would do before he died.

That verse becomes completely understandable and literally true if we consider that Peter, and James, and John, on that memorable day up there in the mountain, were miraculously given to see an incident in the days of the Kingdom which has yet to take place. Paul was taken up into the "third heaven", the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness" and shown in advance scenes in a world which has not yet come into existence. What wonder if to these three men was granted a similar privilege? Is it not to be expected that Moses and Elijah, in their capacity as "princes in all the earth", "Ancient Worthies" as they are often called, will yet in a future day hold converse with the Lord of Glory in respect to matters concerning the administration of the Kingdom? And if so, what more likely than that they will talk of the great theme that is the means by which

the Kingdom has become possible, the death of our Lord at Jerusalem? But will they think of it and talk of it as "death"? From our human point of view, looking at the matter from this side of the grave, it is indeed death, for at the Cross He left this earth and vanished from the sight of men. But what of those who themselves are on the other side of the Vail. To the angels, waiting, that which was his death to us, was to them a home-coming, a return to his own abode. "I leave the world, and go to the Father" He said himself. Was that strange word "exodos," "outgoing," used deliberately? Is it that Moses and Elijah, talking to the Lord in the dawn of the Kingdom Age, speak of his "outgoing" from the world of men to the world of the spirit, back there at Jerusalem? If so, this would be an incidental corroboration of the thought that what the disciples saw in the mount was not just a kind of tableau or symbolic representation of the Kingdom, but a glimpse in advance of an actual Kingdom scene in which Moses and Elijah will yet definitely figure, two thousand or more years before it happens. And if this

be the true thought, then of course the three disciples did actually see the Son of man coming in the glory of His Kingdom, even though what they saw was a prophetic foreview of an actual incident that has not yet happened, but will definitely happen on a day still future.

The Most High, Who sees the end from the beginning, can assuredly grant such glimpses, or "pre-views", as we might call them. There is nothing difficult of acceptance about that.

It is noteworthy that Peter in his Second Epistle, when referring to this incident, refers to his own "decease" (2 Pet. 2. 15), using the same word "exodos", the only other occasion beside Heb. 11. 22 where the word is used. The recollection of the happening still meant so much to him that he could not use the word "death" in the same breath; he had to say "outgoing" because he also felt so near to the Kingdom.

No wonder that in after days these men had to tell their judges "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard." Who could do else, after such a glorious manifestation of the realities that lie "beyond the Vail"?

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

This is of interest to those students of the Scriptures who expect the establishment of a nation, located in some of those lands, through which the administration of the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be conducted. The Old Testament consistently proclaims Palestine to be a most desirable land, one "flowing with milk and honey", and it is noteworthy that the Divine promise to Abraham takes in the entire stretch of country from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, and from the Arabian Desert to Lebanon, as the territory which is

to be the headquarters for Divine government upon earth. That part of the world in which the human race probably originated and from which it spread outwards has evidently been endowed by Divine Providence with all the natural amenities to make it the most fitting source of the new life which will come to all nations in the time of Messiah's Kingdom. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2. 3).

Friends at West Wickham, Kent, extend a warm welcome to any who would like to attend the special gathering arranged for Saturday and Sunday, 29-30 September, at Justin Hall, St. David's College, Beckenham Road, West Wickham (5 minutes West Wickham station). Meetings commence at 2.45 Saturday and 11 a.m. Sunday continuing throughout each day. Lunch and tea between sessions will be provided. Further details Bro. J. Bignell, 28 Croft Avenue, West Wickham, Kent.

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soil, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable temporal needs can be obtained, He can arrange for it.

MICAHIAH THE TRUTHFUL PROPHET

An Old
Testament story

In order to understand the account given in 1 Kings 22, we need to consider first the conditions prevailing at the time. Ahab King of Israel is at war with Syria. In 1 Kings 20, Benhadad, a luxurious and insolent braggart, has demanded the unconditional surrender and plunder of Samaria and Ahab has refused. A prophet of God assures him of successful resistance. It would seem that Jezebel's influence has temporarily waned, for we find prophetic authority being exercised and a large school of the prophets in existence. Apparently Baal worship has declined and the worship of Jehovah in a very imperfect way has been restored.

The Syrians are defeated twice with great slaughter and the King, Benhadad, captured. Some of the leading Syrians come in abject humility to Ahab to plead for the best terms possible. Ahab shows an unexpected clemency, makes a treaty with Benhadad and, after extracting a promise from the Syrian King to restore certain cities to Israel, lets him go free.

Instructed by the Lord, a prophet disguises himself as a wounded soldier with bandage over his head and appears before Ahab with the strange tale that while the battle was raging, a Syrian prisoner had been entrusted to his care, with the warning that if the man was allowed to escape the keeper's life would be forfeited, and the disguised prophet says, very naively, "And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone". The King very naturally replies, "Well, you have pronounced your own fate. Your life must go for his life". Then the prophet takes off the bandage and his disguise and discloses himself as a prophet and explains his acted parable. "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life and thy people for his people." The historian adds "And the King of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased and came to Samaria".

It is three years later that we come to the events of 1 Kings 22, the story of Micaiah the son of Imlah. During these years there had been reigning in the neighbouring kingdom of Judah a man of a distinctly different type, Jehoshaphat. He was a good king, walking in the righteous way of David his ancestor. The

Lord prospered his reign and he became rich and powerful, but during this rise to prosperity he had thought it wise to cement a friendship with his powerful ally Ahab by marrying his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah, and now, eight years after that event, Jehoshaphat goes down to Samaria on a friendly visit. Ahab receives him with royal hospitality, kills sheep and oxen in abundance. This is part of a deliberate plan for obtaining Jehoshaphat's co-operation in the projected campaign against the Syrians. Ramoth Gilead, an Israelite town, was still in the hands of the Syrians, who, according to the unfortunate treaty made with Benhadad, had agreed to restore it but had not done so. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat if he will join with him in the expedition and Jehoshaphat consents but would like to have prophetic advice. Ahab probably thought this a foolish weakness of his ally but strove to humour him, so four hundred prophets are summoned. These would not be Baal prophets or those of Ash-taroath such as Elijah had contended with. These spoke in the name of the Lord, as verse 12 indicates, but Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Perplexed by the din, it is clear that they were not in his view true prophets of Jehovah. He was accustomed to enquiring of the Lord through the person of *one* man, the High Priest at the temple. They had used the word *Adonai*, which might mean the Supreme God of any religion, and Jehoshaphat, struck with their shrinking from the distinctive name *Jehovah*, asks, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah; One who is not ashamed or afraid to speak in *His* awful name?"

Ahab's keen discernment read at once Jehoshaphat's secret dissatisfaction. He knew where to find such a prophet but he would not willingly produce him. He had had some bitter experience with that man Micaiah. He recalled to mind the day when he had sent Benhadad away in peace and had been suddenly confronted by a prophet. How often the words had recurred to him since "thy life shall go for his life". No wonder with a burst of anger Ahab says, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil". Jehoshaphat's courteous disclaimer is an irresistible demand for his presence, so Micaiah is summoned, probably from prison. An officer is sent to fetch him.

Elijah's trial at Carmel was in some respects easier than Micaiah's. In that case it was the servant of Jehovah against the sham gods, Baal and Ashtaroth. Elijah had stood single handed against four hundred and fifty prophets, the King and his court, and triumphed. Micaiah's test was far subtler of approach and so far more difficult, for these men professed themselves prophets of the Lord. In the name of Jehovah they had uttered their predictions (verse 12). Probably to many, if not to all of them, there had been a time when the true voice visited them; the gift, like all God's gifts, could be turned by the receiver to evil use. He might trifle with it, dumb its utterance through fear of man, pervert it for gifts and rewards, like Balaam, and as he thus trifled with the great power he drove away its presence and an evil spirit came and dwelt there. He became a false prophet, a prophet of lies. We read not so much of the false prophets prophesying consciously a lie as of their seeing lying visions and so uttering deceptions. Micah portrays this condition of things in Micah 3, 5-7.

While the officer has gone to fetch Micaiah, verse 11 tells of one of these false prophets, Zedekiah. As the name means "Righteousness of Jehovah", it is quite possible that he was once a true prophet of God but had lost the true vision by a desire to curry royal favour. Anyway he joins in the unanimous voice of the other prophets and declares that the expedition against the Syrians will be successful. Their united reiteration of the cry, evidently with increasing excitement, reminds us of the repeated, "O Baal, hear us" of Mount Carmel and stands in similar contrast with the calm stern utterance of the true prophet.

In verse 13 the man who has gone to summon Micaiah appears to give the prisoner friendly advice. He acquaints him with what is going on, tells him of the united advice of the prophets and advises him for his own safety and possible release from prison to agree with the popular voice. There is in the whole incident, especially in the words of this officer, evidence of the strange confusion of ideas so common in superstition at all times, which in some sense believes in the inspiration of the prophets as coming from God, yet fancies that they can direct it as they will and that accordingly they can be bribed or beguiled or coerced to speak smooth things. The extreme form of this infatuation is exemplified in the case of Simon Magus, who believed the Apostles were the medium for conferring the highest spiritual gifts from God and yet

madly persuaded himself that this power could be bought for money (Acts 8, 18). The delusion is silenced by the stern reply of Micaiah, "*As the Lord liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak.*"

Micaiah is brought out of the darkness of his prison into the full glare of a Syrian noonday sun. It is a significant scene; there are the two Kings resplendent in their robes of silk and purple and gold, surrounded by all the glint of pomp and ceremonial display. Courtiers, magnificent in their dress and overbearing in their pride are numerous, and at a respectful distance are the prophets keeping up their repeated adjurations to the Kings to go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper. All around are the people and probably the troops.

Amidst this crowd the single prophet stands. To him the dull stillness of the dungeon has been suddenly exchanged for the eager interrogation of the King, the angry taunts of the prophets and the deep expectant hum of the people. All around an eager sea of faces. A weaker heart might have fainted under the heaviness of the burden laid upon him. Not so Micaiah; he was strong in the power of Jehovah and felt no fear.

The King puts the formal question and Micaiah repeats the refrain of the prophets with their exact words, "*Go, and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the King*". Micaiah is a true disciple of Elijah in the defiant irony of the tone in which he takes up and mocks the utterance of the false prophets so bitterly as at once to show Ahab his scorn of them and him.

In verse 17 Micaiah drops the bantering tone and prophesies the defeat of the army which has become leaderless, and the King's worst fears are confirmed; Micaiah has as usual prophesied evil. But Micaiah is not finished; he has more to say from the Lord (verses 19-23). "*Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.*"

Zedekiah shows his contempt by striking Micaiah on the cheek. He professes indignation in words of blasphemy against God and of contempt for His prophets and sarcastically enquires how Micaiah came to know the secret dealings and counsels of God, with the idea of turning Micaiah's words into ridicule, but Micaiah ignores his words and merely declares the shame and terror with which Zedekiah shall find out, hereafter, the truth of his words.

Ahab's affectation of disbelief, which his

subsequent conduct shows to be but affectation, simply draws down a plainer and sterner prediction accompanied by an appeal to the whole assembly to bear witness of it. "*If you return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me. Hearken O people, everyone of you.*"

What courage, what bravery! He was resolute in face of danger. A few hours later all was accomplished. The session is ended, the royal train rolls proudly back to the ivory palace of Ahab, the company of the prophets

whose voice of counsel has prevailed sweeps triumphantly away and the crowd melts and disperses. The one man with whom was Jehovah's presence is led back, dishonoured, smitten and reviled to eat prison bread and drink its water.

A few days later, a King, dying on Gilead's mountains, an army slaughtered and scattered and fugitive attested the truth of Micaiah's words "*If thou return at all in peace the Lord hath not spoken by me*".

A NOTE ON GEN. 45.1-17

Further to the notes on Genesis in the March issue relating to Joseph's divining cup, a reader submits the following extract from the writings of Bishop Wordsworth which makes an interesting suggestion on the incident.

* * *

The cup was a bowl, and was distinguished from the smaller cups, into which the liquid was poured. This act of putting the cup into Benjamin's sack was done by Joseph, as appears from the sequel, to try his brethren, whether, and how much, they loved his brother Benjamin, and their father, who specially loved Benjamin.

The Egyptians practised divination by cups; pieces of metal and precious stones, engraved with mystical characters, were thrown into cups, and then the familiar spirit was invoked, who was supposed to answer questions by pointing to some of the characters on the pieces of metal or stone, or by articulate sounds. Sometimes the cup was filled with water, and the answer was given by means of imagery, produced by the sun on the water in the cup.

But did Joseph actually practise divination by cups? There is no reason to think so? He interprets dreams, but we never hear that in so doing he resorted to any such practice. He said to his fellow-prisoners, when speaking to him of their dreams, "*Do not interpretations belong to God?*" And to Pharaoh he said, "*It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*" If he had resorted to divination by cups he would have been untrue to his sacred character as a worshipper and prophet of the one God, and would have degraded himself to the level of the Egyptian magicians, and would have given countenance to their superstitions, which he was commissioned by God to expose and to confound, by

displaying the supremacy of Jehovah.

The cup was to be like an instrument of God in his hands, for the trial of their character, for a good work of genuine moral divination. And how was this?

Joseph had treated Benjamin, their youngest brother, with special affection. He would now try them. Were they jealous of Benjamin? Were they still the same envious, cruel and heartless brethren, who had conspired to kill Joseph, and had sold him as a slave into Egypt? Or had they been amended by the corrective influence of time, by the famine, by the discipline administered to them in Egypt? As soon as they had left the city, he dispatched the steward after them to overtake them; he would not put them to any long and painful agony of suffering, such as they had inflicted on him. No; the trial, though severe, was short. They were overtaken and questioned, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Here was their trial. It was effected by means of the cup. The cup was their touchstone. If they had been in the same evil frame of mind as when they sold Joseph into Egypt, then they would not have been sorry to be rid of Benjamin, the object of their jealousy, and to avail themselves of the proffered impunity for themselves.

Joseph had divined, and he had not divined in vain. Their repentance was now manifest; their true character was now visible; they had been purified.

This result was attained by *true divination*, not by magical arts, such as were practised in Egypt, but by revelations from the one true God, who had endued him with an abundance of the ordinary gifts of prudence and wisdom, which are far better than magical arts and enchantments, and which Joseph himself magnified to Pharaoh.

(Bishop Wordsworth)



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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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



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

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

There will be found on this page a glossary of terms and names which appear in various articles in this issue but which may not be readily understood by, or familiar to, some readers. It is not always possible in the text of a treatise to embark on lengthy explanations of such terms and it is felt therefore that a reversion to a practice which characterised the pages of the "Monthly" ten or more years ago might be of benefit. The name of the article concerned appears above the terms to which reference is thus made and readers may then refer back to this page when necessity so dictates. The glossary in future issues will not necessarily appear on this particular page; the format of the issue will probably make it more convenient to place it on such page as can most suitably afford the necessary space; it is hoped that this feature will enhance the reader's enjoyment and interest in following the expositions and studies as they are presented.

* * *

This note is for readers in the United States and Canada. Will those friends who send gifts to the "Monthly" by means of Post Office Money Orders please note that usually the Post Office in passing us the money order give only the name of the sender but not the address. In consequence we sometimes have difficulty in identifying the sender and are unable to acknowledge the gift. May we ask that anyone on the North American continent paying in money to their Post Office for transmission to us also advise us separately by letter that they have done so, in order that we may be in no doubt as to the identity of the sender.

* * *

GLOSSARY

of little-known terms and names appearing in this issue.

VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Grattan Guinness, Dr. Henry. The most famous English preacher and writer on prophetic interpretation of the late 19th cen-

ture, his books written between 1878 and 1905. Pre-millennialist, believed in imminence of Second Advent. Died about 1908.

Theodore Herzl. 1860-1904. Jewish politician, founded Zionism 1897, first modern steps to realisation of Jewish Independent State.

GREATEST OF THESE

Elysium. The Greeks' and Romans' idea of the place inhabited by the blessed after death, thought variously to be in the Canary Islands or in the interior of the earth.

Homeric. After the style of the great Greek poet Homer, 8th century B.C.

Nirvana. The final end of the believer in Buddhist religion, the state attained when all earthly desires and passions have been completely suppressed.

Stoic. Adherent of a system of philosophy which arose in Greece about 300 B.C., aiming at cultivating wisdom, justice, courage and discretion.

OUT OF STOREHOUSE

John Cumming, Dr. (1807-1881). Scottish minister and prophetic expositor. Wrote more than twenty volumes on prophetic subjects between 1849 and 1881; expected end of the Age and beginning of Millennium in 1867.

Esdras, 1st Book of. Non-canonical book written in 1st century B.C.; deals with events of the restoration from Babylon. Zorobabel is the Zerubbabel of Ezra and Nehemiah.

OFFERING FOR SIN

Moloch. A Canaanite god, in the form of an ox, to which human sacrifices were made as burnt-offerings. The Israelites from time to time fell under the influence of this practice prior to the Babylonian captivity but never afterwards.

HIS FLESH UPON HIM

Barnes, Albert (1798-1870). American Presbyterian minister who wrote one of the most voluminous Bible commentaries in existence.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

*A study of prophecy
passing into history*

Part I. Bone Coming to Bone

This short series is written against the background of belief held by many students of the prophetic word to the effect that before the Messianic Age commences there is to be a restored and purified nation of Israel gathered in the Holy Land in fulfilment of the Divine promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that this restored nation is to play an important part in the evangelistic work of that Age.

* * *

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a symbol-picture of Israel's regathering at the Time of the End. It is an important passage not because it goes into detail concerning the events of that time—it does not—but because it establishes the basic principle behind the order of events. Putting it crudely, the vision, rightly understood, tells the student not to expect everything at once nor anything too soon or before its time. Perhaps the parable of the growing grain recorded by St. Mark "*First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear*" (Mark 4. 28) is as good an illustration of the truth behind this vision of Ezekiel as any; at any rate there is an almost perfect correspondence although the allusion is to a totally different matter.

The vision probably belongs to the later stage of Ezekiel's ministry. The earlier stage, occupying the first twelve years of his captivity in Babylon whilst Zedekiah reigned still at Jerusalem as a vassal of the Babylonians, comprises in the main messages of denunciation and forecasts of coming destruction directed at the enemies of his people—Babylon, Assyria and Egypt—and words of condemnation against the apostates in Israel; there were many such to be condemned. This stage ends with chapter 32 of his prophecy. The remainder, from chapter 33 onwards, elaborates a different theme altogether, the Divine leading of Israel to the point of cleansing and re-acceptance into God's purposes, their final testing in a time of fiery trial from which they emerge victorious, and their ultimate position before God as a holy nation fitted and dedicated to this purpose in the day of world conversion when the eyes of all men are opened to God and his ways. The only date given in this section is that of the final vision, the restored Sanctuary (the Temple of Ezekiel) in chapters 40 to 48, dated some

eleven years after Zedekiah had been dethroned, the Temple destroyed, Jerusalem left in ruins, the land desolate and the people taken into an apparently hopeless captivity. It must have seemed then that Israel would never rise again. Somewhere about this time, it must have been, Ezekiel saw this vision of the valley of dry bones and by inspiration of the Spirit interpreted it aright as depicting Israel's future restoration. As such it was a message of hope to captive Israel; it bade them look forward to a time when, as a people, they would have learned the lesson all mankind have yet to learn, that "*righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14. 34) and so would be received back into the full enjoyment of their Divine commission to be a light to the nations and declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49. 6). It is also a message to those Christians who live at the Time of the End, the time when Christ's Kingdom is about to supersede the kingdoms of men and occupy all the earth in all its glory, for an essential factor in that Kingdom is the presence upon earth of a dedicated "holy nation" composed, at least predominantly, of the natural sons of Abraham, conscious at last of their momentous destiny. It is this holy nation upon earth, in close association with the glorified Church of Christ in heaven, which is to be the instrument in God's hand for the final act in the drama of sin and redemption, the conversion of "whosoever will" among all the nations, with Satan bound that he deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 2).

The vision of Ezekiel 37 is an acted parable. It comprises three distinct stages of development and the correspondency can be clearly traced in the history of what might be called the latter day restoration of Israel. There is nothing fanciful in the impression formed by so many Christian students of the signs of the times that the current development of the new nation of Israel is intimately related to the Divine purpose for world evangelisation even although a dispassionate view of the structure and outlook of modern Israel would seem to give little basis for expecting any great revival of Christian faith and evangelism to have its origin from that quarter. The story of the valley of dry bones would seem to indicate that this apparent anomaly is just

what might be expected at this time; the mills of God grind slowly—but they achieve their purpose in the end.

The prophet found himself set down in a valley—more properly, a wide, flat plain—the ground of which was covered with bones—the disjointed, scattered relics of what had once been men. Here, evidently, lay the remnants of a nation. Their enemies had over-run them, taken their cities and their goods for themselves, slain the last desperate defenders with the sword, and left their bodies to the jackals and the vultures. Only the bones remained, and because it is not in the power of man to restore life to the dead, they lay in the dust, scorched in the sun by day and frozen in the cold by night. A fitting picture of the apparently hopeless state of Israel after their final scattering in the early years of the Christian era, when the six hundred years of slow submergence to the power of their enemies which began with Shalmaneser of Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the 6th century B.C. ended in the Roman dispersal of the residue of the ancient people into all lands and the closing of the land of Israel against them. From that time the sacred soil became the property successively of Roman, Christian, Arab, Turk, and Christian again, but never Israel, until in 1948 a pitifully small remnant of that once proud people took grim and tenacious possession of a pitifully small portion of that once wide and prosperous land and re-named it Israel. But that was enough to mark a move forward in the development of God's purpose. That was at least an indication that the age-long "Times of the Gentiles" which Jesus declared (Luke 21. 24) would be characterised by the subjection of Jerusalem to alien powers was drawing to its close. More than anything else, it was 1948 which began to give meaning to Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones.

... He said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, . . . say to the

wind . . . come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army . . ." (Ezek. 37. 4-10).

There are three stages in the vision and these correspond to three clearly marked stages in the process of Israel's regathering. First there was a noise, and a shaking, the bones coming together, bone to bone, forming themselves as it were into complete skeletons, bereft of flesh but undeniably basic frameworks upon which bodies of flesh might afterwards conceivably be built. Next comes the growth of sinews, flesh and skin; the bony frameworks taking on more and more the frames of men, muscles encircling and rippling round the bare skeletons, flesh filling up the hollows, skin spreading and covering the still forms so that now the valley was filled with recumbent bodies, true men, but without life. The vital spark which alone could transform that valley of the dead into a living multitude was still missing. Then the third and final stage: the Spirit of God sweeping down from the heavens like a mighty wind, breathing into the nostrils of those lifeless bodies, filling the lungs, opening the eyes, flexing the arms; and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army, fitted and ready for the commission and work God was to lay upon them.

Just so, it may be, there are three distinct stages in the process of Israel's restoration in the latter days and their preparation for the Divine service. In the first two stages the vitalising influence of the Divine spirit cannot be discerned even though God's power is manifest in what is evidently a necessary preliminary. The third stage involves the power of the Spirit, and a Spirit-led people strong now in the Lord of Hosts and ready to do Him service. We see not yet the third stage; the question now is to what extent the first two have passed into history.

Bone coming to bone! The first outward evidence of the coming re-constitution of the nation of Israel! For nearly two thousand years this people had been wanderers and sojourners in the earth, having no land they could call their own, yet obstinately refusing to be assimilated into the nations among whom they dwelt. The Nineteenth Century Jew was still as clearly a Jew as his compatriot of the First Century, and just as passionately desirous of regaining his lost homeland. "Next year in Jerusalem" was always the

prayer at the annual feasts and religious observances; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning" the heart-felt cry of the exile. And the nineteenth century closed without any real prospect of the age-old hope being anywhere near fulfilment, even though the rise of political Zionism in 1878 under Theodore Herzl had at least kindled a fervour that was beginning to translate hope into action. Nine years later, in 1887, Dr. Grattan Guinness in "*Light for the Last Days*" had concluded from his study of Biblical prophetic considerations that the year 1917, thirty years future, would prove to be a most momentous year in the outworking of the Divine purpose with respect to the closing events of this Age and the opening of the next, the Millennial Age. And in 1917 General Allenby entered Jerusalem at the head of British troops: Turkish rule gave way to British in the Middle East and the following year saw the celebrated "Balfour Declaration" which pledged British support for a Jewish home in Palestine—the first step to the re-creation of the nation of Israel. In 1922 Britain received the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, and from then until 1936 immigration proceeded at an increasing rate as Jews from all parts of the world began to turn their faces Zionward.

Here, surely, from 1917 onward, bone began coming to bone. There was as yet no flesh; the land of Palestine, administered by Britain under the Mandate, was not a Jewish state and in fact Jews, Arabs and Turks had equal rights in it. The country was as much under the domination of the Gentiles as it had been before; the only difference was that the occupying power was a great deal more friendly towards the sons of Jacob than had been the previous rulers; the administration was more just and progressive and the country could begin to develop. Jewish enterprises began to be set up and to flourish; Jewish settlements and villages and towns began to spring up, Jews, oppressed and persecuted in other countries, began to migrate towards their ancient land. It was not long before Christian students began to point to the old prophecies and see in current events their fulfilment. "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth" cried Isaiah (Isa. 43. 5. 6). "I will gather them out of all countries . . . and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to

dwell safely" said Jeremiah (Jer. 32. 37) and then again "I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame . . . a great company shall return thither" (31. 8). Perhaps one of the most widely quoted, especially at times of intense persecution, was the eloquent passage in Jer. 16. 14-16 "It shall then be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." So the long banished exiles began to dream of a future day when they could dwell as citizens in their own land as of right.

There was little recognition of the hand of God in all this. A minority there was, as there is in every community and every age, which returned to the land in pious belief that God was about to redeem His promise of two and a half millenniums standing. The majority went back frankly with the intention of trusting in the power of their own right arms to establish their position and make their way. The incentive and emphasis was a political and not a religious one. It is not surprising therefore that it all but foundered on the rock of the political re-adjustments of the great Powers during the nineteen-thirties. Arab nationalism was becoming a force to be reckoned with in world affairs; the idea of a Jewish state was not so attractive to the world's politicians, and presently the early rosy promises and honeyed speeches began to be forgotten and reasons advanced for slowing up and even stopping the increasing trek of Jews to what they were now beginning, quite improperly, to regard as their own land. The celebrated—or notorious—British Government White Paper of 1936 sounded the death knell to immediate Jewish hopes with its reduction of further immigration to negligible proportions and concessions to Arab interests. Then came the Second World War, and following that increasing impatience on the part of the West with what had now become known as the "Jewish problem", and demands from the Arab world that the whole so-called "experiment" should be abandoned and complete Arab control substituted.

Thirty years from the liberation of Jerusalem and the Balfour Declaration which had been hailed as the commencement of a new era for the Jew, and these unhappy children of Abraham were apparently doomed to lose all they had achieved. The whole history of

that thirty years was one of a rattling of bones, jerky, disjointed movements of the dead endeavouring to make themselves a place in the world of men but achieving little more than bone coming to bone, unable so much as to clothe themselves with flesh. There was a noise, and a shaking, as the prophet said—discussion and clamour, quasi-military underground movements seeking by force to take what the Powers would not give willingly,—but the sum total of it all was nothing more than the joining together of scattered bones to form their skeletons. There was no substance; there was no life. Britain had left Palestine a desolate and bankrupt land. Every form of civil and military authority had been withdrawn. Industry and trade was at a low ebb. There was no money and no international credit—who would grant such to a people apparently destined to be overrun and submerged? Their enemies stood around, ready to swoop on the prey. Israel was a bare skeleton. Eone had come to bone, but that was all.

That was the position in the year 1948, when at last Britain unilaterally relinquished the Mandate granted twenty-six years earlier by a now defunct League of Nations, moved out

of Palestine, and the Arabs moved in. The world waited with detached interest to see the apparently defenceless Jews pushed into the sea, and the politicians began to alter the colours on their maps. The newspaper reporters sharpened their pencils and their editors sketched out the outlines of their editorial comments sympathising with the vanquished and congratulating the victors. Many Jews, Christians too, altogether but an insignificant minority in the world of men, but believers in the purpose and promise of God, bowed their hearts and minds in prayer that His avowed purpose might stand . . .

A few days later a handful of men in Tel-Aviv proclaimed to the world the establishment of the new State of Israel, called upon the nations for recognition as such, fought and soundly defeated the invading Arab forces and pushed them back sufficiently far to draw for themselves a frontier within which they proceeded to build a self-governing and independent nation.

And in 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel the flesh began to form around the dry bones.

(To be continued)

THE DECREE OF CYRUS

The name of Cyrus is always associated with the famous "Decree" in which he gave authority for the return of the exiles and the restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem. Taken in conjunction with Isaiah's prophetic words of two centuries earlier in which Cyrus was mentioned as the Lord's anointed for the restoration of Judah (Isa. 45. 1), it has been generally assumed that Cyrus the monotheist had a special partiality for the Jewish religion as against the polytheism of the Babylonians whom he had conquered. The record of his Decree, preserved in Ezra 1. 2 seems by its phraseology to betoken a special faith in the God of Israel. *"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 . . ."*

But compare, with that, another decree of Cyrus, issued at about the same time. This one appears, not in the Bible, but on inscriptions discovered in the ruins of Ur of the Chaldees, a city that was sacred to Sin, the Moon-god of the Babylonians. *"Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favourite sign*

delivered into my hands 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 a peaceful habitation." The sentiments are almost identical, except that here Cyrus credits the gods, especially the Moon-god, with having given him all the kingdoms of the earth, whereas in Decree to Israel he gives the credit to Israel's God. It would seem that Cyrus was, in fact, more of a diplomat than was formerly thought; he evidently intended being polite to all the gods in order that he might at least run no risk of unwittingly slighting whichever one of them proved in the end to be the true God.

Gone from us

Sis. M. Gaylord (Calif., U.S.A.)
 Bro. S. Morgan (Bristol)
 Sis. A. Swallow (Blackpool)

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

THE MAN BORN BLIND

A story
of Jesus

It was Jesus who saw him first, the blind beggar standing by the wayside. His affliction and his poverty had aged him beyond his years; on closer inspection it could be seen that he was still a comparatively young man, doomed by his blindness to a life of utter hopelessness. He had never seen; he had been blind from birth, an unhappy victim of the dirt, disease and ignorance so characteristic of his day. Now he stood by the wayside, probably only partially conscious of the milling crowd, waiting mechanically for the clink of the occasional coin as it was carelessly cast into his little bowl. Thus had he stood for more years than he could well remember; thus would he stand for as many more without circumstance or event to vary the dull monotony of his days. He was evidently a recognised member of the local synagogue; in a day when everybody, practically without exception, observed the formularies of public worship on the Sabbath that would not in itself be surprising. There were many of his kind in Judea, and no one took very much notice of them.

For once, this one was noticed. The disciples, moving down the road in converse with the Master, made the beggar the subject of a question. It would appear that some of them at least were acquainted with him and his history; at least they knew that he had been blind from birth. They do not seem, at that moment at any rate, to have done anything to mitigate his misery by way of almsgiving. Their interest in him was theological rather than benevolent. They propounded a question which has been repeated a myriad of times since. "*Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (John 9. 2). In how many different forms has that question been cast, by the devout and cynical, the student and the atheist? Why do the innocent suffer; why does the consequence of one man's sin fall upon another? Men have evolved a variety of answers but outside the Christian faith there is none that is really satisfactory. Even within the general popular understanding of the faith the answers are all too often only suggestive or frankly hazy and uncertain. It is only against the background of God's eternal purpose that an outline of the answer can be traced, and even then it is not good that we be too dogmatic or precise about our definitions. There is much yet for us to learn

about God and about man before we can look at this matter clearly from the Divine standpoint and fully understand why.

Jesus gave an immediate answer, of a nature which was as much as his disciples could be expected to understand and perhaps we also. "*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (vs. 3). Both the R.S.V. and the N.E.B. make the reply a little more accurate by rendering "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him". It is a mistake to assume, as some have done, that Jesus meant God had deliberately caused this man to be born blind so that in after years he might become an example of the Lord's saving power; the operation of the law of sin and death had produced plenty of blind men in Israel at that time suitable for such an example without the Lord having to create one specially. And the idea savours of a callousness to human infirmity and distress which does not square with the loving character of God. Our Lord's words conveyed a deeper meaning and had a wider scope than that. The disciples in putting their question, with this man as the particular subject, really embraced the entire problem of undeserved suffering. Our Lord answered in similar vein; the whole purpose of God in permitting the reign of evil under which the innocent must inevitably suffer was and is that His purposes should be plainly revealed and made known to man. Because from the beginning men refused to learn in any other way, God has ordained that they shall experience for themselves the evil effects of sin, and by comparison with the good effects of righteousness make, at the last, the irrevocable choice—for life, or death. The whole purpose of the permission of evil which God could so easily have restrained, but did not, is that His wisdom and justice and love and power, all that the Apostle Paul in Eph. 2. 7 calls the "exceeding riches of his grace" should be demonstrated openly to all intelligent creatures who have or will ever come from His creative hand.

Whilst the onlookers were pondering the meaning of that remark Jesus moved into action. Unlike the disciples, He had consideration, not only for the theological question to which the incident had given rise, but the

physical needs of the man himself. That man, at least, could hardly be expected to join in a dispassionate discussion on the relation of innocence to blindness with the underlying assumption that anyway one day it would be all well with them that feared God. Whether he was conscious of the power of the One who stood compassionately before him we do not know, but he was certainly conscious of his own pitiable condition. And now Jesus was doing something to him; He was anointing his sightless eyes with a damp clay made from the dust at his feet, and He was telling him to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash it off. Whether he had real faith that he would thus be healed of his blindness does not appear from the record; the later part of the narrative shows that he did not at this time recognise Jesus as anything more than man. Perhaps the calm authority of that sympathetic voice, perhaps some inner glimmering that this was no ordinary man and no ordinary incident; maybe he was something of a God-fearing man despite his affliction and poverty; at any rate something there was which led him unhesitatingly to obey the command, and he made his way the half mile or so to the Pool outside the city walls, and washed, and came seeing.

This story is intriguing for the many details it does not record. Did the disciples who asked the original question realise that the man's blindness had been cured? We do not know. The New English Bible points out that the chapter division between John 8 and 9 may possibly be in the wrong place and that the last verse of 8 and first verse of 9 may reasonably be taken as reading that when the irate Jews took up stones to stone Jesus He hid himself and escaped their notice and this ends the verse, and that then the account should read "*He left the Temple, and as he went on his way he saw a man blind . . .*" If this is right then the man probably went the half mile to the Pool and made his way to his home while the disciples remained with Jesus in the vicinity of the Temple so that they did not see him cured or after his cure. The next development was with the man's neighbours and friends, when he got home. There was considerable discussion and speculation as to what had happened to him; some of them refused to believe that he was indeed the same man and he had to assure them of his identity. Once convinced, they wanted to know all about it, but all he could tell them was that "*a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto*

me, Go to the Pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight" (vs. 11). All that he seemed to know about his benefactor was his name.

This man has been criticised in many a sermon for not going straight back to Jesus to express gratitude for the miracle. Maybe that criticism is unjust. Modern cases are known in medical history where a person born blind has gained sight, by surgical operation or otherwise. In such cases it is usually weeks before the patient is able to recognise and distinguish objects properly; there has to be a sense of association to be acquired and powers of focus to be developed. It was probably some considerable time before this man was able properly to make use of the sight he had been given; he looked upon things the shape and appearance of which he had formerly been quite unable to visualise. He almost certainly found it more difficult at first to make his way along the street than he had done in his blindness. So it would not be surprising if he quite instinctively made his way home first, back to the only refuge and place of security he knew, until all the implications of this tremendous thing that had happened to him had sunk in. By that time, if he had the impulse to find the man who had done this and thank him, he was not to be found. That at least is what he told his neighbours. "*Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*" (vs. 12).

The neighbours did the obvious thing. They took him to the Pharisees. In the old days, under Moses and the Judges and the Kings, when a man of Israel was healed of any grievous disease, he went to the Priest with a thank-offering to God. Now the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat and arrogated to themselves the avenue of approach to God. So they received the little deputation with their usual superciliousness, listening with faint contempt as the story of the miraculous cure was unfolded, a contempt that abruptly changed to angry attention when the hated name of Jesus was brought in as the one who had done this thing. Apparently it was on the Sabbath day that the incident occurred, and after hearing details the first reaction of the Pharisees was indignation. "*This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day*". Some of them were not so sure. "*How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?*" Before very long the Pharisees were involved in an argument between themselves and that did not improve tempers. Failing to reach agreement they resolved the matter by turn-

ing to the blind man and asking his opinion. That Pharisees should demean themselves by seeking the views of a beggar-man on any subject at all indicates a definitely serious state of affairs and shows how deep the cleavage between them must have gone. The healed man did not intend to be drawn into their quarrel; he stated, simply and succinctly "*He is a prophet*". No one could find much fault with that definition for the office of a prophet in Israel was hallowed by antiquity.

Balked at this fence, and unwilling to accept the evidence, the Pharisees called the man's parents, and demanded of them how their son was now able to see. The parents had no more intention of being drawn into the controversy than had the son. "*We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not; he is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself*" (vs. 20-21). Any comment which could be construed as an expression of faith in Jesus could result in excommunication from the synagogue, and they had no intention of risking that. Round Three closed with the Pharisees still on the losing side.

The Pharisees were getting rattled; somehow or other they had got to discredit the Nazarene but so far they could find no weak point in the case. They called the man again. "*Give God the praise*" they told him "*We know that this man is a sinner*". This was a subtle move to put the unfortunate beggar in a tight corner. The formula "*Give God the praise*" was an expression making it incumbent upon the person addressed to answer as if in the sight and hearing of God and as if it was God who was demanding the answer; such an injunction made it obligatory upon the one concerned to give a truthful reply. Now if the man refused to admit that his benefactor was a sinner, he could be arraigned for blasphemy, for—in theory at least—all men were sinners. If he did so admit, then the healing was no miracle and merely a natural event and their purpose would be achieved. The man, however, was still one jump ahead of his interrogators. "*Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see*" (vs. 25). To the chagrin of the Pharisees, Round Four ended with no better result than before. The beggar had very neatly side-stepped the question which had been framed with the intention of incriminating him one way or the other.

In desperation they returned to the original

question. "*What did he do to thee? How opened he thine eyes?*" (vs. 26). His answer shows that he had all the time been leading them on; he was much more astute than they had imagined. At this point he shifted his ground entirely and assumed the offensive. "*I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?*" (vs. 27). The sarcasm was not lost upon his interlocutors; anger at being so neatly trapped led them to lose self-control; they roundly abused him and referred to their own association with Moses. "*We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is*" (vs. 29). That vicious remark was mistake number two; they had laid themselves wide open to a crushing retort from the opponent they had so greatly under-rated, and the retort was not long in coming. "*Why herein is a marvellous thing*"—the irony of the words penetrate even through the English translation—"that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (vs. 30-33). That was probably one of the most telling sermons ever preached to Pharisees by a layman, and every word in it stung them to fury. All pretence of finding a valid reason for rejecting the miracle was cast aside, and in their rage and resentment they shouted at him "*Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*" and there and then excommunicated him. They could not disprove the miracle; they refused to admit it; so they solved the dilemma by getting rid of the man whose continued presence in their synagogue would be a constant evidence of the reality they denied.

No wonder Jesus called them blind guides. The man had sight, and knew he had sight. The Pharisees were blind, but they did not know they were blind, and they resolutely refused to do anything to enable themselves to see. The man knew one thing, and one thing only: "*He hath opened mine eyes*". The Pharisees, at the end of the story, could only say weakly to Jesus, "*Are we blind also?*" The man received his sight because he was prepared to step out in faith at the start; the Pharisees adopted an attitude of antagonism at the outset and in consequence they never had their eyes opened.

Later on Jesus met the man. It was at that meeting he realised for the first time the identity of his benefactor. Verse 35 in the A.V. renders Jesus' question "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" but some ancient manuscripts have it "the Son of Man". It matters little either way; either expression meant one thing, and one thing only, to the man. It told him that his deliverer was in fact the long-promised Messiah, the One for whom all Israel watched and waited, and he believed, and he worshipped. One cannot resist the conclusion that in this man Jesus had found a disciple of sterling worth, and although, so

far as can be discerned, he never again appears in the Scripture record, there is little doubt that he must have become one of the stalwarts who pioneered the new faith after the tragic events of the Crucifixion had passed into history, and perhaps for four or five decades after that historic sabbath gave evidence that not only were his natural eyes opened that day, but his spiritual eyesight glimpsed a vision which inspired and led him for the rest of his life to serve with joy and tenacity of purpose the One who first saw him standing begging by the wayside, as He passed by on his way from the Temple.

A Thought for the Month

"The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. 3. 8).

Those are strong words; James the Just intended them so. He knew, perhaps better than any of the other believers, what incalculable damage to the Cause of Christ and to the hearts and souls of his disciples is wrought by the undisciplined and unrestrained exercise of the powers of condemnation which we all possess. It is one of the marks of the mature Christian that he has learned to keep his tongue—and his pen—within bounds when approaching the sphere of other men's failings and shortcomings. It is one of the marks of the Christ-guided disciple that his speech is kept from evil, and his lips from speaking guile (Psa. 34. 13), and that so far as the erring and the fallen are concerned he is much more solicitous for their strengthening and restoration than their condemnation and punishment. In this our day, as in that of James there does arise from time to time some impetuous Jehu who thinks that he has been Divinely ordained to cry out the names of the condemned of God and drag their delinquencies into the light of day for the regalement of the faithful. The tragedy of it is that God does not necessarily condemn the ones we may think ought to be condemned; He knows of factors in the case which are hidden from us. There may be an enthusiasm which of itself is commendable, a zeal that of itself is beyond challenge; neither enthusiasm or zeal will be of any avail if unjust recrimination, slander and evil speaking blinds to an appreciation of the spirit of the Christ who came not to condemn but to save.

One of the first things we have to learn in the school of Christ is that not one of us is in

a position to pass judgment upon another fellow-pupil, either in matters of his doctrine or matters of his conduct. It is true that the saints are going to judge the world, in a day yet future, but they have got to become saints first. And those who are so lacking in the spirit of Christ—and sometimes in the elementary principles of decency also—as publicly to decry another in a manner that might cause uncontrollable and irremediable harm will eventually find that the thrones of the redeemed have steps which are too high to be climbed except by those who have attained the full stature of a man in Christ (Eph. 4. 13). Amateur theologians who are so ready to denounce, not only the convictions of their theological opponents, but the opponents themselves for holding those convictions, are rivalled only by the untrained sociologists who with equal gusto condemn all whose code of conduct does not precisely match their own, and rank them with those whom the Apostle Paul calls the "covetous, extortioners, idolators, of this world" (1 Cor. 5. 10).

Such would do well carefully to consider the story of the woman taken in adultery, recorded in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel. (The fact that this passage is known to be no part of the original Gospel, having been added in or about the 5th or 6th centuries, does not mitigate its value: all evidence goes to show that it is a true record of an incident in Jesus' life). Confronted with the unfortunate woman, Jesus stooped and wrote with his finger on the Temple pavement, ignoring all the eyes that were fastened upon Him. Why did He do that? He already knew what He was going to say! The most reasonable supposition, most in line with the known

character of Jesus, is that He did it out of consideration for the unhappy victim before Him. Acutely aware of her position, burningly conscious of her recent shame, she stood there in the middle of a crowd of hostile and gaping men, the cynosure of all eyes—except those of Jesus. He did not look at her until all the men had gone. His action diverted attention from her while they pressed for his answer. He rose up and faced the accusers, put his startling command, and then lowered his eyes again until they all, convicted by their own consciences, had one by one left the scene. Only then did He face the trembling woman. "Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee . . . Go, and sin no more." That does not mean that He condoned her sin or overlooked it. There was nothing said about forgiveness, no admonition to "go in peace". The woman's guilt stood and Jesus' words left that matter still unresolved. But He had taken the whole question of her judgment out of the public arraignment which men had engineered and made it a matter between the woman and himself.

We fallible mortals are so apt to pass hasty judgment without knowing all the facts. That is bad enough when the only inspiring motive is zeal for the maintenance of the high standards of the Christian faith; unfortunately, the fact has to be faced that even in the Christian family there are some whose minds have not so far escaped the trammels of carnality that they do not relish the opportunity of a bit of scandal. Such people are a menace and a defilement to the House of God. Many years ago there occurred on a certain day much head-shaking and whispering among the deacons of a city church, imparting itself quickly enough to the congregation. One of their number had been seen coming through the swing doors of a public-house, and he one of a community to which the use of alcoholic drink was anathema. The worst was feared and the offending deacon was almost as good as unseated when someone dryly asked whether it had occurred to anyone that the individual concerned may have been on the premises in question merely in connection with his employer's business, not to gratify any indulgence!

We are apt to criticise adversely those whose standards and customs differ from our own. Not one of us has the right to demand that our own personal way of life and code of conduct must be accepted by all and sundry. Such things differ from age to age and in

country with country, from generation to generation and even as between young and old. Abraham had three wives, at least two of them simultaneously, and an unspecified number of concubines; such conduct would not be tolerated in our country and generation but no one thinks of condemning Abraham on that account. He lived his life in full accordance with the customs and the established civil law of his time, a time which in its essentials was as civilised as those in which we live to-day.

"One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. . . . Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. AND GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE HIM STAND!"

We do well to take the fourteenth chapter of Romans very much to heart, and in this our day, when the ease of communication and the universality of the printed page puts almost fearful power into the hands of any irresponsible zealot who wants to create a stir, we need more than ever to remember that golden rule.

In ancient Crete there was the image of a god without ears. It was intended as a reminder to passers-by that the god in question was too busy and too preoccupied to be bothered with the prayers of needy people. How different is the revelation of our God and Father which we find in the pages of Holy Scripture! His ear is ever open unto our cry. He hearkens to the prayers of His people. God is never too busy and never too preoccupied to attend to our beseechings.

* * *

It is a great moral truth, attested on all hands alike by experience and observation, that any covert alliance with sin makes a man not more, but less lenient to his fellow-sinners, and that if we desire to have a keener sensibility and a stronger sympathy for the sorrows which men by sin have brought upon themselves, the only way to approximate to this end is by separating ourselves more completely from the sin that is in and around us, and cultivating, under God's hand, a higher standard of moral purity.

* * *

Let us as the lilies of His planting, bloom for the glory of our Heavenly Husbandman.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

Wisdom

"Great is the truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon the truth, and the heaven blesseth it: all works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing. It endureth, and is always strong: it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards: but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth."

Zorobabel in 1 Esdras 4 (Apocrypha)

* * *

More Value than Many Sparrows

The "sparrows" of Palestine are very numerous and are caught and destroyed in great numbers as a nuisance. To know this is to better appreciate the assurance that our Heavenly Father, Who takes note of all his creation so that not one sparrow can fall to the ground without His knowledge, will surely take heed to our welfare, who are "of more value than many sparrows". (Matt. 10. 29 and Luke 12. 7).

* * *

"Signs of the Times" in 1848

"Another sign of the near approach of the advent of Christ will be the spread of knowledge. Daniel gives us this indication when he says, '*Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*' Do we not see the signs of this around us? A century ago, if a man made a discovery in science and art, it was likely to be his fortune; but now, if one makes a discovery in chemistry, in science, or in any department of knowledge, in which a man would have staked a fortune in former times, he will find that a discovery made in 1848 is superseded by a more brilliant one before the year has closed. We see steam running and executing the errand of man, and carrying five hundred at once at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Man has made the greatest approach to the power, though he has not made a correspondent approach to God, when he takes the lightnings and makes them carry his messages. How true is it that many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased."—

Rev. John Cumming

Gnats and Camels

Faulty translation is not an uncommon thing in the Authorised Version; misprints, which were common in the earliest editions, are now rare. Some have persisted. One is the expression in Matt. 13. 24 "*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*". What Jesus really did say is "*Ye blind guides, which strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel*". The Diaglott corrects the error, and explains that the allusion is to the custom of passing wine through a strainer lest any defiling insect should have got into it. With this correction made, the comparison becomes much more forceful. One is impressed also with the gentle irony in the Lord's words. The idea of swallowing a camel verges on the ludicrous. Extreme and exaggerated figures of speech are common in the East; even so one can imagine the covert smiles on the faces of the bystanders at this biting comment on the punctilious observances of the Pharisees and their blindness to the really vital things.

* * *

The Resurrection

A well-known resurrection text, Isa. 26. 19, is difficult to understand in the form in which it appears in the Authorised Version. It is evident from the italics that the translators were not sure of the precise sense. The Septuagint rendering throws more light upon it and makes its Millennial setting more definite. "*The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice; for the dew from thee is healing to them: but the land of the ungodly shall perish.*"

* * *

On the word 'Elder'

In the Septuagint version the word for Elder is '*presbuteros*'—'chief men'; and was differentiated from '*presbutos*'—'old men'. We still retain this term in our modern official title 'Alderman', which carries with it a special precedence over other members of our municipal councils. The word 'Elder' does not therefore in itself indicate a 'priestly-prince' but its association with the number 'twenty-four' most certainly does. This official class among the priests is referred to in Isa. 37. 2, as Elders of the Priests; and in Jer. 19. 1, as the 'Ancient of the Priests'.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A study in
I Cor. 13.13

Part I. The "other" things

Before we can estimate at its true value the Love of which Paul writes in this sublime chapter, we must consider for a little while some of "the other things" with which he contrasts it in the course of his argument. We shall find that this Master-grace is not only a greater thing than faith and hope—the two particular virtues mentioned in our text—but a greater thing than all the occult mysteries with their complex organisations, which for many centuries had formulated and laid down the ways of life for countless millions of the earth's misguided population. We shall also find it to be a greater and more excellent thing than that immature and mechanical way of life prevailing in the Corinthian and other Churches in those very early days prior to the writing of those letters and Epistles which together comprise our New Testament. In a word, the scope of Paul's argument throws this heaven-sent Grace into sharp contrast with all those occult and idolatrous influences which had moulded the customs of the various sections of the human race; had instituted their many ways of life, and which, because of the hold it gave them over the masses, were held in great esteem by the intellectual princes of that ancient world. It is only when we can make allowances for all that old-time prophecy had meant to some, the "Occult mysteries" to others, and the practices of Stoic self-immolation to still others, that we will be able to appreciate, as Paul appreciated it, what this marvellous heavenly gift will mean to men, when, at last, it comes to replace them all.

Behind all these "other things"—the systems of prophecy, of the mysteries, and of self-immolation—stood the great problem of God and the Universe, and of man's relationship thereto. To the unenlightened heathen mind, whether cultured or untaught, this besetting problem was ever the great enigma of their lives. With them, as with men of modern times, there was always a riddle of the Universe, deep, elusive, and difficult to solve.

Many speculating minds sought to understand how a First Great Cause—which all admitted there must be—could have created an order of things in which the sensuous and servile qualities of men predominated so extensively. Men found themselves scarcely

separated from the brute, bound with tendencies to lust and vice, unable to escape from the "pull" of a self-centred life. Why were they fettered in this way? Why could they not rise above this environment; How had this state of things come to be? Had the Prime Cause (or Causes, if more than one) definitely and deliberately made it so? Many and various were the speculations voiced by numerous enquiring minds, and many were the theories attempting to explain this riddle of the Universe. Some attempted to explain it by asserting that two antagonistic deities existed side by side—a good one and an evil one—and that all the evil in the world had been introduced by the evil god, with whom the "good" deity was at constant war—the one producing storms, gales, cyclones and all other disastrous things, while the other was responsible for the sunshine, bounteous harvests and life-giving water springs. "How" they asked "could one all-pure, all-good God form a world whose substance and inhabitants were so replete with such evil properties, and so many evil things?" The only solution they could see was that there must be two opposing Gods—the one responsible for the good in life, the other for the bad. This solution was not stated quite so simply as that, but was dressed up in high-sounding speculative terms, so that to the uneducated there was always something of mystery attending it.

Others sought to answer in another way. The First Great Cause projected from Himself, spiritual entities called Aeons or Emanations; these also, in turn, projected other Aeons or Emanations. With each succeeding projection the original divine element became weaker and less pure, so that, in course of time as the lower ranks of angels were projected they became able to deal with the chaotic matter in the universe; shape and make it into this terrestrial world, and people it with sensuous man.

Thus the gap between the Great First Cause and man was deep and wide, and many were the speculations as to the "how" and "why" it had been brought about. Specific claims to know these secrets were made by certain presumptuous minds whose special claim it was to have been thus entrusted with this "knowledge" by the gods. An air of deep mystery pervaded all this "*gnosis*", separating

men who "knew" from those who did not "know".

In other lands mysteries associated with priestcraft and idol-worship claimed to hold the secrets of the gods. Stories of the exploits of the fallen angels in their clandestine relations with the daughters of men (Gen. 6. 2) both before and after the flood (see Num. 13. 34, for reference to the "giant" offspring of the illicit contact—same word "*Nephilim*" as in Gen. 6. 4) were invested with abstruse meanings, and embodied in a vast system of "Mystery". Double meaning to words gave rise to both an inner and an outer explanation of these mysteries—the inner or "esoteric" explanation being for the priestly "initiate" alone. From this source came all the idolatrous systems of Babylonia and Canaan.

That Paul has all these ancient systems of mystery in his mind is evident from the recurring references he makes to the idol system with which the Corinthian brethren had had contact in those former days, before they received the truth. In Chapter 8. 1, he introduces his line of contrast between the "*Gnosis*", and the "*Agape*", and informs us that possession of the "*Gnosis*" alone would result in vanity and conceit in the individual, while possession of the "*Agape*" would cause a sound foundation to be laid upon which a solid superstructure could be reared. Continuing he says ". . . there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many and lords (*baals*) many"—a sure indication that he has the many heathen systems under review.

Again in Chapter 10. 20, he says ". . . the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons '*daimoniois*') . . ." (See also v. 22). Furthermore, the use in Chapter 13. 2, of the two words "*musterion*" (mystery) and "*gnosis*" (knowledge) affords the strongest evidence that Paul was taking a very wide survey of the heathen world, with all its ways of life. Even though the word "*musterion*" was a word in general use to denote things peculiar to a trade or profession—trade secrets we would call them to-day—the special circumstances of those days would invest it with a more specific meaning than that. Trades and professions were dedicated to the gods, and specific knowledge of the trade was interwoven with specific knowledge of the god.

Paul's use of these terms shows that he is contrasting "the way of life" purpose by God with all the many ways of life associated with the many gods, and with the many philosophic answers to the unsolved riddles of the

Universe. He will yet show that "the *Agape*" alone can provide the answer to this otherwise insoluble enigma.

In this analysis Paul also sees the system of the fire-worshipper who gave his body to the flames, not to be burned to death, but to have it calloused (made callous or insensitive). "*Fakir*" practices like this abound in some eastern lands to this day. Great merit—*sainthood*—was considered to flow from this method of burning sin out of the flesh.

Additionally, with his eye on the stickler for Jewish orthodoxy in the Corinthian Church, Paul introduces the Jewish way of life into his analysis, and visualises the "explainer of the Prophecies" at his work. To the ardent Jew—as a member of a people separated unto God, the old-time prophecies contained the very word of God Himself in answer to the universal enigma—they contained the sum and substance of all essential knowledge needful to understand men's relation to the First Great Cause. And he who could, by great subtlety of argument bring down the high things—the mountains—to the level of the human mind was accounted great indeed in his people's esteem.

Here then in these varying contrasted things, Paul has compiled a summary of the greatest and most revered institutions known to the peoples of his day. Among the Corinthian brethren were some who had had contact with, and some degree of knowledge of, one or more of the systems on his list and would be able to evaluate Paul's line of contrast much better than we can do to-day. To us these things are merely historic echoes from an ancient past; to them they had been the living factors imposed upon them by heredity and environment—rounds of life from which they had not as yet entirely broken clear.

But, though we cannot judge these contrasts as they could, we should try, at least, to understand that all these cults and systems had been for them the only channels of present satisfaction and of future expectation in that dark period of the world, both for the life that now is, and for the enshadowed life that lies ahead. The dim pleasures of Elysium, or Nirvana, and every other conception of final bliss had been to them the only climax to these several ways of life that they had lived for.

In this list of contrasts we are brought face to face with universal things, the daily round and common task for nations and for men, from the cradle to the grave; also with the vast superstitious systems which had moulded

both nations and men and made them what they were. We should also realise that apart from the new heaven-sent Way which Paul was setting forth there was no road out, no way of escape from the age-worn groove into which they had been born, in which they were fated to live, till life was done. Life's deeper things were mysteries indeed, riddles concerning the universe, riddles concerning the First Great Cause, and riddles of even human-kind itself.

With all their supposed philosophic knowledge and their myriad mysteries what advantage did they gain? Death still reigned supreme, evil still ran rampant without check, tyrant rule stalked the earth, and priestly craft still bound the minds of men, even of their noblest and best. Where was their driving power, and to what end could they lead, save into deeper darkness and hopelessness? The nations were indeed without God and without hope in the world. Even the Jews, by tradition, had made void the Word of God, and the Light was about to pass them by, and leave them also in a darkness deeper than theretofore.

Against all this flotsam of thought and practice Paul sets forth one thing—*The Agape!* Were I able to reveal every mystery—so he says—explain every prophecy, feed all the poor everywhere, mount the purifying pyre, or even charm the earth with angelic

wisdom or Homeric eloquence all this would avail me nothing if I lacked the *Agape*. It would but add to the world's clanging din, out of which no good had yet come; out of which no good could ever come world without end. Generations would still drag their weary way to the tomb, groping through the darkness without one ray of light.

Not from the mystery-mongering of conceited men, not from far-fetched solutions of ancient prophecy, not from Stoic or humanitarian activities could that which is "perfect" come. There is but one power that can lead to that desired end—that Power is "*The Agape*". Not by self-effort can that "Perfect" estate be attained. It can come only by the help of God. And it is that "Helping Hand" which Paul sets over against all these "other things".

God has purposed to bring in a "way of Life", which, because it is the "Way of Love" will be superior to all these "other things", and thereby reveal the answer to the riddle that has baffled human-kind for all the ages past. It will, in itself, be the explanation of the Purpose that has had all the ages for its development. It will show why men by searching could not find out God, and why through the dark centuries they were left to guess and speculate about the Great First Cause, about the Universe, and about themselves.

(To be continued)

THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN

God uses most for his glory those people and things which are most perfectly broken. The sacrifices He accepts are broken and contrite hearts. It was the thorough breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him where God could clothe him with spiritual power. It was by breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb by the stroke of Moses' rod, that it let out the cool waters to thirsty people. It was when the three hundred elect soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves, that the hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their adversaries. It was when the poor widow broke the seal of the little pot of oil, and poured it forth, that God multiplied it to pay her debts and supply means of support.

It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court that she obtained favour to rescue her people from death. It was when Jesus took the

five loaves and broke them that the bread was multiplied in the very act of breaking, sufficient to feed five thousand. It was when Mary broke her beautiful alabaster box, rendering it henceforth useless, that the pent-up perfume filled the whole house. It was when Jesus allowed his Body to be broken to pieces by thorns and nails and spear, that his inner life was poured out, like a crystal ocean for thirsty sinners to drink and live.

It is when a beautiful grain of corn is broken up in the earth by death, that its inner heart sprouts forth and bear hundreds of other grains. And thus on and on, through all history, and all biography, and all vegetation, and all spiritual life, God must have "Broken Things".

Those who are broken in wealth, and broken in self-will, and broken in their ambitions, and broken in their beautiful ideals, and broken in worldly reputation, and broken oft-

times in health, and those who are despised and seem utterly helpless and forlorn, the Holy Spirit is seizing upon, and using for God's glory. It is the "lame that take the prey"

Isaiah tells us. It is the weak that overcome the Devil. God is waiting to take hold of our failures and nothingness and shine through them. *Selected*

AN OFFERING FOR SIN

A doctrinal
essay

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." (Isa. 53. 10).

Strange, mysterious words; a tale of sacrifice and death on the one hand, and of new life upon the other. Seed that is to arise out of an altar-offering given for sin! Small wonder that the full significance of this scripture can be appreciated only by a clear understanding of the Divine Plan. And yet we must pause, and linger over the haunting beauty of these words, and picture in our minds all that the offerings for sin meant to the pious Israelite, if we are to draw from this theme the guidance for daily life which it can afford.

The Day of Atonement offerings symbolise the process by which our Lord recovers the world from sin and the consequences of sin; in a word, the work of reconciliation. The Ransom is the giving of the *anti-lutron*, the corresponding price. That forms the essential basis upon which the work of reconciliation can go forward and without which reconciliation cannot be made. For the Church, that work is effected during the Gospel Age, the present time, and for mankind generally it will be effected during the Millennial Age, the day of the yet future Kingdom of God upon earth. In this connection it should be borne in mind that whereas in this Age our Lord Jesus Christ himself reconciles his disciples to God, in the future Age these same disciples are to be associated with him in the work of world reconciliation and will themselves be the missionaries of that Age, or, as Paul designates them, "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 18).

Since the Day of Atonement ritual pictures the process of the removal of sin from the world, it follows that the works of the First Advent, the Gospel Age, and the Millennial Age must all find place in the ceremonies, covering the whole period until the time that sin has been utterly removed, never to return. The "offerings for sin" occupy the central position in these ceremonies.

The fundamental idea underlying the offering of slain sacrifices is that of giving life to God to be used again for the renewal of life

in the world. This idea is met with in every type of pagan religion where sacrifice is made, a survival from the days when mythology developed out of mankind's originally clear knowledge of the true God. The sacrifices instituted by Moses were no exception to this rule; he declared himself, under Divine direction, that "*the blood is the life thereof*" (Deut. 12. 13; Lev. 17. 11, 14) and the sprinkling of the blood of the offering in the Most Holy quite definitely symbolised the offering of life to God, that new life might come to the people. Primitive races sacrificed their chiefs and kings when they grew old in the belief that their powers and vitality would be passed on to their successors in the leadership of the tribe. The Canaanites burnt their first-born children to Moloch that the life thus given up might reappear again in enhanced vitality of the people and the land. Even the Israelites were occasionally guilty of this latter abomination and had to be prohibited its practice, as we read in Jeremiah "*and they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart*" (Jer. 7. 31).

It is this principle that lies behind the story of Cain and Abel. Abel's sacrifice was the more acceptable because it was the offering of life to God, indicating Abel's recognition of the fact that the Divine Plan provides for such in God's purpose for world redemption. That is why the Apostle says "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin*" (Heb. 9. 22). Sin cannot be overcome and its consequences nullified, the man reconciled to God, without the offering of life, which in itself involves death, the shedding of blood. Abel's sacrifice was a typical representation, a picture, of this fact, in a sense that Cain's was not and never could be, and it is for this reason that God accepted Abel's offering of slain beasts, and rejected Cain's offering of the earth's fruits (Gen. 4. 5).

God's call to Abraham to offer up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the substitution at the last minute of a ram caught in the

thicket (Gen. 22. 13) is another example of the same principle. The writer to the Hebrews says that Abraham accounted God able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11. 9), as though he could use that sacrificed life again in giving new life to the world, for Abramam knew that it must be and could only be through Isaac that the world could ever be blessed (Gen. 17. 19). The virtue of the sacrifice lay not in the act of slaying the victim, but in that the life thus released from earthly restraints and interests, and given into Divine keeping, could be used by God, and this is precisely the principle underlying our Lord's human life from Jordan to Calvary, and of every life that in this Age is utterly consecrated to Divine service to the exclusion of human interests.

The Day of Atonement ceremonies illustrate this principle. The place of offering was the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. The bullock, without blemish, was slain and consumed by fire on the Brasen Altar in the Court, and its blood taken by the High Priest beyond the Veil into the Most Holy, there to be sprinkled upon the Ark of the Covenant. This ritual was the solemn offering of life to God, and since the bullock had been slain as representing, and in lieu of, the High Priest, the act was equivalent to the High Priest having formally offered his own life to God. But there is much more in this ritual than the mere act of dying. For some time longer the choice parts of the slain bullock were burning upon the Brasen Altar in the Court within full sight of the attendant priests, and the remainder of the carcase was dragged forth and burned outside the Camp of Israel (Lev. 16. 27) in the sight of all people. For a perceptible period of time, therefore, this Sin-offering was being offered in a fashion known and perceived of all men until all was reduced to ashes. Not until that point was reached was the "offering for sin" completed.

This slow consuming of life wholly devoted to God foreshadowed the earthly life of Jesus, during the three and a half years between Jordan and Calvary. It was at Jordan that He said "*Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God*" (Heb. 10. 7). At Calvary He uttered the words "*It is finished*" and "*bowed his head and gave up the spirit*" (John 19. 20). It was the Sin-offering that was finished at that moment; the last remains of the antitypical bullock were there and then reduced to ashes in the sight of the Roman centurion and the bystanders. At that same moment the Ransom was given, the

work of an instant, Jesus Christ dying on the cross "*the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18).

The necessity for this "Sin-offering" lies in the fact that the ransoming of men from the power of the grave and restoring them to conscious life does not of itself transform them into sinless beings who can be expected never again to transgress the laws of God. Every man, coming back "in his own order" (1 Cor. 15. 23) will be free from the Adamic death sentence but will have still the effects of his former life with which to contend, and in the case of many human beings it will be a long, toilsome journey away from the thralldom and power of sin to the full liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8. 21). The Ransom will restore all such to conscious life, as it is written "*For to this end Jesus both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living*" (Rom. 14. 9) but a further work is needed with them before they can be presented faultless before the Heavenly Father. And this is where the *life* of Jesus of Nazareth, as distinct from his *death*, plays its part. The writer to the Hebrews says that "*In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation (i.e., a sin-offering) for the sins of the people*" (Heb. 2. 17). The teachings of Jesus; the works of Jesus; the wondrous influence of Jesus; that marvellous power which radiated from his devoted life and drew men to follow him; all this, involving so much of sacrifice and consecration on his part, even unto death, has, in a manner totally incomprehensible to our finite minds, engendered a potent dynamic force which has been operating throughout this Age for the spiritual life and sustenance of his own disciples, the Church, and will operate during the next Age in a similar fashion toward the world.

"*The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*" (John 6. 51). These are no idle words; they are the expression of a great truth. When the sick woman touched Jesus, He knew that vitality had gone out from him (Luke 8. 46). How it comes about we know not; what unknown influences are at work we can only guess; what we do know is that in a very real sense the consecrated life of Jesus upon earth, spent wholly and completely in the service of his Father, was becoming transformed into a reservoir of creative, life-giving energy "*for the life of the world*". And in all subsequent

days both in this Age and the next, the fruits of Jesus' life on earth have been and will be the means of imparting new strength, new incentive, new life, to men and women recovered from death by virtue of the Ransom, and brought back to full reconciliation with God by virtue of the Sin-Offering.

This then is the Scriptural truth pictured in olden times by the bullock on the Day of Atonement. But the story does not end there.

When Jesus was upon earth, He invited men to follow in his steps and to associate themselves with him to such degree that it could be truthfully said they were taking up their crosses and following him to crucifixion. "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Mark 8. 34). The sayings of Jesus and the teachings of the Apostles regarding this self-denial and whole-hearted devotion to Jesus at the cost of ordinary earthly interests and advantages are so numerous in the New Testament and so well known that there is no need to recount them in detail. Suffice it to say that instructed Christians do know perfectly well that such a call to consecration of life and abilities to the Divine service is invited and encouraged in the teachings of Christ. Now this call to consecration is something quite apart from the general message of God's plan for mankind in the coming Kingdom, also preached by Jesus. Briefly put, God proposes the conversion of mankind in general during the next Age, the Millennial Age, but invites those who will respond to his leading to give themselves in complete dedication of life to him in this Age, the Gospel Age, that they might be his representatives and ambassadors in the world now, and his ministers and missionaries to mankind then.

Now the noteworthy thing about this invitation to dedication of life, or "consecration," borrowing the word from the Levitical ceremonies, is that the subsequent life, conduct, and mission of the consecrated disciple is of precisely the same character as was the earthly life of our Lord. "*As he is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4. 17). In every manner—except in the execution of the supreme purpose for which Jesus came into the world, the giving of a "Ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2. 6)—we as his disciples are associated closely with Jesus. His mission was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; so is ours. His work was to do good to all men; so is ours. His aim and purpose was to banish sin and reconcile men to God, leaving them perfect and flawless in God's sight; that aim is ours. We are called

to follow in his steps and to be identified in every respect with all that He does. To such an extent is this true that the promise to all such "overcomers" is that upon the completion of their earthly experiences and training they will be raised to reign with Christ, to sit with him on his throne, and to reign over the earth in association with him, for the conversion and blessing of mankind, as a queen might reign jointly with a king (Rev. 3. 21).

It follows therefore that the earthly lives of all the members of Christ's Church are offered to God in precisely the same way that the life of Jesus between Jordan and Calvary was offered to God, and that this offering is maintained until it is ended by death. It cannot be claimed that the *effectiveness* of that offering, even of the entire Church of all ages, can be placed on a level with that of our Lord. Nevertheless God looks upon the motives of the heart, and reflects, as did Jesus in speaking of the widow who cast her two mites into the Temple treasury, "they have done what they could". And because those heart motives have been sincere and those consecrated lives have been spent to the very end in Divine service and the discharge of the Divine mission, God is able to make use of those offered lives in his future work. *Because* the offering of the corporate Church of this Age has been acceptable to God, He can use that corporate Church, in its resurrected spiritual state, as a storehouse of spiritual power which will play its part in the regeneration of the world.

It is this that is shown in the second Levitical ceremony on the Day of Atonement. After the bullock had been offered and the sprinkling of its blood upon the mercy-seat had won Divine acceptance, a goat was brought forward to the priests. This goat was treated in exactly similar fashion to the bullock. There was no difference whatever, the only essential being that the bullock must first have been offered and accepted. Once the blood of the bullock had been sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, that of the goat could and did follow it and was acceptable to God for his purpose.

In past times, believing that these ceremonies merely pictured the death of Christ upon the cross, expositors were forced to the conclusion that this ritual with the goat pictured the same thing as did that with the bullock but from a different aspect. This was an explanation offered to fit the situation. Reasoning back from the New Testament teaching now understood concerning the difference between the call of the Church and the hope of the world, a knowledge which the

earlier expositors did not possess, it seems clear that, just as the offering of the bullock pictured the consecrated offering of Jesus' life between Jordan and Calvary, so the offering of the goat which followed pictured the identical offering of the consecrated life of the corporate Church during this Gospel Age.

The typical ceremony is very fitting here. The goat is a vastly inferior animal to the bullock and in the ceremony its value as an offering would bear no comparison with the bullock, which was the offering *par excellence*. (This is shown by the sentiment expressed in Psa. 51. 19, where the Psalmist, seeking for a simile to express the superiority of man's Millennial Age devotion over that of any other time in world history declares ecstatically "Then shall they offer *bullocks* upon thine altar"). Then the goat is said to be a sin-offering for "the people," i.e., all Israel, as distinct from the bullock, which was for Aaron and his house, the priesthood (Lev. 16. 11). In this manner is shown the fact, borne out by New Testament teaching, that the force and influence of Jesus' earthly life and teaching has been effective primarily for the Church, the "Royal Priesthood" and that the world in general, those who know not God, have been largely uninfluenced by it. The time is yet to come, however, when the world *will* come under the influence and power of that life of devotion, but it will be through the medium of the glorified Church and be illustrated to the world by the lives' devotion of the members of that Church. Men will "*by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Pet. 2. 12). It may be a correct view of the matter, then, to say that just as the life of Jesus has provided a power which has influenced, guided and vitalised the "Royal Priesthood" of this Age to follow its calling and walk in his footsteps even unto death, so the inspiration and example of the course of the corporate Church in this Age, added to the inspiration and example of Christ's life, provides a spiritual power or dynamic which will be a potent force for the reconciliation of all men in the next Age.

In this great offering for sin, therefore, this process by means of which life, with all its possibilities, is offered to God to be used in the world's reconciliation, both Jesus and his church have their respective parts to play. In neither instance does any consideration of the Ransom, the deliverance of mankind from death and the power of the grave, enter into the matter. That is an entirely different aspect

of God's plan of salvation, one in which our Lord is the only One, the all-sufficient One, concerned. But after the Ransom has been given, and the way is open for reconciliation, then appears the sphere in which the Sin-offering can operate. The fruits of the earthly life of Jesus, and the fruits of the earthly lives of his consecrated followers, freely bestowed upon the world to guide them to reconciliation with God, will be evident in that day when all the sin that is in all the world will be as it were loaded up and removed far away from the habitation of men so that it can never return.

That aspect of the subject lies beyond the scope of this study. The consuming of sin-offerings upon the altar ends with the close of the Gospel Age, and after that time there is no more any sprinkling of blood upon the anti-typical "mercy-seat". The "bullock for a sin-offering" and the "goat for a sin-offering" will have been offered and consumed; there remains to be accomplished the literal removal of sin from the hearts and lives of men, by the writing of Divine law in their hearts and their intelligent conversion from sin and reconciliation to God, which is the purpose and the object of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

I wonder if the lack of growth in our lives of the love of God has been due to neglect? Oh, the wonder of that blessed intimacy of heart and mind and thought, that unveiling of the innermost secrets of the soul to the one who loves in return. "*He that loveth Me,*" says Christ, "*I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*"—I will unveil to him My very heart. And in our fellowship with the Master our love will grow; the river will deepen.

* * *

Prayer could be a very harmful thing. A weapon like prayer would indeed be a very dangerous weapon to put in the hands of any person but for one essential law of prayer. It is that no man can use prayer simply for his own ends. Prayer is given only for a certain purpose, and if anyone tries to use it in a way that does not accord with that purpose, his prayer will remain unanswered.

* * *

Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice of the body. No wonder they often contradict each other. (*Rousseau*)

“ HIS FLESH UPON HIM SHALL HAVE PAIN ”

Ae examination of a curious text

“His sons come to honour, and he perceiveth it not; they are brought low, but he knoweth it not of them. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.” (Job 14. 22).

If any Scripture could be said to support the eternal torment doctrine, this surely is the one. Taken as an isolated text, it stands as a bald statement of the condition of man after death—a condition of conscious pain.

That it supports the traditional idea of Hell is a position that cannot be maintained when one reads this entire chapter—the 14th of Job. The chapter is devoted to expressing the brevity and unsatisfactory nature of human life, and this final verse is made applicable to all men without distinction. Since not even the most convinced of “hell-fire enthusiasts” will claim that all men, good and bad alike, must go to hell, the verse should be rejected as a statement of the fate of the wicked. It is rather a statement of the fate of any and every man, irrespective of their worthiness of everlasting bliss or otherwise.

We should connect this chapter, which is part of Job’s answer to Zophar, with the latter’s words in chapter 11. Zophar’s argument, founded upon worldly wisdom, is that if Job is really a righteous man he will be rewarded by earthly felicity, and go into the grave at a ripe old age after a full and prosperous life. This is a similar argument to that of Eliphaz in chapter 5, who maintained that the righteous man will see the prosperity of his posterity, and end his life in full satisfaction with the world and everything in it.

Job, on the contrary, in this 14th chapter, stresses the unsatisfactory nature of a life which, after all the toil and suffering which comes to man, ends in death, and, from the human standpoint, no further interest in the world and its affairs. The righteous man is not necessarily prosperous, and, like Job himself, he may be cut off by disease and death without any assurance of the prosperity and happiness of his posterity. He may even, again like Job, have his last hours darkened by the knowledge of misery and loss upon his posterity. So that, from the worldly standpoint, unilluminated by Divine wisdom, man concludes an unhappy and unsatisfactory life by going into death without seeing or enjoying any of the things for which he has laboured. Whether his sons came to honour or grief, he

knows not, lying unconscious in *sheol*. Death comes at the end of a life which is only pain and mourning, so that, as Barnes has put it, man goes “lonely and sad to the land of shades and of night separated from his family and friends”. *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”*

In striking contrast to this hopeless creed is the faith of Job himself, expressed in this same 14th chapter. He has already expressed the common view of the unbeliever, *“there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, it will sprout again . . . through the scent of water it will bud and put forth boughs . . . but man dieth, and wasteth away . . . man lieth down, and riseth no more”* (vs. 7-12). He then voices his own belief in the Divine promise of a resurrection: *“Oh, that thou wouldst hide me in sheol, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thine hands”* (vs. 13-15).

The expression “if a man die shall he live again?” is a rhetorical question on Job’s part designed to fasten his hearer’s attention to the important truth he was about to utter. Only in the promise of God that there will be a future life, and that that future life is attained by means of a resurrection from the dead, is Job able to give a satisfactory answer to the riddle of existence. Not by any system of rewards for a good life now, nor by the satisfaction of following the results of one’s works, or fortunes of one’s posterity, from the world beyond the grave, does Job attempt to satisfy the instinctive cry for justice. He faces up to the fact that this world is evil, and that man’s life is oftentimes wholly unsatisfactory—but he knows that a life to come, when the reign of evil has run its course, will continue the life begun under these unsatisfactory conditions, and give to every man the desire of his heart.

The pain and mourning, therefore, belong to this life. It is before the man has died, whilst he is progressing through life and slowly descending into the grave, that “his flesh upon him shall have pain and his soul within him shall mourn”. Then comes death, from which Job expected to be awakened in God’s own time. *“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”*



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

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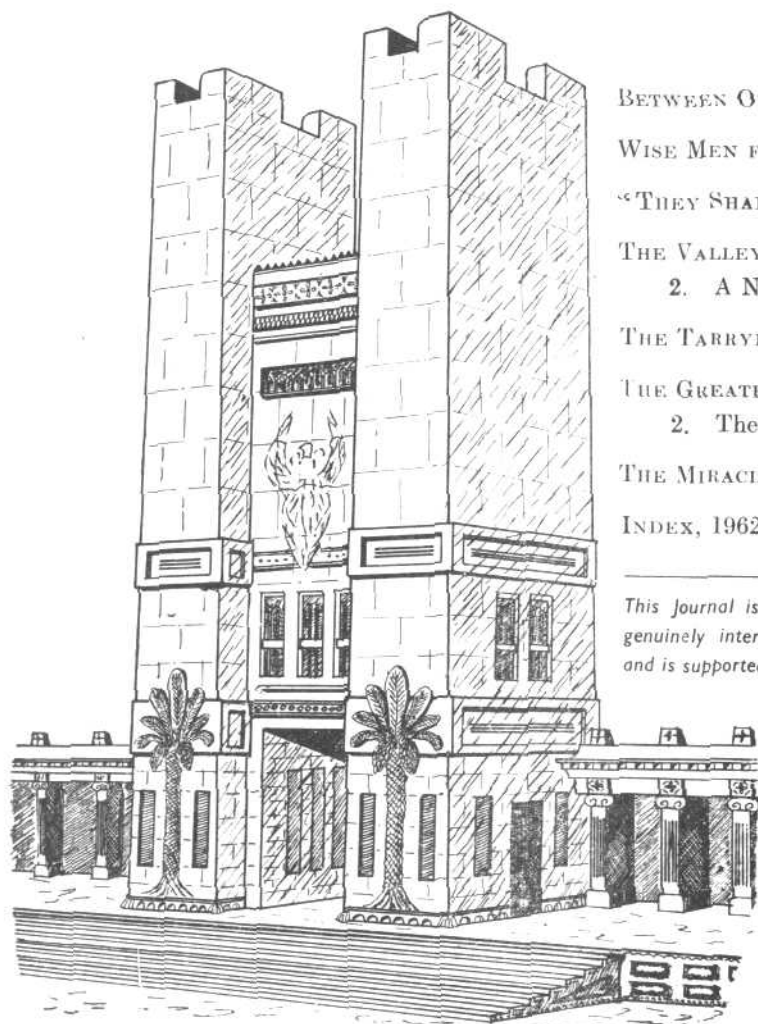
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

It is usual at this time of the year to mention, for the benefit of those who are interested, the special fund administered by Bro. E. Allbon and to say that contributions will be warmly appreciated and acknowledged if sent to Mr. Allbon, 9 Esher Close, Nyetimber Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis Sussex. Details Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis, Sussex. Details Bro. Allbon.

* * *

The series which during the early part of this year appeared in the *Monthly* under the caption "A City and a Tower" has now been reprinted and is available as a 52 page booklet at 1/6 (20 cents) post free. This series it will be remembered, traces the story of the Tower of Babel as related in the eleventh chapter of Genesis and brings in the corroborative testimony of modern discoveries.

We are also still able to supply "The Tragedy of Samson", being the story of the life of the Israelitish hero, at 1/6 (20 cents) post free, and "The Mission of Jonah", an interesting account of Jonah's experiences with a detailed examination of the story of the great fish, 80 pages at 3/- (40 cents) post free. The three booklets together would be sent for 4/6 (60 cents) post free.

* * *

Will readers in the United States and Canada who send gifts to the "Monthly" by means of Post Office International Money Orders please note that usually the Post Office in passing us the money give the name of the sender but not the address. In consequence we sometimes have difficulty in identifying the sender and are unable to acknowledge the gift. May we ask that anyone on the North American continent paying in money to their Post Office for transmission to us also advise us separately by letter that they have done so, in order that we may be in no doubt as to the identity of the sender.

At the close of the year we express our very sincere recognition of the many letters of appreciation received from readers during the year. The "Monthly" has no full-time staff and the whole of the work involved, secretarial and editorial, has to be done in "out-of-business" hours so that it is not possible to reply to such letters; this short note therefore is our acknowledgment and assurance that all such letters are read and afford encouragement for the future conduct of this little effort in the Master's service.

* * *

GLOSSARY

of little-known terms and names appearing in this issue.

WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

Chrysostom. John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) celebrated teacher and preacher, born in Antioch of Syria, became Patriarch of Constantinople and ended his days in banishment due to malice of his enemies. Prolific writer on prophecy, of the "Historical" school and exercised a profound influence on the Christian thought of his day.

Kepler. Johann Kepler (A.D. 1571-1630), German astronomer whose discoveries respecting the motions of the planets became the basis of Sir Isaac Newton's formulation of the law of gravitation. A sincere Protestant Christian who suffered much from religious persecution.

Gone from us

Sis. M. Davison (Newcastle)
Sis. A. Charlton (London)
Bro. H. E. Nadal (Buckhurst Hill)

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

WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

*A story of
the child Jesus*

Mysterious visitors from the East! Better known and more clearly defined in mediaeval legend and modern Christmas card artistry than they could ever hope to be by the original story in Matthew's Gospel. Coming upon the scene from the unknown and vanishing without trace whence they came; their nationality, their religion, their status among men, not revealed, nor even how many of them there were—for the popular conception of "three wise men" owes its birth to church tradition and not to Biblical history. The material given in one account, Matthew's, of this intriguing happening is so scanty that one might almost be forgiven for concluding that nothing more definite could ever be known about these strangers from a distant land. Nevertheless a closer examination of the simple narrative which comprises the second chapter of the first synoptic Gospel yields sufficient to justify a compilation which might reasonably be included among the stories of Jesus.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" (Matt. 2. 1). This is one of the two historical notices by which the date of Jesus' birth can be fixed. The other is the statement by Luke (2. 1) to the effect that He was born at the time a decree went out from Augustus Caesar requiring "all the world to be taxed"—more properly, enrolled. An undue reliance on Josephus and other historians of the period has in the past led to some confusion and error as to the true date. (It is generally known, of course, that the present Anno Domini era does not commence with our Lord's birth; the date A.D. 1 was determined at first by the monk Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century and afterwards modified by the chronologist Scaliger in the sixteenth century). It seems reasonably certain in the light of modern investigation that the enrolment recorded by St. Luke was a population census taken in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, at some time after March, B.C.2. Independent evidences go to show that the death of Herod occurred early in A.D.1 and that Jesus was born between the two happenings, at the end of September, B.C.2. The tradition which placed the event on 25th December did not have its rise until the time of Chrysostom in the 4th century.

It is within the framework of this period of some two years, between the birth of Jesus and the death of Herod, that the story of the wise men is to be placed.

No one knows who they were. The Greek word is *Magi*. The magi were Persian astrologers who had succeeded to the wisdom and status of the Chaldeans, the "wise men of Babylon", who figure so much in the Book of Daniel. Daniel himself was the chief—the "*Rab-mag*", chief magician—of that fraternity at one time in his career (Dan. 2. 48). It is more than likely that during the intervening five centuries a great deal of Jewish belief and religious thought had been incorporated in the philosophy of the fast decaying system. After the destruction of Babylon and its Temple, centre of the Chaldeans' worship and the symbol of their power, the caste diminished in numbers and influence until by the time of Jesus it was virtually non-existent. This party of Magi which came to adore before the child Jesus might have represented a few of them who had accepted a great deal of Old Testament teaching and were more than half ready to reject the last vestiges of their old beliefs in the face of this revelation which had come to them. The extent to which they had any clear conception of the nature of God does not appear. There is the one statement in verse 12 that they were "warned of God in a dream" and obeyed the warning, but that need not imply that they were adherents of the Jewish faith. It is probable that their religion was a mixture of Judaism, paganism and Eastern mysticism. It does not seem that they were Jews; the question in verse 2 "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" is one that would hardly be put in that form by a Jew. Neither would any true Jew admit to Divine guidance by means of a star in the sky; that is altogether alien to Jewish instinct. They were probably Gentiles, of Persian or Babylonian origin, cognisant of the Messianic hopes of Israel, instructed in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and by the laws of their own science convinced that the star they had seen was the announcement of the birth of that Messiah. Incidentally the Church festival of Epiphany, meaning the "manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles", which commemorates the visit of the Magi, is testimony to ancient Church belief that they were in fact Gentiles, al-

though the choice of a date only twelve days after the Nativity does not rest upon any historical evidence whatsoever.

Neither is there any Scriptural basis for the popular impression that the visiting Magi were three in number. Mediæval drama and art, and ecclesiastical tradition, in the Middle Ages, embellished Matthew's story with the added refinement of Caspar, King of India, Melchior, King of Persia, and Balthasar, King of Arabia—in sublime disregard of the facts of ancient history—coming together before the mother and babe in the inn and presenting their gifts. Cologne Cathedral houses a shrine to the three kings and claims that their bodies are buried in the vaults below, but that claim need not be taken very seriously. We can be certain only of one thing, that a party of philosophers, wise men of this world, believers in the promise of Israel's Messiah, by a means not clearly known to us, discerned in their distant home by Euphrates or Tigris that the Messiah had been born in Judea, and they journeyed to see Him and acknowledge Him and pay Him homage. Perhaps that is the greatest thing in the story, that the wise men of this world, the learned, the mighty and the wealthy, should be represented by some of their own kind, adoring and worshipping the Lord of glory, just as the poor, the mean, and the simple of this world had previously performed the same homage through the instrumentality of the Judean shepherds. It might not be altogether without significance that it was the poor and simple who got there first!

It may reasonably be concluded that these men, though Gentiles having no part or lot in the Israel covenant and no claim to being of the people of God, were nevertheless sincere worshippers of God, even though their devotion may have been mingled with a certain amount of paganism. In the first place they evidently had a tolerably definite knowledge of the Messianic hope of Israel and a belief in it, that one day God would send His Messiah to reign over His people Israel and lead them to the fulfilment of their destiny, the enlightenment of all the world. But there is one hint that their knowledge went deeper than that of many in Israel. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews" (verse 2) they asked. They knew that Messiah was to be born a babe and thus come to man's estate and His Messiahship. The majority in Israel did not know that; they expected Messiah to appear suddenly in the full martial glory of conquering power, fully armed and supported for the overthrow of all enemies and the

exaltation of Israel to the headship of the nations. These wise men must have interpreted correctly the famous prophecy of Isaiah "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with justice and with judgment even for ever" (Isa. 9. 6. 7). Israel, to whom that prophecy was given, never really understood it; it was left to three Gentile Magi to announce the fulfilment of the prophecy and call attention to the One who was its fulfilment. What matter that their assertion "we have seen his star in the east" may only have been an application of their astrological principles which on this occasion did coincide with the actual event; they go on to say "and are come to worship him". The long journey they had undertaken to prove their faith and attest their devotion is evidence enough of their sincerity. "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him" (verse 11). This is the act of truly pious men who really believed that, like the aged Simeon in the Temple not so long previously, their eyes had looked upon the Lord's Christ.

This raises the question to what extent their revelation and their journey was inspired by God. Quite worthy folk have argued that God would not use for so signal an event in the story of the Nativity men who were self-confessed adherents of an ancient pagan cult, and astrologers into the bargain; that it is much more likely these Magi came with far less worthy motives than is suggested, or that at any rate God had nothing to do with their coming. It is to be feared that the argument arises from reluctance to admit that God would recognise the faith and watchfulness of men who were not inside the chosen circle of the faithful and who may have mingled with their faith a proportion of pagan elements which admittedly were not of God. Jesus, grown to manhood, met with the same attitude in His ministry, and He told those who thus argued that many would come from the east and the west, from outside the commonwealth of Israel, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while they themselves would be thrust out (Matt. 8. 11-12). The narrative itself makes it plain that God was in this thing, for after finding the child and rendering their worship and presenting their gifts, they were

"warned of God in a dream" not to return to King Herod in Jerusalem as he had requested; they returned to their own country by another route in order to avoid him. There are three stories of the reception of the infant Jesus into this world; the angelic revelation to the shepherds and their subsequent adoration at the birth, this visit of the Magi, and the blessing of the Child in the Temple by Simeon and Anna. These stories all stand on one level; they indicate his reception and acceptance by representatives, respectively, of the people of Israel, the people of the Gentile world, and the class known in all ages as the "watchers", for both Simeon and Anna were members of that closely knit little community known at that time as the Redemptionists, a community which more than any others possessed a tolerably clear knowledge of the nature and time of Messiah's advent and were ready to receive Him in the way He came. It is of tremendous interest to know that in this latter end of the Age when all prophetic teaching no less than the signs of the times indicate that we live in the period of the Second Advent just as the characters in these stories lived in that of the First, there are those among Christian believers who have the same clear perception of the manner and time of His Advent as did Simeon and Anna, Zacharias and Elizabeth and others of that long-past day.

So the Wise Men came to Jerusalem, guided by a star. That star has fascinated astronomers, both professional and amateur. A tremendous amount of time must have been spent during the Age calculating just what was the nature of the appearance. Kepler, a great Christian and astronomer, in the 17th Century decided that it was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn which would make a brilliant display in the heavens; it is known now that no such conjunction took place anywhere near that time. It is calculated that there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Venus in the year 6 B.C. but that was a great deal too early. A modern suggestion is that it was a "nova", one of those mysterious explosions in distant space which cause a normally faint star to shine out with hundredfold brilliance for a few days or weeks and then to disappear. There are some, of course, who picture it as a heavenly light which travelled across the sky guiding the Magi over the desert and through Judea until it stood just over the very house, thus indicating that they had reached the goal of their quest. The text however makes it fairly plain that there was

no question of their following a moving light; that is rather a fantasy of later Christian legend and a useful adornment for Christmas cards. According to verse 2 they saw a star while in their own homes which by the science of their faith indicated the birth of the Messiah of the Jews; they thereupon took their journey to Jerusalem the capital of Judea as being the most likely place to find the new-born King, were directed to Bethlehem and when they came in sight of the house, and not until then, saw the same star again, this being taken by them as indication they had found the right place. From the scanty information given it would be unwise to dogmatise as to the precise nature of the star; it may very well have been a perfectly normal kind of celestial phenomenon, one of several possible varieties and easily understandable by modern astronomers if we only knew for certain which one it was; it could equally well have been a special manifestation of Divine power for the occasion; what is of real importance is to realise that, natural phenomenon or not, it was manifested at precisely the correct moment to achieve the result it did achieve, and therefore must have been under the direct control of the Holy Spirit of God performing His work in the earth.

Perhaps they did not altogether expect the reception they got. "*When Herod the King heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*" (verse 3). Herod the Great had reigned some forty years at this time; he both obtained and retained his throne by treachery and cruelty and lived more or less in a constant state of apprehension. He had already murdered his wife and two sons, largely on account of jealousy and fear lest he lose his throne to one of them; (it was of this king that Augustus the then Emperor of Rome made the scornful comment "I would rather be one of Herod's swine than one of his sons"). Several years before the coming of the Wise Men he had been informed by Augustus that he was in future to regard his independent kingdom as permitted to exist as such only by permission of Rome. Now here come strangers from the East declaring that a new king had been born and they sought Him to do honour to Him. No wonder Herod and his supporters were troubled.

The ensuing narrative is quite in accord with the known character of this king. He first summoned the chief priests and scribes and demanded of them where Messiah was to be born. Herod himself was not a Jew; he

was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, and his knowledge of the Scriptures was probably as defective as that of most professional military politicians. The chief priests could quote prophecy, whether they understood its meaning or not. In this case they could hardly go wrong. They showed him the passage in Micah which predicted that out of Bethlehem should come the Governor who would rule the people of Israel. (Micah 5. 2). Cunningly, Herod sent the visitors to Bethlehem, with the injunction that they return and tell him where the child was to be found, under pretence that he wished to worship him also. The diabolical plan which he afterwards put into execution was forming in his mind; Herod had already put several possible rivals for the kingship out of the way and he was not going to allow a mere child, Messiah or not, to become another threat to his position!

It has often been remarked that in Matthew's account the Wise Men found the family in a house whereas the Lucian account of the shepherds tells of his being laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. It is at this point that a brief examination of the time features connected with the nativity of Jesus becomes appropriate. Whereas Matthew records that Joseph took the child and His mother into Egypt after the visit of the Magi, and only after the death of Herod did he return to Nazareth, the story of Luke (2. 39) says that they went straight from Bethlehem to Nazareth, with no reference to the flight into Egypt. Now that the date B.C.4 as that of Herod's death, based upon the rather confused record of Josephus, has been established inaccurate, and that of A.D.1 found to be more correct, it is possible to draw a reasonable sequence of events which allows both records to fit together harmoniously.

It would appear that the census (the enrolment or "taxing" of Luke 2. 1) was conducted during the year B.C.2. Sometime toward the end of this census, during September of that year, Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem from their home in Nazareth, in order to be registered in what was evidently at least Joseph's native town. It is almost certain that Joseph was born in Bethlehem and possible that Mary was likewise. Her cousin Elizabeth, in order to be a kinswoman of Mary, (Luke 1. 36) must have had a father of the tribe of Judah so that it must have been her mother who was of Levi; she is described as "of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1. 5) as though her Levitical descent was through the female line. Elizabeth was married to a priest engaged in

the Temple service at Jerusalem and lived in the "hill country" of Judea (Luke 1. 39). Bethlehem was in the mountainous part of Judea and almost the highest inhabited town; it is likely that here was the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. The two women must therefore have had the same grandfather, and he of the line of Judah so that both Joseph and Mary had good reason for being registered at Bethlehem.

The birth of Jesus occurred at about the end of September in B.C.2. At this time the shepherds saw a vision of angels and came to the Inn to see and to worship, afterward spreading the story of what they had seen and heard among their associates and friends (Luke 2. 17). It is unlikely however that the story penetrated very far outside Bethlehem; no one in high quarters or of the educated classes would pay much heed to the story of a few men who claimed they had seen a visitation of angels directing them to a particular child born in the most primitive of circumstances.

Eight days after the birth the child was circumcised in accordance with custom. Whether by then, Joseph had succeeded in finding better quarters for his wife and child does not appear. What is certain is that they remained at Bethlehem for forty days, the period of ceremonial uncleanness laid down in the Mosaic law following the birth of a boy child. At the end of the forty days the mother had to appear before the priest for ceremonial cleansing, with an offering. According to Luke 2.22 they went to Jerusalem, a few miles distant, and appeared in the Temple itself for this purpose. This therefore must have been about the middle of November, B.C. 2. It was on this occasion that the aged Simeon, in the courts of the Temple, took the child in his arms and praised God that his old eyes at last looked upon the Messiah, and Anna came in and added her word (Luke 2.25 - 38). Following the completion of the ceremonial, according to Luke 2.39, they returned to Nazareth — before the Magi had so much as arrived in Jerusalem. This verse 39 ends Luke's account of the nativity and verse 40 begins to speak of Jesus' boyhood.

The clue to the time of the Wise Men's visit lies in Luke 2. 41, "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover". It was not incumbent upon a Jew to go to the capital for this purpose but in fact many of pious mind did so. Josephus records that at the time of the Roman siege

of Jerusalem in A.D. 69 the city was crowded with visitors because of the Passover. It would seem that Joseph and Mary were of the reverential spirit which led them to make the journey every year for that purpose. It would follow therefore that after returning to Nazareth with the newly born child in November of 2 B.C. it would not be long before the Spring of 1 B.C. was upon them and they were on their way south once more. There was not likely to be such an influx of visitors on this occasion as there had been at the time of the Census and they probably had friends or relatives in Bethlehem who could give them shelter and so enable them to keep the Passover at Jerusalem a few miles away. Jesus would now be six months old, and it was probably during this second sojourn in Bethlehem that the Wise Men arrived, finding him, not in the inn, but as Matthew puts it, in a house. Here they presented their gifts, the gold and frankincense and myrrh, symbolic, as some have said, of His royalty and Divinity, His future life of dedication to the Father's purpose and the acceptableness of His earthly life to the Father, and the severity of the trial and suffering which was to characterise that earthly life; myrrh, a bitter herb, was a symbol of suffering. So they worshipped and made obeisance to the One whom they recognised as the promised Saviour of the world; talked, doubtless, with Joseph and Mary on the wonder and grandeur of this thing, and took their leave. The young couple must have seen them go with a feeling of awe; they did not move in a circle which included the wise and the noble of this world, and the visit of these grave and scholarly men would have caused them a certain amount of trepidation. The shepherds had been of their own kind; these must have seemed like visitors from another world, but the whole experience must have strengthened their faith in the reality of the things the angel had said to Mary at the very beginning.

That night Joseph dreamed. The Lord appeared to him in his dream and told him that Herod was plotting to destroy the child. He was to go quickly into Egypt, a journey of some two hundred miles, out of Herod's jurisdiction, and there stay until told to return. Joseph seems to have been a man of unquestioning faith; he took Mary as his wife without hesitation when the angel of the Lord had so bidden him in a previous dream. Now without delay he took his wife and the child and set out on the journey to what was certainly an unknown land. So it came about

that while Herod sat in his palace waiting for the clue that would enable him to put his dark design into execution, the Wise Men were well on their journey eastward and the child he sought to slay well on the way southward out of his power.

The Wise Men were probably well advanced in years. It is hardly likely that any of them survived until thirty years later to hear of the fame of the prophet Jesus of Nazareth. They must have closed their eyes in death with the same thoughts as the aged Simeon; they had seen the Lord of glory with their own eyes; the promise had been fulfilled and one day all would be well; they would stand up in the resurrection and rejoice in the glorious salvation God had promised the willing and obedient of all mankind. Herod also, although he did not know it at this time, was destined to live less than another twelve months. He waited a while for the return of the Wise Men but finally realised that they had seen through his hypocrisy and were not going to return. It was then that he committed the fearful act which has made his name a byword, although compared with others of the acts of Herod the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem was comparatively trivial.

He may have waited several months. We do not know. When he did act, he singled out all the children in Bethlehem up to two years old and sent his soldiers to massacre them. He evidently intended to make quite sure that the reputed new-born King of the Jews would not escape him. The horror of the act has burned itself deeply into the imagination of Christians in every generation; it has been reliably estimated, though, that the population of Bethlehem at the time probably did not exceed two thousand and it is unlikely that more than about thirty or forty children suffered under the king's cruelty.

Herod died less than a year later after six months of intense unrelieved suffering, the climax to a malignant disease with which he had long been afflicted. As he lay dying he tried to make plans and give orders for the wholesale execution of all the highly-placed and nobility of Jerusalem immediately upon his expiry so that there would be a general time of sorrow and grief coincident with his own death. His orders were disregarded and when at length the tyrant expired there was only relief and satisfaction in Judea.

It is not likely that Joseph returned at once. Matthew says that when he did return, Archelaus was reigning in Judea and in consequence he went on to Nazareth in

Galilee. Archelaus was the son of Herod but before taking office he went to Rome to have the kingship formally confirmed by the Emperor Augustus. It was more than a year before he returned and mounted the throne. In the meantime rebellious elements had plunged the country into tumult; Sabinus, the Roman governor of Syria, had invaded Judea with his troops, and all Israel, from Galilee to the south, rose up in arms against him. The Romans speedily found themselves in trouble and more legions were despatched from Syria. Ravaging, burning and slaying as they advanced, the soldiers slowly quelled the insurrection and crucified two thousand of its leaders. Archelaus came back to a kingdom desolated by the horrors of war.

From all of this the little family in Egypt was spared; Joseph would have found work to do at his own trade and been able to support his wife and the child. At last, and probably at least eighteen months or so after the flight into Egypt, and perhaps even more, when the country had settled down into a semblance of peace, Joseph again saw the angel of the Lord in his dreams. "Arise" said the angel "and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young child's life" (Luke 2. 20). Obedient as always, Joseph did as he was bidden, taking the high road which led up into Judea through Beer-Sheba and Hebron, thence to Bethlehem and Jerusalem, leading onward after that through Samaria into Galilee. It must have been on his arrival in the south of the country, perhaps in Beer-Sheba, that he learned of the current political position. Archelaus reigned as king of Judea and Archelaus was turning out as great a tyrant as Herod. Joseph evidently felt that

while Archelaus reigned it was too risky to consider settling in Bethlehem. But of Herod's far-flung dominions, the Jewish State as it had existed since the days of the Maccabees, Herod had bequeathed to Archelaus only Judea, Samaria and Idumea. Galilee in the north had been given to the brother of Archelaus, Antipas (who thirty years later appeared in the lives of John the Baptist and of Jesus). Antipas was a man of much more mild disposition; Joseph decided it would be better to settle in his dominions and so from Beer-Sheba he turned aside to the road which ran by the sea coast through Joppa and Cæsarea, eventually reaching his old home in Nazareth of Galilee.

There the story of the child Jesus comes to an end. He would be possibly about two years old. Nothing more is known of him until twelve years of age when He went up to the Passover at Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary (Luke 2. 42). All that is said about the intervening time is contained in Luke 2. 40 "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him". By the time He was twelve there was no king of Judea; Archelaus, after a reign of nine years characterised by injustice and cruelty, was arraigned before the Emperor Augustus, stripped of his possessions, and banished to Gaul. Judea was reduced to the status of a Roman province and Roman governors exercised control in Jerusalem.

So the child whom the Wise Men worshipped grew quietly to manhood until the day He stood before John at Jordan ready to commence the mission for which He had come into the world, and for which He had been protected from the enemies who in those early days "sought the young child's life".

"THEY SHALL SEE EYE TO EYE"

A few words on a well-known text

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (Isa. 52. 8).

The immediate setting of this text is the promised return from captivity to Babylon. There would be symbolic watchers on the walls of Jerusalem and symbolic heralds hastening over the mountains to announce to the watchers the coming of the returning hosts intent on rebuilding the temple and city. The long night of captivity is past; the day of Divine favour is come. "I am returned to

Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in it, and a line shall be stretched out upon Jerusalem" (Zech. 1. 16). Hence the stirring cry of the watchmen in the seventh verse: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith unto Zion 'Thy God reigneth'" (Isa. 52. 7).

Then come the words of our text. The rejoicing watchmen sing together because they see, face to face, the heralds of good tidings announcing the Lord returning to His sanctuary in Zion.

That is what this expression "eye to eye" means. "Face to face." It only occurs in one other place in the Old Testament, Num. 14. 14, where it is rendered "For thou, Lord, art seen 'face to face'." The thought in Isa. 52 is that the watchmen see clearly, face to face, the heralds of glad tidings announcing the imminent return of their God to His people.

Rotherham's rendering is "*Eye to eye shall they look upon Yahweh's return unto Zion*" and he further remarks on the meaning as "Probably 'face to face with the event'." Moffatt has it: "*They see the Eternal face to face as He returns to Zion*". Margolis: "*They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion*". Ferrar Fenton: "*When clearly you see that the Lord comes to Zion*". The Septuagint confirms the thought by having "*Eyes shall look to eyes when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion*".

This wonderful imagery was not intended solely for fulfilment in the days of Israel's return from captivity. Paul uses the seventh verse as applicable to the heralds of the Gospel in Rom. 10. 15. Realising that the return under Cyrus was but a picture of the greater release from captivity which should come to spiritual Israel at the close of the Gospel Age, and the joy which the imminent Advent of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, would inspire in the hearts of the Gospel Age "Watchers", we can discern a greater and more glorious application of these glowing words.

The "Watchers" on the walls of the Holy City of this Gospel Age have waited through a long and dreary time during which the people of God have been held captive by an oppressive system which has crushed the Truth to the ground. Only a few of the "poor" have remained to be "vine-dressers and husbandmen", but these have faithfully manned the walls watching for the promised "return". The night is far spent, the day is at hand, but as yet only the first gleams of dawn are perceptible.

Then come the heralds. Hasting over the mountains, pressing toward the Holy City, so long down-trodden and oppressed, they come with glorious news. The KING is on his way. He is returning to Zion with favour. Enlightenment and prosperity is to come with Him. The captive people are loosed—even now they are on their way to commence the great work of rebuilding the Temple of God, and placing within it the golden vessels—the precious truths so long submerged under the defilements of a foreign power.

How eagerly the Watchers fasten their gaze

upon the heralds. They haste—therefore the news is good. Did they bring bad news their pace would be slow. They each seek to outvie the others in order to reach the city first. How beautiful the sight, heralds upon the mountains proclaiming the coming King!

So they meet, face to face. No longer any doubt. The news runs round the city. Not all the watchers receive the news at once. Not all hear exactly the same story from the different heralds, all zealous to proclaim the essentials of their message. But one central truth stands out—THE KING IS AT HAND! He may be upon the mountain approach; He may even be within the city, and making Himself known to those who have perceived His entrance. There is no lack of love and zeal on the part of those who have not actually seen Him enter the gate, if so be He really is now within the walls. All are united in the one joyous theme—the time has come. "*I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.*"

That is the story of this closing period of the Gospel Age—a period which is now well advanced. Is the King within the walls? Is He at the gates? Whether the one thing or the other, the important teaching of the text is that we are "face to face with the event". The Watchers and the Heralds have met, and their united testimony has been given. The Temple has been built; Divine Truth, things new and old, has been established in its rightful place. The work is not yet finished; the building must go on; the Temple must be adorned with yet purer and nobler vessels of truth and understanding, that the day may at length come when the great outer doors will be flung open to all mankind and the invitation come to all men to enter and walk in its light.

The importance of a right understanding of this Scripture is great. It calls us to recognise the significance of the times in which we live, a period of active preparation for the day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested in His glorious appearing—His revelation of Himself to all men, in association with His glorified Church, for man's blessing and salvation. How beautiful upon the mountains . . . the heralds . . . proclaiming "*Thy God reigneth*" . . . for the time of His Kingdom is come, and the day is not far hence when He shall "*reign in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously.*"

"God has placed us in the world to be Lighthouses, to reflect His Light and to shed radiance wherever we go.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

*A study of prophecy
passing into history*

2. A Nation Born in a Day

This short series is written against the background of the belief held by many students of the prophetic word to the effect that before the Messianic Age commences there is to be a restored and purified nation of Israel gathered in fulfilment of the Divine promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that this restored nation is to play an important part in the evangelistic work of that Age.

* * *

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them" (Ezek. 37. 8).

This is the second stage in Ezekiel's vision. At first he had seen the heterogeneous collection of disjointed bones lying in the plain coming together and joining themselves together to form complete skeletons—lifeless, unmoving, but skeletons nevertheless. Now he saw the skeletons growing and changing into bodies; sinews, flesh and skin appearing as if from nowhere and clothing those bones so that now the plain appeared full of recumbent bodies—still, and without movement, but in every respect complete and perfect, needing only the spirit of life from God to vivify and animate them and set them on their feet, a living and mighty host.

A very fair analogy can be drawn here between the vision as recorded and the actual development of Ezekiel's people into a nation in the latter days. If, as outlined in the first part of this treatise, the coming together of bone to bone could be held to picture the slow assembling of the framework of the Jewish State and people during the period between 1897, when Theodore Herzl set in motion the forces which have resulted in the present situation, and 1948, when the Israeli State was formally proclaimed and began its independent existence, then quite logically the years since 1948, when the nation has been steadily gathering strength and solidity, could well be pictured by the sinews, the flesh and the skin covering those bones. That which was a bare skeleton in 1948 is now in fair process of becoming a well-rounded out body.

At the establishment of the State in 1948 there were 650,000 Jews in Palestine, and with the departure of the Mandatory Power they were left with a land that was virtually

bankrupt, without government, without organisation and without resources. Almost every function of modern civilised national administration came to an end and by all the rules the land should have relapsed overnight into anarchy, a ready prey to the invaders who waited eagerly around its frontiers. To-day, less than fifteen years later, the land has 2,000,000 Jewish inhabitants living and reasonably prospering under a well-planned and well-run Administration which has won the admiration and envy of other nations and is already extending its influence and assistance to other emerging nations in Asia and Africa. Israel may have been a skeleton in 1948; it is most certainly not so to-day.

First of all, the sinews cover the bones. Money has often been called the sinews of war; in this case money became the sinews of peace. Not only money, but men, immigrants, poured into Israel from the very first day of the new regime. The restriction imposed by Britain in 1936 in a desperate attempt at Arab appeasement vanished overnight; the doors were thrown open to all who would, of the sons of Jacob, to return. And return they did, from every place under heaven, creating an immediate problem which all but wrecked the struggling embryo nation. Money came too; many Jews, particularly in America, who for various reasons were not prepared to join in the rush for the land, made their contribution in cash or in financial assistance so that the nation could begin to put itself upon a commercial basis. The bones could not boast of flesh at first, but they certainly began to acquire some sinews, something to give the muscular power which they would need so much later on. As the facilities became available so industries began to re-open or to develop. Stagnated or derelict farms began to be cultivated. Struggling communities unable for years to do more than produce enough to keep themselves alive began to organise and increase production so that they could contribute a share to the nation's export business, essential if the nation was to survive at all in this modern competitive and commercially minded world. Men came searching for new outlets of business and production, like the Australian who remembered the sulphur nuggets he found during his war service in

Palestine, came back and explored, and started a prosperous sulphur mining industry. Imaginative schemes were drawn up for exploiting the country's incipient resources, such as the gigantic water pipe-line running two hundred miles or so from the headwaters of the Jordan in the far north to the parched deserts of the Negev in the south, bringing the blessings of irrigation and abundant water to the farming communities struggling to make the wilderness blossom as the rose. That pipe-line was a sinew indeed! So the sinews appeared on the bones as the strength and resources, the industries and trades, began to grow and become established.

After the sinews in Ezekiel's vision came the flesh, clothing the bare bones with a semblance of shape and form. So, after the basis of the new nation's economy had been assured by the provision of men, and of money, and of farm implements, and of factories, and of ships, and of all the means which a nation must have if it is to grow and prosper, came the fruit of these things. Crops, herds, manufactures, raw materials gathered from the land itself, minerals, oil, fertilisers, all these began to appear in increasing measure both for the enrichment of the national life and for export further to enhance the national stability.

So, at a certain point, the skin began to cover the body, sign of a completion and rounding out of this second stage in the revival of the dry bones. Social and commercial organisation, the establishment of stable financial and political institutions, all that makes for a sound national economy; in short, an orderly and firmly seated Government administering the affairs of a virile and thriving community conscious of its own potentialities and determined to maintain its own separate identity in a world at the same time friendly and hostile according to circumstances. Here was the skin, the medium which held the fabric of the nation together, binding the elements of the body together and enabling it to present a united and homogeneous front to the world.

It cannot be said that this second stage is anything like complete at the present time. Israel is a secular State; there is no question of reliance completely and utterly upon the power of God for their national prosperity and safety. So there is no question yet of the breath of life from God blowing upon them to vivify those rapidly developing bodies. The sinews and the flesh and the skin are still in process of clothing the dry bones, and not

until that process is seen to be complete can the third and final stage be expected. Just to look at things from the strictly natural point of view, it is obvious that the polity of Israel is still upon a very insecure footing. Economically they are only just beginning to become truly self-supporting; politically there are internal strifes and conflicts and externally the ever-present menace of the Arab world, planning and preparing for the day of decision. Religiously, even although honour is paid to the Bible in the highest circles and religious thought and observance probably stands at a higher level than any European or American country, it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be likened to the Holy Nation which will at the end experience the most spectacular of every Divine deliverance which the world has ever witnessed. We must expect the present process yet to continue until the nation has measurably fulfilled the glowing predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and the herd . . ." (Jer. 31. 12). ". . . the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land" (Ezek. 38. 12). "Thy waste and thy desolate places and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away" (Isa. 49. 19). "The seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnants of this people to possess all these things" (Zech. 8. 12). Some of these Scriptures draw attention to a problem which is even now facing Israel, the limited area of land available for the rapidly increasing population. The present territory of Israel amounts to no more than about 9,000 square miles; the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession, the land which is to become the Holy Land of the Messianic Age and which is to be possessed by the Holy Nation before the work of that Age begins, amounts to some 120,000 square miles. Somehow or other, before the final onslaught of the forces of evil upon the serene and confident Holy Nation at the full end of the Age, a great accession of territory to the nation has to take place. How that will come about is not at present clear, but that it must be so is necessitated by the Divine promise and

purpose. It is not yet true that the holy city of Jerusalem is delivered from the power of the Gentiles, for the old city, the whole of Jerusalem as it was known in Bible days, is part of the Arab Kingdom of Jordan and cut off from Israel. The part of Jerusalem which lies in the State of Israel is entirely modern and did not exist in ancient days. The site of the Temple on Mount Moriah, the holiest spot of all, is still occupied by the Moslem shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. These and many similar problems have to be solved and Israel enter much more fully than is the case at present into possession of the Land of Promise before it can be said that the clothing of the dry bones with sinews, flesh and skin has been completed and the time has come for the Divine Spirit to in-breathe new life into that nation that it may live and stand upon its feet, an exceeding great army.

It must never be forgotten that the promise to Abraham envisages a land stretching from Sinai to the Euphrates and from Elath on the Red Sea to Mount Hermon in the north. A glance at a map of the Middle East will show what a tremendous task lies before that people and how much desert land has to be brought under control and made to add its contribu-

tion to the wealth of the nation. Simultaneously there must also be involved the solution of the "Arab problem" and the readjustments necessary in order to leave Israel politically predominant over all that vast area. Here is ample scope for watching with keen interest the day-by-day developments in that land and perceiving how the Divine purpose is moving steadily toward its fore-ordained climax.

At some future time, then, how far in the future we do not at this time see, the bones will have been completely clothed and the Spirit waiting to come upon the nation. What is the great event which so turns Israel's heart that the Spirit can enter in? That is the next question to answer. The Spirit cannot come unless the people are ready; God cannot deliver unless the people believe and trust; that is fundamental in all His dealings. So before the last great onslaught, when God rises up as He did in the day of battle to deliver His people from their enemies, the people must have been converted. By what power or influence will that great change have been effected? The breathing of the wind of God upon those slain depends upon that!

(To be continued)

THE TARRYING³/₄ VISION

*A talk for
the times*

"The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. 2. 3).

The splendid faith of the prophet Habakkuk shines down the ages, a standing reproof to all who have allowed the slow passage of many years to undermine and finally destroy their faith in the coming Kingdom. There is not much consolation in the thought of a world wherein dwelleth righteousness that is still many thousands of years away. The great incentive that led so many despairing souls in the First Century to fling away their sadness and come rejoicing into that wonderful missionary society that was the Early Church was their fixed conviction that the time was at hand and the Kingdom of light was at the doors. The splendid imagery of the Book of Revelation was full of that theme to the early Christians. Little did they reckon of the two thousand years that must yet elapse before the New Jerusalem would in fact descend to the earth to the blessing of all mankind. They in-

terpreted the mystic symbols to refer to their own day and the events of their own times—as they were intended to do—and they fell asleep in the secure conviction that the days of evil were numbered and the Rider on the White Horse all but ready to cleave the heavens in His meteoric descent to the salvation of men. In their admittedly partial and incomplete understanding of the dispensational features of the Plan of God they found all that was necessary to Christian fortitude and steadfastness. In that faith they lived, and in that faith they died.

So it was through the successive centuries of this Gospel Age. There has hardly ever been a time when the Second Advent of Christ and the speedy ending of this present evil world has not been looked upon as an imminent event. There were times—round about A.D. 500 and again in A.D. 1000 and to a lesser extent in A.D. 1600 when that general belief increased to the dimensions of a well-nigh universal expectation. On each such occasion the belief was founded upon chronology and

each time the chronology was proved to be erroneous; but the impetus thus given to a wholehearted and zealous "watching for His appearing" was on each occasion the cause of much blessing. It is not the failure to discern aright the details of the vision that is the cause of falling away from faith and hope, but the failure to discern any vision at all. The inaccurate details can be replaced by more accurate ones as fast as the passage of time reveals their inaccuracy without disturbing our view of the vision itself; nothing can fill in for us the details of a vision that has faded into nothingness.

In our own day we need to remember these things. It is not that we have just the same basis for concluding that maybe we ourselves are equally mistaken with those of five or ten centuries ago and that the world is doomed to continue yet for an unspecified length of time before the transition to the Kingdom becomes an accomplished fact. There are factors in the case which did not exist before. It is reasonably evident to-day that humanity, left to itself, will fairly soon destroy itself from the earth unless there be some intervention from outside. It is reasonably evident to-day that the continuing increase of earth's population will in a very short time render the fulfilment of the Divine promises physically impossible, if the end is not to come soon—assuming that our understanding of the Scripture doctrine of salvation is the true one. It is true to-day, as it has never been true before in the Age, that the Divine promises to "Israel after the flesh" have commenced to be fulfilled, and that the preparation of that Holy Nation which is to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth has commenced. It is true to-day, as it has never been true before in the Age, that this Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, that no corner of the inhabited earth remains into which Christian missionaries have not at one time or another penetrated with their soul-saving message. All these things are signs of the End; for the first time in history it was possible to anticipate the imminent Second Coming of our Lord and the consequent speedy setting up of His Kingdom on earth on a basis other than that of chronology. That is a most important thing. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of any particular chronological scheme, none will deny that the signs of the times and the inexorable logic of events constitute a far more sure and reliable basis on which to found our expectations. Therefore it is with serene confidence

that we in this Twentieth Century ought to take our stand, as did Habakkuk of old, upon our watch tower and view the close approach of those things for which Christians all through the Age have longed and prayed and waited.

Fine words, these, say some! Logical, and perhaps difficult to refute from the standpoint of reason. But our lives are not altogether governed by reason, and oft-times the discouragements and difficulties of the way and the more immediate appeal of every day happenings makes it hard to take and hold to ourselves arguments such as the above, logical and truthful though we know them to be. That was how the children of Israel in captivity to Babylon felt. They knew, in a theoretical sort of way, that after seventy years in Babylon they were going to be restored to their own land and all the glorious promises of God to their nation come true. But that belief had not become so much a part of their lives and an object of assured expectation that they could hold it unsullied against the background of their present miseries in Babylon. So they invented that proverb which has become the catch-word of all who could not "stay the course" through all time since, "*the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth*". What utter hopelessness and despair is embodied in those eight words! Nothing left of all the rosy promise of youth, of all the zeal and enthusiasm with which one set out, maybe many years ago, to serve the Lord God as an ambassador of His Kingdom. The commission renounced, the service abandoned, the hopes dashed, the future—black. Disappointment; bitter, keen disappointment, was the lot of many in Natural Israel in those dark Babylonian days, and it has been the lot of many in Spiritual Israel in these latter days also. This past century in Christian history has been a grand epoch of watchfulness and expectation, a time of Bible exposition and understanding, of evangelism and revival, of missionary endeavour and Christian activity of every description, but for many that wonderful experience has proved fruitless. They have consecrated their lives to the Cause, have borne the heat and burden of the day, have done mighty and wonderful works in His Name and perchance have led others in turn to the feet of the Saviour—and then in evening time have abandoned their hope and faith in the face of unfulfilled expectations. The Bridegroom has tarried—has seemed to them to tarry, for in fact He does not really tarry; He comes "at the due time"—and the test of waiting has found the chink in the

armour which all other tests had failed to penetrate. So they sought "other salvations", or have gone to the world and its mundane affairs and petty interests—or glittering attractions—for consolation, or have retired into their own shells to lament the apparent futility of all their life's work. *"We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there any amongst us that knoweth how long."*

But some there are who do keep the vision undimmed. Some there are who endure to the end, "as seeing him who is invisible," and these are they who perceive the hidden truth which explains all things. These are they who know that God once looked out upon a wild chaos that was "without form, and void" and because He had faith in Himself took up the great work of making it a home for mankind. These are they who know that God once looked down upon a human creation apparently wrecked and ruined through sin, condemned to return to the dust from which it had been made—but because He had faith in man, continued the development and outworking of His great redemptive plan. He knows that despite the apparent hopelessness of the case, mankind one day will win through to the full standards and standing of the sinless and everliving sons of God. And His faithful ones know that too.

Habakkuk was one of these. His noble words have been an inspiration to the perplexed and discouraged, time after time. No one will ever know, this side the Vail, how many despairing souls have been induced to pick up the broken remnants of their faith and piece them together and struggle on still to keep the vision in sight. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*" (Hab. 3. 17-18). That was the spirit which led the prophet Joel, looking forward rapturously to the Kingdom that shall be, to break out exultantly "*your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*". (Joel 2. 28). That word really belongs to the Millennial Kingdom itself but there is a very true sense in which the principle it enshrines is applicable now. We who have enjoyed the inestimable blessing of knowing about the coming Kingdom in advance, as it were, of mankind generally, can surely take

to ourselves some of the Millennial insight which will be granted to men and women of God in that day. We too, according to the tale of physical years or maturity of Christian character, or both, can be of those who "dream dreams" or "see visions". Be it remembered that in the meaning of this verse the "dreamer of dreams" is the one to whose Spirit-filled mind God can reveal Himself and make His purposes known, as He did to Joseph and Daniel and the Apostle Paul. The "elder" who dreams dreams is the one who by reason of long experience in the Christian way and a steadfast faith that has survived the years does habitually "walk" and "talk" with God. He is one whose ministry is a spiritually profitable and acceptable ministry, one who can interpret aright the outward signs of the development of the Divine Plan and explain the apparently obscure or contradictory features that seem to deny rather than confirm our expectations for the future. The "younger" who sees visions is the one who, only recently having started on the Christian pathway, directs all his enthusiasm and all his zeal and all his faith into a heartfelt and active consecration of life and all that life holds to the service of God in the interests of His Kingdom. The trials of faith have not yet come to test the staying power of his consecration. All he has is zeal and enthusiasm—and the vision! God grant that all such may hold firmly to their first resolve until in their turn they become of the "old men" who can "dream dreams" because they have learned to walk with God.

So the vision leads on, never standing still, never appearing quite the same to any two people or at any two moments of time, but ever enduring a sure and faithful guide to the heavenly city. Lose the vision, and all is lost; we wander aimlessly and blindly in a darkened world indeed. "*Will ye also go away?*" "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*" Hold fast to the vision and it will lead on with beckoning fingers, the light growing more intense and the outlines of things to come more definite, until the day of fulfilment has dawned and faith is swallowed up in sight.

"*As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall have no occasion to use this proverb any more in Israel. Say unto them, 'the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.'*"

"Prayer is the key to open the day and the bolt to shut in the night."

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A study in
1 Cor. 13:13

Part 2. The Charismata

Part 1 of this series showed how pagan man in his systems of religion and mythology was endeavouring to find the answer to the great questions of life—the First Cause, Good and Evil, the way to life, without success. In 1 Cor. 13 St. Paul seeks to show his Corinthian converts that their new faith has the answers they previously sought.

Between those * * * days when the Corinthian brethren worshipped at the idol's shrine, and these later days when Paul wrote to them these searching words, these converts to the Christian faith had been endowed with extraordinary supernatural powers. They had been invested with "gracious gifts" (*charismata*—1 Cor. 12. 31). They are also called "spiritual gifts" (*pneumatikon*) in Chap. 14. 1. The possession of these gifts enabled them to do and say many things entirely outside and beyond the range of their natural capacities. They were intended to be a source of help in their witness-bearing before their former friends and relations in the early days of the Church's establishment.

The use of such supernatural powers was not an entirely new feature in their lives, for they would have seen and heard the heathen priesthood exercising similar powers many times. Supernatural exhibitions of occult power were of frequent occurrence in the worship at the shrine—while the pronunciation of cryptic oracles, or the infliction of the most terrible taboos, under demonic influences, were but regular features of the priesthood's daily functions. To produce impressionistic effects upon the worshippers' minds black magic of many kinds was employed, while other features of the black arts were used either to restore to health or to blast to death such individuals as the priest might choose. Men have been known, so historians say, to wilt and die forthwith under the priestly curse. We are told by competent authorities that occurrences of this sort took place in every land where a demon-inspired priesthood held sway, hence these at Corinth would be no exception to the rule.

But in those former days these brethren had been no more than observers and witnesses of these Satanic happenings. None but the priesthood with their acolytes had been thus endowed. While therefore the sight of these

happenings was really no new thing in their lives, it was most surely a new experience entirely for themselves to be endowed and equipped with such supernatural powers. And in that endowment lay its danger to themselves. Ingrained as that way of life had been from their infant days, into the very fibres of their soul, every act and experience, every word and thought had been tinctured through and through with occult influence. When passing over into the Christian Church these Corinthians seemed to have brought much of this early heritage along with them. They had not all cut entirely clear from its entangling influence. Some of them still attended at the idol shrine, and sat with family and friends at its festive board. With them they still partook of the "offered" meat, while others scrupled not to lend themselves to immorality. Seemingly, for some of them, the "pull" of the newer faith was yet too weak to neutralise the fascination of the ancient shrine.

And yet there was some "pulling power" in the new faith. They came at the appointed times to the place of fellowship and mingled with other communicants of like mind. It was at these times that the new influence came to rest upon them. It was in this place that the heavenly "*Charismata*" enabled them to speak without premeditation or other preparation in their own foreign tongues. Some were accorded ability to interpret a "foreign tongue", and make it of use and service in the general ministry. Others were given insight into an ancient prophecy, which was then communicated to all for the common good. Others had ability conferred to heal the sick or work minor miracles.

Thus, within the limitations of their own ecclesia, these one-time heathen worshippers were endowed with supernatural powers. And, in that they lay outside the range of their own natural abilities, they were, in this sense, akin to those of their former priests, though intended for nobler ends. With men inclined to be wholly good—men like Paul and Peter and whole Apostolic band—these "*charismata*" could be of untold benefit, both to the recipient himself and to the wider circle around him, but with men not yet cut clear from evil things and evil ways, they could well be a source of great danger and immense difficulty. With men such as these

selves were only, in part, responsible. And the fact that some among them laid themselves open to demonic control—as is evidenced by some one or more of them saying “Jesus is accursed”—greatly complicated the situation for the whole assembly. A counterfeit obsession by the evil powers—a state of things which few seemed able to detect or correct—produced consequences in their midst far from good or desirable.

In any case, the influence of the evil powers had showed itself too strong to be corrected by the heavenly gifts, as their divisions, their indifference to sin, their readiness to “go to law” proved most unmistakably. Even their very “love-feasts”, with which their usual gatherings terminated, had degenerated into seasons of drunkenness and gluttony.

These were sad scenes in a Christian Church, and make grievous reading even when lightly sketched. And the Corinthians were not the only Church in this tragic plight as reference to Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles will show. The Church at Corinth stands before us in the nature of a window, through which we may view the state of many congregations in those early days, shackled and fettered as so many of them were by the heathen influence of former days.

What then was effected among them by the “Charismata”? Were there no good results therefrom? Yes, indeed, there was great good where the heart and motive of the recipient was pure, but to produce praiseworthy effects the heart must first be pure. The mere possession of a “gift” did not by itself purify the heart.

What was the real purpose of the bestowment of these “gifts”? The answer is—it was to show the need of some better thing! Taken in their widest sense, these “gifts” were endowments of an enabling Power—Holy Spirit Power—accorded to believing men to assist them in their witness-bearing to the new faith, and to call attention to the changes that were being introduced in the earth. But a dispensation of “Power” alone was not enough to purify and sweeten hearts so supersaturated with sin. The hosts of wickedness under Satanic control could also dispense wonder-working power to their representatives, enabling them also to perform prodigies before men. And, being what he was, man would respond more readily to the evil display than to the good. The great and all-essential purpose behind the bestowment of these “gifts” was to show the need for the dispensing of “something” which God alone

possessed—a “something” not possessed by any evil power—a “something” that would penetrate below brain and hand and eye, and win response from the deep discerning qualities of the heart. Mere “power” that operated from outer sources upon eye and hand and brain was not enough; it must be the deep call of One great Heart—able and ready to help to the uttermost—to every other heart which had come to know its need of help. There is but one attribute that is ample enough for this great task; it had its source in God.

For a little while therefore God gave the lesser “gifts”, which were destined in due time to pass away, to show to men, (even to believing men) their need for a more excellent thing.

(to be continued)

We stand on the borders of a new era. The present dispensation is almost finished. In a few more years, if prophecy be not thoroughly misinterpreted, we shall enter upon another condition. This poor earth of ours, which has been swathed in darkness, shall put on her garment of light. She hath toiled a long while in travail and sorrow. Soon shall her groanings end. Her surface, which hath been stained with blood, is soon to be purified by love, and a religion of peace is to be established. The hour is coming when storms shall be hushed, when tempests shall be unknown, when whirlwind and hurricane shall stay their mighty force, and when ‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ’. But you ask me what sort of kingdom that it is to be, and whether I can show you any likeness thereof. I answer, No. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him’, in the next, the Millennial dispensation; ‘but God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit’.

“Jesus, our Lord, is to be King of all the earth, and rule all nations in a glorious personal reign. The saints, as being kings in Christ, have a right to the whole world.”

(C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-92).

Daniel could sleep better in the den of lions than Darius in the royal palace; he who could not find rest in the lion’s den, when *that* was the place for him, could not gain rest by a mere removal to a palace.

THE MIRACLE BOOK

*An appreciation of
the Holy Scriptures*

The Holy Scriptures have truly been described as a miracle of diversity in unity. The Bible is its own great evidence to its Divine origin and authority and we cannot consider these two great facts without being tremendously impressed with its diversity and its unity.

First there is the diversity of language; the Old Testament was written in Hebrew; a portion of it in Chaldean, while the New Testament was written in Greek. There is a diversity of authorship. These Scriptures were neither written by one nor by a company of men collaborating with one another, but men with greatly diversified mental calibre, training and occupation were employed in writing them. Moses was a shepherd, Joshua a soldier, Samuel a seer, David a King, Solomon a philosopher, Amos a herdsman, Daniel a statesman, Ezra a scribe, Matthew a taxgatherer, Luke a doctor, John a fisherman, Paul a scholar. There is a further diversity of place in which these Scriptures were produced; they have come to us from the desert of Sinai, the wilderness of Judea, the banks of Chebar, the city of Zion, the public prison of Rome, and the Isle of Patmos. There is no literary phenomenon in the world to be compared with this book, the Bible. Not only so, but there is diversity of form; in Genesis there are stories, in Leviticus ritual, in Deuteronomy oratory, in Ruth romance, in Samuel and Kings national history, in Job drama; the Psalms are sacred hymns, in Proverbs we have ethics, in Ecclesiastes philosophy, in the Canticles a love song, in Joel and Habakkuk rhapsody, in Isaiah and Jeremiah prophecy, in the Gospels biography, in Acts church history, in the Epistles doctrines, in Revelation the Apocalypse. All these forms of literature make up this great spiritual classic. From the standpoint of diversity of subject matter also, is there any other book in the world to be compared with it? In the Bible we read of God, of men, of angels and demons, of Jews and Gentiles, of Christians and pagans, of saints and sinners, of the church and the world, of peace and war, of friends and foes, of blessings and curses, of holiness and sin, of honour and shame, of faith and unbelief, of time and eternity, of life and death, of love and rage, of Heaven and Hades. These and countless other subjects are

brought to our notice within the covers of this extraordinary volume.

We are not impressed, however, with any sense of incongruity; there is an eminent fitness in the relation of these tremendous themes to one another. Nor were these writings produced at any one time. They do not belong to any one age; they come to us as the growth of many centuries. Is there any other book in the world that can be compared with this as to its diversity? Were the number of subjects treated or their equivalent brought together in any other book no publisher would take the risk of publishing it and no purchaser would ever buy it, and yet the Bible is the most widely circulated book in all the world. Other books have a season, they have a run and then we hear of them no more, but this book lives on through the ages. It outlives all other literature and is the queen of all literature.

Notwithstanding all this diversity the Bible is nevertheless a sublime unity; every part is essential to the whole, and it all originates in the will and revelation of God. The two Testaments are essential to each other; they brood over the mercy seat as did the cherubim of gold of old, each answering to the other, "The New is in the Old contained. the Old is in the New explained." Genesis and Revelation are essential to each other; Genesis is the book of commencement, Revelation the book of consummation; Genesis anticipates Revelation and Revelation consummates Genesis. Each part is related to and corresponds with every other part. Genesis with Matthew, the two great beginnings. The books that introduce the two covenants, Leviticus and Hebrews—Leviticus giving all that is essential to Judaism and Hebrews all that is essential to Christianity; Exodus with Acts—Exodus telling of the nationalisation of the people of God and Acts of the beginning of the Christian Church and the first generation of her history. Joshua with Ephesians, telling of the inheritance of God's people. Daniel, the Old Testament Apocalypse with Revelation the New Testament Apocalypse, pointing beyond the rise and fall of the world's empires to the coming of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

As an illustration of this correspondence, take the first three chapters of Genesis and

the last three of Revelation and it will be found that each of these chapters treats of the same subjects but in the reverse order. In Genesis 1 we have the first Heaven and Earth, in Revelation 22 the last Heaven and Earth. In Genesis 2 we have husband and wife. In Revelation 21 the Lamb and the Bride. In Genesis 3 the sentence is pronounced upon Satan, and in Revelation 20 the sentence is executed. It is little wonder that the Devil attempts to have us believe that the one book is all myth and the other is all mystery.

The Word of God is not a dead letter; Hebrews speak of the Word of God as being alive, and Peter speaks of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. We can no more leave the Bible alone or leave it out of our reckoning than we can leave Christ alone. Christ does not derive His value from the Bible; the Bible derives its value from Christ. Only through the Bible can we get to Christ; our eternal knowledge of Christ comes through the Bible.

The Bible is built up in an extraordinary way, not to be accounted for by accident or chance, and both Testaments we find in sequence. For instance, in the Old Testament from Genesis to Esther we have history and further back we cannot go; but begin that first verse of the first of Genesis, and interest is aroused and we are led on through all the books right to the sublime end in the Apocalypse of John. We are impressed as we read with this amazing diversity, yet it unfolds and presents itself as a sublime story. All these stories are one story, all these revelations are one revelation, and all these records are one record. Across the whole of the Old Testament you may write the word "expectation", and across the whole of the New "realisation". In Genesis there are origins, in Revelation there are issues, and all the way between, from Exodus to Jude, there are processes leading from those origins to those issues. The revelation of God to man has been made in history and everywhere in Holy Scripture there is historical continuity and sequence. There is historical unity everywhere in Scripture; there is, further, prophetic unity. Here there is opportunity for the wildest confusion and multiplied contradiction, as witness modern prophecies, but, although there was not, and could not have been, any collusion among the writers of Holy Scripture, there is no contradiction. There are four great themes of prophecy—the Messiah, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church. Some treat of one, some of another and not a few touch upon them

all, but there is an amazing harmony everywhere. There is no contradiction among the voices. In the Old Testament there are predictions, and in the New there are fulfillments. In the Old we get types, in the New antitypes. The whole of the Old is leading up to the first Advent and the whole of the New is leading up to the Second Advent. There is prophetic unity as well as structural unity, and historical unity everywhere in Scripture. We also have here doctrinal unity. Were man left to themselves, how utterly impossible it would be to have harmony of doctrine, but these many writers across the ages were not left to themselves.

Everywhere in Scripture we find God. We are told in some quarters that Jehovah was the tribal Deity of the Hebrews, but this is not so; He is declared the God of all the earth, the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the God of all men, and the New Testament shows that He so loved—not the Hebrews, nor the Church—but the WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Everywhere in Scripture man is a sinner. The Old Testament does not present man as half a beast on his way up to morality and the New as a man made like God; both Testaments agree in saying that man has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Both Testaments teach that Christ is the one and only Redeemer and His Cross our only hope. Redemption, in the Old Testament anticipated, is in the New accomplished and it is from the Acts to the Apocalypse applied. It is the one great theme which runs throughout all the Scriptures. It is the note that dominates in this orchestra from start to finish. We also have spiritual unity. Think of the level of thought in the Bible. Think of its range, of its vision, of the sublimity of its themes. Think of the loftiness of its ideals, of the power of its appeals. The horizons of the Bible are infinitudes and immensities. The current coin of this realm is Faith, Love, and Hope. Think what the Bible has done for individuals. Think of the countless numbers who, were they with us still, would say, "this one thing I know—that whereas I was blind now I see." No man ever came to say that by studying philosophy or science, but many have done so through an acquaintance with the Word of God. Think of what the Bible has done for the Church of God and for national life; for where the Word of God is accepted and believed there is emancipation and deliverance from degradation and from

cruelty.

It has turned the demons out of cruel hearts and made men sober and kind. If the Bible is to be judged by what it has accomplished, then verily it is the Book of Books and the Word of God. It could have no other origin than God Himself. It does not need our apology or our special pleading; give it a chance and it will demonstrate its own character and its own power.

The poet Dryden wrote:—

*Whence but from Heaven, could men unskill-
ed in arts,*

*In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths? or how or why
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gain, and martyrdom their
price.*

*Then for the style; majestic and divine,
It speaks no less than GOD in every line:*

The whole substance of religion is faith, hope and charity, by the practice of which we become united to the will of God: Al lbeside is indifferent and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end and be swallowed up therein by faith and charity.

* * *

Oh! wonderful economy of God! and oh! wonderful wisdom of God! to accomplish the overthrow of all evil things and evil men by the power of His grace, by the power that enables men to endure fire and flame, scorn and reproach, in the faith of Him.

* * *

The only way to enjoy life is to believe on the Son of God, and then to walk in fellowship with Him. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "The Lord doth put a difference."

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