



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 48, No. 1

JAN./FEB. 1970

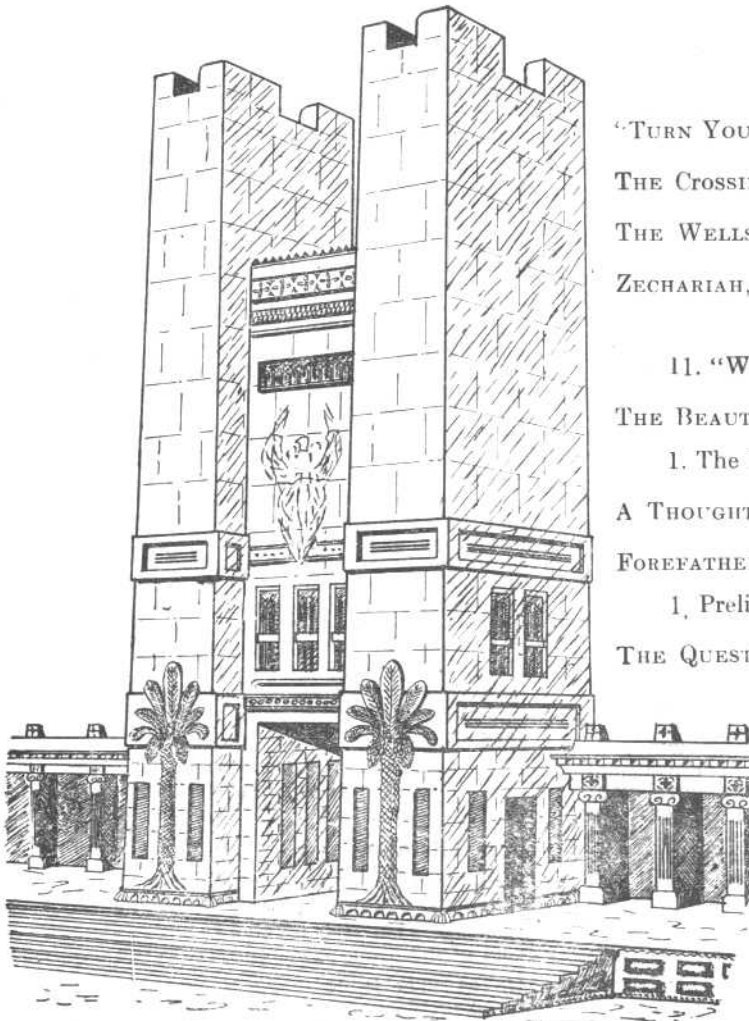
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published November 1st

Next issue March 1st

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

*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*

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

New features

With the ending, in the September 1969 issue, of the series on John's First Epistle, and the close during this year of Zechariah's prophecy, two new serial features have been selected to follow. Their opening instalments appear in this issue.

"The Beauty of Holiness" is a New Testament study of the Scriptural presentation of holiness—its meaning in Scripture and its place in the individual Christian life. This study first appeared in the "Monthly" some thirty years ago and it is felt that its appeal will be no less inspiring to a new generation.

"Forefathers of Abraham" comprises an examination of the very brief account of the period between the Flood and the time of Abraham as given in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis, in the light of present-day knowledge resulting from modern archaeological research. Despite the apparent brevity of the narrative there is much material available nowadays whereby these two chapters, covering a substantial piece of historical time, are rendered more informative, and their historical accuracy confirmed.

* * *

To all readers

With our increasing circulation it has been necessary to go over to mechanical addressing, and by the middle of the year the whole of our readers should be receiving their copies in envelopes addressed in the new style. Whilst this will considerably ease the work involved in the postal despatch of the "Monthly", there are a few relevant points on which we would ask all readers' co-operation.

Clerical errors in names or addresses will not be so easy to detect under the new system and it will be appreciated therefore if any inaccuracy in the address appearing on the envelope is advised promptly to us. Especially is this the case with postal code numbers. If the "Monthly" fails to arrive within a reasonable period of the usual time please notify the fact so that a replacement copy may be sent whilst the defect is investigated.

It is very important that change of address be notified as early as possible, always giving the old address as well as the new. In this connection some readers give their new address when renewing their request for another year without stating the fact

that it is a new address. This is very confusing to us since we have no means of associating this request with the old address unless we here have some personal knowledge of the individual concerned and this is not always the case. In consequence we are likely to take this as a new reader altogether so that the old address is never cancelled. It is much better to advise change of address when it takes place and not when next renewing the "Monthly". The time required for us to give effect to changes of address after receiving notification may be anything from ten to fourteen days, so that it is helpful if readers in this country notify, if possible, a fortnight before next issue is due. In the case of overseas readers it is best to advise by air mail since sea mail may take anything between five to eight weeks. In many such cases the current issue will be already in transit, this also taking five to eight weeks to reach its destination, so that unless arrangements are made for the local postal authorities to re-transmit to the new address the copy may never arrive. We are always prepared to send a replacement copy in such cases on request.

In some instances, particularly in U.S.A. it seems that the same address can be written in several ways, such as with or without box numbers, delivery route numbers, street names and so on. When making the annual request for renewal, please keep always to the same form as already appears on the envelope, provided of course that it is still correct. The work and cost involved in making trivial alterations to names or addresses which are unnecessary is considerable and we here have no means of knowing whether the variant renderings are necessary or not.

* * *

Free Literature

The following pamphlets are available in small quantities on the same terms as the "Bible Study Monthly", i.e. free of charge but gifts toward the cost of maintaining supplies sincerely appreciated.

- No. 31 The Bible — the Book for To-day
- 32 World Conversion — When?
- 33 The Divine Permission of Evil
- 34 Everlasting Punishment
- 35 Conversion in the After-life
- 36 The Resurrection of the Dead
- 37 The Second Advent — its Nature and Purpose

"TURN YOU NORTHWARD"

A Call to Action

"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. Turn you northward." (Deut. 2. 3.)

It was after the generation that came out of Egypt had passed away, and forty long years of penance in the desolate territory at the northern end of the Red Sea had been endured, that the word of the Lord came again to Israel and electrified the host with its promise of great things to come. The terrible tragedy of Hormah, when the host from Egypt had essayed to take the land by force in defiance of the Divine command, had trusted in their own swords and personal prowess instead of the arm of the Lord, and had in consequence been soundly defeated by the Canaanites, was forty years in the past and the present warriors of Israel had not then been born. All they knew of the far-off stirring times when God came down upon Mount Sinai, revealing Himself by signs and terrible wonders, when the pillar of cloud and fire led the tribes through the wilderness, when the judgments of God had been exacted, time and time again, in consequence of Israel's rebellion and perversity, had been told them by their fathers. All that remained to give evidence of those far-off days was manifest in the persons of three men, Moses, Joshua and Caleb, and those three stood before Israel sole witnesses to the veracity of God's promise. For nearly forty years the people had dwelt in one place—for most of the travels of the Exodus were accomplished in the first year of wanderings, and for the bulk of the time they dwelt, spread irregularly over the eastern half of the Sinai peninsula, from Kadesh in the north to the Gulf of Akaba in the south, waiting and hoping for the relaxing of God's stern decree that they should remain there and not see the good land He had promised them until His wrath was assuaged and His due time had come.

Now, to this new and virile generation, sons of the desert, accustomed from birth to hardship and stern endurance, brought up in an atmosphere of religious observance and ritual worship which pervaded every activity of life, free from the idolatrous influences of Egypt, ready for the task of building up a new nation in a new land, came the call *"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward!"* Northward lay Canaan, the land of promise. Northward lay the fulfil-

ment of all their hopes, the golden land of all their dreams, the place where they would become a great nation, and God Himself would dwell with them, and under His leadership and in the glory of His presence they fulfil the promise to Abraham to the blessing of all men. No wonder that the host was excited as messengers went swiftly from camp to camp, from settlement to settlement, throughout the whole area where dwelt the three millions of Israel, proclaiming the message: "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom is at hand; prepare yourselves, O men of Israel, to go forward. *Turn you northward!*"

These were the men who conquered Canaan and translated the promise and the hope into reality. The generation that came out of Egypt could never have done that. They commenced the journey; they were the people who willingly entered into the Divine Covenant and cried with enthusiasm "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient", and they were the people who endured the hardships and privations of that terrible desert, that "waste and howling wilderness" where the sun scorched by day and the frost chilled by night, where they hungered and thirsted and suffered as perhaps few have ever suffered. They did it for an ideal. They followed Moses because they believed he would lead them to a land of freedom for their children, and despite their often waywardness and rebellion they did, in the main, hold to that ideal throughout. We are perhaps too apt to condemn that generation for its unbelief without giving sufficient value to the credit side of the picture. Those people brought into the world and trained in the national hope and worship another generation which was better fitted than they themselves to complete the work. Those slaves who came out of Egypt could never, in the natural way, have conquered Canaan for themselves. They were too weak physically, too divided in counsel, too insecure in their conception of the common ideal, to act with sufficient resolution ever to win themselves the land by the sword. True, God had foreseen that and expressly forbid them to make any such attempt. He would empty the land from before them, He said, and all they need do was to march right up in faith and possess it; but the adverse report of the ten spies was suffi-

cient to destroy any assurance Israel might have had that God could do this thing, and so, because they would not gain the land by faith, and could not gain it by the sword, their carcasses rotted in the wilderness, forty years. But even so, they did, even in their failure, make a great and essential contribution to the ultimate winning of the land. They brought into the world the men and women who did eventually enter, and prepared them for the task, and for that we must give them due credit.

To-day we stand at such a time. There has been a long time of waiting in the wilderness. The exodus from spiritual Egypt is already a long way in the past. We who now live have no personal experience with the difficulties of the pioneers who through the 19th century proclaimed with fire and zeal the message they had received: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" There have been experiences many and varied since then; there has without doubt been lack of faith and vision and because of that a loss of power in service and witness. The proclamation has without doubt suffered because of that. The bright vision of the coming Kingdom has measurably faded, the assurance and certitude of things to come is not so firmly held, and, like Israel of old, there is an increasing tendency to revert to man-made aids to the preservation of our fellowship and the bringing in of the Kingdom. Just as Israel, when faced with their own failure to live on the high level to which God had called them, said "No, but we will go up ourselves into the land to possess it" and, attacking it with fire and sword, were soundly and deservedly defeated, so have we seen a time of materialism both in service and in doctrine, and the result has been leanness to our souls.

But—we of this generation can remedy all this, if we will. We may be small in numbers and influence, but not more so than the people of Israel in face of the hosts of Canaan, whose cities were "walled up to heaven" and whose inhabitants were as giants. If we were as grasshoppers in the sight of the world we are but as was Israel then; and they conquered. We are a generation that has the inestimable advantage of being the inheritors of a mighty work done by our immediate predecessors in the faith, and a wonderful tradition which it is both our privilege and duty to guard and amplify. We have waited many years for just such signs as we see around us to-day. The Kingdom now is nearer than when we

believed. Is it not time then that we listen for, and hear, the cry "*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. TURN YOU NORTHWARD!*"

The crisis of an Age is upon us. This crisis is more momentous by far than that which faced Israel on the day those messengers ran from camp to camp in breathless haste with the message—even although their response was an essential preliminary to our own position to-day. If Israel had not answered the call, left their "place of habitation" in Kadesh (Psa. 107. 7) and taken up their responsibilities in the outworking of the Divine Plan, electing instead to remain where they were in the desert, *where would we be to-day?* And if we fail to heed the Divine call when the time comes to act, electing to remain quiet and inactive, intent only on the undisturbed contemplation of the Divine mysteries, *what is going to be the effect upon the continued out-working of that Plan? Will God revise His times and seasons to await our convenience? Must the groaning creation, travailing in pain because it is "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" go on waiting beyond the time God has set because the sons of God refuse to be manifested? If God is ready for us, must He be kept waiting until we are ready for Him? Or will the words of Jesus come true in a more terrible sense than has ever been known before; "the Kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation which shall bring forth the fruits thereof". (Matt. 21. 43)?*

From the sphere of exhortation we come to that of practice, for the one is of no value unless it becomes a guide and stimulus to the other. *Is there such a call now being uttered, and if so, what should be our programme in response to that call?*

In the communal sense the call is of a "dispensational" character. A time comes when another stage in the development of the Divine Plan has to be initiated, and God sends out once more the age-old call "speak to the children of Israel that they go forward". This is a collective call; no purpose can be served by the advance of two or three out of the host. Israel must be agreed in spirit and in purpose, in method and in practice, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, fired by the enthusiasm of a common purpose, go forward together, "northward".

What doubt can there be that such a time is now upon us? In the hectic years since the last war men have had to grapple with new problems and the whole aspect of the world

order has been changed. We have in these years seen visible evidence of the threat to ordered world government by disorderly elements which will culminate in the confusion and disruption which ends this Age. From that to the establishment of the Kingdom in visible glory and power may be a very short space, measured in terms of years. We may not say, even now, that it is five minutes to twelve; but it is certainly a long way past eleven o'clock.

What then is the programme? If we can re-examine the position with fresh and unbiased minds it may not be long before the Holy Spirit breaks through into one mind and another and we as a community recognise the voice of God speaking in our midst, calling us to a period of clear-cut Christian progress, fellowship and service. We have much to proclaim, but we have also much to learn; and the practice of the Christian life and manifestation of Divine principles in daily life is probably capable of considerable improvement, not so much in individual life as in life together as a fellowship of believers.

There are three aspects of Christian life which exercise a profound effect upon communion one with the other and the manner in which we make progress. They may be expressed by the three words "fellowship", "revelation" and "evangelism" and each of these aspects must be well considered in relation to the future.

Fellowship involves much more than the mere exchange of social pleasantries or the spending together of a pleasant Sunday afternoon. When the children of Israel turned northward they entered upon a fresh stage of arduous experience but they journeyed onward in the ties of a close fellowship. So with us; our fellowship involves the life of a family of God, in which each member is deeply and intimately concerned with the welfare of every other member and all are conscious of a common bond in a common aim and ideal. The first essential to any kind of progress together, whether in knowledge or in service, is a union of like minds and the only possible lasting basis for this is our common standing in Christ as His consecrated disciples. As students we are bound to arrive at varying conclusions in the interpretation of Scripture and this is to the good if by this means the constantly unfolding vista of Divine Truth is seen more clearly in all aspects. As proclaimers of glad tidings and heralds of the Kingdom there are bound to be different ideas as to the most effective methods of proclamation,

and this too is good inasmuch as it serves to reveal by the acid test of actual experience how best the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour may be made known. But there is only one fellowship; only one bond of union and that bond is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in each one to sanctification of life, and flowing out from each one to edification and building up. The Shekinah glory, the Angel of the Presence, was in the midst of the host of Israel and under that overshadowing Cloud, and in the radiance of that Light, that host moved forward as one man. We have the Holy Spirit in our midst, around us and within us, to guide and protect us in our turn, and it is as a Spirit-guided company that we shall be united as one family so to fulfil our Divine calling, now as well as in the future, to be a "people for a purpose".

The second essential is revelation. God in His wisdom has from time to time "set" teachers in the Church and their stamp of Divine authority has been such that many, recognising that authority, have accepted the Divine provision thus made and advanced in the unfolding light accordingly. God sees to it that the Church is provided with "helps" of all kinds, ministers who are able, in varying degrees, to instruct, encourage and exhort the household of faith. And God has not provided that a few monopolise this work of the Spirit; every member of the Body of Christ is a "help" in greater or lesser degree according to ability and zeal. So it comes about that although from time to time in the history of the Church a teacher arises to shed some particularly bright light upon a difficult part of its pathway, such interventions are the exceptions rather than the rule, and the more continuous revelation of truth lies in the ministries of each one of the brethren, the Holy Spirit through them all ministering. It is in the studies, the quiet talks, the reading together, that revelation comes to each mind to appreciation of the truth, and essential therefore that, as the well-known exhortation has it, we "*forsake not the assembling of ourselves together*" so that our progress in the understanding of God's Divine Plan may proceed apace and fit us the more for the third essential in our "turning northward"—evangelism.

Now at the present time, toward the end of the 20th Century, we have to realise that our Christian world has been subject to change since those earlier days of the 19th when Christian interest in the Second Advent and its related matters swept the world like a

prairie fire. The recurrent failure of dates set for the event, the rather lurid emphasis upon judgment and condemnation and the fiery dissolution of this planet, combined to bring the subject into disrepute with later and more knowledgeable generations. Not much is said or heard nowadays about the Albany Conference of 1826, London 1873, Mildmay 1878, all in England, or Boston in 1840 and Clifton Springs in 1878 in U.S.A., when crowds of responsible ministers and laymen voiced their convictions regarding the imminence of the Advent and the supersession of this Age by a new one "wherein dwelleth righteousness". Later in the century came a more balanced and reasoned view of the purpose and manner of the Advent and the Messianic Kingdom and with the expansion of man's knowledge of the Universe and its possibilities characteristic of our own day there is a challenge laid before every one of us to relate Scriptural truth to that knowledge and show that God is supreme in this greater creation of which men are now aware. The Christian message must take all this into consideration.

The message, then, should include more than the mere proclamation of the coming Kingdom and the issue of present events in a great Time of Trouble to precede that Kingdom. In proclaiming the "acceptable year of the Lord" and the "day of vengeance of our God" we need to place before all who will listen the essential truths of the Bible regarding Sin, Redemption, Repentance and the Divine calling to consecration of life for the service of God. On a lower plane of understanding, but still a very necessary one, must come the explanation and exposition of

the Bible itself, its history, its trustworthiness, and particularly its basic principle, that man was created perfect and fell into sin, from which fall he is to be saved by the Mediatorial reign of Christ in the Millennial Age. Let us become known, not merely as prophets of coming woes to be followed by golden days, but serious, reasonable exponents of a Scriptural philosophy which is solidly founded on the "impregnable rock of Holy Scripture", which attempts fairly to meet the critics' objections even although it may not always provide a completely full answer. which views the problems of to-day in accurate focus and shows how the Divine way of life is the only solution to those problems. It will involve much re-examination of general ideas tacitly accepted for years but not necessarily well founded on Scripture. But it will lead to a new realisation of the appeal underlying those historic words "Go ye, teach all nations".

"The night is far spent; the day is at hand; therefore let us put off the bonds of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." There are such tremendous possibilities before us. We can march up and possess the land, if we will. Surely we have lingered overlong in Kadesh. The messengers are going about with their cry to the faithful, but there are not enough messengers. The Holy Spirit is with us, a Shekinah that will lead us safely if we as a people will follow together. What is needed now is the response of a people. Who will respond? "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward . . . Ye have compassed this mountain long enough. TURN YOU NORTHWARD!"

THE HAPPY MAN

The Happy Man was born in the city of *Regeneration*, in the Parish of *Repentance unto Life*: he was educated at the school of *Obedience*, and now lives in *Perseverance*: he works at the *Trade of Diligence*, notwithstanding he has a large estate in the country of *Christian Contentment*, and many a time does jobs of *Self-Denial*: he wears the plain garment of *Humility*, and has a better suit to put on when he goes to court, called the *Robe of Christ's Righteousness*; he often walks in the valley of *Self-Abasement*, and sometimes climbs to the mountains of *Heavenly-Mindedness*: he breakfasts every morning on *Spiritual Prayer*, and sups every evening on the same: he has *Meat* to eat which the world knows not of, and his *Drink* is the *Milk* of the

Word of God. Thus happy he lives and happy he dies.

Happy is he who has *Gospel Submission* in his Will, *Due Order* in his Affections, *Sound Peace* in his Conscience, *Sanctifying Grace* in his Soul, *Real Divinity* in his Breast, the Redeemer's Yoke on his Neck, a *Vain World* under his Feet, and a *Crown of Glory* over his Head. *Happy is the life of such a man; to obtain which, believe firmly, pray fervently, wait patiently, work abundantly, live holily, die daily, watch your hearts, guide your senses, redeem your time, love CHRIST, and long for GLORY!*

(selected from an old book)

Sympathy is the key that fits the lock of any heart.

THE CROSSING OF JORDAN

An instance of
Divine Deliverance

"Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it."

(Josh. 1. 11.)

The great day had dawned, and Israel stood at the banks of Jordan, gazing at the Promised Land half-a-mile away. For full forty years had the promise stood; the fathers who had set out from Egypt to inherit this land were dead, their remains buried in the wilderness, but these their children had lived to see the fulfilment of the promise. This very day they were to pass over and enter upon their inheritance.

The crossing of Jordan is usually bracketed together with the passage of the Red Sea. They are two very similar miracles. But there is a fundamental spiritual difference. The passage of the Red Sea was a going into the wilderness; that of Jordan was a coming out of the wilderness. The one was a prelude to a time of humiliation and suffering, the other to a time of conquest and triumph. The one has been used to picture the Christian's deliverance from the bondage of sin and his entrance upon the Christian life, a life of humiliation and suffering whilst in the flesh. The other pictures his final victory and entrance into the heavenly kingdom, into the light and joy of the presence of God, the full attainment of the promised spiritual inheritance. The passing into the glory of the Divine is often spoken of as a crossing of Jordan; never as a crossing of the Red Sea.

For three days they had waited, watching the turbulent waters rushing past, for it was early summer and the snows of Hermon were melting. "*Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest*" (Josh. 3. 15). The stream, normally only about a hundred feet wide and easily fordable, was a raging torrent half-a-mile from bank to bank and quite impossible of passage even by boats, if they had any, and they had not. The Canaanites on the other side were feeling tolerably secure, at least for the next few weeks until the waters would begin to subside.

Obedient to the command of Joshua, the priests were carrying the Ark of the Covenant, swathed in its blue coverings so that it should not be exposed to the gaze of the people, and at a respectful distance, two thousand cubits — a little over half-a-mile —

the leaders of the people followed. How they were to cross the river no man knew, but, confident in Joshua and in their God, the priests went steadily forward, and down to the water's edge. With, perhaps, only a moment's natural hesitation, they stepped boldly into the water.

As they did so the wet mud appeared under their soles. They stepped forward again, slowly, into the stream, and again the water had hardly laved their ankles before it receded and the mud appeared. So they went on, more confidently now, and the water's edge retreated from before them as fast as they stepped into it. The hosts of Israel, higher up on the slope that led down to the river, could see what was happening, and a shout of exultation arose on the still air, a shout that aroused the attention of the Canaanite guards on the other side of the river, and caused them to disappear in haste to warn their superiors of the strange phenomenon that was occurring down there in the bed of Jordan.

The priests were still advancing, very slowly. Always the waters were shrinking and the priests advancing. The watching hosts on the hillside, limited still to their two thousand cubits distance from the Ark, therefore not as yet able to approach even the river's bank, cried and shouted to each other in awe and wonder at this great thing the Lord was doing in their sight

The stream was down in the deepest part of its channel, gliding along more quietly and only thirty yards or so wide. The wide terraces so lately covered by the rushing waters were baking and steaming in the tropical sun, the soft mud hardening as it dried, ready for the trampling of the thousands of feet that would shortly be crossing its wide expanse. And the priests still advanced, slowly, forward

There was but a brook now in the midst of Jordan. Farther up the valley, as the watchers on the hillside looked into the distance, the river bed was completely dry. There was no more water to come down. The last of the flow would soon have passed them on its way into the Dead Sea. The gateway into Canaan stood open before them.

The priests had stopped, and turned aside a little, standing in a group, with the Ark in their midst clearly visible as they held it

hoisted up upon their shoulders. They stood thus; there was a moving and a jostling of men; and as though animated by one impulse the whole host surged forward, down the slopes to the edge of the bare hard mud, swarming on to the level terraces, dropping by successive steps to the place where the priests were standing, spreading out as they did so until the whole valley as far as eye could reach, in either direction, was filled with the thousands of Israel, walking, running, climbing, to the accompaniment of shouts and cries of triumph and joy, up to the terraces on the Canaanite side, and assembling in the wide meadows beyond which could be seen the walls of the garrison town of Jericho. It was not until the last few stragglers had brought up the rear and made their way up the slope to the Canaanitish side that the priests reformed their little party, and with the Ark still in their midst, moved up in turn, out of Jordan, into the Promised Land. From behind them, as they did so, came the water. The channel was filling, water was coming down again from the higher reaches, and as the people looked the river began to flow in strength, lapping behind the feet of those slow moving priests until by the time they had gained the topmost level with their burden the swirling flood stretched once more from bank to bank. Moab and Canaan were separated again and no man might go nor come. *But the host of Israel was in Canaan.*

It was a miracle; of that there can be no doubt. Whatever the natural means by which the flow of the river was interrupted, it was by Divine intervention that it occurred just at the moment when Israel needed such an occurrence to make possible their entrance into the Holy Land.

The account in Joshua 3. 15-16 reads "*as they that bare the ark were come into Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water . . . that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap far away, by the city Adam, which is beside Zaretan; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people passed over right against Jericho*".

The waters "stood, and rose up upon an heap". Where was this heaping of the waters? The "city Adam" is the modern El Damieh, twenty miles up stream from Jericho, and Zaretan is Zarthan, opposite El Damieh, on the eastern bank of the river. At this point the

Jordan traverses the narrowest part of its valley; it flows between clay banks ranging from forty to one hundred and fifty feet high. The clay is soft, and landslides into the river occasionally occur. A heavy landslide can dam the river completely and interrupt its flow until the weight of the mounting waters is sufficient to wash away the obstruction and permit the river to resume its normal course.

Such a thing has happened three times at least in recorded history. On the 8th December, A.D. 1267, the west bank at El Damieh collapsed and dammed the river so that no water flowed down the channel for sixteen hours. This record rests on the authority of an Arab historian, Nowairi. It meant that the bed of Jordan from El Damieh to the Dead Sea was dry for all that time and anyone could cross on foot. In the year 1906 the same thing happened in consequence of an earthquake, and again in 1927, according to Prof. Garstang, the celebrated earthquake which shook all Palestine, and cracked the Mount of Olives, caused the west bank at El Damieh to collapse. On this occasion the flow of water was interrupted for no less than twenty-one hours, and a number of people did actually cross and recross the river bed on foot.

It is known nowadays that the fall of the walls of Jericho, a few days after the Israelites crossed Jordan, was caused by an earthquake, occurring at the critical moment. It might well be, as suggested by Garstang, that there was a tolerably long period of earthquake activity at this time and that such an earth tremor, occurring at the right moment, threw down the cliffs and dammed the river, just as in 1927. There is at any rate a remarkably exact correspondence between the story in Joshua and these more modern instances and there seems no reasonable doubt that the crossing of Jordan was due to this precise cause.

"Coincidence" says someone. "If this has happened at other times in history then it was just pure luck that it happened when the Israelites were ready to cross. Perhaps, even, Joshua had received secret information by swift runner of what had already happened twenty miles upstream and knew that within an hour or two the river would be running dry".

Perhaps — if it were not that the Scripture provides its own refutation of the suggestion. Joshua knew precisely what was going to happen at El Damieh several hours at least before it happened!

At some time during the previous day,

when Israel was already gathered on the banks of Jordan in anticipation of the crossing, Joshua had said to them "Sanctify yourselves; for *to-morrow* the Lord will do wonders among you" (ch. 3, vs. 5). He, and they, already knew that by some means or other they were to cross Jordan. Joshua now knew that it was to be the very next day; whether at that time he also knew the means by which the crossing was to be effected does not appear. But that night — early in the morning hours — the Lord spoke to Joshua (vs. 7) "*This day,*" He said "will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel . . . and thou shalt command the priests . . ." etc. This was the day of the crossing; it is probable that the word of the Lord came to Joshua during the silent watches of the night, for it is most unlikely that the day itself with all its excitement would give any time to Joshua for quiet communion with God. And there was a full programme of events to be fitted into twelve short hours. First was Joshua's charge and instructions to the children of Israel, then the selection of twelve men from amongst their number to be responsible for bringing out of the river's bed twelve great stones to be a memorial of the crossing. It was whilst giving these instructions that Joshua revealed his knowledge of how the miracle was to be effected. "The waters of Jordan" he said "*shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above, and they shall stand upon an heap*" (vs. 13). This speech must have been delivered not later than eight or nine o'clock in the morning, for it would take the people several hours more before they could be ready for the crossing, and time for, perhaps, two millions of people to cross before sundown had still to be allowed. By eleven o'clock perhaps, the people would begin to remove from their tents and by midday the priests be venturing into the edge of the rushing flood, and it would be at this time therefore that the first effects of the collapse that had occurred upstream became visible at Jericho in the retreat of the water's edge. Now if this effect became observable at Jericho at midday the disaster at El Damieh must have occurred not more than four hours before; the high velocity of the water in the Jordan would drain the channel between the two places within that time. It must be concluded then that the collapse occurred not earlier than eight o'clock and yet Joshua knew pre-

Religion must not be considered true because it is necessary, but it is necessary because it is true.

Mangoni

cisely what was going to happen when he rose that morning, and probably earlier, during the small hours.

Reasonably, it may be expected that God revealed this coming event to him by means of a dream, as has been done so often in Scriptural story. Joshua saw the high, overhanging cliffs, the rushing river sluicing its way between them; in that incomprehensible manner associated with dreams he knew that he was looking at Jordan, although the place itself he had probably never seen before. As he looked, the ponderous masses moved and slid across the foaming channel, and as the waters behind began to pile themselves up behind the barrier, and those in front quickly drained away and left the river-bed bare, he knew that he was seeing what the Lord was about to do, and awoke, ready for his great task. Thus it was, perhaps that he was able to give Israel so accurate and graphic a description of the marvel that was to happen in a few more hours' time.

The rest of the day's programme fits into this picture very well. By one o'clock the crossing was in full swing. It need not be assumed that the people waited to negotiate the river channel in one long procession—two million would take a long time to cross in that way. More probably Israel was encamped along a wide "front"—perhaps five miles or even more along the course of the river—and when the word was given they began to cross in a body. In such fashion the entire host, with all their flocks and herds, tents and baggage, could be inside the Promised Land in three hours. By four o'clock the transfer could have been accomplished and the priests begin to make their own way up out of the river-bed. Thus the water began to flow again, following their retreating footsteps as they came slowly up the terraces. By six o'clock—sunset—the river was in full flood once more.

The crossing of Jordan was a miracle. The agency used was a natural one; the powers of Nature were enlisted in the service of God. But God knew beforehand what He was going to do and when He was going to do it; He gave Joshua due notice several hours before the event, and when the hour had struck for the barriers to be thrown down and Israel enter his Promised Land, "*the sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back . . . at the presence of the Lord*".

One of the greatest lessons of life is to learn not to do what one likes, but to like what one does.

THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE

*Discussion on
basic principle*

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jno. 1. 4).

Life is a mystery even though it pervades the whole of the world we know. On the land, in the sea, in the air, below the surface of the earth, live myriads of varied creatures animated by this mysterious power we call life. The land and the sea alike are replete with an almost infinite variety of vegetation which displays the same phenomenon. The structure of all these creatures and all these plants is composed of the materials which also form the planet on which they live but the possession of life puts them in a class apart. In the case of man the quality of intelligence adds a further unknown factor. What is life and where does it come from?

The Christian answer is that the source of life is in God, that He bestows life and withdraws it according to His Will. This is the Bible viewpoint and every writer whose words appear in the Bible takes his stand upon this principle; in the New Testament there is an enlargement of thought in that although life has its origin in the Father, it comes to man only through the Son. The whole explanation of the Divine creation and purpose and man's relation thereto which the Bible offers is built upon this thesis. Without God there cannot be life.

A good many in this modern age think otherwise. Failure either to believe in the existence of a supreme Creator or to comprehend the essential relation that must exist between the Creator and His creatures leads them to enquire elsewhere for the origin of life. A goodly number of biologists and other research workers are trying very hard to find the answer. Unfortunately, for them, they have not much to go upon, for all that is available for study is the finished article and the only book which so much as claims to furnish the information they seek has to be rejected by them on principle. So the biologists have been very busy, especially in quite recent years, separating bodies into cells and cells into molecules and molecules into atoms to find out, if they can, at what point life can be said to start. Not surprisingly, they have come up with some remarkable discoveries. Thus in 1953 it was found that by exposing a mixture of water, ammonia and methane to ultra-violet light some of the basic constitu-

ents of the cells comprising animal bodies were produced. Much construction of theories aimed at explaining how such basic constituents could have come together in the form of living organisms able to grow and reproduce themselves has taken place but when all is said and done it remains that the investigators have only discovered or produced the material structure in which life is manifested; how life got into it or how life originated or what it is no man knows. There is a fundamental difference between tracing out the origin of living creatures and the origin of life. So there is considerable discussion now going on as to whether life began as a chemical reaction between non-living matter and the surrounding environment, the sunlight, the air, the water and so on, or is the result of "seeds" or "spores" of life reaching the earth from outer space and entering into combination with elementary substances and so producing the first living things. In either case the origin of life remains unknown.

Against this admitted uncertainty and inadequate understanding the Bible representation speaks out with conviction and authority. The Apostle Paul declared that in God *"we live, and move, and have our being"*; that He *"giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"* (Acts 17. 25-28). *"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life"* says Elihu in Job 33. 4. Even more to the point are the words of the Psalmist *"With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light"* (Psa. 36. 9). All is summed up in the statement that the Most High alone possesses immortality—inherent life (1 Tim. 6. 16). It is impossible for us to comprehend God; the infinite Intelligence which created all things and sustains all things is forever beyond our understanding but we must accept the fact that in Him is the source of life and the only means of continuation of life.

The New Testament presents the person of Jesus Christ as the means by which God is manifest to man, and the means by which He imparts life to man. The writer to the Hebrews describes Christ as the effulgence of God's glory and the delineation of His being (Heb. 1. 3). We finite creatures, with our limitations, can see the Father only when we look at the Son; *"He that hath seen me hath*

seen the Father" (Jno. 14, 9). It follows then that what we receive from the Father comes to us through the Son. That is why Jesus taught that life, vital life, eternal life, can only come through Him and be attained by acceptance of Him. There is no other way and no other channel. The Gospel of John stresses this in a variety of incidents and sayings all the way from chapter 3 to chapter 6. The first Epistle of John continues in the same strain. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life" (1 John 5, 12). "The gift of God" says St. Paul "is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6, 23).

The patriarchs of Old Testament times had a simpler and more material idea of God and of course the person of Christ was not revealed to them, but they, many of them, had grasped this fundamental principle, that life is of God. The Old Testament presentation of God giving life to man by breathing His Spirit into man's frame is literally accurate even if intended metaphorically. In the story of man's creation, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2, 7). The necessity of the continual sustaining of that life by the power of the Almighty is recognised. "The dust" says the Preacher "shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccl. 12, 7). That principle obtains with the lower creation also. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Psa. 104, 29-50).

The New Testament recognises these two aspects of life—life as it can be when lived eternally in union with God and life as it is manifested temporarily in an earthly body—by its choice of descriptive words. Two Greek terms are used consistently throughout the New Testament. Life that is associated with an animal or terrestrial being, life in a fleshly body, is *psuche*. This word occurs some hundred times and is rendered sometimes "life" and sometimes "soul". The life which terminates when the body dies is *psuche*, a life that comes from God but is dependent upon the terrestrial organism to be conscious of itself and to find expression in its environment. That is why it is so often explained that the "soul" is the combination of the spirit of life with the earthly body; that is clear from the very beginning of things when "man became a living soul". St. Paul uses the same word in 1 Cor. 15 when contrasting the two states of

life of which we know, the terrestrial and the celestial. He says "there is a *natural body* and there is a *spiritual body*" where *psuche* is the word rendered "natural". But the life of man as we know it is only a shadow of the real thing. The life which comes to one who has entered into union with God through Christ, the vital force which so often in the Scriptures is called "eternal life", the life of the everlasting future which awaits all who eventually find their place in the Divine purposes, is *Zoe*, life in all its fulness and with all its possibilities. *Zoe* occurs about a hundred and thirty times and in only about seven instances can it be made to apply to the earthly life animating the terrestrial body. All those Scriptures which speak of life as inherent in Christ, as coming to the believer through Him, as awaiting the faithful at the end of their pilgrimage, all these employ *Zoe*. In perhaps no clearer fashion could the Scriptures indicate the profound difference that exists between life as it now is to mortal man and life as it can be—will be—when man has entered into the fulness of his destiny, and yet preserve intact the fact that the origin of all life is in God.

So, all unknowingly, the advocates of what is called panspermia, the scientific theory that there are eternal seeds of life winging their way throughout the vast distances of space ultimately to fuse with non-living matter on earth and so give rise to living creatures, are not so very far from the mark once it is accepted that the power behind that continually pulsating life is God. The Greek philosopher Anaxagoras first suggested this theory in the 5th century B.C. and it has been revived in modern times now that men are bringing all their recently acquired knowledge to bear on the problem of life. But the Bible had the truth of the matter long before Anaxagoras, a truth which, if accepted, solves all the problems of the biologists, problems which those of them who are honest freely admit do exist. As, for instance, does Prof. J. D. Bernal in his recent book (*"The Origin of Life"* 1967) wherein, speaking as a convinced believer in evolution, he says "the problem remains as to how did the first organism know how to make itself?" and poses the question "how, from a set of fairly simple chemical substances, can the whole of the complete reproductory metabolic mechanism be evolved without the benefit of any preformed structure?" by which he means how could a complete living creature with all its wonderful powers evolve itself from the basic dead elements when

there was no existing pattern to point the way. To which question he returns his own answer; *"this is the major unsolved question of the origin of life"*.

Perhaps the glowing words of David in Psa. 139, 14-16 form the best commentary upon that rather despondent remark. It is not likely that David the shepherd-boy knew much about the origin of life but not much doubt that he was used as an agent of the Holy Spirit to express things which he himself would understand only in part. *"I will thank thee therefore that I am so fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works and that thou knowest right well. My being was not concealed from thee when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. My undeveloped substance did thy eyes see, and in thy book were all of these written—the days that were formed for me when as yet there were none of them."* It is fairly evident that David was speaking representatively for man in general in this passage; this is a description of the forming of man, the handiwork of God. There is an atmosphere of gradual development as the words run their course; one might easily understand an evolutionist seeing in them a picture of the slow development of the human frame from more elementary forms of life. At the same time it could also quite reasonably be said that here is an expanded version of the story told briefly in one sentence in Genesis: *"the Lord God made man of the dust of the ground"*. The important thing to notice here is that man is the workmanship of God; this terrestrial body of which nearly ninety-nine per cent consists of three elements only, carbon, oxygen and hydrogen, was put together by the incomprehensible power of the Holy Spirit to become the vehicle of Divinely bestowed life in a world specifically designed to meet its needs and aspirations. And the pre-existence of a Divine pattern for man before any action was taken to execute the work is implicit in the passage. *"My being was not concealed from thee when I was being made"*; God saw the finished product before one step in the process had begun. *"My undeveloped substance did thy eyes see"*—the Hebrew word *golem* which appears only here in all the O.T. means, according to Gesenius, "rude or unformed matter, not yet wrought, as of parts not yet unfolded or developed". There is something here that runs parallel with the condition described in Genesis 1 when the earth itself was unformed and empty, dark-

ness and chaos, and the Spirit of God came pulsing over the face of that chaos and brought an orderly earth out of those disorganised elements. So was it here with man, *"The days that were formed for me when as yet there were none of them."* A future for the creature of His making; days to which God looked forward knowing that man would eventually be worthy of the planned destiny although in that primal day none of them had as yet dawned.

This then is the only answer. God made man and gave him life. How the material body took shape, how the earth itself came into being, as expressed in scientific terms, is of minor importance against that tremendous fact. God made man, made him for a purpose, a purpose that is steadily becoming more obvious to us as our knowledge, not only of our relationship to God, but of the possibilities inherent in His creation, increases and expands. *"For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light."*

It is surprising when we come to reckon up the instances how often it has pleased God to come down into the daily rounds and daily lives of His people, to equip them or call them to His service and favour, not when they were secluding themselves for purposes of devotion, but while engaged in the common-place, every day duties of very humble callings. Moses received his call and commission by a Voice issuing from a burning bush while tending his father-in-law's sheep on the slopes of Mt. Horeb. Gideon, as he threshed out the wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, was greeted by the Angel of the Lord, and charged to deliver his people from the hand of their oppressors. David, the shepherd boy, attending the ewes, great with young, is called by God to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. Elisha, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, finds the mantle of Elijah thrown across his shoulders, thereby designating him to be the prophet of the Lord in the room of Elijah. Even the shepherds on the hill sides of Judea, while watching over their flocks by night were blessed, above men, by the songs of the Heavenly Host, as they sang of the babe of Bethlehem. Peter and Andrew were casting a net, when Jesus walked by, and called them to be "fishers of men". Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, entering up the payment of tribute, when the Lord called him to apostleship. Within the narrow sphere of "the common round, the daily task," the Lord found His servants and equipped them for greater things.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 11. "Who is on the Lord's side?"

From his description of the external forces gathering against regathered Israel in chap: 12. 1-9 the prophet now turns to view the attitude of the people in the land. Up to this point the nation has been referred to in general terms as the subject of Divine deliverance soon to be accomplished, but the extent to which the individuals comprising that nation are at heart loyal to God and trusting in His promise has not been declared. As a matter of fundamental principle God can only deliver where there is faith and trust and one of the reasons why it is so repeatedly said in the prophetic Scriptures that only the "Remnant" is ultimately delivered is surely because in all history saving faith is usually found only in the minority; the majority are found unable to pass the test. More than one Old Testament reference to these stirring times indicates that there will be a final purging of the unworthy from the nation on the very eve of Divine intervention and it is only to be expected that Zechariah's very complete foreview of the events should include some reference both to that purging and the turning in faith to God which is characteristic of those who are not thus purged.

This is where the next section of the prophecy, chap: 12. 10 to 13. 6, has its application. The first half presents a picture of what appears to be almost a universal conversion of the nation and wholehearted sorrow for its former blindness to the workings of the Almighty on its behalf; with that comes the swift response of God in establishing a means of cleansing so that they become acceptable in His sight and acknowledged as His people. But concurrently with this the prophet paints a parallel but darker picture; false teachers and idolatrous, anti-God influences in the land, even whilst in the process of being done away, are still active. The false prophets are "ashamed" of their visions and they make excuses, but they give no evidence of repentance and apparently remain false prophets at heart. And there may yet be such among the people when at the final critical moment God stretches out His hand to deliver. So the stage is set for that seemingly strange paradox of the end of chapter 13 and the beginning of chapter 14 when in the very moment of deliverance some who are still in the land suffer

deprivation and cutting-off.

At this momentous time, when the "governors of Israel" of vss. 5-6, the Old Testament stalwarts or "Ancient Worthies", are beginning their task of organising the nation to meet the increasing threat, a strange and wonderful happening occurs. *"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddon"* (chap: 12. 10-11).

This "spirit of grace and of supplication" is obviously one of repentance and a throwing of themselves upon the Divine goodness. Like Daniel of old, they might well be saying *"we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies"* (Dan. 9. 18). So many times there were in Israel's former history when because of their apostasy *"He brought down their heart with labour, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses"* (Psa. 107. 12-13). Now the same thing is to happen again and for the last time. There will be no more apostasy. As Isaiah says (44. 3-5), speaking of this same time and event, *"I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring . . . one shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel"*. This is definitely a widespread repentance within the nation, from the nature of the description a majority repentance. The dissentients and the unrepentant would appear to be in the minority, and this raises the question as to what has brought about this major reversal of national feeling. Is it inspired by the evidences of God's moving in the affairs of the nation, or the realisation, at last, of Israel's historic mission and that the time is at hand for its execution; or is it the effect of the reforming zeal of the heaven-sent "governors" and their evident control of the situation and constant exhortation to faith in

God? Whatever it may be, there is no doubt that this is a sincere and lasting repentance. The following words show that, "*They shall look upon Me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him*". At long last, after so many generations of hard-heartedness, they will "look unto Him, and be saved".

There is a certain amount of doubt as to the textual accuracy of "they shall look unto me". The speaker in this chapter is God Himself and there is a measure of inappropriateness in thinking of the Most High being "pierced"; the word is *dagar*, meaning to thrust through as with a sword or spear, and implies the death of the subject. To think of God as being thus done to death, even in symbol, seems improper. Neither does the sentence read very grammatically; they shall look on Me and they shall mourn for Him without specifying who is the second person thus introduced. Some give "him" instead of "me", so that some modern translators, including the R.S.V., Moffatt and Ferrar Fenton, adopt "him", whilst the RV and Rotherham give "him" as an alternative. It is of course tempting to look on this verse as referring to the Crucifixion especially as John in ch: 19. 37 quotes it in that connection, and his words are rendered in the A.V. "*They shall look on him whom they pierced*". It would appear to be true that on the basis of existing manuscripts there are more or less equal claims for either word. It has been pointed out, however, that the omission at an early date of one letter from the word could transform an original "him" to "me". The Hebrew word rendered "upon me" is a preposition in the first person singular masculine which by the addition of one more letter, the Hebrew *vav*, becomes third person, thus changing "me" to him. The following word in the Hebrew text, *AT*, is given by Gesenius as a demonstrative pronoun corresponding to the Greek *autos*, "*this same*", so that if the hypothetical correction is made the phrase would read "*and they shall look toward him, this same who they pierced*". Now the Greek of John 19. 37 rendered literally would read "*they shall look unto whom they pierced*", the "him" being implied. It is possible therefore, that the "*vav*" was in the original text and dropped out at an early date, thus accounting for the alternative renderings in various manuscripts, and that what we have here is a prophetic picture of the repentance of Israel at the Time of the End, and their acceptance of the One whom their forbears crucified. "*They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an*

only son"; this was a term used to denote any unusually intense expression of grief and goes to shew how widespread and deeply felt will be that national contrition which will sweep the nation at that time. A similar expression occurs in Amos 8. 10.

Verse 11 colours the picture further, "*In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddon*". This is a simile which is not easy to understand at first sight. There is no other reference in Scripture to the "mourning of Hadadrimmon" and no such place is known either in the valley of Megiddon or anywhere else. Jerome in the 4th century suggested that it referred to a town called Rummaneh, near Jezreel, but no evidence that there ever was such a place is extant. Hadad in the Aramaic languages means The Mighty, and Rimmon is another name for the Syrian deity Adonis. The story of Naaman the Syrian captain healed by Elisha mentions the house or temple of Rimmon (2 Kings 5. 18). The "mourning of Hadadrimmon" therefore may well mean the "mourning of the mighty Adonis". This was a well known ritual observed in the valley of Megiddon as in all lands in and about the territory of Syria. The legend told how Adonis, the youthful god of Nature in her beneficent aspect, had been slain, and descended into the underworld. At his going the sun veiled its face, vegetation withered, the crops failed and the cattle died. The world became a cold and dark place in which there was no new life. Then Adonis rose from the grave and Nature smiled again and all was well. The entire myth was probably a picturesque story of the coming of winter upon the world and its succession by springtime. So, every year, in early springtime, the festival was held. As soon as the river Adonis began to run red (this was due to the red clay banks crumbling in the sunshine and colouring the water) maidens ran about wailing and mourning the death of the god, whose blood was staining the water. The shepherds pointed to the red anemones blossoming in profusion over the fields—drops of blood from the veins of Adonis. The whole people gave themselves up to this ritual mourning for a week. Then, on the sixth day, the note changed. Adonis was risen! Expressions of joy rose on every hand. The days of mourning were forgotten and all was well.

The same custom prevailed in Babylon and Chaldea where Adonis was known as Tammuz, and Ezekiel refers to it when, in des-

cribing the idolatrous practices of the Israelites of his day, he says he saw at the gate of the Temple "*women weeping for Tammuz*" (Ezek. 8. 14). So Zechariah was led to liken the mourning of Israel in the Last Days for the "only son" who had suffered death and risen again to that ancient ceremonial with which it had so many elements in common.

The final aspect of this universal mourning in Israel is shewn in verses 12-14 of chapter 12. Each family will mourn in privacy and the womenfolk separated from the menfolk. This is reminiscent of the Mosaic laws respecting the ceremonial for cleansing from defilement caused by contact with the dead. (Num. 19. 11-22; 5. 2-4; 9. 6-10). Seven days' separation from their fellows, and purification by means of the "water of separation", had the effect of purifying the man or woman from uncleanness; so here, simultaneously with the great mourning there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. (ch. 13. 1).

Four families are specified; the houses of David, Nathan, Levi and Shimei. Two names are well known, the other two not so familiar. About nine individuals named Nathan appear in the O.T., including the famous prophet of King David's time, and eighteen named Shimei. There could be scope here for a number of interpretations based on any particular selection; perhaps the most reasonable conclusion is that Nathan, the son of David by Bathsheba, and Shimei, the grandson of Levi, are intended. We then have David, the leading representative of the royal house of Israel, and Nathan, a minor member of his posterity, with Levi, the head of the priestly tribe, and Shimei, a minor member of his posterity. The combination of the four names would then picture this great mourning extending to all levels of the people, from kings and priests at the forefront to the rank and file of the people below them.

It is probably true that the respective offices of kings and priests will be combined, in that day, in the persons of the "governors", the princes, but the meaning remains the same. From the leaders to the led there will arise a great expression of repentance for the past and acceptance of God and His ways for the future. This is where ch. 13. 1 has its place. A cleansing stream makes its appearance and in the waters of that stream the sin and uncleanness of the past is washed away and the people stand ready to face their final ordeal, standing thus in the strength of their God.

A darker part of the picture now comes

into view. Some there are in the nation who do not share the general spirit of repentance and supplication. Idolatry is still present in the land and in ch. 13. 2 the Lord declares His intention of rooting out that idolatry and eliminating the false prophets. Idolatry in Zechariah's day meant the worship of false gods, Baal and Ashtoreth and Molech and others, representative of and associated with the powers of Nature and the more depraved aspects of men's minds. That kind of worship has long since disappeared, but its equivalent in more modern guise is with us now and to an extent will be present in the regathered nation until consumed in the fire of the final ordeal. Money, commercial gain, political power, control of the minds and lives of men, these are the modern forms of idolatry and these will have their devotees, the false prophets of this chapter, and to an extent their voices are heard in this nation so soon to be tried in the fire that it may be forged into an instrument for God's purpose. It would seem, though, that chapter 13 envisages a time when national sentiment in general is against them. The great repentance and mourning of chapter 12, the fountain for cleansing of ch. 13. 1, are having their effect, and in ch. 13. 3 a situation is described in which these false prophets are discredited and rejected when they speak. Again the symbolism of the Mosaic Law is invoked. The parents of the false prophet say to him "*Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord*" and they thrust him through, i.e. put him to death. This was the penalty for idolatry laid down by Moses and recorded in Deut. 13: 6-11. The offender's nearest relative must execute the death sentence. Thus is indicated that the closest of ties will not interfere with the complete separation between the godly and the godless at this critical time. So the false prophets are more or less driven underground, as we would say today. They endeavour to avoid discovery, "*ashamed every one of his vision when he hath prophesied*" as Zechariah puts it in vs. 4, eschewing the distinctive garb of a prophet, the *addereth seir*, the mantle of goatskin or camel skin. They claim instead to be one with the people of the land, and when taxed with an enquiry as to the wounds in their hands they return an evasive reply. "*One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*" (vs. 6). The idolatrous priests were accustomed to cut themselves

with knives and inflict various wounds upon their bodies in the prophetic frenzy—the priests of Baal did this at the time of Elijah's challenge (1 Kings 25, 5-12)—and the possession of such injuries was another mark of a false prophet. But here in this case the men thus taxed deny the imputation and claim that they received their injuries within their social circle; this is the meaning of the expression "house of my friends". Either blood relatives or close companions are implied. The false prophets are at pains to make it appear that they are at one with the prevailing national sentiment of faith and loyalty toward God but in fact their hearts are far from these things. This passage relating to the presence of false prophets at this time is difficult to interpret and it is only because there are other Scriptural references to the presence of just such a class of men when the hostile nations advance to the attack that it is possible to elicit a meaning at all. Thus Zephaniah, speaking of this same time, of the Lord "rising up to the prey", gathering the nations for judgment preparatory to turning His "pure language" to the people (Zeph. 3, 8-20) goes on to say "*then will I take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride . . . I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*". This "remnant of Israel" he says "*shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth*". The 5th chapter of Micah, devoted to the same events, pictured as the "Assyrian" invading the land, includes as an integral part of the Lord's deliverance the banishment of witchcraft, "*and thou shalt have no more soothsayers. Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine own hands*". Isaiah in his 66th chapter talks of retribution to come upon those who are following idolatrous practices at the very time He has gathered all nations of the world for the final battle; here again the "remnant

Men do not care to admit that they are sinners, and especially do they object to admitting that they are helpless sinners, and that only Christ can lift them out of that hopeless state. It is not unusual to see a very small and perhaps obstinate child refuse its father's proffered assistance in its effort to walk, and insist on taking a few tottering steps by itself. That may be a good thing in the case of a child learning to toddle, but it is not a good

of Israel" are the only survivors in the land and they are then commissioned to take the knowledge of God to all nations. This is another way of picturing the "pure language" of the Zephaniah passage just quoted. The association of an unbelieving element with the faithful "remnant" in the land at this crucial time seems plainly to be indicated in these passages.

It will not have escaped notice that in all these prophetic foreviews the prevailing sin of the unbelieving element is idolatry—the worship of a rival god. It is perhaps only to be expected that in Israel at the final stage there will still be those whose minds and hands are given to the perpetuation of this present order of things, those who would advocate collaboration with the powers of this world rather than dedication to the service and the purpose of God. Perhaps in the Divine wisdom such will be allowed to continue their covert resistance to the reforming work of the "governors"—false prophets "ashamed" of their vision, but at heart false prophets nevertheless and hoping still that their policy will ultimately prevail. But the Lord has declared "*I know their works and their thoughts*" (Isa. 66, 18) and although their continued presence in the land may well be permitted to constitute a test and a refining influence upon the faithful—and this may well be the inference to be drawn from verses 7-9 of chapter 13—it is certain that all who come short of complete and whole-hearted faith and loyalty towards God will find themselves excluded from the deliverance which God has planned for the people of faith. The fourteenth chapter makes it plain that when, at last, the long expected onslaught takes place and Israel enters into the fire, some of the people are not delivered; they go into exile. That can only be because they are not the people of faith. They have yielded their devotion and efforts to the service of idol gods, and to their idol gods they will be abandoned.

(To be continued)

thing for a man who needs to walk in absolute righteousness before God.

* * *

Big things are only little things put together. It is encouraging to think of this when confronted by a big task. Remember always that it is only a group of little tasks, any one of which you may easily do. It is ignorance of this fact that makes some men afraid to try.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

I. The Holy One of Israel

*A series of studies
on sanctification*

The highest accomplishment of all religious life and experience is to become intensely aware of the holiness of God. This great fact—God's absolute holiness—is the very essence of all revealed Truth, in that it takes us behind all that God does in order to show us what He "is". Behind the whole structure of the Divine Plan of Redemption is the character of that God who framed it. If, in our Gospel day, we have been permitted to see that redemptive Plan as a manifestation of unfathomable love, it is because that love existed before the plan was made. If we to-day can talk of Bethlehem, and Calvary, and Olivet, and realise that the coming of a Babe, the dying of a man, the resurrection and ascension of the Son of God have made salvation possible for all, then back of all that preparation we must see the yearning heart of One who, for a time, had lost possession of His earthly sons. If, looking onward, down the years we see a righteous world, where no ill deed is done, and man is free from sin, then behind the whole design we must allow for One who hated sin before that sin began. Behind all precious doctrine, behind all redemptive work, behind each type and shadow, behind the whole Gospel story, there stands the identity of One who in Himself is greater than His works. From His own great heart the love-stream flowed; from His white-hot soul the sin-hatred sprang; and from His unfaltering Will, the drive and power of accomplishment came forth. Effects spring only from adequate causes—Redemption and Restoration must have Redeemer and Restorer, and though others may be chosen to help reach those effects, He only is the First Great Cause.

Behind all Truth, behind all development of this or that to serve His ends, stands God Most High; a God of Love and Pity, compassionate, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, yet not overlooking sin. If love of man is found in men, it is because it first was found in Him. If love of truth is found in man, again it first was found in Him. Out from His unsullied fulness sprang all that He has done. He "does" because of what He "is". Because He "is" to-day all that He ever "was", His purposes remain unchanged. Because eternal years to come will find Him still as He "now is", the utmost bounds of time

will find no variation in His ways. To-day, as yesterday, and throughout everlasting years, His integrity will remain the same because His native Holiness can know no change. His glorious plans, made sure by promise, and precious blood, and "Oath" upon His own Great Name, assure both Heaven and Earth that He will uproot sin, and uplift man, till naught of Adamic or Satanic taint remain; till man and angel too, shall savour of that holy state so like His own.

No student of God's word can feel surprise that He who dwelt with the Eternal God before the round of time began should here on earth, in time, teach mortal man as the first burden of his prayer to say "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name . . ." Through ages too profound to calculate the worthy Son had held in reverent esteem that Holy Name, and times unnumbered He had led the undefiled in heaven to sing its worthy praise, and echo forth the "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord"—a song which in due time will rise from every tongue.

Come down to this sad earth, the sweetest hours which blessed His lonely life were those in which memory sped back to those far days before the world was made. The memory of that Holiness in this His hour of need, what time He walked 'mid sin and death, kept Him, as needle to the pole, at rest and peace, and faithful unto death. When humble earthly fishermen, desiring to know God, requested to be taught, the theme that rose from His own soul was given as pattern for their prayers. "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name."

In His touching farewell prayer, though heavy sorrow filled His soul, the same great theme engrossed His mind. When placing His little band for their safe-keeping within His Father's care, He prayed "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name, those whom Thou hast given me" (John 17. 11). No thought of nearing death could banish from His mind the "Holy Father" and the "Holy Name". By precept and example then, before His chosen few, the Son of Man who came from Heaven held up on earth that Holy Name as worthy of all praise and adoration, because it was the Name of Him who in Himself was holy beyond compare.

How extremely poor are illustrations and

words to show to us mere men the incalculable heights of worthiness and excellence which natively reside in God. High as the highest heaven, above the lowest spheres of earth, so stands God's moral worth above the worth of worthiest man. No single thought, no single word, no single act, from the far depths of everlasting years gone by, to the far distances of everlasting years to come has ever yet, or ever can know taint or flaw. No tongue of man or angel will ever need to utter accusation against the Holy Name, when once He deigns to show Himself such as He truly is. No truce with sin, nor irresolution to root it out will ever come to be preferred against the Holy One of Israel. The sacred writers say that "God is Light". How wonderful, and yet how inadequate is light to illustrate that greater "Light"! Far back along the stream of time chaos and unending darkness reigned, and light "was not"; but the "Eternal Light" dwelt in His abode and sent forth from thence His brooding power, and drew the beams of light out of the womb of black eternal night. Greater far that "Holy Light" than our majestic king of day, at summer's noonday hour!

The Scriptures say He is "of purer eyes" than to behold approvingly the sins of men. But how insufficient are those mere words to tell of that undefilable purity which no foe can taint. If whiteness be the token of inward purity then God's native Holiness shall out-white the winter's virgin snow. If the white-hot glow is needed to consume the dross in order that the pure red gold may be set free, then God's fiery jealousy against sin is a flame intenser far. Brighter than the equatorial noon-day sun, purer than the polar virgin snow, hotter than the mercury or oxygen-fed flame is Divine jealousy for the right, the good, the true, and its zeal against sin and wrong and evil in every form.

But there it must be left. Our world contains no parallel to the exceeding intensity of the Holiness of God. Our language has no words—not even Shakespeare's facile pen nor Milton's glowing tongue—to paint the Holy Fire which dwells eternal in the heart of God; and here our quandary begins.

All students of the Holy Book admit the Holiness of God. But none admit the holiness of man. How then can we contemplate our text? If God is Holy beyond compare, how can we attain to holiness like Him? What do these words of Peter mean? Let us note again that they are prefaced by an "it is written". "Because it is written." "Be ye holy, for I am

holy." Back somewhere then in an earlier day the inspired penman had recorded these few words, and Peter takes them up to sharpen his appeal to win his brethren to a purer life. But can disciples live a holy life? Is it not presumptuous to speak of holiness and saintliness while here on earth? Are we not of sinful stock, and tainted by the fall? Do we not oft do things we ought not, and leave undone those we should do? Can we claim, even in our best moments, to be free from sin? Nay indeed! Before the query arises the answer comes! Yet Scripture describes brethren as holy (Rom. 12. 1, Heb. 3. 1) and often calls them saints (Rom. 1. 7, 1 Cor. 1. 2, Eph. 1. 1, etc.)! In what way then can sin and holiness accord? Another distinction here needs to be made. Paul says "There is none righteous" (Rom. 3. 10). Is holiness and righteousness the same quality of heart? Holiness is generally understood to mean freedom from sin, "an absolute purity of heart". But so is righteousness; that is, when speaking other than of righteousness by faith. Wherein comes the difference then?

Righteousness is a forensic term—that is, it indicates a state or condition in harmonious conformity with a law. It is a "law" term, and as such applies to the equitable action, the righteous balance or the just measure, in men's inter-dealings with each other. A transaction is accounted righteous or unrighteous according to its conformity or non-conformity to a code of laws which has been accepted and constituted the standard of rectitude in any given community. These standards vary in different communities, hence an action may be lawful (legally correct) among one people, but unlawful in another. An action may be considered right (righteous) in one community but condemned in all the rest. Herein lies much of the basic cause for the world's present distress.

Connected with the things of God and God's dealings with men, it is the Divine code of laws which determine what is right and what is wrong. Here the standard of righteousness is absolute, and is the same for every land and every man. It applies to angels too; it embraces both heaven and earth. Not even God Himself is exempted from its claims (John 17. 25). Righteousness (in the absolute) is a state in which full compliance with Divine Law exists. Such compliance denotes a state of legal sinlessness. Sin is accounted to be equivalent to unrighteousness—"a missing of the mark"—a non-compliance with the Law's demands. Sin and unrighteousness are

thus synonymous. Righteousness is the *legal* opposite condition to both sin and unrighteousness.

Holiness applies to the moral aspect of an act: It describes the moral quality of a man whose action when completed is determined as righteous. Lack of holiness, before an act, predisposes to the performance of an act which when completed is determined as an unrighteous act. Holiness is thus the moral opposite of sin. Lack of holiness implies taint in the man, just as unrighteousness implies taint in the act. Holiness implies that man is wholesome in himself, exactly as righteousness implies that the action is wholesome in itself. Holiness is thus the basic moral quality within the man whether in action or at rest. Righteousness is the outworking of that inner quality when its activity conforms to the accepted standard of law. Holiness applies to what one is ("the *Holy One* of Israel"); righteousness to what one does ("Thy righteous acts are made manifest"; Rev. 15. 4).

In God we have Holiness in *what it is*—in other words subjective Holiness—the holiness of the subject whether active or at rest; but in God we see it also applied to an end, to rid the world of sin. Here we see it as objective Holiness as well, applied to an objective or purpose. The holiness of God's inner Self desires the holiness of His whole environment. In God's Divine Plan we have God's intrinsic Holiness expressing itself in such activities as will eventually reproduce a similar intrinsic holiness (the same in kind though in less degree) in a race of men who had been once defiled by sin. God sets Himself before this race of men as the pattern for

them to imitate. He desires to see produced in them the same high qualities of heart which dwell so richly in Himself—to see men love their fellows, and dwell at peace, each with his kin, and all with God.

God longs for man to reach up to an untainted state within, in order that he may perform untainted works without. Thus, to renew righteousness in the earth God will act upon the human heart, enabling man to create a new environment. From the inner to the outer; from the centre to the circumference, from the heart to the hand; such is God's order in the uplift out of sin. To make man's life sound without, God will first make it sound within.

If then God's Holiness is such, where do we stand to-day? In this mad world of sin and sorrow how can we become like Him? It is not Nature's gift to any man to be a saint, it is the work of Grace. We needs must learn, patient and slow, how best to copy God, and then, to stand the strain, God must give grace to help, and eyes to see, and meanwhile hold us in His hand; and then by slow degrees the lesson will be learned, and we shall come to see our God more lovely than all the sons of men. The dark forbidding cloud that hides Him from men's view will open up its folds and we shall pass within the veil of mysteries and see things there which human eye has never seen, nor mortal ear has heard, nor heart of man conceived. In there, like Moses on the mountain's crest, God's glory falling upon our hearts will change them day by day, until the holy supersedes the vile, and we become like Him.

(To be continued)

GOOD-TIME CHRISTIANS — A Thought for the Month

"The king made a feast . . . in the court of the garden of the king's palace; where were white, green and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble; the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble." (Esth. 1. 5-6.)

Words of ease and comfort! What a pleasant place must have been that Persian court in which the Jewish maiden found herself reigning as Queen! Life must have been very comfortable and the ugly things of the world kept at a safe distance—until Haman brought

her face to face with reality.

That is the position of the good-time Christian. There are so many fellowships and groups which have rendered Christian service in past years which now stand in grave danger of degeneration into a community of such. The world is becoming such an ugly and unsympathetic kind of place that the temptation for us to withdraw into our own circle and enjoy ourselves in our own way was never stronger. And it seems so obvious a way of being "in the world but not of it", especially when we are getting on in years

and continued disappointments and disillusionments remind us that the placid backwaters of study and meditation on the river of Divine Truth do not rock the boat so much as the turbulent main stream of evangelism and witness. After all, we reason, we are older than we were twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. The Devil is always very solicitous about our advancing years and counsels us not to strain our failing powers too much. And so there are meetings at which the faithful gather together to listen to "a very lovely song of one that hath a very pleasant voice, and that can play well upon an instrument" (see Ezek. 33. 32) and after the service to shake hands and congratulate one another on the good time they have had. The pity of it all is that there is such sincerity and real love for the Lord manifested in this; there is no denying the thoroughness of the consecration to God and the desire to be true copy-likenesses of His Son. That is not the issue at all. The real trouble is that having secured our own assurance of heavenly glory we fail to remain imbued with the passionate longing to bring others into the same happy condition. "I am become all things to all men" said Paul "if I might by any means save some". And that devoted Apostle was able to say, after a life-time spent serving His Master, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel". It is essential that we have our conventions, our gatherings, our Bible studies and our fellowship. These things are the breath of life to us and they play an important part in our spiritual development. But do not let us use them as a means of escape from the solemn obligations resting upon us of being lights to, as well as in, the world. Do not let the wealth of good things that we enjoy at the Lord's table so dull our senses that we do not realise our responsibility of ministering these same things to others outside. The Christian faith is a missionary faith; the Christian group that ceases to evangelise eventually ceases to exist. Whilst it can be argued that such must be the ultimate fate of the Church in the

flesh before the Millennial Kingdom can come, it must also be pointed out that our Master has not entrusted us with the task of ending the Church's earthly career; that is something He has reserved to Himself. A soldier is expected to be prepared to die for his country if and when necessary, but his true duty is to avoid death as long as possible and keep himself in such condition that he can inflict the maximum of damage upon the enemy before he does have to yield up his life. And is it so very different in the Christian Church? Is not our Lord best pleased with those who, like Gideon's band, are constantly on the alert, in their drinking of the waters of Truth, for the first appearance of the enemy that they might be ready to leap up and engage him in mortal combat? Else why are we bidden to emulate the Roman soldier and stand, arrayed in the complete armour of God, ready to suffer hardship and sacrifice, that we may please Him who hath called us—to be a soldier?

It is in that spirit we can make a sober appraisal of our position and resolve that we will by our lives and our works give a good witness to the world in which we live, a world which is rapidly going to pieces before our eyes, a world which contains men and women—millions of them—who sadly need the oil of joy and the garments of praise which we can give them? Let us take strength from our fellowship and studies together and give that strength to those around us, that we may prepare, even though in only slight degree, for the Kingdom that is to come. Let us take an intelligent interest in our fellow-beings, Christians and non-Christians, the converted and the non-converted, taking to each the message that is most appropriate in the particular case, according to the opportunities we have or can make. Let us resolve that we shall not rest until we find work to do for the Master that is going to cost us something in labour and sacrifice and vitality. We are destined to deal with all men in the Millennial Age so near at hand; a little practice now will not come amiss.

The Apostle Peter urges us to "Seek peace and ensue it", or, as Moffatt puts it: "Let us make peace our aim".

Why need to seek it, if it is a gift? Because it is not a natural element of this passing evil world, neither is it for the indolent and lazy ones.

God is a rewarder of them that diligently

seek Him, and if we would have this in its fulness, we must seek to know the factors upon which it depends, and apply them to our lives.

* * *

The last person to enter heaven will be the one whose religion has all been in the first person singular.

FOREFATHERS OF ABRAHAM

I. Preliminary Survey

*A little-known period
of the Old Testament*

The period between Abraham and the Flood is one that has always been tantalising to Bible history students by reason of the very brevity of the Genesis narratives. During this whole period, some four hundred years if the Masoretic chronology is followed, or some twelve hundred years according to the Septuagint, the only events and incidents recorded are those of the Tower of Babel, the migration of the sons of Joktan, and the statements that Nimrod founded an empire and Peleg was so named "because in his days was the earth divided". Not much for a period which saw the settlement of the "world that now is" by the descendants of Noah, the birth of the three great races of mankind, and the development of at least four great civilisations! And when at last the Bible lifts the curtain in the days of Abraham, the earth had been peopled and those civilisations had seen their best days and were already in decline.

A century ago nothing whatever was known of the times before Abraham. Usher's chronology, with but a few minor variations, held the field and no one dreamed that the land which Abraham left to go to Canaan already had a long and glorious history. The patriarchs who lived between Noah and Abraham were usually pictured as simple pastoral folk living in tents and keeping flocks and herds. The few stories of kings and cities that lingered in traditions were put down as mythical legends and dismissed from serious consideration. It is perfectly true to say, as has been frequently said, that the earliest reliable historical date was the entry of Cyrus into Babylon and the end of the Jewish seventy years captivity in 536 B.C. Back of that, history became increasingly vague and unreliable.

Of course research continued. Archæologists have been busy digging up the past and are still doing so. Scholars and historians have been busy piecing together the fragmentary records that have been discovered and weighing up the evidence of the numerous relics that have come to light, and are still doing so. In consequence the science of history has expanded its scope immeasurably—and is still doing so. Accurate dating is being pushed ever farther back into the past and Bible records are being increasingly

confirmed and illuminated. Forty-five years ago reliable secular dates went back to 1000 B.C., the time of King David. To-day there is reasonable agreement to 2000 B.C., about the era of Abraham, and the rather vague, shadowy period which lies behind the "Father of the Faithful" is being lighted up by the discoveries of the past twenty years.

The purpose of this short treatise is to note some of these latest findings in their relation to the Bible record concerning the period from the end of the Flood to the departure of Abraham from Ur. In order to set things in their correct relation one to other it will be necessary occasionally to suggest certain approximate dates, but it must be understood that these dates are only tentative since there is no real agreement yet even among the authorities and very little reliable matter on which to base a definite system of dating before the time of Abraham. It may be more useful to set the various events against the background of the patriarchs' lives given in Gen. 11. In that chapter we have a connected chain of names, father to son, from Noah to Abraham, which we accept as a true historical record—the only really satisfactory link that exists—and if we can say that a certain event was probably toward the end of Shem's life and another when Terah was a small boy we shall probably convey a more intelligible picture than would be afforded by a string of dates.

The old question as to whether the Masoretic (Hebrew) chronology (427 years from the Flood to the Covenant) or the Septuagint (Greek) of something like 1,200 years, is the correct one, is outside the scope of this treatise and will not further be touched upon except to remark that the longer period is assumed in this series of notes to be nearer the truth. The established historical records of the ancient nations concerned almost certainly require something much more like the longer period. And there seems to be no doubt that the shorter periods in the Hebrew—and consequently English—Bibles are due to deliberate tampering with the text in the early years of the Christian era, in order to keep the six thousandth year from Creation still in the future, on account of the Jewish tradition that Messiah would appear at the end of the six thousand years.

Forty years ago the world was electrified by the news of Sir Leonard Woolley's discovery, at Ur of the Chaldees, of an eight foot strata of water-laid clay, deep down below the city ruins, which betokened the catastrophe of a flood of gigantic proportions. Almost at the same time a similar discovery was reported at Kish, two hundred miles distant, and it soon became apparent that most of Mesopotamia is covered with this great "Flood layer". This was immediately hailed as concrete evidence of the Bible Deluge. Since, then, however, two more "flood layers" have been discovered, with definite evidence of several centuries' civilised life between each of them, and it seems clear that Abraham's native land was visited by at least three, and perhaps more, devastating Deluges over a period of some centuries, many years before his own time. Beneath the earliest of these "layers" there has now come to light numerous relics of a still earlier race of men and if the bottom layer was indeed deposited by the Flood of Noah's day then we have here articles that were made by the ante-diluvians, the men who lived before the Flood. In any case, the discovery in Northern Mesopotamia, during the past ten years, of similar objects belonging to a much simpler and more primitive state of society than that which characterised Abraham's kinsfolk, enables us for the first time to trace, in reverse, as it were, the wanderings of the sons of Noah almost from the point where they emerged from the Ark in the "mountains of Ararat".

The setting for the whole of the events with which we shall have to do is the land through which the rivers Tigris and Euphrates flow on their way to the sea. Its modern name is Iraq and its name before the 1914 war was Mesopotamia. During later Old Testament times (Jacob to Malachi) the southern half was called Babylonia with its capital city Babylon, and the northern half Assyria with its capital city Nineveh. Before that, in the days of Abraham and earlier, it was known as "the land of Sumir and Akkad" ("Shinar" in the Old Testament) and whoever was strong enough to rule over at least a major part of the country styled himself "King of Sumir and Accad". Sumir—normally written "Sumeria" in English books—was the low-lying part at the head of the Persian Gulf, its chief cities being Ur of the Chaldees, Eridu, Nisin, Nippur, and Larsa, and its people, the Sumerians, descendants of Ham. Akkad included the rest of the country, in which lay Babylon, Kish, Mari and the city Akkad. The

Akkadians were descendants of Shem. The Sumerians at first occupied all the country but after the Semitic invasion the two races gradually fused into one people by intermarriage and became the ancestors of the later Babylonians and Assyrians. Although the Semitic Akkadians invaded and conquered the Hamitic Sumerians, the conquerors adopted Sumerian customs and habits until the entire people became virtually Sumerians, so that it is really correct to say that Terah and his son Abraham, natives of Sumerian Ur, although of Semitic descent were in fact Sumerians.

Genesis 10. 8-10 gives us the Biblical indication which enables us to place these events. Those verses speak of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord", and declare "his kingdom was the beginning of Babylon, and Erech, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (not "the beginning of his kingdom" as in the A.V.) These cities were real cities—their ruins still exist—and logically therefore Nimrod was a real person. Nimrod was of Hamitic descent and therefore of Sumerian race. "Shinar" is the Hebrew equivalent of "Sumir" and Babylon, in later days a Semitic stronghold, was in its first founding a Sumerian sacred city. The original Sumerian name of Babylon was "*Tin-tir-ki*" meaning "*the place of life*" changed when the Semites gained possession to "*Bab-ilu*" (Greek "*Babylon*") meaning "*the gate of the gods*", not long before Abraham's time. Calneh was the Sumerian city of Nippur. Nimrod must therefore have lived at a time before these cities came into existence.

The only other thing said of Nimrod is that he was "a mighty hunter before the Lord". This does not mean, as has often been assumed, that a studied insult or affront to God is implied. Jewish rabbis and finally Josephus gave Nimrod a bad name and later Christian writers perpetuated it, but in fact the Hebrew expression merely means that what he did was as as it were performed in the sight of God and with His definite knowledge, without involving either credit or discredit to Nimrod in the matter. The only name similar to Nimrod so far discovered in the inscriptions is that of a king who lived long after Abraham and he clearly cannot be the one intended. Sumerian legend, however, does tell of a mighty hero named Gilgamesh, "Lord of Erech", who performed deeds of valour in the sight of the gods, winning the favour of some of them and earning the enmity of others. This Gilgamesh is said to

have lived at the close of what is called the "mythical" period of Sumerian history and just before the time when the kings and cities of whose existence definite proof exists come into view. Not long after the alleged exploits of "Gilgamesh lord of Erech" we have the written inscriptions of Mes-anni-padda, King of Ur, the earliest specimens of decipherable writing at present in the possession of scholars. Nimrod, alluded to so briefly in the Book of Genesis, gave rise to the poetic legends of Gilgamesh which are so common in Sumerian literature.

For the present, then, we might say that Nimrod took a leading part in beginning to weld the cities of Sumir into an empire. This could well be just prior to the beginning of the period for which written documents have been found, and the cities of Sumir were just rising to city status from their original village settlements. Even so, these "cities" were small by modern standards. Ur of the Chaldees, when it was the capital of the empire, only covered 150 acres and housed less than 24,000 people. We in England would call that a very small town; some American states might grant it the status of a city. In this case Nimrod would probably have lived about B.C. 2800, some five hundred years after the Flood, seven hundred before Abraham, and roughly when Eber and Peleg (Gen. 11. 16) were alive.

Now it was between the times of Nimrod and Abraham that there occurred a most important event, having a direct effect on the outworking of the Divine Plan but not so much as mentioned in the Bible. That event was the mass invasion of Sumir by the descendants of Shem.

At the time to which the Tower of Babel story refers the tribes of Shem had turned

their way north-west and migrated into what is now known as Syria. The sons of Ham stayed where they were and over-spread the land, to which they gave the name of Sumir. Of the peoples springing from these sons, Mizraim's tribes migrated to Lower Egypt and became the Egyptians of later history, Phut grew into a nation colonising northern and equatorial Africa, Canaan occupied the land afterwards called by his name, whilst Cush, the most prolific, retained the homeland of Sumir besides spreading south-east along both shores of the Persian Gulf, ending up in the Indian Punjab on the one hand where they set up a Sumerian civilisation of their own which lasted until Aryan tribes from the North wiped it out in the days of Abraham, and across South Arabia into Africa on the other hand where they survive to-day in part as the modern Nubians and Ethiopians. In the meantime the sons of Shem had multiplied into a great nation and at last, in small parties at first, and later en masse, they turned their faces towards the place of their dispersal in the days of Babel and came back into the land.

The general picture we have, therefore, is that of a united journey of Noah's sons and their descendants of one or two generations from Ararat to Babel, where they separated, the sons of Ham alone remaining in the land and building its great cities and setting up a civilisation remarkable for its artistic and constructional achievement. Centuries later the tribes of Shem, who had grown up in Syria, invaded the land of Ham and after many centuries of strife became united as one race with the sons of Ham. That is how Abraham, of the line of Shem, came to be born in Ur of the Chaldees, a Hamitic city.

(To be continued)

?

THE QUESTION BOX

?

Q. A suggestion sometimes encountered is that after conversion and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ there should be expected what is described as a "second act of grace"—a special additional outpouring of the Holy Spirit which is essential to the believer's growth in grace, and that those who do not experience this "second blessing" do not fully enter into the Christian way. Is there Scripture basis for this belief?

* * *

A. There is not much doubt that some do feel that such an experience has entered their

lives to their spiritual enrichment but it does not follow that all believers should expect the same, nor that the Scriptures support the idea that it is an essential factor in the way to God. One has to realise that people of varying temperaments react to the appeal of the Gospel in different ways and that what might be termed, with all respect, an emotional approach is well fitted to one personality, but quite unfitted to many others. None would deny the sincerity, say, of the coloured Christians of the New World with their "negro spirituals" but few would advocate the fit-

ness of those same spirituals as a regular feature of formal English church worship.

It is very possible that this idea of the second act of grace following conversion arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptural doctrine of baptism and its connection with the Holy Spirit. In these latter days baptism is looked upon as a formal ritual by means of which acceptance into the Church of Christ is assured. The fact that baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit into the heart and life of the believer are indissolubly linked is not always realised as it should be. When Cornelius and his household were converted the Holy Spirit came upon them immediately and they were straightway baptised in symbol of that coming. When St. Paul came to Ephesus he found disciples of John the Baptist who had not so much as heard of Jesus and the Holy Spirit; when they believed, he baptised them and at once the Holy Spirit came upon them. Consistently through the New Testament the order is, first, repentance, which means a change of mind; conversion, which means to turn about; consecration or dedication, which means to make new. In the New Testament sense repentance is the change of mind respecting all those things in the past life which are out of accord with the ways of God, the resolve to eschew them henceforth. Conversion is that revolution which occurs in the life when Jesus is accepted as Lord and Saviour. Consecration or dedication of life is the whole-hearted yielding of one's self to the service of God that we might be fitted by Him for whatever place in His Creation He has determined for us. This is the point at which the Holy Spirit comes upon us for it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the transforming work within us is accomplished. Thus we do come into Christ as members of His Church and it is of this, the real baptism, that water baptism is the symbol. "*We were buried with him*" says Paul "*by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*" (Rom. 6. 4) "*Being justified by faith*" he says again "*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*" (Rom. 5. 1-2).

The logical sequel to conversion and

acceptance of Christ is consecration of life to Him. It must be so, for the Holy Spirit is the power of God working in the heart and mind to transform, the new life which makes the "man in Christ" a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5.12) and makes it true that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". From that time onward the believer is led and sustained by the Holy Spirit, and to this fact an abundance of Scripture gives testimony. There is no need or place for a second effusion of the Spirit or any addition to the work of grace which takes place at that crucial moment when the one who has seen the Light and heard the Call utters the words made so famous by Heb. 10.7 "*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*". When God accepts the disciple, He does so completely and finally, and from then on proceeds to do His great work in that one.

For be it remembered that God does all this for a purpose. In this present Age He calls all who will listen, and heed, and respond, to give themselves to Him unreservedly for what amounts to a course of specialised training that they might be suited to His plans for the future. What those plans are we may not certainly know. We do know that they include the full and final conversion to Him and His ways of all from among the sons of men who can be persuaded to respond, and to that great work the coming Age of God's Kingdom on earth is to be devoted. What lies beyond that we can only surmise but of one thing we can be sure; those who have given themselves to Him now and received the inestimable gift of the Holy Spirit and retained that gift to the end of their course on earth will remain fully employed in His wonderful works into all eternity.

In the years to come, memory will hold precious, not the brief moment of triumph, but the love and sympathy of comrades, and will seek to recall, not the plaudits of success, but "the touch of a vanished hand, or the sound of a voice that is still".

* * *

There are no hands upon the clock of eternity! there is no shadow upon its dial. The very hours of heaven will be measured by the sunshine, not by the shadow.



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 47, No. 2

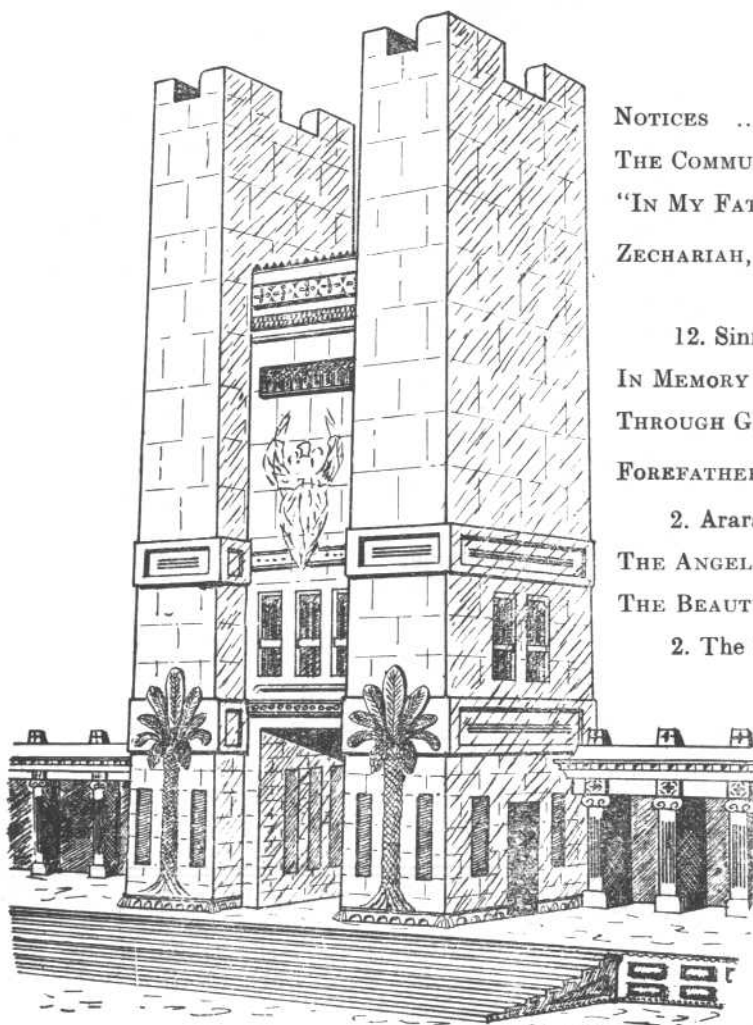
MARCH/APRIL 1970

Published March 1st

Next issue May 1st

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

*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*

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

NOTICES

Renewal requests

There is no obligatory charge for this journal, reliance being placed upon the spontaneous gifts of those who feel led to contribute towards the costs of publication; nevertheless we do ask for a renewed assurance annually that it is still desired in the case of those who have not already signified their wishes. To this end, any reader from whom we have not heard since the last renewal period, either with a gift or else an expression of interest and desire for continuance, receives a "renewal request" form upon which it is desired that wishes may be stated either for continuation or cancellation. Some readers will receive this request with the March issue and others in that for September, repeated similarly annually. Whilst we are anxious that none who sincerely appreciate the "Monthly" are deleted from the list, it is necessary to ensure that copies are not sent when unwanted or to addresses no longer valid. We do ask therefore that the renewal form be returned without delay so that we may be sure of your sustained interest.

In this connection the attention of overseas readers is drawn to the fact that since sea transmission time ranges from five to eight weeks it frequently happens that a reader's letter—with or without gift—crosses in the post with an issue containing a renewal notice. In such case the notice can be ignored and there need be no fear that we shall fail to record the reader's wishes or continue to send the "Monthly".

Coming Conventions

An Easter gathering during March 28 to 30 is being arranged at the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington, and a warm welcome is extended to all who can attend. Details from Mr. F. B. Quennell, 43 Ackers

Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington.

The Manchester Christian Fellowship announces plans for a Conference on Saturday and Sunday, April 25 and 26, in the Cheetham Town Hall, Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester (opposite the synagogue). All interested are welcome. Details from Mr. A. Chrimes, 2 Cheam Road, Altrincham, Ches.

The usual Midland Convention is planned for Sat./Sun. May 9/10 in the District Social Centre, Blaby. Details from Mr. A. Charcharos 55 Greenacres Drive, Lutterworth, Warks.

A convention in Liverpool is planned for Sat./Sun. June 20/21. Venue and details from Mrs. W. E. Pampling, 6 Clive Road, Birkenhead, L43 5RR.

The Memorial

The Memorial date this year is Sunday, April 19.

Itineraries 1970

The following visits have been planned to date:

		<i>F. MUSK</i>
March	4-7	North Riding
		19 Bollington
		26-27 Sheffield
April	9	Burton-on-Trent
		<i>J. D. PARKER</i>
March	15	Welling

Gone from us

Bro. R. E. Darby (London)
Sis. E. M. Dark (Wellington)
Bro. H. Hall (Penarth)
Bro. F. Lardent (London)
Bro. W. J. Bonage (Fareham)

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

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body." (1 Cor. 10. 16-17).

In these burning words Paul has laid bare for us the fundamental principle of our fellowship. Throughout his busy life he strove consistently for one supreme object, the union of the Body of Christ, the welding together of all who named the Name into a unity of the Spirit that would defy all attempts to break. He succeeded only partially; the visible Church of Christ has never measured in full up to the spirit of our Lord's last prayer "that they may be one, even as we are" (John 17. 22). The human element has often failed the inspiration of the Spirit. But the prayer of Jesus has not gone unanswered. In every generation from Pentecost to the present there have been some who have entered so fully into the spirit of Christ's message that they have over-ridden the bonds and bars fashioned by men and found themselves at one with others of like understanding. True Christians may recognise each other wherever found and there is a unity of the Spirit which transcends and ignores all denominational barriers.

The outward expression of that unity is to be found in the Memorial of the Last Supper and the coming together from time to time in regular assembly for the simple sharing of bread and wine—a symbolic feast that at one and the same time expresses our one-ness with each other and our one-ness with the Lord. Whether that celebration be as often as once a week or as seldom as once a year it always symbolises, not only our acknowledgment of the saving power of our Lord's death, our acceptance to ourselves of His shed blood and sacrificed life, our association with Him in the offering of life to the world in due time; not only all this, but also that kinship, that brotherhood, that one-ness with each other as brethren in Christ, without which none of the other significance can be really appreciated by us or true of us. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, asks James, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? So the one that has not entered truly into living relationship with his

brethren may by no means be in living relationship with Christ, His acceptance by and standing with Christ may be, and is, the result of an individual decision and based upon his personal justification by faith, but he can maintain that acceptance and standing only by becoming one of "the brethren", a fellow-member of the Body. He must enter and accept the communion of saints.

Paul chose a wonderful word to express this relationship, and he used it in a variety of connections in order to show how intimately this "common-union" enters into every aspect of our Christian walk in the flesh, and extends beyond this life into the future glory. And this text in 1 Cor. 10 is a fitting commencing point for a sober consideration of all that the word implies, just as the Memorial ceremony itself is the centre and basis of our Christian life and fellowship.

"Communion"! What does it mean? What is there in the word to stamp it as particularly and peculiarly expressive of all that is deepest and most precious in our dealings and intercourse the one with the other? "Communion" in the Greek means the act of using a thing in common, or as we would say, sharing together in the use of a thing. It has its origin in the word which is translated "common" in Acts 2. 44, "all that believed were together and had all things common" and Acts 4. 32, "they had all things common". Now this is a good pointer to the principle behind the word, for it is beyond doubt that the primitive Church of the days immediately following Pentecost, when they sold possessions and parted to every man as each had need, grasped this thought of the family relationship perhaps more clearly than did the Church at any other time. Here, it seems, is the basis for the Apostle's expression "the communion—common sharing—of the body of Christ". The same word is used in Titus 1. 4 "the common faith" and Jude 3 "the common salvation" where the meaning, that of something to be held and shared together, is obvious.

But this word "communion" is also sometimes translated "fellowship", sometimes "communicate", sometimes "partaker". Each of these aspects of our Christian life is an aspect of the communion of the saints and as such is intimately associated with our under-

standing of the Memorial. The early Church, we are told, "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and *fellowship*"—communion (Acts 2. 42). James, and John, and Peter, extended to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of *fellowship*—communion (Gal. 2. 9). Paul exhorted that he who is taught in the word should *communicate*—share with—him that teacheth (Gal. 6. 6). These few instances are enough to show that in the minds of the Apostles the fellowship of the brethren was the same thing as the "*communion of the Body of Christ*". We sometimes tend to think and speak of our "*fellowship*" as of a mere social contact and the enjoyment of a pleasant time together. The New Testament writers knew of no such thing. To them the fellowship of the brethren was a deep-rooted and vital association together in Christ—common-sharing in all the obligations, all the endurance, and all the joys of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And as though testifying to their realisation of the practical implications of this association with all that Jesus stood for, which they had entered, the Apostles made it clear that we are sharers together in a communion of good works, a mutual care the one for the other, extending out of the realm of spiritual things into that of material things. "*Distributing to the necessity of saints*" says Paul in Rom. 12. 13, where *distributing* is the same word as "*communion*". "To do good and to *communicate*—to share with others—forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13. 16). An account is given in Rom. 15. 26 of some in Macedonia and Achaia who were pleased "to make a certain *contribution* (communion) for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem". How tender and eloquent a way of expressing their material help so freely rendered; not a "gift" not "charity" but a "common-sharing". And that these Macedonian and Achaian believers had the right understanding of the matter as well as the right spirit is beyond all doubt. Their "common-sharing" of material things followed logically from their position in the "communion of saints". Had there been no common-sharing they would have been outside the communion, no matter how extensive their knowledge of the Truth, eloquent their discourses, or profound their studies.

It is out of this practical brotherliness that effective fellowship in service is born. There is a communion in the Gospel which is the *inspiring force behind all powerful proclamation of the Kingdom message*. In writing

to the Philippians Paul speaks of this "*fellowship—communion—of the gospel*" (Phil. 1. 5) and the "*fellowship*"—communion—of the Spirit" (Phil. 2. 1). To the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8. 4) he refers to the "*fellowship—communion—of the ministering to the saints*" where the allusion is to service in material, and not in spiritual things. In this really marvellous Scripture we have the Macedonians who provided the gift, Paul who carried the gift, and the Jerusalem Christians who received the gift, all joined together in the communion—sharing together—of the ministrations. Could there be any greater depth of Christian unity than is implied by this relationship where the donor, the messenger and the recipient are all considered as one, sharing together in the privilege of the ministrations? Herein lay the secret of the power of that early Church; they were welded together as one family, one Body, and the welfare of each was the concern of all. Thus their outward witness was powerful and effective, because it had behind it the driving power of a solidly compact body of people who maintained their essential unity in Christ and with each other.

This in turn led to a realistic understanding of their common participation in the sufferings of Christ. There was no beclouding or confusing the plain issue by theological definitions of doubtful value and full of incipient sources of argument and misunderstanding. To these earnest, enthusiastic souls, participation in the sufferings of Christ was a sharing the life that He lived and enduring the same trials and distresses that came upon Him in consequence of that way of life; and this participation was a very real thing to them. The history of early Christian persecution and martyrdom shows that. The ordeal of fire which so many of them went through and endured until death released them from their sufferings is too terrible to recount—historians have already described it in sufficient detail. Let it be realised that nothing but the one-ness of the Church in which all members suffered with one, and so the strength of all was given to one in the hour of need, could have enabled them thus to endure. Many in later times have wondered how those stoical souls withstood the fiendish cruelty of their pagan persecutors. The answer is that their strength was not of themselves, it was of the Body, and from Him Who is the Head of that Body. And without the true unity of the Spirit the strength would not have been theirs. Paul knew this when he desired that he "might know . . . the *fellowship—commun-*

ion—of his (Christ's) sufferings" (Phil. 3. 10). He knew that in that common-sharing there resided a source of strength such as his own self-resolution could never give him. To the Corinthians he says "as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of the sufferings (both of Christ and of His disciples) so shall ye also be of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1. 7). That word "consolation" is full of significance here. It means the arrival of help at a time when it is needed (*paraklesis*—a being alongside to help). That is the effect of conscious sharing in the sufferings of one another and of our Master—it gives strength to withstand all that makes our Christian way difficult and arduous. There is then a "being alongside to help". What wonder, then, that Peter, in the calm maturity of his old age, bids his suffering brethren to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4. 13). And it is Peter who takes us to the highest level of this communion of saints, for in two eloquent Scriptures he relates it to the consummation of our glorious hope. In 2 Pet. 1. 4 he tells us that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the divine nature" and in 1 Pet. 5. 1 that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the glory that shall be

revealed". The communion of saints is not only one of suffering, it is also one of glory. The fellowship that is begun here below in conditions of "weakness and much trembling" is to be continued forever in that eternal kingdom where it will be expanded into the glorious fellowship of the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven.

Seeing then that we know these things, how ignoble and petty become those specious arguments which limit and restrict the unity which can exist between all who name the Name. We who have a glorious hope for mankind, a clear perception of the Divine Plan, and a noble tradition going back to Apostolic days, should we be one whit behind those who in those same early times took their Lord at His word, and because He bade them "share together", brought that spirit of sharing into every phase and aspect of their fellowship, and in that joyful union found a strength and a power that in its outworking shook the pagan world until that world tottered and fell? If we in our day could by any means achieve a unity such as that, what man could foretell the magnitude of the blessing that would flow out from the "communion of saints"?

"IN MY FATHER'S COURTS"

*A note on
Luke 2. 49*

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2. 49).

The only incident of our Lord's boyhood that is recorded is the occasion when at twelve years of age He accompanied his parents to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. The eight-day ceremony ended, Joseph and Mary with the rest of their party commenced the journey home to Nazareth and at the end of the first day found that Jesus was not with them. Turning back to the city, they searched unavailingly for three days until at length they found Him in the outer court of the Temple questioning the "teachers of the Law" and showing such aptitude in his understanding that those venerable First Century theologians were "*astonished at his understanding and answers*". To his mother's anxious reproof and apparent intimation that they had been three days searching for Him the response came with evident innocent surprise; why had she not realised that the one place where He was

most likely to be was in the Temple court?

The A.V. rendering of "business" is supplied by the translators and is agreed now to be incorrect. The Greek reads literally "*do you not know that in the . . . of my Father I must be*". The missing word for which the translators supplied "business" is an example of what is known as ellipsis, that is, the omission of a word of such a nature that the meaning in the sentence should be obvious. It is generally accepted now that the missing word is "court" and not "business"; that Jesus really referred to the Temple court as the one place in all Jerusalem where He might be expected to be found. "Why did you spend time searching in the city?" He asked in effect "Did you not realise that I must be in my Father's courts?"

There naturally arises from this incident the question as to what degree Jesus, as a child or as a youth, was able to remember anything of his pre-human existence. As a fully grown man, entered upon his mission

and possessing the Holy Spirit in the sense in which the Spirit came upon Him at Jordan. He was obviously and without doubt fully cognisant of the glory He had formerly shared with the Father. (Jno. 17. 5). Did that knowledge or that recollection come to Him as it were instantaneously at the moment when the Spirit came upon Him when He stood before John in the water and the voice sounded from Heaven "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1. 11), or was it a gradual revelation, slowly filling his mind as childhood gave way to youth?

There is very little data upon the basis of which a conclusion can be formed. Luke, in his record of this very incident, says that Jesus "increased in wisdom and age, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2. 52). This implies progressive development in knowledge as the years passed, but that need mean no more than it would in the case of any intelligent lad. The "favour with God" could be natural comment from onlookers who observed his piety and devotion to the things of God. On the other hand the expression in Matthew's account at his baptism "the heavens were opened unto Him" (Matt. 3. 16) might well be held to indicate a moment when a whole new world of spiritual perception broke in upon his mind and that in a flash He knew Himself for whom He was, the "Word made flesh" (Luke 1. 14), and the entire memory of his past was imprinted upon His human consciousness. The manner in which the Lord from heaven laid aside his other-worldly glory and appeared on earth in the likeness of men is an abiding mystery to men because we have no knowledge of the world from which He came and the nature

of life as it is therein existing. There must be something of vital truth in St. Paul's words when he declares that our Lord "emptied" or "divested" Himself when He took human form (Phil. 2. 7). "Kenosis" means being completely empty or reduced to nothing, and this can only mean that every element of his glory pertaining to the celestial order of things was stripped away and left behind, that when He was born of Mary, He was in every physical respect man, though sinless. But at the same time He was still and is for ever the Son of God. Although we cannot comprehend the mystery of the Divine Life, the link which bound the Son to the Father must have remained unbroken throughout. Whether it was by positive knowledge or by some kind of sub-conscious instinct that He used the expression "my Father" at twelve years of age, it was a true prompting. It might be the case that from the time He was able to think rationally on the human plane Jesus knew that He was not the same as other boys were; He might have been conscious of a link with the Eternal which maybe the purely physical brain could not define; yet for all that there might still have been no memory of the past and no power of visualising the scenes and happenings of the celestial world. We do not really know; what is quite certain is that after Jesus came out of the baptismal waters the power of the Divine broke through the physical barrier and from that time onward Jesus possessed a full mental understanding of all those things which once He had known beyond the veil that separates the terrestrial from the celestial.

Joseph in Egypt

"Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Gen. 41. 40). The description of Joseph's exaltation to power at the right hand of Pharaoh is well illustrated by tomb paintings found in Egypt. Joseph had evidently been raised to the position of "Prime Minister", and in the short passage from verse 40 to 45 of Gen. 41 we have a vivid description of an induction into office which was repeated with every successive Grand Vizier or "Prime Minister" in the land of Egypt. The ring upon Joseph's hand and the placing of the gold chain around his neck was the repetition of an ancient ceremony which betokened the highest possible honour which could be conferred upon the recipient. This ceremony was practised 300 years before the time

of Abraham and Joseph became one of a long line of men, who were thus raised to the most exalted position Egypt could offer. His marriage to Asenath, daughter of the High Priest of Heliopolis, brought him into intimate relationship with the priestly caste, and thus, like Daniel in a much later day, the simple shepherd boy from Judea became the virtual leader of a great nation, and discharged the responsibilities of his office with that integrity and diligence which should characterise every true believer in God.

* * *

Charity should begin at home, but it should not stay there. Life is service. Service is a part of life; it is the only real human life, and from Christ's own experience we see the great example of it.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 12. Sinners in Zion

We come now to the most difficult passage in the whole of Zechariah's prophecy—difficult, because the opening sentences seem on the surface as though they could apply only to the First Advent whilst almost immediately there appear expressions which can only refer to the Second Advent. The sword is raised against the Lord's Shepherd and in consequence the sheep are scattered. Two parts among them die but the third part is preserved in the fires and becomes the people of the Lord. The Day of the Lord dawns and the nations surround Jerusalem. One part of the citizens is led into exile but the other part is preserved. At this point the Lord rises up to defend Israel and scatter the besiegers. The difficulty lies in reconciling the smiting of the Lord's shepherd with the rising up of God to overthrow all evil and deliver those who trust in Him.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (ch. 14, 7). This "shepherd" who is also the Lord's "fellow" can be none other than Christ; the word rendered "fellow" is literally "my companion", the "man of my fellowship", and indicates one bound to the Father by the closest possible ties of association, much more so than the ordinary bonds of friendship. Abraham and Moses were said to be the "friends" of God; Daniel was the "greatly beloved", but this word indicates a closer and more constant oneness and when associated with God cannot be applied to other than the Son. Zechariah must have known this and seen in the expression a reference to Israel's Messiah. Jesus endorsed this (Matt. 26, 31). The R.S.V. adopts a rendering which is peculiarly fitting; "the man who stands next to me". However the passage is interpreted, this, the central figure, is undoubtedly Christ the Messiah.

The smiting of this Shepherd is then the rejection of Him by the flock; not only that initial rejection which led to His crucifixion in the days of His humanity, but the long-continued rejection which has subsisted throughout the Age and is still true, at least in part, at the Age's end. In this the rejection of chapter 13 differs from the rejection of the

same Shepherd in chapter 11, where the reference is only to the First Advent. But to perceive how this can be it is necessary to examine the structure of the passage more closely.

The point that emerges most noticeably is that chap. 13, 7 to 14, 2 is written in a style dissimilar from that which goes before or comes after. It really forms a self-contained little section in its own right. Up to chap. 13, 6 and also from chap. 14, 3 onward the style is prose narrative, telling in the one case of the progress of Israel's repentance and cleansing, and in the other of active Divine intervention and the establishment of the Kingdom. But this little section is not narrative and it is not prose; it is poetry written in the characteristic style of Hebrew poetry, and gives every evidence of being a kind of triumph song in highly rhetorical terms inserted at this point to give maximum effect to what it has to say. The passage consists of nine couplets, the typical form of Old Testament poetry, arranged in sets of three each. Couplets 1 to 3 tell of the smitten Shepherd and the consequent scattered flock, of whom two parts die and a remnant is left. Couplets 4 to 6 describe God's care for the "remnant" which is saved out of that scattering, and couplets 7 to 9 sing of the further purifying of that remnant by the elimination of a further part proved unworthy so that a fully tried and tested nucleus remains to experience deliverance. Thus understood, the passage stands in the following fashion.

1. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd;
And against the man that is my fellow.
2. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;
And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.
3. And it shall come to pass that in all the land two parts therein shall be cut off and die;
But the third shall be left therein.

* * * *

4. And I will bring the third part through the fires;

And I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried.

5. They shall call on my name;
And I will hear them.
6. I will say, it is my people;
And they shall say, the Lord is my God.
* * * *
7. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh;
And thy spoil shall be divided in the
midst of thee.
8. For I will gather all nations against Jeru-
salem to battle;
And the city shall be taken, and the
houses rifled, and the women ravished.
9. And half of the city shall go forth into
captivity;
But the residue of the people shall not
be cut off from the city.

Now if this is recognised as a "theme song" then its theme is clearly that the rejection of God's Shepherd has become a means whereby the apostates are separated from the faithful, the dross from the pure metal, until only the true-hearted "remnant" remain in the land of God's choosing and face the massed evil of the world in complete faith that God will deliver. Perhaps this is why the "song" is inserted at this point, between the account in chaps. 12 and 13 of the preparation of the land and nation for the final battle, and the stirring picture in chap. 14 in which the kingdoms of this world pass away and the Lord becomes King over the whole earth. If this is so it becomes easier to accept the language of this song as covering, in a poetic fashion, the entire story of apostasy and faith from the First to the Second Advents, so that Jesus could logically apply ch. 13. 7 to Himself in His earthly life, when the rejection began, and yet prophetically Zechariah could see that rejection still persisting at the time of His coming again, when, as Jesus predicted, there would still be a lack of faith in the earth. At the same time the rapid development of the "remnant" which is to face the final challenge becomes a very real and present part of the picture.

Who are the sheep that are scattered and what is meant by God turning His hand "upon the little ones". In chap. 11 the sheep are the

whole house of Israel and they are abandoned to dispersal and death because of their rejection of the Shepherd. That was fulfilled in full measure at the First Advent. This later picture might well extend the same theme to the whole of the Age with particular relevance to the Age's end. Throughout the Age, the sword has been smiting the Shepherd and the sheep have been scattered, for Israel has been continually "abiding in unbelief" (Rom. 11. 23). And if the whole history of Israel's rejection of Messiah is looked at from the viewpoint of the resultant situation at the end of the Age a solution to the problem of the two parts that are cut off and die presents itself. Out of all Israel there have always been, and are still, those who remain in the lands of their dispersion, in every part of the world, by choice, having no faith in the promises of God and no intention of taking any part in the rebuilding of the Land of Promise. These constitute one part. Then there are those who do settle and live in the Land, sharing in the creation of that State and people, but either do so from a purely nationalistic motive or, if they start out on the basis of faith in the Divine promise, later repudiate that faith and revert to the standards and expectations of this present world. These form the second part. One part still in the Dispersion, and one part within the frontiers of Israel, but both parts have rejected the Shepherd and both parts, so far as inclusion in the Divine purpose is concerned, are "cut off and die". Like their forerunners in the days of Jesus, they see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, sit down in the Kingdom of God, whilst they themselves are thrust out (Luke 13. 28).

There remains the "third part" which is left therein. This third part would seem to be identical with the "little ones" of verse 7. The Shepherd is smitten and the sheep scattered but, says God, "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones". The "little ones" are, literally, those who are esteemed mean, despised, small in others' view. This can well fit the few who retain their faith in God. The expression "turn mine hand upon" is not so easy to interpret. "Upon" is a word having a negative power, most frequently used in the sense of forbidding or being against a thing, and would be more accurately rendered "against the little ones" which is how the RSV and a number of other modern translations render it. In fact the same word is rendered "against" twice in this same 7th verse. The Septuagint uses the Greek *epi* to

translate the Hebrew word all three times in this verse, and *epi* has the sense of being on, upon or over the subject. It might be then that the hand of God is "over" or "upon" the little ones in the sense of protection and this is the view usually taken of this verse. Since however the "third part" is later said to be brought into the fires of testing it might be in this sense that God turns His hand "against" them. Zephaniah, speaking of this same "third part" in the same prophetic setting, says that God will "*leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*" (Zeph. 3. 12). It may be therefore that the expression is intended to indicate that from the onlooker's point of view the Lord, having allowed His Shepherd to be smitten and the sheep scattered, has indeed turned His hand against His little ones, although from the long term angle it is clear that He is dealing with them, to use Malachi's expression, as a refiner and purifier of silver.

This is where the second stanza of the poem comes before notice. "*I will bring the third part through the fires, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name and I will hear them. I will say, it is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God.*" This refined and purified and tested people is, of course, the Remnant, the stalwart nation of faith which will experience the Deliverance. The time can only be the end of the Age and the eleventh hour of the End at that, for at no other time in history will such a national faith in God, and such a consequent Divine acceptance, be true. Despite the smiting of the Shepherd which has subsisted throughout the Age, and the falling away of so many, God has at last completed the formation of His earthly elect. Ready for their glorious destiny they stand in their places in the land they have made ready, waiting.

So to the third stanza, which appears in the A.V. as the first two verses of chapter 14. Were this poem set to music, here most certainly would come the fanfare of trumpets. "*Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*" The time has come, the time of Israel's victory, and nothing can now hold back the march of events already irrevocably ordained in the Divine time-table. The powers of Heaven and earth are drawn up in martial array and they face each other, waiting.

A failure to understand aright the nature

of this prophetic picture of the attack upon Jerusalem leads some to see in this expression the division, among the attackers, of spoil taken from Israel at this time. The idea of such proceeding is not consistent with the basic principle that this is the time, not of Israel's defeat, but of Israel's victory. Neither does the text read that way. "Thy spoil" means Israel's spoil. Had it been otherwise the passage would read "*Their* spoil shall be divided . . .". The point here is that despite the overwhelming physical superiority of the enemy and their proud boast that they have come "to take a spoil and to take a prey" (see Ezek. 38. 12-13) it will be the devoted people in the city who will take spoil of their attackers, as Ezekiel again says in 39. 10 "*They shall spoil those that spoiled them*". And the nature of that "spoil" is well described by Isaiah; it will be no less than the allegiance and devotion of the erstwhile godless nations to the standard of righteousness which will be unfurled by the Holy Nation in that day, "spoil" more valuable to the people of God by far than treasures of gold or silver or possessions or lands. "*The nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee . . . the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee . . . ye shall eat the riches of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves . . . and the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory . . . thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*" (Isa. chaps. 60-62). The forces of the Lord in that day will have no need of earthly treasures for their spoil; their God already owns "all the gold and silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills". The spoil they look for and will take is something much more precious, the hearts and minds and the lives of men, and this it is that will be yielded to them at that historic period of human history.

But first there has to come the peak, the crucial phase, of the refining fire that is to winnow all that is dross from the community of Israel. Chap. 14 verse 2 presents what is to all appearances a strange and unexpected anti-climax. At the momentous hour when God moves in, as it were, to intervene and deliver, the prophet sees the city "taken", the houses rifled, the women ravished, and half of the inhabitants driven into exile. Nowhere else in all the many Old Testament foreviews of this dramatic time is such an

eventuality pictured; in every other instance the attacking forces come immediately up against the irresistible powers of Heaven and are utterly broken. Here in Zechariah the very next verse presents the same theme, and shews the all-powerful Lord advancing to the battle. What then is the significance of this strange diversion, introducing itself as it were at the last minute of the eleventh hour?

It must be remembered that we are still hearing the strains of the "triumph song" which closes with this verse 2. To a great extent the language used reflects past occasions of triumph and rejoicing in Israel's history, and the nature of the coming event is described in terms reminiscent of past similar happenings in Israel's history. The man of Israel, hearing or reading the words, was expected to cast his mind back to the former event and visualise the predicted reality within the general background of that event. In this case there is not much doubt that the background is that of Sennacherib's defeat outside Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. In both cases the enemy surrounds Jerusalem in confidence that he will capture the city with ease; he openly defies God, God answers the challenge, and he is defeated and expelled from the land—Jerusalem is saved. In both cases that salvation is in consequence of faith and reliance upon God. Hence to understand this verse it is necessary to compare it with the things that happened in the days of Hezekiah. There is an abundance of material upon which to draw, for the record of that celebrated event, the defeat of Sennacherib, is repeated no less than four times in the Old Testament, in 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chron. 32, Isaiah 22 and Isaiah 37, with another "triumph song" extolling the victory in Isaiah 33. As if all this were not enough, we in our day have the additional advantage of Sennacherib's own account of the campaign, inscribed on a six-sided cylinder which is at present in the British Museum, and another which is held by the University of Chicago. From all of this the aptness of this incident from history to illustrate the deliverance of Israel at the end of this Age is very marked.

"The city shall be taken" says the A.V. "Taken" is *asaph*, to gather or encompass, as in a net. Hos. 4. 3 uses the word of fishes of the sea thus taken, and the meaning here is that the city is surrounded or besieged, but not captured in the sense of a forcible entry being effected. Incidentally the same word is used for "gather" in the same verse where

God says He will gather all nations against Jerusalem; the enemy encompasses the city but God encompasses the enemy! It is rather remarkable that Sennacherib uses the same term in his account, "*Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, I shut up within Jerusalem, his royal city.*" And of course Sennacherib, despite his boasting, never did get inside the city! From this picture it would seem justifiable to conclude that in a poetic manner Zechariah is saying what all the other prophets do say, that the enemy will surround the Holy Land but not actually capture it; the intervention of God will come first as it did in the case of Sennacherib.

Now Zechariah expands his theme. "*The houses shall be rifled and the women ravished*" he says. This at first sight would seem to contradict the inviolability of the city. Again the historical precedent can be a guide to the meaning. According to the account in 2 Kings there was a period immediately before the great deliverance when faith on the part of Hezekiah and his people was not as strong as it should have been and they yielded to the Assyrian demands for treasure and tribute. The cylinder of Sennacherib gives a more complete list of the booty the invader took from Hezekiah at this time. "*Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of all kinds, pearls, thrones adorned with ivory, tusks of ivory, sandal wood, ebony, the contents of Hezekiah's treasure house, his daughters, the women of his palace, and his male and female slaves*". All these did the Assyrian take and send to Nineveh, the treasure for the adornment of his city and the women for the rest of their lives to be at the mercy of their captors. Not only so, but during the actual siege some there were who left the city trusting to the Assyrians rather than in God, and these too were captured and sent also to Nineveh. "*I threw up mounds against him*" goes on the remorseless conqueror "*and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from the city. All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off.*" That there were a number of such among the leaders of Israel is recorded by Isaiah 22. 3 which is an account of this siege. "*All your rulers have fled together, without the bow they were captured. All of you who were found were captured though they had fled far away*" (RSV). So that when Zechariah declares that the houses are rifled, the women ravished, half of the city go forth into exile, he is telling us that just as in the days of Sennacherib

there was an element of unbelief which led to the loss of all part in the coming deliverance for some of the people, so will it be now. After all the purging fires of the Age which has resulted in a dedicated people awaiting, in a dedicated land, the onslaught of the enemy, there will be at the last moment a portion whose faith does not hold and who in consequence are abandoned to the powers of this world. The particular details given by Zechariah are symbols only, drawn from the story of Sennacherib. The reality is that, for the last time, unbelief is found in Israel, and because deliverance can only come by faith and God is now waiting to deliver, the unbelievers go forth into exile.

Isaiah seems to have had a keen insight into this position. The language he uses in Isa. 33. 14 although primarily directed to the unbelievers who left the city in Hezekiah's day, is even more cogently applicable to the similar situation at the end of the Age. "*The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites*" he says, and poses their terrified questions "*who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*" The prophet gives the obvious answer; "*He*

that walketh righteously . . ." and so on, but from other prophetic writings it is evident that he is not heeded. When Amos comes to speak of the same great Day he says "*All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, the evil shall not overtake us*" (Amos 9. 10) and then immediately "the Lord proceeds to "raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen" i.e. introduce the opening stage of the Millennial Kingdom.

"*But the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*" That is the concluding triumphant line of this victory song. This word "residue" is the one so often rendered "remnant" in reference to the people of faith found ready for the Divine purpose at the end. And here Zechariah concludes his poem and prepares to draw aside the curtain to reveal the last great act in this wonderful drama. The enemy is in position around the Holy Land, all unbelievers and idolaters have been excluded from within its borders, the "remnant" is fully prepared and strong in faith. All things are now ready.

"*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle.*"

(To be continued)

How loving and tender is our God, and how wise and strong! His promises have never failed those who have put their trust in him. The fact that we are weak and lame does not separate us from the love and power of our God, while we are striving to do his will; for "*He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust*". Then let us more and more lay hold of this strength of the Lord, that we may courageously pursue our course in the narrow way of difficulty and trial. Precious indeed to the saint of God is the ministry of pain and sorrow!

It is when continued trust in the Lord and his many responsive providences in our lives have ripened into precious personal acquaintance and intimacy that we learn to delight in him. It is when heart answers to heart, when pleading prayer brings recognised answers of peace, when the Divine love and care have been clearly seen in the guidance of our way, that we can recognise the abiding presence with us of the Father and the Son. Then, however dark may be our way, however severe may be the storm that rages about us, the thought of Divine protection is ever with us, so that as the children of the Lord we are never in despair; though cast

down, we are not destroyed; though persecuted, we are never forsaken. We know our Father's hand is ever at the helm, that his love and care are sure unailing.

Those who have come into real heart sympathy with God have learned to see him as the Fountain of all goodness and truth and blessing. To them He is the one altogether lovely. His law is their delight. His friendship and love are their very life. When the heart has become thus centred in God, it is the most natural impulse to commit its way unto him.

The holy life is not all mountain-top experience. It has its depths as well as its lofty heights. The valley of the shadows must alternate with the still waters; the dangers of the path with the safety of the fold. The young eaglet must be tossed out of its nest if it is to learn to fly up the steep slopes of the air. God must put His child to the proof to ascertain if his love is true and deep. Sorrow pain and loneliness may have to be allowed to plough up the subsoil of the heart, in order that the spirit of obedience, so dear to God, may become manifest under a thousand tests.

IN MEMORY OF HIM

A memorial talk

We are all impressed how fast the years glide by. As the various special seasons of the year come upon us, it seems so little time has elapsed since the last. So Memorial follows Memorial, the years glide by, and we are growing older. With the passing of the years this present evil world becomes more unstable—so from two angles we wonder how many more Memorial seasons the church of God will keep this side of the veil, or this side the Kingdom. As we grow older our physical strength weakens, and at the same time the demands made by the modern world grow greater under the acceleration of the great increase of knowledge in this day of rushing to and fro. Consequently we hear on all sides the lament of weariness—"I am so tired". Physical weariness may, to an extent, be offset by taking more rest and reducing the pressures around one by doing a little less, and this is often a wise procedure. But as consecrated Christians our attention is toward the things of the Spirit. When peculiar difficulties of the "narrow way" are added to the physical weariness of "earning a living" and "providing things honest in the sight of all men", a Christian sometimes faces a special dilemma. God has not ordained that those striving toward joint heirship with Jesus in the throne of his Kingdom should have an easy and trouble free life. The way is one in which we can expect to feel weariness. How do we re-act? May our Heavenly Father make it profitable for us to reflect for a short time upon an answer to this question.

We know that Jesus came to give his life a ransom for all. As a perfect man He knew no sin, therefore need not have suffered or endured any weariness. But time and again his healing hand reached out to some poor ailing sinful human, and each time "*virtue went out of him*"; in other words He surrendered some of his own vitality or strength. Many such occasions during the three and a half years of His ministry brought Him to a condition, physically, much on a par with the fallen creatures He had come to save, so that as He was led to crucifixion He stumbled beneath the weight of his cross, and another was commandeered to help Him carry it. The same healing missions doubtless, caused Him to sit down on the well, "*being wearied with his journey*", as He talked to the Samaritan

woman. It was because of his many wearinesses' that our Lord became to us such a great High Priest—Hebrews 4. 15 reads, "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . .*"—no, indeed, He *experienced* what we experience; and so it is that we are able to come so boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain "mercy . . . and help in our times of need". The Amplified Version of Hebrews 4. 15 is so simple and beautiful—"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a fellow feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning".

It is this One upon whom our thoughts especially dwell at this season of the year—the Memorial; He "*who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death . . .*" (Heb. 5. 7). Truly, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and as we remember Him we are fully assured He understands our own trials, and will ever reach out to us his help at our call. Memorial services are occasions when we pay tribute to the memory of one we loved, who has gone from us, and we recall features and characteristics of the departed one's life which proved inspiring and helpful to ourselves. With earthly friends, particularly parents and close relatives, we sometimes spent moments musing upon memories of them; and as Christians it is most profitable to dwell often upon the life of our Saviour, the *perfect* One. He trod the way of weariness which we all know something about. What were *His* re-actions? We desire the answer should be the same to the earlier question, What should be ours? If we fall short of it, as we must in our imperfection, yet it is our will, our desire, to draw *examples* which we may ever set before us, to follow as nearly as we can.

We know that long before our Lord's time, the Psalmist David wrote several psalms which were largely prophetic of our Lord's experiences. One such is psalm thirty one—we use it now particularly because of verse five. The Lord had many times delivered David from his enemies, so that he had learn-

ed to put his trust in Him when he was oppressed, and verse five is how he expressed it—“*Into thine hand I commit my spirit . . .*” (my life, my being). He trusted God to take care of him. So also did Jesus during all the earthly experiences as the Lamb of God who was to be sacrificed to take away sin. How he suffered, was straitened, in difficulty, until his baptism unto death was accomplished (Luke 12. 50), but he never lost the peace of God in his heart! Into his Heavenly Father’s hand He committed his being, though we do not find Him using the exact expression of David until he was about to draw his last breath on the cross. Luke 23. 46 (Amplified Version) reads—“*And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. And with these words he expired*”. A short time later the first disciple of Jesus to suffer martyrdom used the same expression—in Acts 7. 59 we read, “*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*”.

As we consider our Saviour now during this memorial season, may we be helped towards the distress relieving spirit of committing our way fully to the Lord at all times. Especially when we have gone *all the way*, “*have resisted unto blood*” (actual death) “*striving against sin*” (Heb. 12. 4), may we be able to say with full assurance—“*Into thy hands I commit my spirit*”. Such an attitude, if we can maintain it continually during our daily walk, will prove a blessing. This is shown in a very beautiful way by the words of one who has long since finished the way. His words will bear repetition—“*To be a true and faithful servant I must put myself daily into Almighty hands, and say, ‘Into thy hands I commit my spirit’—for this day and every day . . .*” These words Jesus himself used when, on the cross, he was looking out on death; but they had been, before that, the words of one who was looking out, not on death, but on the difficulties and trials of life (Psl. 31. 5). If they were enough for my Master to die upon, they are more than enough for me to live upon, and so I say—*Into Thy protecting hands I commit my spirit, for the keeping of it. Life is full of temptations, the world full of snares; I cannot keep myself, but thou canst keep me from*

falling; I trust myself to thee, Into thy tender hands I commit my spirit, for the comforting of it. The sorrows of my life may be many, the waters deep, the furnace hot; I may have thick darkness over me soon in which I could lose all my joy, but if thou wilt whisper to me then, ‘I am with thee still’, I will fear no evil. Into thy correcting hands I commit my spirit for the sanctifying of it. I am willing to be chastened if only the chastening makes me purer than before. Take what way thou wilt with me, I will bless the hand that smites. Into thy moulding hands I commit my spirit for the consecrating of it. Use me to thy glory. I would not live to myself. Let self be killed that Christ may be all in me. Turn me as the clay is turned in the potter’s hands. I would fain be a vessel for the Master’s use, filled with the Master’s grace, and thou canst make me so. And then if death should come even suddenly, I will hear thee calling, and reply, ‘Into thy redeeming hand I commit my spirit for the glorifying of it. Thy creating hands fashioned me, thy preserving hands have kept me, thy guiding hands have led me, thy appealing hands have beckoned to me, thy smiting hands have chastened me, but they were always saving hands that delivered me, and sheltering hands that covered me. I ever found them to be loving hands, I have proved them to be strong, and so I trust myself entirely and for ever to thee; Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth’.”

He who has made it possible for us to enter into this blessedness, to know such godliness with contentment, which is such great gain, is the One whom we, at this season, are especially remembering. He led the way none other had ever trod before, and He made it possible for us to receive the privilege of entering into his suffering experiences that we may know the fulness of his joy at his right hand in the kingdom. As we lift the cup that signals our participation with Him as members of his body in the experiences of the present time, may we commit our spirits to Him in the glad anticipation of soon drinking it “new” with Him on the other side of the Vail.

A common friendship!—who talks of a common friendship? There is no such thing in the world. On earth no word is more sublime than that—a friend.

H. Drummond

Look not sorrowfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart.

THROUGH GATES OF DEATH

"His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth. In that very day his thoughts perish." (Psa. 146. 4).

As a concise definition of death that brief statement of the Psalmist is probably unequalled. Throughout the Bible the cessation of breathing, absence of movement, and apparent unconsciousness has been the accepted evidence of death; whatever the fate of the one thus affected he is no longer of this world. Thus the expression so frequently met with; "giving up the spirit", the antithesis of the original bestowing of the spirit of life when the individual began to live. The breath has always been presented as synonymous with the spirit of life; when the one ceases, the other has gone, as the Wise Man said "to God who gave it".

Modern progress in the medical world has presented an apparent challenge to this position. With the advent of cardiac machines and automatic respirators, electrical pacemakers which take the place of the heart, external heart massage, and so on, cases arise every so often when a person who has ceased to breathe and whose heart has stopped, and is therefore dead by conventional standards, is "brought to life" again after perhaps hours or even days. It is inevitable that the question is then posed to orthodox Christian theology; where was the "dead" person in the meantime? Did the soul leave the body and come back? Was there a resurrection? Can it be said that, even to this limited degree, man can "raise the dead"?

To some extent an answer is being discerned in the progress that is being made in knowledge of the brain and its working. It is known, now, that all consciousness, all thought and perception and action, is dependent upon the continued activity of the cells of the brain—ten thousand millions of them. These cells depend for their continued operation on supplies of oxygen, which come from the lungs, and of raw materials carried by the blood from the food we eat. This generates electrical energy in the brain cells and it is this electrical energy, transmitted throughout the nervous system and into the muscles, which enables us to see and hear and act as we do.

The electrical activity of the brain can now be detected by a suitable device and recorded

on a chart, appearing thereon as an undulating line which varies its characteristics according to the nature of thought or activity subsisting at the time. When the line becomes flat and straight, thought and feeling have ceased and death is not far off unless the electrical activity can be restored. If the condition is due to cessation of heart and breathing, within five or ten minutes the brain cells will have suffered irreparable damage, and nothing can restore life. If within this time heart and breathing can be restored by means of mechanical devices there is a chance that after a time, limited to a few hours, brain activity will recommence, and the patient "comes to life". These are the cases that are reported.

From these and other related factors it is being concluded by the medical profession that the true definition of death must lie, not in the cessation of breathing and heart beat, but in that of the activity of the brain which under normal conditions ceases within a few minutes thereafter. It is noteworthy that this is exactly what the Psalmist says in the Scripture above quoted. But be it noted that all this has to do with the physical body. No one has yet solved the mystery of the mind and the life, those two imponderable factors which use the brain cells as a means of relating the individual to his environment. All that science with its knowledge of the physical world can do; all that doctors with their mechanical and electrical devices can do, is to certify that there is no mind and no life operating in the body. It has become the body of a dead man and its constituent atoms will speedily separate and return to the earth from which they came. As the Lord said to Adam in the story of Eden; "*dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Gen. 3. 19). That which lies beyond that point requires not knowledge of physics, nor yet of electronics, but knowledge of God. The ability to discern material things is of no avail in this sphere, but the ability to discern spiritual things is essential. The evidence of "things not seen" is of a different order from that required in the study of the physical sciences, but it is evidence just as conclusive nevertheless. Therefore the testimony of men through the ages who were capable of understanding the unseen things is of supreme

value. The patriarch Job, an Arabian philosopher of nearly four thousand years ago, for example, was in no doubt as to the sequel to death. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" he said "and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And after I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 12. 25-26). That so clear a view of the doctrine of the resurrection should be possible at so early a date has been denied by some of the "advanced" critics, but there are the words and they cannot be ignored. Job knew that his body must turn again to the dust, but he also knew that in a day yet to come he would realise life and consciousness in a new flesh, and in that flesh he would behold God as he had never beheld Him before. The body—dust; the mind and the life—safe in the keeping of God; until in the resurrection that mind and that life is "clothed upon" with an organism suited to the environment in which they must henceforth exist.

The Apostle Paul at the other end of the time scale says exactly the same thing, but whereas Job seems to imply that he expected to experience life again in a terrestrial body suited to this earth, the Apostle is talking to Christian believers about a resurrection life in a celestial body suited to another order of being, the celestial. "There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial" he says. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another . . . so is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a natural (physical, terrestrial) body; it is raised a spiritual (celestial) body . . . If our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens". (1 Cor. 15. 40-44; 2 Cor. 5. 1-4). We earnestly desire, he goes on, to be "clothed upon" with our "house which is from heaven". In no clearer terms could he have expressed the basic truth that the body of any living being is the means whereby the mind and the life can make contact with its environment, the world in which it lives, knows itself and expresses itself. The body is an essential part of a living being, which is why Genesis says of the first creation "Man became a living soul" (Gen. 2. 7) but because mind and life is of God and in a manner we as men cannot comprehend, is always held, so to speak, in the mind of God, the dissolution of the terrestrial body is not the end of all things to the individual. Though the cessation of terrestrial life for the time being, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection declares that in God's own time life and

thought and action will be resumed in another body; whether it is terrestrial on this earth or celestial in a different sphere of being does not affect the principle and the fact.

The time element is involved here, for the teaching of the Old and the New Testaments, echoed by Christian theology through the centuries, is that the resurrection takes place at the "Last Day" i.e. the day that the Messianic Kingdom takes control of affairs on earth for the elimination of evil and the conversion of mankind to God and His ways. Martha put that understanding very succinctly at the tomb of Lazarus when our Lord said to her "Thy brother shall rise again", and she responded "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (Jno. 11. 23-24). Many an endeavour has been made to postulate the position of the life or the spirit during that intervening time—as men know time—between death and resurrection, but none of the so-called "intermediate states" provide satisfactory definitions. The ancients, viewing the "Last Day" as almost inconceivably remote from their own times, likened the pre-resurrection state of the dead to a time of sleep in which the dead, quietly waiting their call, were oblivious to the passage of time. Thus the many expressions of this nature describing the place of the dead. "In death" says the Psalmist "there is no remembrance of thee" (Psa. 6. 5). Again he describes them as being "in the dark" and "in the land of forgetfulness" (Psa. 88. 12). "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Psa. 115. 17). "The dead know not anything" declares the Wise Man emphatically, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9. 5-10). In uttering these sentiments the writers were not denying the resurrection; they all held tenaciously to belief in a future life, but they did assert, just as dogmatically as the experts of today assert, that when the heart is stilled and the breathing has stopped and the brain no longer responds, the being is dead and there is nothing left but that which resides in the incomprehensible power of God. One day at some unknown future time that power is to be exerted and that being will live again.

Canon R. H. Charles, one of the most knowledgeable theologians of the early 20th Century, put this position very logically in his book "Eschatology" (A. & C. Black, 1913). Commenting on the account of man's creation as given in the second chapter of Genesis, he says that according to that account "the

material form when animated by the spirit became a living soul. The soul is the result of the indwelling of the spirit in the material body and has no independent existence of its own. It is really a function of the material when quickened by the spirit. So long as the spirit is present, so long is the soul a living soul, but when the spirit is withdrawn the vitality of the soul is destroyed and it becomes the soul of a dead man, i.e. a corpse".

The space between death and resurrection may seem long as man measures time—in the case of the ancients it can be truthfully said to be thousands of earth years—but from the Divine standpoint it might be nothing more than an instant of time. It is difficult for us, with our human limitations, to realise that many of our everyday conceptions and standards are valid only in the world we know and may appear very different when viewed from the standpoint of eternity. The analogy of sleep so often used by Biblical writers may be more fitting than we realise; to the one who sleeps, his period of sleep is as a moment and he is unaware of the passage of time; the observers around him experience the lapse of maybe several hours, occupied by all the activities applicable to the affairs of this world. Many present day mathematicians and physicists believe that time as we know it only applies to our physical universe, and even within this sphere is capable of what seem to be some strange anomalies. Thus one consequence of Einstein's theory of Relativity is what is known as the "clock paradox" by which it is claimed that if astronauts in a space ship found it possible to travel through space at nearly the speed of light they might be away from the earth for say two years according to their clocks and calendars, and reach home to find that two hundred years had elapsed on earth and all their friends were dead. The arguments upon which this astounding conclusion is based are quite incomprehensible to the ordinary man and it is only fair to say that an equal volume of equally expert opinion declares that the whole idea is a mathematical abstraction which would not happen in the real world. But that such an apparently fantastic conclusion can be reached by responsible physicists does at least suggest the possibility that the passage of time may not mean just the same thing to those who have passed beyond the gates of death as it does to we who still remain. We do not know; all we can say, and say it on the authority of all that the Scriptures have to tell us concerning the

death state, is that the next event after death, in individual experience, is resurrection. From then life goes on, into what further revelations of the wonders of Divine creation we do not know. All we do know is that life is unending, leading into eternally widening spheres of experience and activity to those who use their resurrection life to overcome the failures and errors of the past and come fully into harmony with the Divine laws, and take their rightful place in Divine creation. It is for that purpose the Kingdom of Christ upon earth is ordained, that those who so choose may "*inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. 25, 34) and those who will not, incur the logical consequence of their refusal to accept eternal life from the Father on the only basis which could possibly make it eternal.

Therefore death, as the term must of necessity be defined and understood amongst men, is the cessation not only of bodily functions but also of the activity of the brain, and the consequent commencement of the return of the physical body to its dust. The fact that the body may be mummified and preserved from decomposition, as in the case of the ancient Egyptians, makes no difference; the preserved body is just as much a part of the "dust of the earth" despite the fact that decomposition has not taken place, for the spirit has gone, and when the spirit has gone the man is dead. Death is a phenomenon that, so far as man is concerned, is confined entirely to the physical body and to this planet. Even when the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15 speaks of some in the end of the Age who do not "sleep" like those who died in earlier times but are "changed in a moment" to their heavenly destiny, he does not invalidate this fact. Those who are thus "changed in a moment" die just as truly as the antediluvians who were swept away by the Flood, for the moment of their "change" is the moment the material brain ceases to function and the human body is discarded for ever. That is death—even though it be followed instantaneously by resurrection.

"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" asked the Psalmist (89. 48). "Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" No; man cannot. But God can—and God will.

Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.

FOREFATHERS OF ABRAHAM

2. Ararat to Babel

*A little-known period
of the Old Testament*

"These are the three sons of Noah; and of them was the whole earth overspread" (Gen. 9. 10).

These notes are concerned only with the effects of the Flood so far as the land of Iraq and its re-peopling by the descendants of the sons of Noah is concerned, so that any question of the wider extent of the Flood is ignored. According to Genesis eight people came out of the Ark and from them came all the peoples which afterward inhabited the land. The purpose of this series is to show that the physical facts as revealed by modern research are consistent with the Biblical presentation and there is nothing improbable or impossible in the Bible account. The word "erets" rendered "earth" in the above text does not necessarily mean the entire globe; it can, and does in numerous instances, refer to an expanse of land or territory which happens to be the subject and it could well have been rendered here "the whole land" meaning, generally speaking, the lands which figure in the ensuing narratives.

In tracing a correspondence between the movements of Noah's immediate descendants and the findings of present day archæology it must be recognised that much of what is suggested has to be considered tentative since research is still proceeding and fresh discoveries may either amplify or modify some of the conclusions reached. The present purpose will have been served if it is shown that there is nothing in what has been discovered which disproves the accuracy of this portion of Bible history.

Attention, then, is directed to the moment when Noah and his three sons, with their wives, left the vessel in which they had weathered the Flood and surveyed the land on which they stood. There are three main contestants for the site. The celebrated Mount Ararat in Turkey is the most familiar, but must be counted out of the running; it is in the wrong type of country and anyway the tradition attaching to it is only about three centuries old. "Ararat" in Genesis is the ancient name of what is now Armenia and Kurdistan, and the "mountains of Ararat" the range which extends across the northern end of the plain which formed the old lands of Assyria and Babylonia. Moslem and Jewish tradition, and Christian too prior to the

17th century, held that Mount Judi, to the north of Mosul, was the place. But Sumerian tradition, thousands of years closer to the event, said that the Ark grounded in the land of Nisir, near Mount Nisir, which is now Eastern Kurdistan. From the geographical point of view the latter is the most likely; on the assumption that the probable impact of the Flood upon the land in which Noah lived was in the form of a gigantic tidal wave from the south, flooding the entire plain, the Ark would naturally drift northwards and land on the rising ground leading up to the mountains. In this connection it must be noticed that the A.V. expression in Gen. 8. 4 "the Ark rested . . . upon the mountains of Ararat" is incorrect in that the Hebrew has the significance of drawing near to, or moving in the direction of, the subject, and not resting on top or above as is implied by "upon". Correctly rendered, the passage says that the Ark came to rest in the vicinity of, or towards, the mountains of Ararat, and the old idea that it finished its voyage perched on a mountain summit has to be abandoned. Probably, then, somewhere in the valleys surrounding Mount Nisir, somewhere among the headwaters of the rivers flowing from the countryside surrounding that giant pile, the Ark of Noah ran aground and the occupants set foot on dry land. The story is recorded in various ancient histories and poems and these have been found and are in our possession today; but this of itself is not conclusive, and in the territory concerned, after five thousand years no concrete evidence of those first adventurers could be expected to remain.

No concrete evidence, but perhaps a hint from modern research. For a good many years exploration has been going on all over Iraq to discover relics of the primitive settlements existing before the cities and the civilisations of Babylon, Assyria, Sumeria, came into being; back, in short, to the centuries which the Bible Student would describe as immediately following the Flood. Several successive stages of such "cultures" have been studied and named, indicating the development of a simple village life into the highly civilised social system of Abraham's day. It was only in 1948 that the most primitive and earliest of these settlements were discovered, and these, remarkably enough, are in the vicinity

of the ancient Mount Nisir. This in itself is significant; this is one of the districts to which the Ark could logically have been expected to drift if the Bible story of the Flood is a true story. These settlements, some five or six strung out over a distance of about seventy miles, are termed the "Jarmo culture", from Qalat Jarmo, where the first discoveries were made. The inhabitants of these villages had no metal and no pottery, lived in mud huts and practised a primitive agriculture, and had domesticated sheep, goats and pigs. The mud houses did not last long; when they crumbled away the site was levelled and a new hut built on top; at Jarmo itself eight such levels of rebuilt houses have been traced and this might indicate a period of occupation of say at least a century. Archaeologists interpret these findings as revealing traces of the earliest men to live in this land, of course without connecting them in any way with the Biblical story of the Flood. If however that story is true history these people must have been in the direct line of descent between Noah and Abraham. In that case the order of events could well have been something like this:—

Noah and his family emerged from the Ark low down on the southern slopes of the mountain masses of the Sumerian land of Nisir and found themselves in the valley of the Lesser Zab river. Here they made their first settlement and here Noah offered his thanksgiving sacrifice as recounted in Gen. 8. 20-22. But he would not wish to remain in this region. To this day it is a wild country with a wild climate and, it might reasonably be expected, the little family would migrate from time to time, following the river valleys, in search of more congenial living. Children would be born, and in the course of time numbers increase until there was a sizeable tribe of which Noah and his three sons were the four patriarchs. The nomadic nature of their life rendered settled agriculture difficult and at this stage they would live mainly "off the land". This must be the time to which the incident recorded in Gen. 9. 20-27 refers "Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard", for vines can be, and are still, grown in the mountains of Kurdistan, but not in the plains to which the travellers soon moved in their journey to Babel; it must however have been after the lapse of some years since Canaan is involved and he was not born until after the Flood.

If this hypothesis be accepted than the Jarmo settlements well fit the requirements.

Starting from the point where Babylonian tradition says the Ark landed—and be it remembered that the Babylonians knew nothing about these settlements, which were already extinct a thousand years before their day—they stretch in a southerly direction along the valleys just where the plains begin to give place to the mountains. It might have been a century or more before those wandering tribesmen found themselves at the end of the valleys and in the open plains through which flowed the great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. As the increasing posterity of the patriarchs began to explore this new domain, well watered and promising rich pasture land for the flocks and herds, it is logical to expect the building of houses and transition to a more settled agricultural society. There are some indications of this, for scattered over much of the country there are settlements of a somewhat later date and superior culture, which has been called the "Hassuna period" from Tel Hassuna near ancient Nineveh where the first such discoveries were made, and although most of these would seem to take their place following the dispersion from Babel it seems logical to think that some of them on the "line of march", so to speak, may represent the developing culture of the tribes as they progressed across the plain. The Hassuna people could make good pottery and artistic vases, they had tools and lived in houses built of sundried mud plastered over timber or reed frames, but they still had no metal. The nomadic life was perhaps not completely dropped but there was not the same urgency. Families remained in their villages maybe for years at a time whilst scouts went out on long journeys to discover, if possible, even better territories for a permanent establishment.

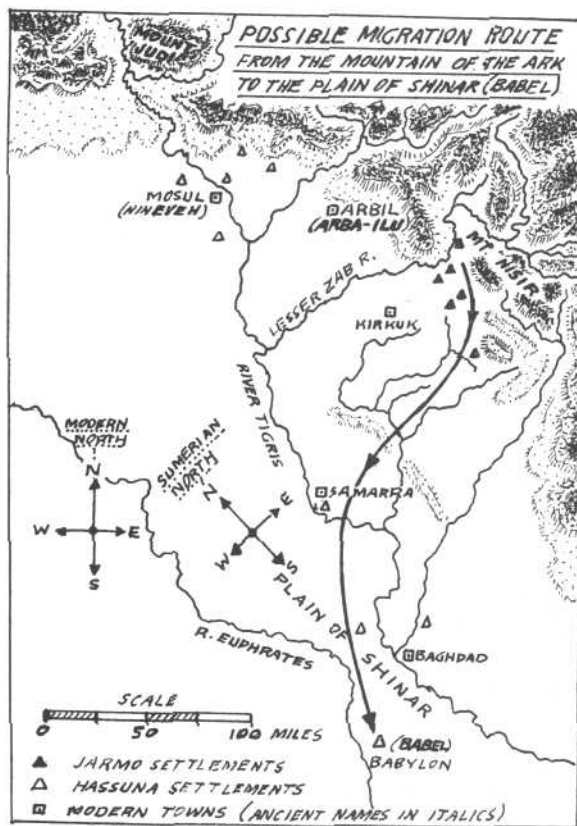
Now the Bible account comes alive. "As they journeyed from the east" says Gen. 11. 2 "they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there". Here follows the story of the Tower of Babel. Some of these scouts, perhaps those who built the Hassuna settlement at Samarra, had brought news of a sun-drenched, well-watered plain to the south of their own village, large enough to accommodate all the descendants of the host for many generations. They had already travelled nearly two hundred miles from the east; now the whole assembly, by now numbered in the thousands, resumed their journey, another hundred miles, into the fertile land in which they intended to remain together as one community in defiance of the Divine

injunction that they spread themselves abroad on the face of the earth.

That journey is shown on the map here presented. Genesis itself offers one interesting confirmation. Ch. 11, 2 says "as they journeyed from the east"; it is possible that the more correct rendering is "journeyed in the east" but this makes no difference to the point. It will be shown in a later instalment that the early narratives of Genesis were probably first put together by a dweller on the middle Euphrates in Sumerian times—long before Abraham's day—and the land of Nisir is, by the Sumerian reckoning, due east from that area. (The Sumerian "points of the compass" differed from those of modern times in that their "north" was our north-west and their "east" our north-east. A geographical tablet now in the British Museum and various clay tablet maps is concrete evidence of this beside allusions in various inscriptions.) So, eventually, the superior fertility of that "Plain in the land of Shinar" (Sumer) where Babel was afterwards to be built attracted the entire concourse and there, they counselled to each other, they would settle and become a great nation.

Noah and Shem were still alive; Ham and Japheth almost certainly so. Did they travel with their children and become involved in the calamitous outcome? There is no Scriptural indication either way although some Jewish traditions tell that Noah had separated himself. It is very possible in practice that small communities or families in some cases remained where they had settled so that the main body, but not necessarily every individual, travelled into Shinar. There is one circumstance which may have significance. Fifty miles east of Mosul stands the Iraqi town of Arbela (abbreviated on the most modern maps to Arbil or Erbil). It is today an important place since it is one of the chief oil producing areas of the country, but Arbil is noteworthy for another and more significant reason. It is the oldest city on the face of the earth that is still inhabited, and it has been continuously inhabited since its founding. It existed before the building of Babylon or Nineveh or any other city of the ancients and in the days of Assyria was one of the four principal cities of the empire. Its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity; when history begins. Arbil is already there. It could well have existed, as a place bearing that name, when those tribesmen made their way toward their new home in Shinar. Its name, in the original, *Arba-ilu*, means the place of

the four gods, or the four mighty ones. It is only sixty miles from Qalat Jarmo and its first founding, as a village in all probability, might well have been during that period. Now at that remote time there were no "gods"; no mythology had been evolved and men worshipped one God as monotheists if they worshipped at all. This fact has been confirmed independently of the Bible presentation. And even when mythology was developed many centuries later the Sumerian and Babylonian pantheons revolved around the idea of three supreme gods, not four. Who



then were the four "ilu", gods, mighty ones, in whose honour this place was named?

There may be more than a possibility that the four post-Flood patriarchs, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, did end their lives in a settlement of their own founding not too far from the place where the Ark grounded, and so were not associated with the disruption of Babel, and that for ever after, in their honour, the place was called Arba-ilu, the place of the four gods. There is no proof, there is no other evidence; this is only a possible explanation of the origin of the name, but it

is difficult to think of any other reason for an allusion to four mighty ones at that early age. And if Noah and his sons did build and end their days in this place, there is something noteworthy in the fact that the city of Arbil

continued throughout history and remains today, whilst Babylon, the city founded by their godless descendants to endure for ever, has vanished from the face of the earth.

(To be continued)

THE ANGEL OF THE PRESENCE

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Exod. 33. 14).

These lovely words, so full of encouragement and promise, were spoken to Moses whilst he was bringing the children of God through the "terrible wilderness" of temptation and trial, to the Promised Land. They also, surely, apply to all who to-day are seeking the "secret place" of the Lord's overshadowing wings in this present "wilderness" of doubt and confusion—this transition period, which is, praise God, drawing near to its end, and bringing us to the crossing of Jordan, and the Land of Caanan.

This glorious promise of God's Presence is ours to-day, and oh! what a continual stay and comfort it is. Let us, therefore, seek to understand the meaning more clearly of this gracious promise to all who, like Moses, are seeking to guide the people of God forward to the Heavenly Kingdom—the Promised Land.

How well Moses understood the promise is clear to see by the fact that he looked to the Lord continually on every occasion of strife, difficulty or doubt, and that the Lord's Presence was known to be with him was likewise clear by the Lord's response to his appeals in the sight of all the people.

In the words with which Moses answered the Lord's promise, however we have a wonderful view of the at-one-ness of Moses with his God. Let us ponder carefully these revealing words in these days of darkness and doubt.

"Wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the earth." (v. 16).

It is by the Lord's Presence with us, then, that we know that we have found grace in His sight. Jesus made the same promise to His disciples, saying to them *"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world"* (or age). St. John, in his epistles, shows how we may know that the Presence of God is with

us; *"And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."* (1 John 3. 24.) If we have the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Comforter, we are safely led through all the doubt and confusion and the conflicting voices, by the Voice of the Indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ, and we are enabled to discern the true mouthpieces of God, those who have His Spirit, and those who have not: *"for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God"*.

Yet another gracious promise is given to those who are guided by the Spirit of God, for St. John says: *"the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you"*. How difficult some find this promise to accept and to make their own, and to rely upon the guidance of Spirit which abides in us. Yet He is faithful who promised that *"he will guide you into all truth"* and also that *"he will shew you things to come"*. (John 16. 13). *"Where Thou art Guide, no ill can come."* As we come to realise more and more the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit, we become more and more sure of guidance. We learn to trust the still small voice of the Spirit, and, like Elijah on Mount Horeb, we feel we must *"wrap our face in our mantle"*—a sign of deep humility, for our Mantle is the Robe of Christ's righteousness, by which alone we can stand before the Lord, and in which alone we are *"accepted in the Beloved"*. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit"*. (Titus 3. 5.) Again St. John says *"Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit"*. (1 John 4. 13.)

Oh what a wondrous gift is this. His "free gift" to all, bringing with it all that we need for our enlightenment, and our spiritual progress; of help and support, of strength in times of weakness, of upholding power when we would fall, of protection from the clamouring voices without, which would distract

us from our pathway, of encouragement when we seem so alone, and of comfort and cheer when we are cast down by our faults and failures: when, with Elijah, when he cast himself under the juniper tree we feel inclined to say "Lord it is enough, I can go no further, I have failed utterly, and cannot go on". Then the Angel of the Presence—the still voice of the Spirit—comes to bring us refreshment and strength, and food for the journey, until, as Elijah did, we can go in the strength of that food to Horeb—the Mount of God.

All this, and much more, is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit, until we come to rejoice in the Indwelling Presence and say, morning, noon and night "Praise be to thee for thine unspeakable gift".

Here, then, in this "free gift" of the Holy Spirit, is the fulfilment of the promise made to Moses, "*Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared*". The Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is the Indwelling Spirit of which St. Paul says:— "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*" (1 Cor. 3. 16). Let us pray, therefore, that the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit may be imparted to us all, and increase more and more. St. John, in his wonderful vision, sees the Spirit of God dwelling in the hearts of all men, transforming their lives, and gradually winning the world to Christ until—

*"All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing"*.

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21. 3). Until we have found the Kingdom of God within our own hearts, being "born again of water and of the Spirit" (we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without this regeneration or re-birth of the Spirit) we cannot be effectual in bringing the Kingdom of God into the lives of others. The salt will have lost its savour if we have not the Holy Spirit indwelling us, changing us, moulding us, and conforming us to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Above all things will the Holy Spirit teach us to "Love one another". "*If we love one another God*

dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4. 12).

As, therefore, we are taught by the Holy Spirit to covet the best gifts, so shall we be taught to develop and increase them. Charity St. Paul describes as "the bond of perfectness", saying "*Above all, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness*" (Col. 3. 14).

The fruits of the Spirit, he says are "*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*". May we, therefore, seek to realise the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit of God ever more and more, and thus come to trust His sure guidance, to develop His Sevenfold gifts, and to claim the promises of God to those who dwell in Him, and who have learnt to

*"Make our hearts Thy dwelling-place
And worthier Thee"*.

As we learn to trust in the Angel of the Presence who will indeed go with us, we shall indeed find that "He will give you rest".

*As through the wilderness the People went,
Leaving reluctantly the world behind,
Lest they should falter, God His Angel sent
And fed the flame of hope in their
dull mind.*

*A Fire by night His gracious Presence
burned,
A Cloud by day He moved before their
eyes;
None from the path of safety need have
turned,
None have come short in His great
enterprise.*

*Just to have known themselves to be
but men,
Just to have let Him lead them by His
Hand,
Just to have had a little faith, and then
All had come safely to the Promised
Land!*

*And yet they failed. O, by their failure
teach
Those that come after, in the same
distress,
More faithfully to follow till they reach
The land that lies beyond the wilderness.*

That which robs death of its sting, robs life of its bitterness.

* * *

God will give seed to the sower in spring—
not alms to the sluggard in harvest.

There would be many Good Samaritans if
it were not for the two pence and the oil.

* * *

Difficulties are the stones out of which all
God's houses are built.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

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*A series of studies
on sanctification*

It is not possible for us to say how far God revealed His holiness to our first father in Eden's sinless days. That God forewarned him about the fatal consequences of a rebellious act, we know quite well. How far he understood its deadly moral nature, we may not easily say. Enough to know he dared to risk the sinful act with open eyes, knowing quite well that he would die. On that point his knowledge was complete; but how far he had come to understand the attitude of his Creator-God towards the principle of sin (as distinct from an act of sin) is another point we may not know. It could not be, in the short time he had lived that he had comprehended everything about his God. He knew that he was God's handiwork; he knew his consort, Eve, was God's gift. He knew that God had made his lovely home and filled it with all desirable things. Hence he would know God as a Creator, mighty and bountiful, Who would have the right to expect obedience in the use of all His gifts.

But did God tell him of that vehement detestation of sin which burned, fiercer than any flame, within the Creator's heart? Did God make him to know how zealously He would uphold the Universal Law against every infraction of its terms? In short, did God reveal to Adam that He was a "Holy" God—as distinct from a Creative God—the sworn enemy of sin; and that, cost Him what it may, He would fight it with all His power till the last trace of it was gone? We may not know for sure, for Adam's Eden days were few. Doubtless God would have told him more as time went by, so that he would know that every act falls into line with this or that of the two basic principles of holiness or sin. Had he remained at peace with God he would have learned those deeper things which angel visitants could tell about their God and his.

In their own estate, where sin did not then abound, these heavenly messengers can understand the awful Majesty of the Eternal God; for they have seen and known the terrible effects of sin. There was a time when an angel Prince led revolt against the Heavenly Throne, and brought abasement to himself and those he led astray. Divine power had arisen to the task imposed and thrown around the fallen host bands of darkness and restraint. Thrust down from heaven and chain-

ed in the dark depths of "Tartarus", they had been made to feel the scorching fire of Divine zeal against sin.

Those holy messengers who maintained their first estate could have caused God's human son to learn and deeply realise that God could never countenance sin, nor permit the sinner to abide one instant before His Holy face. By observation and by contact they had learned how unchangeably holy was their God, and how with omnipotent and omniscient power He stood pledged eternally to uphold the Truth and defend the Right. All this Adam might, in time, have learned. The angelic visitant could have made known how when sin raised its ugly head the peace within the heart of God remained undisturbed, yet there brake forth with more than volcanic force a holy displeasure which revealed, to all who saw, how unfathomably deep was the Divine repugnance to haughty pride, rash act, or insubordinate word. Moreover, the earthly son also might have learned how these heavenly sons, possessed of holiest desires, were able to find and appreciate hallowed fellowship with God, He as Creator and Sovereign over all; they as created and subject Spirits obeying His behests. No need of any kind existed for God to hide away from them, nor they to be forbidden access to His face, but subject only to such decorum well-suited to that august Court, they went unafraid into the Presence, and enjoyed unscathed "the burning bliss" of that great Eternal Light; the fervent response of each angel heart meeting with ready accord the holier desires of the Heavenly Throne. All this Adam might have come to know; and knowing and comprehending it, this knowledge might have anchored him also to the Heavenly Throne with chains stronger than steel.

How greatly otherwise must it be where sin comes in! God's pity for the sinner may be great, but God cannot parley with the sin. No provision for excuse had been made in the Divine Code of Law, and He who had to maintain that Law could show no toleration of the sin. Of necessity God must separate Himself from the sin, and in so doing, the sinner too. No greater welcome to His Presence could be offered to rebellious men than to the sin itself; for to such rebellious men the Holy

God could be no other than a consuming fire. When therefore, for some wiser end, Omniscience Divine determined that the state of sin should be allowed to stand, the very intensity of Holiness Divine could only mean that God must withdraw Himself—He must draw apart from men.

How quickly amid those Eden bowers the sense of guilt and shame disclosed itself. The shrinking sinner fled away, coming not at an evening hour with ready heart into the presence of his God. Since morning sun arose a fearful change had taken place, for sin had won the day and spread its empire over man. The unhallowed influence of Lucifer had triumphed, for the time, over the hallowed influence of God. Sin had stormed the heart of man and sin-consciousness had been born. Sin-consciousness dared not seek the face of God but shrank into the shade to hide. Called from his hiding place to meet the "Judge" the shame-faced sinner came forth to hear his doom. "Sin," naked and ashamed, stood face to face with Holiness and hung its head while putting up its lame defence; then Holiness withdrew and man was driven forth to die. The gift of life and happiness mis-used, the Giver took back the gift, and left the sinner to his fate. Sent forth outside the gates of Paradise, God came no more to meet with man, and man, in contact daily with his sin lost his fine sense of righteousness, and, as time passed on, prostrated himself to stocks and stones and creeping things. The Holy One withdrawn, the inner heart-need being unfed, man must needs bow himself to some meaner thing, and sink himself to lower depths in the defiling slime of sin.

Throughout the corrupted years until Abram came from Ur, in answer to God's call, but little added light was given. Enoch spake of recompense for ungodly men (Jude 15). Noah warned a wicked world, but little heed was given! The light which nature gave bore witness to Eternal Power and Deity (Rom. 1. 20) but rebellious men gave it no ear. They preferred the ways of sin, and man, made subject to demoniac power, sank down into corruption's deeper depths. Yet though the whole world was thus steeped in sin, increasing every day, vile cities arising on every side, God told the faithful pilgrim (who, leaving Chaldea's idol-serving land, came to sojourn with Canaan's polluted hosts, that, spite of all the sinful filth, He purposed yet to bless and win the hearts of men. God told that Pilgrim Father that all that He desired to do, He surely could perform, "I am the

Almighty God . . . I will . . . I will . . . I WILL . . ." (Gen. 17. 1-8). So spake the Most High God to that worthy man. His theme was "power"—Almighty Power to carry out His Sovereign Will. Two thousand years had passed; throughout them all God had maintained the severity of His law. No tender message came from God until He told this chosen man He had a plan to bless the world and power to see it through; and let us note God did not point out and stress the fact or heinousness of sin to that good man.

Apart from one grim day when Almighty God came down to burn the cities of the plain, He made no reference to sin in any of His talks with Abraham. At no time throughout his life did Abraham learn from God's own lips that He was a holy God! Of beneficence and ability he truly heard, but not one note of that deeper chord which vibrated in the heart of God. God told him what He proposed "to do", but spake no word concerning what He truly "was". God told him of the "outflow", but did not describe the "spring" from whence the beneficent stream should flow. The part which holiness must play in purifying the world from sin was left unrevealed. That God would Himself provide a sacrifice was shadowed forth when that worthy sire, with uplifted hand, stood near to slay His son; but the weighty reason WHY God should provide that Lamb went undisclosed.

More centuries still then passed away before much further revelation came. A shepherd was tending desert flocks when mysteriously a bush began to burn. The bush remaining unconsumed, the man drew himself aside to see the sight. "Take off thy shoes . . . the ground . . . is holy ground", sounds forth a voice (Exod. 3. 1-6). Here a new theme breaks forth, a theme unheard before in Holy Writ since Eden days (so far as records go). No man since Adam sinned had heard that word from God until this momentous day; but from that day and through that man this word, with an increasing range of thought, was always to the fore. The idea of holiness was set forth anew, that man might again begin to learn how high and lofty are the heights of virtue and purity which have their source in God. It was a great lesson to be set before fallen men, and so, in many ways, by various means, God took such as had desire to learn into His newly-formed school.

How strange (and yet not strange) to find the lesson has not changed from those far

pre-human days, when erring spirits were cast forth from the presence of the Eternal Light! Nor has it changed from Eden days when man was forced by cherub sword to quit his paradise. The holy God and the unholy participant in sin must separate from each other, must draw apart and dwell apart. But now it comes about in order to accomplish His great design that God would separate unworthy men from their unworthier kind, and fit them to become the means whereby the Holiest of all could reach right down to grasp the unworthiest of all. The lesson for the scholar in God's school was this—"Come ye apart from them and walk with Me, and let Me make of you the channel of my Love. Come, let Me teach you the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and when you have looked into those black depths beneath then let me teach you to look up to Me, and see in Me the radiant heights of unchanging holiness".

But not for all in that far day was this far-reaching lesson set. To none but Abraham's lineal seed was the offer made. To other peoples the Holy God still dwelt in darkness and afar. Though those vile "cities of the plain" would have repented of their sin had opportunity knocked, the "Most High" passed them by. They were not of the chosen seed. Nor yet to Egypt's people came the call, for

they also were outside the pale. Sin's utter darkness hid Him from their sight.

To none save Abraham's seed, and for their faithful father's sake (Deut. 6. 8. Deut. 10. 15.) God sent the call to come apart and dwell with Him. God came not fully from the dark, it was too soon for that. He came into a twilight world of shadow and type. God came to meet this chosen seed to make known to them the A.B.C. of Holiness Divine. He came—shall we say—part-way to meet them, to call them to His feet, but in their turn they too must make efforts to "draw near" to the Holy One who came to dwell in Israel. This then is the great fact we have to learn, that the Most Holy God, Who perforce had separated Himself from sin, and had separated sinners from Himself, now sought to bridge the gulf between the exalted heights of Holiness and the depraved depths of sin by separating unworthy men from their unworthier kin, and helping them to learn His Laws, that thus, through this favoured Seed, the whole company of the nations might be blessed.

Separation! separation! ! separation! ! ! that and that alone is the A.B.C. of the lesson even we must learn, if we would know, and walk with Him whose voice has said

"Be ye holy . . . for I am holy".

(To be continued)

THE ETERNITY OF GOD

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

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

(Selected from an old book)



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 47, No. 3

MAY/JUNE 1970

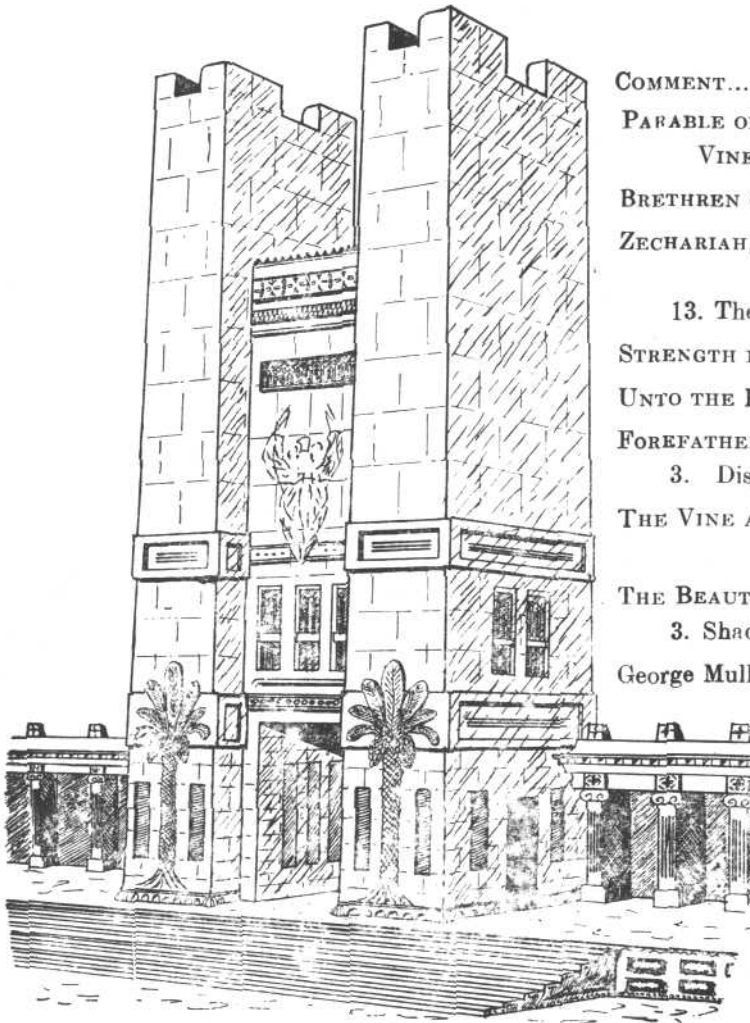
Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

Published May 1st

Next issue July 1st

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

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

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

COMMENT

"We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job 8. 9).

Nothing is known of Bildad the Shuhite beyond the fact that he was a friend of the patriarch Job and probably descended from Abraham through Keturah, so was of Arab race. But his perception of the position of man relative to the universe puts to shame many moderns who think that because of to-day's discoveries man is well-nigh lord of the universe and can do as he wills. Learned professors dilate on the wonders of man's evolutionary climb from the humble beginnings of primitive single-celled algæ and the power that he now possesses over his environment; enthusiastic graduates fresh from university talk of the conquest of space upon which they will presently embark and picture the extension of the works of humanity to the distant stars as though nothing else has ever been so grand and great as twentieth century man, nor could be. A serious shortcoming of present-day education is its failure to tell the generations of to-day that men just as intellectual, just as knowledgeable, as themselves lived thousands of years ago and that there is nothing really new under the sun. *"Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time which was before us"* said the Preacher (Eccl. 1. 10). So that reflective Arab, sitting quietly in the desert back there when the world was young, voiced a truth we all do well to consider. Despite our fantastic achievements, our wondrous inventions, our moon shots and space flights and radio controls and ability to make edible foodstuffs out of natural gas, it is still true that we are but of yesterday and know nothing, and our time on earth is but as a fleeting shadow. God is dead, say the clever ones;

then we come from the dark, and go into the dark, and all our achievements are dust. Bildad knew better; if, says he, we put our hand into God's hand and go with Him, then, *"though thy beginnings are small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase"*. Bildad knew of a destiny for man greater than anything conceived even to-day—but only because God is behind it.

NOTICES

Portrush convention

The annual spring convention at Portrush is being arranged for the three days May 23 - 25 inclusive. Details from Miss F. J. Stinson, Port-naglas, Lansdown Crescent, Portrush, N. Ireland, or Mr. T. R. Lang, 31 Hawthorn Terrace, Londonderry, N. Ireland.

* * *

Liverpool convention

Arrangements for the Liverpool convention are now complete. Sessions on Saturday June 20 at 3.0 and 6.15 (light tea provided) will be in the Minor Hall, Y.M.C.A., Mount Pleasant, and on Sunday June 21 in the Tudor Room, 145 Prescott Road, all day starting at 11.15 (light meals provided). For details and accommodation write Mrs. W. E. Pampling, 6 Clive Road, Birkenhead, Ches., L43 5RR.

* * *

Conway Hall convention

We are requested to make known that upon account of a number of adverse circumstances it has been decided, with regret, that the usual August convention at Conway Hall will NOT be held this year.

Gone from us

Sis. E. Essam (Kettering)
Bro. L. Kinsey (Isle of Man)
Bro. J. Lardent (Wallasey)
Sis. A. McKeough (Dartford)
Bro. C. Spilsbury (Warrington)
Sis. N. Tibby (London)

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

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD LABOURERS

Sometimes known as the "Parable of the Penny", this story of Jesus in Matt. 20. 1-16, has been explained in a variety of different ways, but not often is it observed that its interpretation is closely connected with the incident of the rich young ruler recounted in the previous chapter. The division is at an unfortunate point; the passage from verse 16 of chap. 19, to verse 16 of chap. 20, is all one account and should have constituted a chapter by itself. It tells of the rich young ruler—some think there is evidence that he was Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary—who came to Jesus asking what good thing he should do that he might have eternal life. Jesus told him to sell all that he had, to give to the poor, to take up his cross and to follow Him. At that the young man, we are told, went away sorrowful, "for he had great possessions". And Jesus took advantage of the incident to warn his disciples with what difficulty a rich man must enter the Kingdom of God, a warning that puzzled them greatly, so greatly that they asked "Who then can be saved?" To their still material minds it seemed inconceivable that if the rich, with all their advantages, could not attain the Kingdom, any other man should do so. But Peter, with his habitual quickness of mind and impulsiveness of speech, came out with a blunt enquiry as to what *they*, who had given up all for His sake should have therefore, and by then it was becoming apparent that some sound instruction was necessary; so Jesus told this story of the man who hired labourers to work in his vineyard and what happened to them at the end of the day.

We shall miss the point of the parable, therefore, unless we bear in mind that it is intended to teach the disciples the truth regarding this matter of ultimate rewards in the heavenly Kingdom. *Here* is a rich man who was debarring himself from entrance because he would not give up his riches; *there* were other men who would attain to glory and power in that Kingdom because they had given up their scanty possessions. But there was something else beside. They had "followed" Jesus: the rich men had failed to follow. The sacrifice of worldly possessions was not of itself enough; there must also be the willing acceptance of the life of labour "with Him" if the desired end was to be reached.

And above all things, the idea of, and the thought of, personal advancement in front of one's fellows must be eradicated from the mind; there can be no ruling over one another, no taking precedence or assuming superior glory, in the Kingdom. All will be brethren, and there will only be one Master, Christ. The story of the request made by the mother of James and John, that they should be given special favour in the Kingdom, comes immediately after the parable and probably not without design. The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, said Jesus, but it shall not be so among you. So the parable of the vineyard came readily to the Saviour's lips in furtherance of His purpose to show His disciples the better way.

"For the Kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." It is vintage time; the husbandman has tended his vines assiduously throughout the growing season with the help of his own regular servants—he had a steward according to vs 8 and therefore must have had servants in house and field—and has brought his crop to fruition. But the vintage must be gathered quickly and he needs additional temporary help, and so, as morning dawns—6 a.m. in the East—he goes to the marketplace where the casual labourers congregate and engages sufficient men to complete the work. It is important to the right understanding of the story that this point be appreciated; *the householder engaged all the labourers he needed*, at the normal time for starting work. Other employers would be there too, engaging men for their requirements, until the demand was satisfied, and then, just as in later and, to us, more familiar days, the unfortunate ones who had not been engaged would resign themselves to another day of idleness and loss of wages.

But the particular employer who occupied the centre of the stage in this little drama which Jesus, with His consummate skill, was working out for the benefit of the enthralled disciples, was not as other employers. He left his own duties and went out into the market place again about nine o'clock and, probably

as he anticipated, found men standing about idle, not having been hired. He had no need of them, but—he sent them into his vineyard to labour, and they evidently went gladly. At noon, when the work of the day was half-way through, he went again, and found more men idle, and sent them in similarly. *Came three o'clock in the afternoon* and the sun swiftly dropping down the western sky, and yet a little knot of men, renewed hope in their faces, wending their way to the householder's vineyard for three hours' work before the night came in which no man could work. Truly a strange but a welcome employer to have this altogether unusual concern for the unemployed and hopeless.

The disciples must by now have been wondering toward what this story was leading them. They were of the working classes themselves, and they had no illusions about the characters of employers. Enough is known—from sources quite outside the Scriptures—of the economic conditions of our Lord's time to establish the fact that what in certain circles to-day is glibly termed the "reservoir of labour"—meaning the permanent proportion of unemployed among the workers—was just as much a part of the system then, and an employer who went out of his way to employ, and pay, labourers he did not really need was just as much a rarity then as it is now. *No wonder the disciples were interested.* But Jesus had not finished the story yet.

Five o'clock came; the eleventh hour. In sixty more minutes the sun would sink suddenly below the western horizon and darkness would drop down, quickly and completely. The day's work was virtually over; and yet here is the householder, once again in the market place, asking the few remaining stragglers why they stand there all the day idle. *"Because no man hath hired us"* they answer, perhaps resentfully, perhaps wonderingly. A strange question to ask; he knew very well why they thus stood. But the rejoinder was stranger still. *"Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."* They needed no further encouragement, and an hour later were standing before the steward, probably thankful for the small moiety of payment they expected for one hour's more or less nominal labour. They received, each one of them, a full day's wage!

By now more than one or two of the other labourers were convinced that this householder was not altogether accountable for his actions. A whole *denarius* for one hour's work; such a thing was unheard of! It looked as if

some of them who had been fortunate enough to start earlier in the day would take small fortunes home to their families. They stepped up in their turn, covetous eyes seeking to discern what their fellows were getting, and—*"they received every man a denarius"*.

Of course, there was disappointment, and *expostulation, and talk of injustice.* The householder was called to the scene, and listened to their complaint. Quietly he told them that none of them had suffered loss; all had received the amount for which they had bargained, the amount they had expected, the amount which, if commonly accepted observation be true, was the normal day's wages for a labourer at the time. True, they had worked longer and harder than had the late comers, but it was their good fortune that they had obtained work and in the ordinary way the others' misfortunes that they were workless. Their material needs were the same; their families at home needed food and clothing in equal measure, and the householder had recognised that fact by giving to each, *not according to his accomplishment, but according to his need,* and without injustice or hardship to any one of them.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like that, said Jesus to his listeners. They sat round him, chins supported in cupped hands, flowing robes gathered closely, seeing in the mind's eye *that coming day in which they would sit, each on a throne, twelve men on twelve thrones in all, judging the tribes of Israel, and the rich man who could not find it in him to sacrifice wealth and position now, bereft of it then, taking his place amongst the crowd.* A group of men, some having worked long and hard, others for a little time only, all receiving the same at the end, without distinction in position or reward. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like that!* What Kingdom of Heaven is this?

Evidently from the fact that the parable is given in consequence of the disciples' question regarding future reward for present sacrifice, it has reference to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God in the next Age, the Messianic Age, when the Church of Christ, glorified and associated with Him in the spiritual realm "beyond the Veil" will have ceased from their labours in the vineyard of this Age and appeared to receive their "hire", the "reward" of their consecrated walk before Him. The householder, of course, is the Lord Himself, going out himself to find disciples who will serve His interests in this world. His "going out" thus continues during the whole of this Gospel Age, from Pentecost until the

setting up of the earthly Kingdom, but the third hour, sixth hour, and so on must refer, not to the early, middle and late centuries of the Age, but to stages in the lives of individuals at which the call comes to them. Quite obviously no one has laboured from Pentecost until to-day, for life does not last so long. But some there are, and such there have been at every point of time throughout the Age, to whom the call came in youth or early life, and who heard and obeyed the call and laboured zealously and faithfully until old age ended their labours. These are they who were sent into the vineyard "early in the morning". Others receive the call in middle life; these are they who respond to the householder's invitation at the third or the sixth or even the ninth hour. And some are already in the evening of life when they give themselves in whole-hearted surrender to the Lord Christ; they come in at the eleventh hour but the Lord has work for them to do and a work to do in them.

So it will be, then, when the hope of every true believer is realised, and the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" has become an accomplished fact. We shall meet our fellows and our companions of the pilgrim way, those that have gone before us into the glory land, the saints and martyrs and prophets and apostles of earlier times, and we shall find that we are all equally citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, thinking no more of station or rank, of preferment one above another, but all rejoicing together in the wondrous companionship and over-lordship of Christ our Head, the heavenly Bridegroom. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace." The "penny" which each one will receive is the prize of eternal association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Kingdom, and before the presence of the Heavenly Father; and, associated with that for the duration of the Messianic Age, the inestimable privilege of working together with the Saviour for the conversion of the world.

Some will ask what there may be in this happy state to correspond with the "murmuring". Is there to be murmuring in heaven, amongst the redeemed and glorified saints? The idea is both absurd and unthinkable. Jesus meant something quite different from that. His story showed the disciples what *they* were making of the calling to which he had called them, and was yet to call others. *They*

were the men who were manifesting the spirit of self-assertiveness, who wanted to be greater than others in the Kingdom, who even quarrelled among themselves as to which of their little band should be greater than the rest. That is the spirit, said Jesus in effect, which would lead you at the end to murmur against Me when I finally apportion the crowns of life, in the Kingdom. It was a warning, and the subsequent history of the disciples shows us that, though in some cases the lesson was long in being learned, at the end it was learned, and well learned.

Conrad Noel suggested (in his "*Life of Jesus*", 1937) that this parable was given to define the "economic" basis of life in what he called the Divine Commonwealth and what we call the Messianic Kingdom. He sees here an expression of the Divine intention that all men shall take their place in the world's work and labour according to their ability, and receive of that provision which the world affords, according to their need. There is no doubt that the principle is there. Jesus may very well have intended some such thought as a secondary teaching, applicable, not to the Church, the members of which will then be exalted to the heavens, but to the world of men, engaged in learning those new laws of life which are to be promulgated during the Messianic Age; for "*Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*". It is perfectly true that in that day men will have to learn the same lesson that the disciples of Christ are learning now. All, whether in heaven or on earth, who enter into everlasting life in that perfect condition which lies beyond the dethronement of sin and death, will give of their best and rejoice with their fellows in absolute equality of citizenship. Each will seek the welfare of other; all will be servants of all, and in that blessed relationship, hallowed for all time by One who Himself came to serve and minister, will enter into their reward.

There is no beautifier of the complexion, or form, or behaviour, like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us.

R. W. Emerson

* * *

There is nothing in the world so much admired as a man who knows how to bear unhappiness with courage.

Seneca

BRETHREN OF "THE WAY"

*A glimpse of
early days*

The earliest believers in Jesus Christ—before the time that the word "Christian" had been coined—adopted a charming term to describe their fellowship. They called themselves "brethren of 'the way'" and this expression occurs a number of times in the Book of Acts. It was a new way of life into which they had entered, a way that led to the Kingdom, a straight narrow way that nevertheless was broader in its liberty and longer in extent than the bondage of Judaism which they had left. And because they found themselves to be fellow-pilgrims together, travelling as one company through the darkness of this world to the light of that which is to come, and because their Master Himself had told them "I am the Way", they took to themselves in utter simplicity and sincerity a word that expressed to the full the spontaneity and happiness of their communion. They were "brethren of 'The Way'."

The first mention of the name as such is in Acts 9. 2, where we are told about Saul, the persecutor of the infant Church, receiving authority that if he "*found any of the way*", he might "*bring them bound to Jerusalem*". This was within a few years of Jesus' death, when Saul was still a young man, and the Jerusalem Church under the guidance and teaching of the Apostles was growing rapidly in numbers. This name must have originated right at the beginning.

One wonders who first suggested it. What discussions there must have been in those first days over the question of a distinctive name for the new fellowship! The orthodox Jewish Church had its sects—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zadokites, and others lesser known. The political parties, Herodians, and Zealots, had a quasi-religious connection and might almost be counted as sects, too. The disciples had been known popularly as Nazarenes, but quite evidently they would not accept that name willingly themselves. And in the probably oft-times excited babble of discussion it might well have been the reflective, loving mind of John which inspired a suggestion winning immediate acceptance. "The Master said 'I am the Way'. Let us call ourselves 'brethren of the Way'."

The name evidently became known very quickly. When Paul arrived at Ephesus he

found that "*divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of the way*" (Acts 19. 9), and a little later Demetrius the silversmith called his fellow craftsmen together and "*there arose no small stir about the Way*" (Acts 19. 23). (Incidentally, it should be noted that in every case where the expression occurs, except in Acts 22. 4, it should be read "*the way*", not "*that way*". In the Greek the definite article, not the demonstrative, is employed). The persecution of "the Way" which arose at Ephesus was only one of many, and when Paul returned to Jerusalem he found the same bitter prejudice against the Christian community. When the riot which led to his arrest was at its height, he stood on the castle steps and made his defence to the people. "*I persecuted this Way unto the death*", he cried (Acts 22. 4), speaking of his actions at the time before his conversion. And later on still, we find that Felix, the Roman governor, had "*more perfect knowledge of 'the Way'*" than had his predecessor Porcius Festus (Acts 24. 22).

The term died out eventually, being replaced by the more immediately descriptive word "Christian", which, we are told, originated in Antioch (Acts 11. 26). Perhaps there was a loss in the passing of the phrase. It was such a simple, refreshingly naive answer to give enquirers. "Who are you?" "We are brethren of 'the Way'." And it was in the simplicity of that bond that the early Church formed its first communal fellowship, having all things in common and parting to each as they had need; and so prospered in spiritual things.

In this our day some circles have followed a similar impulse and coined the expression "brethren of the Truth" and referred to themselves as "being in the Truth". More than one Christian group has used this term. Perhaps it is a right impulse. Said Jesus "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*" (John 14. 6). There is surely a fitness here. Brethren of the Way at the beginning of the Age; brethren of the Truth at the end of the Age; both together, with all who have lived during the intervening centuries, "brethren of the Life", in the Age which is to come, when the "faithful in Christ Jesus" will be ushered into the presence of the Father with exceeding joy.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 13. The Valley of the Mountain

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle" (ch. 14. 3).

This is the climax, this the farthest limit of the powers of this world. At this point God breaks through into human history, and for the first time, perhaps, since the days of Jehoshaphat, the armed forces of earth come up against a power which is from heaven, and because it is from heaven cannot be resisted. The Lord comes forth to war, as He did do several times in Israel's national history, but this time He comes forth not only for the deliverance of the Holy Nation from its immediate enemies, but the deliverance of all mankind from the great enemy. Here, at this time, the dominion of evil is to be overthrown and in its place instituted an order of things "wherein dwelleth righteousness".

How does the Lord go forth and with what weapons does He fight? There are not wanting expositors who visualise a sanguinary combat in which all the instruments of devilry devised by man are used on both sides, and a victory distinguished by masses of dead and wounded strewn over a blood-soaked land. It is true that many of the prophetic foreviews of this final conflict are couched in such terms but this is because men, accustomed to such scenes, can only visualise a conflict in which one side gains the victory and the other suffers defeat in some such manner. These foreviews must be taken as pictures illustrating the principles involved; the issues to be decided in this battle are greater by far than can be resolved by the indiscriminate slaughter of human beings, most of whom are still so ignorant of the eternal verities that, like the men of Nineveh in Jonah's time, they cannot "discern between their right hand and their left hand". Just as Jesus said "the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" so now, when God is pictured as descending upon the Mount of Olives amid awesome cataclysms of Nature it is not that He might destroy men, opposed to His righteousness and unregenerate as they are, but that He might destroy their capacity for accomplishing their evil designs and reduce them to a condition of submissiveness before Him, that He might then "withdraw man from his pur-

pose, and hide pride from man" (Job 33. 17). It must be expected therefore that the actual concrete actions and events by means of which the prophecy is to be accomplished can be only imperfectly visualised, involved as they are with celestial powers the nature of which is outside our ken. The natural picture presented by Zechariah, the descent, the earthquake, the battle and so on, is to be regarded as a picture, a painting which, when regarded and considered, conveys a message; it is the message that is of importance.

Perhaps the cardinal principle to be built into a satisfactory understanding of this passage is that which was illustrated on those previous occasions when Israel, exercising faith, was delivered in the face of apparently hopeless odds. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" said Moses just before the Red Sea crossing. "The Egyptians whom you have seen today, ye shall see them no more again for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. 13. 14-15). The people obeying, in faith stepped down into the sea-bed and were delivered. "Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him" was good King Hezekiah's exhortation to his people at the time of the siege. "With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah" (2 Chron. 32. 7-8). And in that night the host of the armies of Assyria melted away. When the forces of Moab and Ammon and Edom invaded Judah, to cut them off from being a people, "all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children" while King Jehoshaphat, standing in the Temple court, lifted up his voice to God "we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chron. 20. 12-13); their faith was vindicated and Judah was saved. So in this, the greatest and final deliverance, the situation that is pictured is one in which the cleansed and dedicated Nation manifests serene confidence as to the outcome, the enemy surrounds the land with every expectation of an easy victory; the armies of heaven advance to the battle and in an awe-inspiring display of other-worldly

power frustrate the invaders' purpose and reduce their armed might to nothingness.

The features which Zechariah saw in his prophetic vision are well known. The people, in the city, waiting. The invaders, having already taken captive and sent into exile the faint-hearted and apostates from among the people, preparing to follow up their advantage. Only the men of faith remain and it seems that even for them there is now no hope. Perhaps they have all gathered in the Temple courts as did their predecessors in the days of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah to pray for deliverance, the while the enemy is already rifling the houses. And at that moment besieged and besiegers alike look up into the skies and behold a stupendous sight; God Most High, the Ancient of Days, descending, accompanied by His attendants and holy ones, descending upon the Mount of Olives, His feet touching the sacred soil, a mighty earthquake, the Mount cloven in two, a deep chasm from west to east separating the mountain into two parts, that great multitude of exultant foes halting in their tracks as they move in for the kill, finding their eyes being burned out of their sockets by the dazzling radiance, their tongues stilled and destroyed by the terror and thunder of the earthquake, their bodies maimed and destroyed as the earth heaves and opens and swallows them up; a blind unreasoning panic seizes them and they turn each against other, the blind, the dumb and the maimed until, at the end, there are none left. The mountainous districts surrounding Jerusalem which, from time immemorial, had looked down upon the city from their superior height of several hundreds of feet, are broken up by the earthquake and sink down to form a low-lying plain like the plain of Jordan, and within that broken up terrain is buried for ever the remains of the host that had defied the living God. In the centre of the plain stands proudly, Jerusalem upon her hills, exalted "above the tops of the mountains". And so the Nation is saved, and so perish all the enemies of the Lord. That is the picture as drawn in verses 4-15 of Zechariah's 14th chapter. How should it be interpreted?

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives . . . and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south" (ch. 14. 4).

This is an earthquake; but is it a literal or

a metaphorical earthquake? It is a very common practice among prophetic students to interpret the whole of this passage upon a literal basis. Geologically, there is nothing against the possibility. The entire land is in an earthquake zone which runs up from the Red Sea and into Galilee and Syria. Earthquakes have occurred there a goodly number of times in history and Zechariah refers to one such in his very next verse. There is nothing in the prophetic description from verse 4 to 11 which is physically—geologically—incapable of realisation. That does not demand, of course, that the prophecy is intended to have such literal fulfilment; the possibility that this is a figurative use of language, in line with practically the whole of Zechariah's prophecy, to picture happenings and processes of a more fundamental nature and involving greater issues, must also be considered. It could also be argued that the prophecy has a dual function, possessing literal and figurative elements. But it has to be shown that the interpretation suggested has some valid place and purpose in the outworking of the plan, that it contributes towards the attainment of the predetermined end, which in this case is the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and this will be the endeavour here.

The descent of the Lord upon the Mount of Olives obviously marks the moment of Divine intervention in earth's affairs. This is true whether the descent is literal, the Deity in visible human form taking His stance upon the mountain top, or figurative. This same theme is dwelt upon elsewhere. *"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake"* says Joel (Joel 3. 16). *"The Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft"* is Micah's contribution (Micah 1. 3) although here the prophet is talking about Divine judgment imminent upon Israel and Judah of his own day. In like fashion Nahum tells of coming judgment upon Assyria; *"The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries . . . the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence"* (Nahum 1. 5). In these latter two instances the language is figurative; history shews that. Likewise the variety of allusions in the Old Testament to the event now under consideration directs the conclusion that the language here is figurative also. In Joel the Lord "roars

out of Zion"—Jerusalem. In Daniel 7 He appears on a heavenly throne to conduct the Last Assize and invest the Son of Man with the rulership of earth. In the apocryphal Book of Enoch, quoted by Jude, (Jude 14-15) and possibly enshrining some very ancient prophecy not otherwise included in the canonical books, the place of descent is said to be Sinai, "*The Holy Great One will come forth from his dwelling, and the eternal God will dwell upon the earth, on Mount Sinai, and appear in the strength of his might from the heaven of heavens . . . and the high mountains shall be shaken and the high hills shall be made low, and the earth shall be rent in sunder . . . and behold, he cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all . . .*" (1 Enoch 1. 3-9). In any case this whole picture has to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament revelation that it is Christ the Son who comes in person to the earth at this time to deliver Israel and subdue all evil; since this deliverance is but one of the sequence of events occupying the *Parousia*, His presence, the descent on the Mount of Olives becomes the symbol of the first outward evidence that His Presence is an accomplished fact. Up to that point of time many will have continued to say "*where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as from the beginning of creation*" (2 Pet. 3. 4). Beyond that point, all will realise the fact, and believe.

The impact of that intervention upon men, and its consequences upon the enemy, is likened to an earthquake. At the coming of the Lord the earth will quake, the heavens pass away, the sun and the moon become dark, the stars cease to shine, the works of man be burned up—all these symbols are used to describe the disintegration and utter destruction of man's world, which in this context is synonymous with all evil things, because man's world is predominantly evil. A new world is to follow in which all the good that has survived—for such good as does exist in this present world, because good is lasting, will survive—will blossom forth into greater good under the more favourable conditions of that world. So Zechariah tells of a great earthquake which splits the Mount of Olives into northern and southern parts with a valley between. Geographically that valley, running east-west, would be exactly opposite the East Gate of the Temple; the idea is irresistible that the prophecy intends some notice to be taken of that fact.

The succeeding verse has given translators—and expositors—a great deal of trouble. As it appears in the A.V. the meaning is very obscure. Speaking of this valley the verse says "*ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*" (ch. 14. 5). When the descent and the earthquake are held to be literal it is said that the citizens of Jerusalem will flee into this valley for protection and shelter—ignoring the fact that people do not run toward the site of an earthquake for safety but away from it. In any case the text, as with all such obscure passages, needs closer examination before interpreting.

The preposition "to" is in italics, having been supplied by the A.V. translators because there is no preposition in the Hebrew, which should read in the A.V. "ye shall flee the valley" i.e. away from it and not into it.

The word *Azal* has been put in as a place name but no such place in the district is known. Properly, the word is *el-atsal* and some expositors have suggested that this may be intended for the *Beth-ha-etsal* of Micah 1. 11 which, say some hopefully, was perhaps to the east of the Mount of Olives. In fact this place was near Beer-Sheba, twenty-five miles in the other direction, so that geographically this could not have been intended.

The mention of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah should next be investigated. Zechariah refers to this as though it was a well known event to the people of his day even although it was by then over two centuries in the past. No account of this earthquake is given in Biblical history, the only other allusion being by the prophet Amos, who says he began his prophetic ministry in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, king of Israel, "*two years before the earthquake*" (Amos 1. 1). It was evidently a happening which made a deep impression and of which the memory was long lasting. Fortunately Josephus gives an account of it; his account reveals the similarities which led Zechariah to use it as an illustration in this later picture of Divine intervention and Divine judgment. It will be remembered that the books of Kings and Chronicles relate how Uzziah arrogated to himself the priestly duty of offering incense in the Temple, for which sacrilege he was smitten with leprosy. Josephus declares that the earthquake came as Divine judgment for

the act. He says (Ant. 9. 10. 4). "Uzziah was corrupted in his mind by pride . . . accordingly, when a general festival was to be celebrated, he put on the holy garment and went into the temple to offer incense to God upon the golden altar, which he was prohibited to do by Azariah the High Priest . . . and when they cried out that he must go out of the temple, he was wroth at them and threatened to kill them. In the meantime a great earthquake shook the ground, and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately; and before the city, at a place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and rolled itself four stadia (about half a mile) and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king's gardens, were blocked by the obstruction". The source of Josephus' information is unknown and no independent check on its veracity is possible; physically however, the account is consistent with the topography of Jerusalem. His "east mountain" is the Mount of Olives; the "west mountain", the heights of Ophel at the south-eastern corner of the city half a mile away, on the slopes of which were the "king's gardens", and at the foot, the "fountain of the fowler" called En-rogel, the "Eroge" of his account. It would appear that part of Ophel collapsed and fell four hundred feet into the valley separating it from the Mount of Olives and blocked the valley besides burying the king's gardens. Such a line of cleavage, extended northward, would intersect the Temple area and account for the effect noted by Josephus.

With this background story in mind attention can be turned back to verse 5. The first important factor to notice is the expression "ye shall flee", appearing twice in the verse. A great many ancient authorities adopt a term meaning "to be blocked up" in lieu of this expression and this rendering, which is also that of the Septuagint, has been adopted by modern translators such as the R.S.V., Moffatt and Rotherham. The determining word in the original Hebrew, which was without vowels, is *ynstm*, which is pointed in some manuscripts as *yenastem*, "ye shall flee", and in others as *yenistam*, "shall be blocked up". The expression in the A.V. "shall reach unto Azal", critically rendered, means to turn toward each other so as to touch or join together. Thus the sense of this verse is not that of anyone fleeing, either into or away from, the valley, but of the valley

itself being closed or blocked up. This is where the analogy of Uzziah's earthquake holds good; Josephus says that the valley was blocked by the earthquake. So the best translation of this verse, supported by the LXX and the modern translators mentioned, would read "and the valley of the mountains shall be blocked up, for the valley of the mountains shall close together as it was blocked up by the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah".

So far for the rendering, but what does it mean? Why should there be an earthquake, creating a valley through the centre of the Mount of Olives, if the next step is to close up that valley again? Is the solution connected with the remaining element in the verse "and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with him"?

This, in fact, is the answer. This dividing of the Mount of Olives pictures not only the last event of "this present evil world" but also the first event of the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness". It pictures God, in Christ, not only coming to judgment upon the last adversaries to resist the incoming Kingdom, but also His coming in splendour to take up His dwelling with men, as realised in the Millennial Presence. And to appreciate this it is necessary to associate this vision of Zechariah with that of his predecessor Ezekiel when that prophet saw, in like manner, the glory of the Lord coming from the East to take up residence with His people.

The 43rd chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy describes how he took his stand by the East Gate of the Millennial Temple. "And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory". And the glory of the Lord came into the Temple by the East Gate, and a proclamation was made to the effect that the Lord was now to dwell with Israel for ever—and then the East Gate was shut, never again to be opened. The reason? "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut". In figurative sense, the Lord had come, finding the gate open to receive Him. He was never again to go away, for now His people were ready to accept Him and not repudiate Him again. No need for another to come would ever arise, for He will be all-sufficient. So the gate would never need to be used again; it could be shut and the way

closed up for all time.

Now this is what Zechariah also saw. Within the limits of his vision he saw Jerusalem and its Temple, with its own East Gate fronting directly upon the Mount of Olives. He saw the enemies of Israel around the city and he knew that God was coming, not only for their overthrow but to dwell with Israel eternally. And the valley through the middle of the Mount of Olives made a passage for the God of Israel, coming from the East straight to that East Gate. That is why, when before his eyes that great chasm appeared in the Mount, and he saw also the Lord advancing through it toward the city he cried out in ecstasy "And the Lord my God shall come,

and all the saints with him".

That explains why the valley is to be blocked up. Just as in Ezekiel's vision the East Gate of his Temple was to be permanently closed after the God of Israel had passed through it into the Temple, so here, the valley is similarly to be blocked up after the God of Israel has passed through it on His way to deliver His people. The symbols used by the two prophets differ, but the principle is the same. There are yet other effects of the earthquake to be described in succeeding verses, but here at this point, the Lord comes, His holy ones with Him, to deliver His people and remain with them forever.

(To be continued)

STRENGTH FROM ON HIGH

*A word for
a quiet moment*

"For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30. 15).

It can safely be said that none save the consecrated child of God realizes the utter truth of this statement, "In confidence is strength, in returning and rest is salvation". It is upon this and like promises that the Lord's people rely more and more in these days of stress and turmoil. How contrary to God's ways are the ways of fallen man; strength to-day is measured in a very different manner. Calm, quiet confidence and rest in God is not considered strength and finds no place in unregenerate hearts. It was ever thus, for we read in the very next verse the reply made by Israel of old to this wise counsel from God, "But ye said, No (we will not return) for we will flee upon horses". They preferred their own way rather than the way of God, and God's answer to them was, "therefore shall ye flee".

The horse in Old Testament usage is a counterpart of the modern tanks and guns. It was their idea of confidence and strength. Egypt was distinguished for producing fine horses and the Egyptians used them much in war. God knew this and had forbidden the kings of Israel to multiply horses (Deut. 17. 16) and in prohibiting them He designed to distinguish His people in all respects from the Egyptians. It was not His purpose for them to rely upon horses for strength and deliverance but solely upon their God, who had

promised them victory over all their enemies on conditions of faithfulness to Him. Psalm 20. 7 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God".

In spite of God's warning through Moses in Deut. 17. 16, to those who would afterward become the kings of Israel, we find Solomon grossly violated this law, for 1 Kings 10. 26 says, "Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen". He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and verse 28 says that Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt. This course finally led to Solomon's downfall and the downfall of his kingdom as shown in the next chapter (1 Kings 11. 9-12).

Among the heathen nations the horse was dedicated to the sun and driven in processions at the festivals of sunworship. The ancient Persians, who were sun worshippers, dedicated white horses and chariots to the sun and it is supposed that other nations derived the practice from them. The sun was supposed to be drawn daily in a chariot by four wondrous coursers. That even Israel had become contaminated by this particular type of idolatry is shown by 2 Kings 23. 11, for Josiah, in instituting his wonderful reformation, took away the horses that the Kings of Judah had given to the sun and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. In view of this we can well understand the fitting rebuke of Isa. 2. 7. "Their land is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land is full of idols, they worship the

work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made."

Isa. 20. 16 continues, "We will ride upon the swift, therefore shall they that pursue you be swift." Alas that man still, as Israel in Isaiah's day, should rely upon the "swift", and his pursuers have access to the same "swift", whatever it be, whether the horses of the ancients or their modern counterparts, and it is still necessary for the Lord (as in verse 18) to "wait that He may be gracious". Yet how our hearts rejoice as we continue this passage, in verses 19 and 20. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more; He will be very gracious

unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when He shall hear it He shall answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers", and, even as we apply to ourselves now the words of verse 21, "This is the way, walk ye in it", so, soon we believe, God will say with authority, "Stand still, and know that I am God", and mankind will then no longer have any trust in horses, but will in "quietness and confidence" wait for the word of our God.

UNTO THE PERFECT DAY

"The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4. 18).

How many times that verse has been used to justify the institution of a new "break-through" in Christian thought, leading the more adventurous of Christ's disciples into widening and lengthening vistas of understanding! The promise of Jesus to the effect that the Holy Spirit would "guide you into all truth and show you things to come" is indeed a guarantee that the society of the faithful must expect to experience advancement, progress, in their perception of the things of God and in fact it would be intolerable in this our day, when knowledge on any conceivable subject is so manifestly increasing, to think otherwise in respect of the most important subject of all. The gloom and obscurity of the Dark Ages when it was held and believed that no possible addition to the Divine revelation could possibly be made, and religious thought was static, has been dissipated by the perennial striving of the human spirit for something clearer than has been attained, and in this the seeker after Divine truth has been following a right impulse. The entire emphasis of the New Testament is upon a continually increasing and deepening understanding of the Divine purpose in creation and of God Himself. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" cried the Apostle Paul to the Romans (Rom. 11. 33). Truly the shining pathway of the Christian

leads straightly forward into the illimitable distance; there is no end to its prospect but away on the horizon the golden light shines in splendour, beckoning the eager traveller onward and ever on. This is the promise of the Christian faith, the prospect of increasing light, increasing scope, increasing ability, and increasing achievement throughout the everlasting years of all future time.

But we now are still at the beginning of the way; this three score years and ten of human life is our babyhood, as it were, our first introduction to the wonders of sentient sharing in God-given life in a God-given environment, the first perhaps of many of consistently widening range. For us the light is only just beginning to break through the gloom. And because we are still so immature and undeveloped in our powers of perception, it is difficult to comprehend the full sweep of this theme into eternity. Much easier it is to picture the shining light as encompassing the span of our earthly life with our fellows, and to think of the community with which our associations and activities are bound up and the impact of that light upon that community. Especially is it true to think of that increasing light as the radiance of dispensational truth, the knowledge of the Divine plans in history, coming to truly dedicated Christians in this, so evidently the closing years of the Age, and destined still further to increase in brilliancy and clarity until it merges at last with the greater glory of the Messianic Kingdom. That is a true application of the Scriptural allusions in Prov. 4,

but because it is not the full and final sense in which that text is used it cannot and does not take into account the purely local times of recession when, in the particular community, the light ceases to increase because the earlier impetus of that fellowship has spent itself. The passage of years, the non-fulfilment of expectations fondly held, the realisation that there is much more in the problem of existence and of God than was at one time thought, bring doubt and uncertainty to some as to the validity of the fellowship and its predominant theme.

That is not an unusual sequel. It has happened so many times in Christian history. It comes from interpreting the promise of the shining light purely in a community sense. Do we do right in expecting Prov. 4. 18 to be so interpreted? Our Lord is not interested so much in communities as in individuals. We tend to forget that. We are so apt to be dazzled by the sight or thought of some spectacular work being carried on by an assembly or organisation of zealous and dedicated Christians that we fail to remember the ultimate purpose of such things. The community, the society, the organisation, or whatever it may be, is only useful to our Lord as a nursery for His disciples and in every case it is discarded when it has served its purpose. None of our organised arrangements, useful and helpful as they may have been here on earth, will be carried into Heaven with us at the end. Just as surely as flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, just so surely must all the imperfect creations of our hands, means of grace though they may be now, be forbidden entrance to that celestial world where the whole conception of worship, of service and activity, of growth in knowledge, must be on a totally different plane. So we need not mourn the passing of an old order which no longer has the power to enthuse and inspire as it did of yore. Neither do we well to spend time and energy endeavouring to recreate or resuscitate a system of service or of instruction which can never do again what it did at the first. For its work had been done, and well done, in the hearts and lives of those, who having once seen the golden vision by the ministry of that work, have retained the radiance in their own hearts, yea, and will retain it until the end of their days. The organisation may be no more, the fellowship may seem to be in process of dissolving, but the individuals who are the true fruitage of such a work are progressing still in the light of

that vision "unto the perfect day".

So Proverbs 4. 18 is in the singular, not in the plural. The path of the just man, not of the just society, is to shine more and more unto the perfect day. Whatever may be the wealth or the paucity of the outward means of grace, of fellowships, of church communions, of joint activities—even of personal friendships within the circle of believers—in the long run each disciple follows his own pathway to the stars and receives his own illumination from on high.

Standing on the seaside promenade at night, one sees the path of the moonlight across the waters, ending right at one's feet. Twenty yards farther along, one's companion also sees the moon-track, also pointing straightly towards his own self. No two observers ever see the same pathway in the waters; yet it is the same moon light and from whatever vantage point leads still to the same moon. So every disciple follows in the same way to the end of the path where, like Jacob's ladder set up from earth to heaven, God waits. In the selection of those to whom He is to entrust the work of the next Age He is exercising infinite care and patience, and each one receives individual treatment. There is no such thing as mass production in the Almighty's methods.

This is where another catch-phrase, familiar to many, comes to mind: "*a people for a purpose*". That expression is the key to much of the apparent mystery in God's dealing with man. Why is He so long in dealing with evil? Why is the Kingdom so tardy in its appearance? If Jesus died for man two thousand years ago, why is it that the world still groans and suffers, waiting for that which Jesus died to give them? The answer lies in this phrase. God is developing, during this Age, a people to serve His purpose in the next. And so our whole conception of our calling and our life in Christ must be set against the background of our place in the Divine purpose. The way in which we walk and the light which shines upon that way are both contributory to the ultimate execution of that purpose.

Away in the Central American country of Yucatan there lie the remains of a great ceremonial road built by an ancient people, the Maya, something like two thousand years ago. Along that road there passed, in olden time, youths and maidens who had dedicated themselves and their lives to the sun-god. Leaving all the hopes and aspirations and ambitions of life behind them, they pressed along the road, day after day, until at length

they entered a gloomy tunnel leading down into the bowels of the earth. That tunnel took them into an underground cavern deep below the Temple of the God, and in the middle of the cavern, a yawning abyss at the bottom of which was a deep subterranean lake. As each one of those youths and maidens reached the edge of that gaping pit they unhesitatingly threw themselves in, a willing sacrifice to the god they served. And of what avail was it; a useless waste of young life that might have been put to some good purpose?

Some Christian lives to-day are spent like that: a gloomy, morbid and sometimes ultra-sanctimonious outlook which takes no account of the element of purpose in God's requirements with us. Given only to the maintenance of a pious mind and abhorrence of sin, there is nothing positive, nothing active, nothing that recognises the need for qualification for future work of service. Some lives like that, truly dedicated to God, are nevertheless as much wasted in his sight as were those of the Maya youngsters of long ago.

On the sandy plains of Mesopotamia, when Babylon flourished and Daniel administered affairs of State, there existed a road of another kind. The "Processional Way" it was called, and it traversed the principal districts of the city of Babylon from the gates of the Temple of the great god Marduk, past the king's palace, to the river. Once in every year there was a great festal occasion. The image of the god was brought out of his place in the Temple, placed upon a conveyance, and taken in solemn state along that Processional Way amid the cheers and admiration of the populace. Making gracious acknowledgements to the temples of the lesser gods as he passed them, accepting the homage of the king before the entrance to the palace, and paying his respects to that very important lady the goddess Ishtar, Queen of Heaven, as he went through the great gateway dedicated to her honour, he eventually arrived at the river Euphrates, was placed in the state barge, and continued his journey by river. He eventually arrived back at his own temple, was duly

landed and restored to his accustomed position, where he remained for another year. He had a most interesting journey, saw a lot of interesting sights and met a great many interesting people. But at the end he was back where he started; he never got any farther.

Too many Christian lives are like that. They start out on the road that is to lead them to the heavenly kingdom but the realisation of purpose is lacking. They learn a great many things and they see a great many things and they do a great many things, but at the end it has all added up to nothing so far as their own fitness for a future Divine purpose is concerned. From God's standpoint they have just gone round in circles and got nowhere at all.

"A people for a purpose." We want to remember that. The road we are treading will continue to shine more and more brightly until the perfect day if we remember all the time that we are called for a definite purpose which awaits the next Age for its full accomplishment. There is a goal toward which we are pressing and it is not attained in this life. The road we travel commences in darkness but it ends in light; that, after all, is the principle of God's creation. In Genesis the earth is without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep; but in Revelation the holy city is all radiant in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb, and there is no night there. Isaiah told of the people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, upon whom a great light shined and John announces the Lord Jesus as that light of the world which shone in darkness and the darkness could not contain it, and so the darkness was overpowered and swallowed up by it. So it will be with us if we resolutely press forward along this path of the just upon which our feet were once upon a time firmly planted, secure in the knowledge that no matter what may befall us in our earthly circumstances or our earthly fellowship, the light will continue to shine for us more and more brightly. "unto the perfect day".

FOREFATHERS OF ABRAHAM

8. Dispersion of the People

*A little-known period
of the Old Testament*

"They found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there . . . 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 on the face of the whole earth." (Gen. 11. 2-4).

The account could be read as though the building of this city and tower was under-

taken immediately upon their arrival in Shinar but this is not likely. It is much more plausible to suppose that the whole migrating multitude, which must have numbered many thousands, settled first in villages which they built for themselves and began to explore the possibilities and potentialities of their new domain. Living conditions were easier compared with the mountainous country their fathers of several generations back had known. The climate was warmer and the ground, well watered by the two great rivers, much more productive. The host had to be fed and at first all the effort must have gone into cultivating the soil, raising flocks and herds, and devising new building methods. They had been used to forests in the mountains; there were no trees down here in the plain. To this day that land grows only the date palm, and in the southern swamps giant reeds. But, as if to compensate, the abundant river clay proved ideal for making bricks. For the first time they could build durable houses and this is the significance behind verse 2 of Gen. 11, "let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and bitumen had they for mortar". The bitumen deposits which supplied the needs of the city builders for many centuries thereafter are a hundred and twenty miles higher up the Euphrates from Babylon, so that there must have been quite a bit of exploring and excavating before they reached this stage, and it was only then that their imagination became fired with the ambition to build, not just villages, but a city and a great tower with the aid of this new and exciting building technique. Kiln-fired bricks would be so much more permanent than the sun-dried bricks they had used hitherto and this advance of technical skill was probably inspired by the superb pottery these people were able to make with this river clay, pottery the examples of which since discovered show to be unequalled by that of later times. This pinpoints another factor; their tools and implements had to be made of pottery or baked clay because they had no metal. Copper and tin and iron, familiar to later generations, was denied the men of Babel because there are no metal deposits in any part of Mesopotamia; not until later generations had penetrated farther afield did they learn the arts of metallurgy.

This fact tends to provoke a question as to what in the way of implements and necessary amenities of life were stored in the Ark from the pre-Flood world. Metal was known

and worked before the Flood; Genesis even gives us the name of the first metallurgist, Tubal-Cain. It is probable that the antediluvian world was a highly civilised one; the building of the Ark itself, if anything like the description given in Genesis, must have required a high degree of technical knowledge and skill. A little reflection will show, however, that even if Noah did preserve and bring into the new world any useful equipment, metal or otherwise, the quantity he could thus have saved would soon become hopelessly inadequate for the needs of the increasing population, so that it is not surprising to find that the most ancient inhabited sites that have been excavated reveal a complete absence of metal objects. Sickles were made of baked clay, knives of chipped flint, and so on. It seems that the little family saved from the Flood had to start life all over again, and provide their needs from the resources of the land in which they found themselves.

So, before long, the grand scheme took shape. They would build a city which should form the central rallying point for all the villages around, and in the centre of the city they would build a tower so tall that its top might appear to pierce the heavens. That was to be the symbol of their greatness but it was also to be the symbol of something else. It was to symbolise their rejection of the God of their fathers, who had saved those fathers from the Flood, their rejection of the Divine command to scatter themselves abroad over the face of the earth, and their determination, not only to remain a compact and closely knit community in this fertile plain, but to worship gods of their own devising and serve leaders of their own choice, that they might become known as a powerful and mighty people. "Let us make us a name," they said; it is not clear from this whether they expected eventually to meet other communities of men who had not been affected by the Flood, and appear great in the eyes of those men, or rather wanted to perpetuate their memory in the minds of generations that should follow them. In any case their attitude was one of arrogance and self-aggrandisement, and as such it attracted the notice of God. "This they begin to do" He said "And now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do" (ch. 11. 6).

This is where, in perhaps rather tentative fashion, the mighty hero Nimrod can be introduced into the story. The Bible mentions this famous figure of Hebrew and Arabic

legend only once, in the "Table of Nations" in Gen. 10. We are told that he was a descendant of Cush the son of Ham, that he was "*a mighty hunter before the Lord*" and that "*his kingdom was the beginning of Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Nippur, in the land of Sumer*" to use modern archaeological names for these places. But though the Old Testament is thus reticent as to the further deeds of Nimrod, his life and exploits preserved in tradition have made him the most famous legendary character of ancient times to all peoples of the Middle East. Josephus asserts that Nimrod was leader in the enterprise of the Tower of Babel, although he adduces no evidence in support of his statement. The fact, however, that Gen. 10 places his lifetime as before the building of the most ancient Sumerian cities does indicate somewhere near the time of the Tower and warrants a little further thought.

Assyriologists have shown that the Hebrew name Nimrod is the Hebrew form of the Sumerian Amarudu or the Babylonian Marduk. Now Marduk was the principal god of the Babylonians and his name and exploits figure in all the ancient legends. Particularly is Marduk credited with having built the great Tower of Babylon which is the Biblical Tower of Babel. Of the reality of the latter there can be no doubt; continuous references to its existence occur in history from 2300 B.C. until almost the Christian era, and what remains of it is still there for anyone to see. Early Sumerian writings say that it was built to be a centre for religious worship and to honour the one who inspired and directed its building; that one, say the legends, was the hero Marduk, deified after his lifetime to take his place among the gods. From all of this it may be concluded that perhaps Josephus was not so far off the truth when he said that the Biblical Nimrod was the one who built the Tower.

There is another line of evidence which may be relevant. From the historical point of view the period between Noah and Abraham is divided into two parts. The second is what is called the dynastic or historical period, that for which a more or less complete history can be built up from the records and remains that have been discovered. This commences from the beginning of the Sumerian cities, of which Erech (Uruk) was the first, and covers a span of about seven hundred years. A great deal is known about this period. Then prior to this comes what is called the pre-dynastic or mythical period when there were no cities,

no written records, and only legends and traditions survive. This period must have embraced at least five hundred years and it is somewhere in the middle of this period that the Tower was built. Now round about the time of the birth of Abraham Sumerian scribes compiled historical lists of the ancient kings and in these lists they included the names of alleged rulers in the mythical period. A line of five names goes back to one Meski-agga-seir who is described as being the "son of the sun-god". If this list has any basis of historical truth then this man must have wielded power at just about the middle of the mythical period which could not have been very long after the building of the Tower. The Sun-god of the Sumerians was Marduk (Nimrod), so that Meski-aggur-seir, if he really lived, would be the son of Nimrod and this again would put Nimrod at about the time of the Tower. So these fragmentary links from archaeology, fitted to the equally fragmentary links in Genesis, begin to take on the shape of a connected history. Vague and shadowy as they are, they are not more so than were some of the later kings who in quite recent years have been proved to have had an actual existence.

In the Genesis story this is where God stepped in. If the people would not scatter voluntarily He would take measures to scatter them. Be it noted here that the injunction to scatter was for their own good although at that time they did not know that. Until they scattered they would not discover the many natural products such as metals, minerals, useful food plants and fruits which were not to be found where they were but existed in other lands afar. So God intervened. He "*came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded*" and He said "*let us confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth*" (ch. 11. 5-8). It is a very human picture. The confounding of language was probably the development of differences of opinion on methods, on policy, on all that had to do with the project in hand. If Nimrod was the leader, the fact that he was of the sons of Ham might well have induced jealousy on the part of those whose descent went back to Shem and Japheth. After all, these two latter had been given the supreme blessing by Noah (Gen. 9. 26-27); so they might have reasoned. It is significant that, historically, the sons of Ham remained in the land afterwards; the peoples

of Shem and Japheth were, in the main, the ones who departed. So one can imagine growing discord between the various families and tribes until at last the decision was taken to separate.

The people of Japheth moved northward along the course of the Tigris towards Lake Van; an extensive group of settlements in the area where Nineveh afterwards stood, and northward into the mountains, at what is called the Hassuna stage of culture, may mark a transient halt in their migration but eventually their descendants spread over all the lands to the north of Iraq and never returned. So far as Genesis is concerned the sons of Japheth are unknown beyond the second generation from the patriarch, which in itself may be a further pointer to the time of the separation. The tribes of Shem seem to have followed the Euphrates into what is now Syria, for it was from that direction they returned perhaps five centuries later to regain the land they had left. Of the children of Ham, some migrated and some remained. According to Gen. 10 the sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. To detail all the evidences here would be unnecessarily tedious, but indications go to show that the tribes of Canaan went both east and south, some of them finishing up in the land which afterwards bore their name, the tribes of Mizraim south-west across Sinai into Egypt, giving rise to the Egyptians of the Bible, and those of Phut through Arabia and across the Red Sea into Africa where they later built up an empire stretching across that continent to the Atlantic. The peoples of Cush appear to have been the most prolific for they stayed to populate the land in which stood the Tower and also sent out colonists to establish new centres through Arabia into Africa on the one hand and eastwards into India on the other. The "scattering" therefore was a very real thing, and the differentiation of language as generation succeeded generation the natural result.

So one might picture the lands of the Bible some four centuries or so after the Flood, the Tower already having stood perhaps for some two hundred years and rapidly becoming the centre of a system of idolatry—the worship of gods the creation of man's own imagination—in a land chiefly inhabited by the posterity of Ham. Syria, Canaan, Egypt, Arabia, all these lands were being penetrated by migrating people, some of Ham, some of Shem, and away to the north the children of Japheth were carving out their own destiny

to become known in later years as Medes and Scythians and Greeks, to say nothing of distant peoples beyond the seas with whom the sons of Abraham of much later date were destined to come in contact. But all that lay then in the distant future. At this time the most significant event was, perhaps, the birth of Eber in the line of Shem, a man who was to give his name to a great people destined to do great things. Eber was the progenitor of the Hebrews; for reasons which do not immediately appear it was his name, and not that, say, of his father Sala, nor yet that of his son, Peleg, which became the distinguishing name of the people out of which God eventually found and took, first, a man for His purpose, Abraham, and then a people for His purpose, Israel. Eber must have lived at just about the time that definite history, as distinct from myth and legend, begins, the time of the earliest written records that have survived, the time when the earliest cities in the land were built. Chronologically, it could turn out that his life came just about midway between the Flood and Abraham, and that in his day there began the divergence between true and false worship which afterwards grew to such extent and has characterised the world's thinking ever since. According to Gen. 10 all the Israelis and all the Arabs stem back to Eber. From Israeli and Arab have come the three great monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all insisting upon the One God. From Eber's contemporaries have sprung the mythological beliefs, the gods many and lords many of the idolators, represented in that far-off day by the Temple and Tower of Babylon and since then by temples and deities too numerous to mention. Perhaps it was at this point and in the person of this man that God began to define and reveal a difference, in the families which sprang from Noah, between "*him that serveth God and him that serveth him not*". At any rate, the records that have been recovered from the sands of Iraq show clearly that from this time onward the descent into darkest idolatry on the part of the major proportion of the population was rapid and catastrophic. Nimrod, deified after his death as the great god Marduk, had, temporarily, triumphed.

(To be continued)

Those who are guided by God are led by the right way to the best place.

THE VINE AND THE GREEN OLIVE TREE

The prophet Isaiah sings of the vineyard of his beloved. It is situated on a fruitful slope, well dug, the stones have been removed, and it is planted with the choicest vine. In it there is a watch-tower and a winepress and it is surrounded by a wall and a hedge. He then tells who the vine portrays "*For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah, the plant of His delight.*" In Jer. 11. 16 there is another picture; speaking of Israel and Judah God says "*you once were called to be a lovely spreading olive tree*" (Moffatt).

Both of these pictures portray fertility, fruitfulness, but what happened? Speaking of the vine God says "*When I looked for it to bring forth grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge, break down the wall, it will be trodden down, laid waste, and not pruned or cultivated; but there shall come up thorns and briars. I will also command the rain to rain no rain upon it.*" But, and this we must emphasise, the vine itself was not destroyed. Of the lovely spreading olive tree the prophet declares, "*With the roar of a great tempest He will set fire to it and its branches will be consumed*" (Amp), but we emphasise again, the tree itself is not destroyed.

In these two pictures we see portrayed one of the greatest tragedies in the world's history. The Old Testament is a sad commentary on this neglected vine, this burnt olive tree. There is so much condemnation and calamity, God's jealousy is so frequently mentioned, that we may forget that God is, and always has been, a God of love (see Amos 3. 2. Jer. 31. 3. Hosea 11. 1 & 3. 4). God's purpose in revealing His love to men was that one day all men might live together as one happy family (Gen. 22. 18). What a tragic family was Israel's. Joseph's jealous brothers sold him into Egypt as a slave, but what was the outcome? Later on when Joseph's brothers were brought before him, he was so overcome that he could not keep back the tears and asked to be alone with them. He tells them who he is and says "*do not be angry with yourselves because of what you did, for God did send me before you to preserve life.*" After the death of Jacob (Israel) Joseph again addresses his brothers saying (Gen. 50. 20-21 Moff.). "*You meant to do me evil but*

God meant good to come out of it, as is happening today, when many lives are being preserved, so do not be afraid: I will maintain you and your little ones."

As we ponder this incident in the life of Joseph and his brothers, we look forward to the time when Jesus (the antitype) will welcome His brothers, the children of Israel who so cruelly treated him, and will say "*God meant good to come of it, so do not be afraid, for I will maintain you and your little ones.*" However, much is to transpire before this happy event. When Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to Jacob in his old age that he might bless them, Jacob reversed the natural order, and when Joseph sought to rectify the matter Jacob said "*Manasseh shall become a people, but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.*" In Gen. 49. 22 we find Israel's final words to his family and he says of Joseph "*he is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.*" History reveals that the two tribes of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, led the tribes to victory in the land of Canaan; (Joshua was an Ephraimite) and they occupied about half the land, including large tracts of land on the east bank of Jordan, so literally "ran over the wall" It is significant that the name Ephraim means "fruitful" and we shall see this thought of fruitfulness running as a thread through our study.

However, yet again something goes wrong, for in both the minor and major prophets Ephraim is condemned over and over again This is summed up in Psa. 78. 67 "*Moreover God rejected the tent of Joseph and those not of the tribe of Ephraim*" (in which the tabernacle had been accustomed to stand) (Amp).

Why was this so? In Hosea 9. 8 (Amp) we read "*Ephraim was intended to be a watchman with my God, but he has become a Fowler's snare in all his ways. There is enmity, hostility and persecution in the house of God.*" In Hosea 7. 8 Ephraim is described as "half-backed" and in vs. 11 "like a silly dove", because he courted favour with first one country and then another, calling to Egypt and Assyria for help. What of the fruitfulness

implied in his name? Hosea 10. 1-2 (Amp) Israel is a "luxuriant vine that puts forth its (material) fruit. According to the abundance of his fruit he has multiplied his altars (to idols); according to the goodness and prosperity of their land they have made goodly pillars (to false gods). Their heart is divided and deceitful; now shall they be found guilty and suffer punishment" (Hosea 9. 16. 17 Amp). "Ephraim is smitten, their root dried up, they shall bear no fruit. Yes, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even their beloved children. My God shall cast them away, because they did not listen to and obey Him, and they shall be wanderers and fugitives among the nations."

But enough of this sad story; let us turn now to the New Testament. The first chapter of St. John's gospel speaks of the gospel's beginning on earth and there Jesus is described as the light and life of the world, but what do we find in verse eleven? He came unto His own and his own received him not. So the sad story continues into the New Testament. In Mark 12 we read an account of the parable of the vineyard in which our Lord uses almost the same words as in Isaiah 5. The vineyard was planted and the owner went abroad, letting it out to labourers. At the end of the season he sent servant after servant to receive the fruit of the vineyard but they were knocked on the head, insulted, beaten or murdered. So the sad story goes on; the owner sent his son, saying to himself, surely they will respect my own son. But the labourers murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard. The parable continues, "What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard is going to do? He will come and destroy the men who were working his vineyard and will hand it over to others".

This parable is self-explanatory, so let us go on to consider the amplification of it in the letter written by St. Paul to the Roman church. This is found in chapters nine to eleven and uses the other picture, that of the olive tree. In the opening verses of chapter nine Paul deplores the infidelity of his own race, and enumerates the blessings which were theirs. As we read this we recall the words of Isa. 5. 4. "What more could have been done to my vineyard, what have I left undone" But Paul knew that God's purpose is not, and cannot be, utterly defeated, for Rom. 9. 10 reads "Now this does not mean that God's word to Israel has failed, for you cannot count all 'Israelites' as the true Israel, nor can all Abraham's descendants be consid-

ered truly children of Abraham". In chapter ten he continues to outline the cause of Israel's failure, and how they missed the way, and concludes in chapter 11. 1-4 "Has God then totally repudiated his people? certainly not. It is unthinkable that God should have repudiated the people whose destiny he himself appointed." He then goes on to show how that in the providence of God disaster has been turned to good account. (This reminds us of the outcome of the incident in the life of Joseph which prefigures Israel's treatment of Jesus). So he says (Rom. 11. 28-29 Phil) "As far as the gospel goes, they are at present God's enemies—which is to your advantage. But as far as God's purpose in choosing is concerned, they are still beloved for their father's sakes. FOR ONCE THEY ARE MADE, GOD DOES NOT WITHDRAW HIS GIFTS OR HIS CALLING." Here Phillip's translation interpolates a sub-heading, "The whole scheme looks topsy-turvy, until we see the amazing wisdom of God".

Does the whole scheme look topsy-turvy today? What is happening in Israel? The answer seems to depend upon what we are looking for. Some writers stress the material prosperity of Israel, saying that it is an indication of God's favour, but Israel and Ephraim prospered in the past, and this was not a sign of God's favour. Their fruit was not then, and is not now, the sort that God seeks. We are saddened by the pictures of the girls and youths of Israel being trained for armed combat. We look—but we look in vain—for some indication of their leaders turning to God in their besetment; but Ephraim still trust in their own way, in chariots, and in a multitude of mighty men; or to modernise the picture, in fighter planes, in bombs and rockets, and in aid from other nations. But, you may say, they must fight with modern weapons. Why must they? In Hosea 1. 7 (Amp) God says "But I will not save them by bow nor by sword, nor by equipment of war, nor by horses, nor by horsemen" (see also Isa. 31. 8 & 9 and 37. 36). In the history of Israel there is ample evidence that God can and does save, not by weapons. (Read the accounts in 2 Chron. 20. 1-24. Judges 7. 12-22. 1 Sam. 14. 6-16). In the last account quoted Jonathan and his young armour-bearer showed themselves openly to the Philistine garrison: this seemed a stupid thing to do, but Jonathan had said to his armour-bearer previously "Come on, let us cross over to this uncircumcised garrison; perhaps the Eternal will do something for us. for the Eternal

never has had any difficulty about delivering his people, by means of many, or by means of few" (Moff). Would that some Jonathan would stand up today, for there is still no sign of any faith in God's ability to deliver them; so the same thing must happen to modern Ephraim as it did long ago, but with what a different outcome!

In Jer. 30. 7 we read of Jacob's trouble. There is much conjecture as to how, and when this takes place; let us read this verse in its context. Verse 3 reads "*The days are coming saith the Lord when that I will release from captivity my people Israel and Judah, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it*". Whether they possess it now or not is open to question, but verse 5 continues "*For thus saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling and fear and not of peace*" (Moff.). Jacob's trouble is then likened to the pains of a woman in child-birth, which pains are spasmodic, increasing in severity and becoming more frequent as time passes. Is this Israel's experience today? Let us not quibble as to how and when this takes place, but rather note well the outcome "*But he (Jacob) shall be SAVED OUT OF IT!*"

For so long the vine has been neglected and over-run with briars and thorns, the olive tree has had other and wild branches grafted in, now must come the painful operation. The thorns and thistles of pride and avarice must be grubbed out, the briars of injustice and idolatry torn away; the burnt hedge (trust in weapons) cleared and the crumbling watch-tower rebuilt and a new wine-press dug. The wild olive branches will go and the natural branches re-grafted. All this constitutes a major operation, but it is necessary if Israel and Ephraim are to bear fruit. Slowly but surely the work will proceed, and out of bitterness will come salvation.

We have dwelt at some length on this sad story, but this is inevitable as it has lasted for so long. However, we look not at the seen things which are transient, but at the spiritual things which are eternal. So much of the prophecy of Hosea is condemnatory, dwelling upon the punishment which Ephraim merits and has received, but it also contains some wonderful flashes of hope and rejoicing. Israel is pictured as an unfaithful woman bearing three children, but Hosea 2 speaks not only of her punishment but of her rehabilitation also. "*So I will allure her, put her alone and apart, and speak to her heart; then I will restore her vineyards, and make the*

dale of Trouble a door of hope: then shall she answer me as in her youthful days, when she came up from Egypt's land" (vs. 15 & 16 Moff). In Jer. 31. 1-20 God promises to build Israel afresh and restore Ephraim, referring to Ephraim as "my favourite son, my darling child". Poor Ephraim, so roundly condemned and punished for so long will at last return to favour. There are so many passages in the prophecies which are indeed a window of hope to Israel. Many are in the form of vivid visions in which natural pictures portray coming events.

When Ezekiel was in exile in Babylon, far from his beloved Jerusalem, he saw the glory of the Lord in the temple. Fire from the throne-chariot sets fire to the city and the glory of the Lord departs from the Temple, pauses at the East gate, then moves to the Mount of Olives. It is in the tradition of the Rabbis that for three and a half years the Shekinah tarried on the Mount of Olives in the hope that Israel would repent, but they did not. The prophet then sees a vast battlefield strewn with the bodies of men long dead. As Ezekiel prophecies as instructed "*there was a thundering noise and behold a shaking and trembling, and a rattling, and the bones came together*". (Is not this another picture of Jacob's trouble?). He then sees sinews, then flesh, then skin covers the bones, but there was no breath or spirit in them. Is not this a picture of Israel today? Then breath and spirit came into the bones and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceeding great host. The prophet then sees the Temple rebuilt, the priests in their various orders installed, the land portioned out, and the tribes dwelling in peace and prosperity. He sees the Glory of God approaching the city from the East, from the Mount of Olives. He then describes the return of the Glory of the Lord to the city. Let us forget the sad story of past ages, let us forget Jacob's trouble of today, and join the prophet in his lovely vision of the glorious future. "*And the glory of the Lord came from the East, and his voice like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the east gate; behold the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And He, the Lord, said unto me, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever*".

So shall the "vineyard of my beloved"—the lovely spreading olive tree—flourish and bear fruit for all eternity.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

3. Shadows of Better Things

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

Among the many questions on which Christians of an earlier day made great mistakes was that of the Israelitish system of religion. By many it was accounted to be merely a pattern for the Christian Church, the priesthood being the model for the Christian ministry, the congregation of the tribes being representative of the Christian laity. A warranty was thus produced for the particular privileges which the ministry claimed as their special prerogative. Some, looking at the frequent effusions of sacrificial blood, considered this part of the system barbaric and revolting, and utterly unworthy of the Christian's God. In consequence, the Hebrew's God was accounted to be a mere tribal God—akin to Baal (the Assyrian God) and Dagon (the Philistines' God)—a God delighting in blood sacrifice and oft-repeated rite. The real reason for the institution of the Israelitish system was *not* to provide a pattern for the clerical and lay division of the Church in this present dispensation, nor were the constantly repeated sacrificings intended to teach that Jehovah was a mere tribal God. The object behind these things was to shadow forth the cleansing and adoption of that people—but in a later day—as the channel of Divine Love and Redemption for all the peoples of the earth. In thus becoming the adopted channel of the Lord, they would be the means of manifesting God's Holiness to man. In order to prepare them for that Millennial task, God began to teach them, in kindergarten form, the deeper values of life and liberty, of holiness and sin.

To teach them this elementary aspect of redemption truth, God took them apart from the rest of men, and instituted, with great care and detail, the system of the Priesthood and the Law. They needed also to learn that God was holy—a God who could not approve sin. Other peoples associated vile practices with the worship of their gods, and entertained no consciousness of sin therein. With Israel it was intended to be otherwise. Their God desired to erect the standard of purity and holiness in their midst, and to create within them an intense abhorrence for their sin.

In the wicked state of that ancient world, that was indeed a great and exalted lesson to be learned. In order to show them something

of the vast difference between holiness and sin, God instituted a series of separations among men, each stage of which was intended to depict an increased degree of holiness, until, by the emblem of his own Presence in their midst the absolute degree was shadowed forth.

First of all, the entire nation was separated from the rest of men. When God's due time for deliverance had drawn near, God sent Moses to lead them out of Egyptian bondage. "*Israel is my son, even my firstborn . . . let my son go*" so said Moses to Egypt's king (Exod. 4. 22-23). Among the whole concourse of the nations of the earth to be regathered to the Creator-Father, Israel was intended to be the first. He brake the Egyptian yoke, and set his people free. He led them through the sea, and separated them into a place apart. After this He separated one whole tribe from among this separated people; then a separated family from among a separated tribe; and then a separated man from among the separated family. This man alone of the whole nation—nay of the whole world—was permitted to appear before that holy and mysterious Light wherein God had made his presence known.

In order to begin his great design of blessing all the nations of the earth, and winning back their hearts from sin, the Holy God, who because of Eden's sin withdrew into the distance and the dark, now began his approach to men. In keeping with the Promise made to Abraham, God made this first approach to Abraham's seed, in order to teach them how He hated sin. Accordingly He came and pitched his Tent within the circle of their camp. He came to dwell in that mysterious Light; to be the central feature of their life—to be their God, and take them to be his people. Yet though He came so comparatively near to his chosen people, how far away He really was! Around his Tent, a Holy-Court was marked. A holy fence prevented Israel's unceremonious ingress to the Sacred Court, save when presenting oblation before their God. None save the chosen tribe had daily access (of right and duty) to enter within that white-curtained space. But not all these, those Levi's sons, were privileged to tread the Holy Place within the Sacred Tent. None save the anointed Priest had

right of access there. But deeper still, within the Most Holy Place (the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Israel)—dwelt Israel's God, so near, and yet so far away. The separations among the people were thus augmented by the separations of these respective "places".

Again, the chosen tribe must show distinction in its dress. In robes of linen, pure and white, they trod the holy ground. No other men could wear this dress. Above all this, he upon whom fell the highest choice must dress in robes of even greater distinctiveness, to all else everywhere denied. A golden crown adorned his head—fit emblem of his Holiness to the Lord. Anointed with an holy oil, for other use forbidden, this special man stood forth as the Anointed of the Lord.

Yet even he, the final choice of all these stages of selection, was not permitted at any time, or at his own will or pleasure, to enter before the Holy Light. Not more than once each year, and even then not without the holy blood to make recompense for sin, this chosen Priest was admitted before the Holiness within to leave upon the Mercy Seat the "*Kaphar*" for himself and all the tribes of Israel. There was thus a way between Israel's need and God's abode, but how very narrow and circumscribed it was!

How far from the dark distance into which He had withdrawn the Holy God had come, that He might dwell with Abraham's Seed, and yet how far away his Dwelling-place was pitched! Too far for unaided, uninvited man to reach! That holy Light, untended and unfed, enthroned aloft amid cherubic wings, was emblem of that Eternal Light in heaven above, the source and fount of Holiness Divine. This was the standard of the Absolute, the Sinless, the Incomparable. Here was All-Holiness, underived. No holy oil sustained the Light. Here was no consuming, nor diminishing, nor replenishing. Here was Fulness (Col. 2. 9). Exhaustlessness—Eternal Plenitude. Here was no enthronement of a tribal God. No festal days of Isis or Osiris, of Bel or Dagon could compare with this.

In His own good time the Eternal Custodian of Virtue and Truth began herein anew to grapple with the heinousness and sinfulness of sin. For full two thousand years since Adam fell, God made no effort to hold sin in check, except on rare occasions when vengeance fell on vile unholy men. Death reigned everywhere unchecked before Moses came, but God had sent no further enunciation of his Law (Rom 5. 14). No sin-sacrifice was offered or accepted throughout those years,

for without proclamation of Law, no charge of sin was laid. God gave no law adapted to man's fallen estate when Adam fell. Thus, without Law defined, no transgression could occur. Man was condemned already, in the first father's condemnation. Adam broke the Law, and the broken Law had spoken. Its Judge had issued his decree; its Executive Power had acted, and both the sinner and his seed were under penal claim. No man of Adam's seed could break the grip and power of sin within, nor lessen its contaminating effects without. Still, notwithstanding that man was vile, and wallowed pleasurably in his filth, God had taken no occasion to re-assert his Law, nor to adapt it to the needs of fallen man, until his own due time arrived. When Abraham's Seed had multiplied, and had smarted beneath the tyrant's whip, God's due time had come.

The due time come, the Holiness of God began again to grapple with the sinfulness of sin. To show far it separated God from men He drew around Himself the children of his faithful Friend (Jas. 2. 24. Isa. 41. 8). Though fallen like all other men, yet God devised a way to use this seed to serve his ends. By bringing them apart from other men, by clothing some of them in special robes, by teaching them a code of adapted Laws, by accepting animal blood as atonement for their sins, God clothed and invested this people, priest and laity alike, with ceremonial saintliness. If they would obey his voice, He promised to accept them as a holy nation, and as a community of Priests, and to place within their Camp his own holy Habitation. This procedure did not free their hearts from sin. It did not cleanse them, once for all, from sin's effects. Their taints remained within, and oft they fell. Yet spite of this, if they would follow certain prescribed rites, God promised to account them clean, so that they might continue to serve his ends. How like a father, teaching his son to build! The nursery bricks—just tiny blocks of wood—are placed in this or that design, as doting sire thus teaches his little son to learn how it should be done. More than all else, the father seeks to cultivate his off-spring's "building sense".

Building it surely is—but oh, how crude and immature, yet exactly the right thing for the untrained infant mind. In course of time the wooden blocks may be superseded by brick or stone and some imposing edifice, artistically constructed, may come forth from brain and hand, as consequence of that kindergarten cultivation of the "building sense".

We speak of building sense illustratively here—now let us speak of “holiness sense”, as God takes his family of pupil sons in hand. That it was nursery work and kindergarten instruction, all will admit. But in that far time, in no place else the wide world through, could anything to compare be found.

God was commencing a great design—of this Abraham had been told—but no effective instrument was ready to his hand. God must needs make that instrument in his own way. Hence, He gave them statutes and instructions to expand their minds, so that they could order their lives thereby. The exact value of this instruction is found in its results upon the lives of those rare souls who rose to heights of trust and faith—as Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel, and others too, who shone like stars in a dark sky. Faithful men, of whom the world was not worthy; of whom God bare record that they had pleased Him, yet all in very truth, the product of Sinai's Law and Covenant.

This faithful few, and not the sinful mass, are token of the task God undertook when He began to “make” a people for his Name. That all the rest in Israel, the ox-like stubborn mass, were not pure in heart is only too painfully sure, yet spite of all their sins and stubbornness, it still remained that they were accepted as the first-fruits, the first-born, among all the people of the earth. Intrinsicly no better than the rest, God accounted them as separate from their fellows, and invested them with an external holiness to make possible their participation with Him in his plans. *“I am the Lord your God which have separated you from other people . . . And ye shall be holy unto Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine”* (Lev. 20. 24-26). *“Sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God . . . I am the Lord which sanctify you”* (Lev. 20. 6-8). *“I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves and ye shall be holy, for I am holy . . . ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”*. (Lev. 11. 44).

These words, spoken to the whole nation, describe the whole nation's standing before God. The lesson we must learn in connection with their calling is that their lapses into sin and idolatry did not cancel out their position before God, nor destroy their holy standing as his people, and intended co-workers in the accomplishment of his plans. To enable them to maintain their national holy standing before their Holy God, the

whole Levitical system was then set up. Though they were chosen to be a *nation of priests*, yet God appointed for them a chosen tribe to render priestly service, and a priestly family with its specially chosen priest to slay the sacrifice and offer the blood which ceremonially cleansed them from their sin. Themselves a nation of intended priests, yet God provided for them a family of priests. Israel was at school—its teacher was the Most High God—the Almighty God who had called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—its lesson, first, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; second, its converse postulate, the Absolute Holiness of God. To that end God surrounded them with holy things. He gave them holy days and holy years to keep, He gave them ordinances of service and ablutions to keep them clean, or to restore cleanliness when lost. He gave them holy fire to consume upon an holy altar the oblations which they brought. He gave them holy water wherein to wash after contact with the dead.

Looking back from our own fuller day, how hopelessly trivial and inadequate these carnal ordinances may seem. The constant round of sacrifice with its repeated effusion of blood—the slaughtering of bulls and goats, the repeated washing of hands and robes, the trimming and feeding of golden lamps: the swinging censer while incense burned, the regular eating of permitted foods—oh, how humdrum and monotonous it might seem; a constant round of tawdry ritual and fleshly ceremonial; but let us not forget even in this our “better” day, that this is the most advanced lesson in righteousness and holiness which the whole world of that distant day affords. In no place else than Israel did God condescend to set before the minds of men the first principles of that holier estate where man might live at peace with man, and in subjection to a Holy God. Count it elementary if we will; esteem it kindergarten as we please, but let it not be overlooked that here historic fact attests that in this way the chosen race first began within the bounds of post-Edenic times to lisp its alphabet in the deepest things of life. A people was set apart to God, to serve his deeper purposes; to throw upon the screen of life a picture of the present tragedy of sin and of its ultimate finale in righteousness, when once the “better things” have brought to pass the redemptive blessings for all the nations of the earth. Faulty and frail they were, so often falling as other men to worship idol gods, yet notwithstanding all, they were accounted holy unto God.

Not holy in themselves, not undefiled in heart, but for the programme's sake, God took them as his own. Not from within, but from without that holiness derived. It came from God, and from his presence in their midst and from his expressed desire to have them co-operate with Him to out-work His great designs.

A great objective was set before them—and even in those early days the credit-worthiness of the scheme was attributed to them for the scheme's sake. It was intended in future times to produce holiness in man—to conquer sin and make man whole and wholesome within. This holy "end" made holy the "means" thereto. And thus in those far-off primitive days, by means of elementary rites and sacrifices God set on record for such

to read as can, the basic lesson concerning his own inner Self, and of his unfaltering intention to set man free from sin and death. Intrinsically unholy men were accorded extrinsic holiness, so that they might co-operate with God. Gathered round the emblem of his presence, within the hidden depths of the Holiest place, and set by God each in his own respective relation thereto, High-Priest, under-Priest, Levite, and tribesman, each and all, from centre to circumference afford a picture of holy means dedicated to a holy end. The lesson we must learn to-day is this, that those whom God calls to be associated with Himself in carrying forward his great design, are made Holy by that association, for the sake of the design.

(To be continued)

GEORGE MULLER ON WORLD CONVERSION

"Sin is not, as some suppose, a comparatively little thing. It is a deadly spiritual disease, as the word of God declares it to be; and no progress in education, no mental culture, can eradicate it from the heart, nor change depraved human nature. For, notwithstanding every effort at improvement the heart remains 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked'. Until the return of the Lord Jesus, therefore, the present state of things will continue, and, as we shall see presently from the word of God, will become worse and worse.

"The gospel, indeed, was to be preached 'for a witness unto all nations', but it was not to be the means of the conversion of the world. (Matt. 24. 14). Moreover, from Acts 15. 14 we learn the character of the present dispensation, which is, that God takes out from among the Gentiles 'a people for His name', but does not convert all nations. This is confirmed by the parable of the wheat and the tares; for if the whole world were to be converted before the return of the Lord Jesus, there would be no truth in the explanation given of it by our Lord Himself. He tells us that the tares (the children of the wicked ones) were to grow together with the wheat (the children of the kingdom), until the end of the age, namely, up to the time of His return. This, therefore, the word of the Lord Jesus, is in direct opposition to the common notion that the world will be converted previous to His coming again

"As assuredly as the practical character of the Lord's second coming is really appre-

hended in the power of it, the most blessed effects upon the life and deportment of Christians will follow. By means of it we are taught what awaits the worldly, lying in the wicked one, and what will be the end of all this world's glory, pride and pomp. The future destiny of the children of God is also unfolded to us, even that we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of our risen Lord, both in soul and body, when we shall see Him as He is. Then shall we enter upon the possession of our inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and shall be seated with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3. 21), to judge the world in union with Him, and to spend a happy eternity together with our Lord in glory. 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' (Rev. 22. 12.)"

(George Muller, 1805-98)

* * *

(George Muller of Bristol is famous for the children's Homes he founded and conducted during a great part of his life, and his unswerving faith which carried him through many a financial crisis in that connection.)

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

Margie Brown



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 47, No. 4

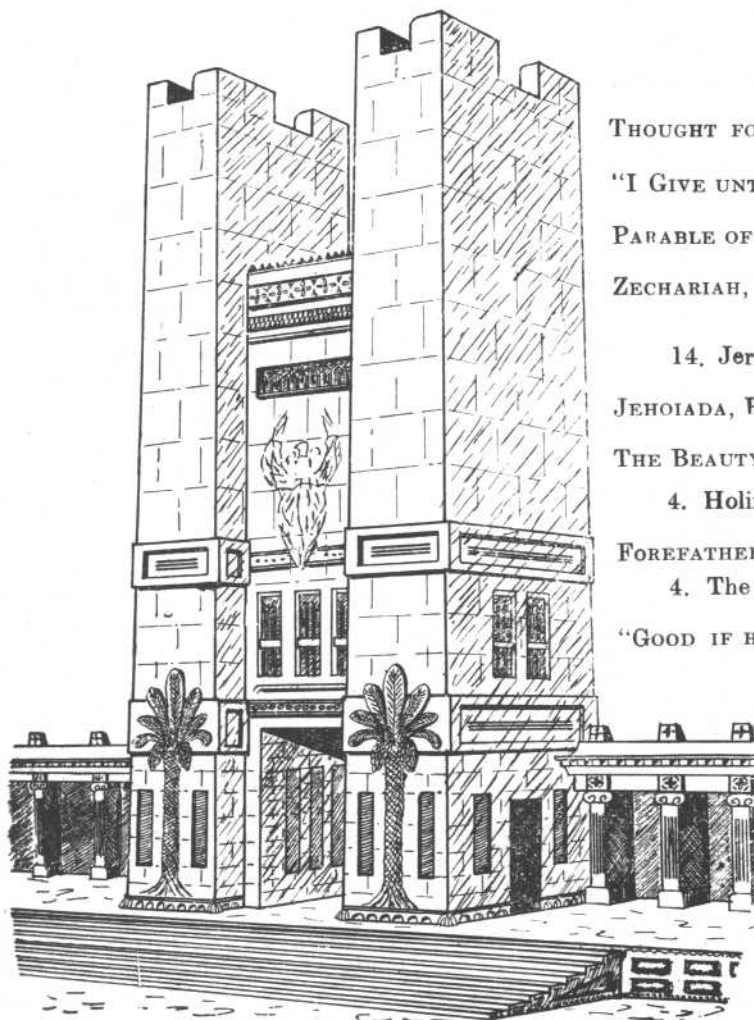
JULY/AUG. 1970

Published July 1st

Next issue September 1st

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

*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*

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
 Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

Thought for the Month

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth!" (Rom. 14. 4).

It is so fatally easy to value another brother's or sister's service by one's own bushel measure. We all desire very earnestly to serve our Lord and the interests of His Kingdom. We generally take delight in speaking of Him and of the Divine Plan to any who will listen. And we all have our own ideas of how best the Gospel may be preached. Is it the very intensity of our own earnestness in this direction that makes us want every other bondsman of Jesus Christ to serve in just the same manner that seems good to us? Is it the measure of our own personal talent and success in one particular field of ministry that blinds us to the possibility of effective service being rendered in another manner, in other hands?

"There are diversities of gifts . . . there are differences of administrations . . . but it is the same God that worketh" (1 Cor. 12. 4-6). When will we learn that the grandest characteristic of all God's handiwork is variety, and that He has ordained the accomplishment of His service in such a fashion that "every joint" supplieth a contribution fitted to its place in the body?

Says one, loftily, secure in his ability and privilege to address the assemblies as befits the office of an elder in the Church, "there is no doubt that the preaching of the Word is the great means the Lord has ordained for the spiritual growth of His people." All very well—but what discouragement to the brother who is temperamentally quite unable to stand before an audience and deliver a prepared discourse, but in his own quiet way can lead a study circle in leisured discussion of the Scriptures to the very real edification of

his fellows

It was teacher's birthday. For weeks beforehand her pupils had been busy making pretty aprons and tending little plants in pots to give her on the day, for this teacher was greatly beloved. At length lesson time was over and they crowded round with their offerings, stepping back with gratified smiles as the teacher expressed her surprise and delight at each successive gift. Last of all came the "black sheep" of the class, grubby and untidy, half hesitating and half defiant, avoiding the amused looks of his classmates as he extended a tightly clenched fist and deposited into teacher's hand—a hot and sticky piece of butterscotch and three marbles.

But that teacher was wise—wiser than many who have attained eldership in the assemblies. "Oh, how lovely!" she cried, smiling down at the anxious little face below her. "It's years since anybody gave me marbles for my birthday; and I just adore butterscotch."

The grubby one made his way back to his desk, head held high and face radiant. He loved his teacher, and he had so feared his gift would be rejected, but she had understood. He had done what he could

Brethren in the Lord! Be very careful how you disparage the service another is trying to render, just because you "cannot see what good it will do." You may be the means of dashing the enthusiasm of one who will never be able to serve in the big things, as you are privileged to serve, but is nevertheless trying to contribute some small mite to the work of the Master Whom we all love. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."

Gone from us

Bro. W. C. Seabourne (Pontypool)

'Till the day break, and the shutters flee away'

"I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE"

Scripture quotations herein are from the Standard Revised Version.

* * *

"He who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jno. 5. 24).

That is one of the many New Testament statements which declare that the gift, or power, or quality, of eternal life is the present possession of every true believer. The submission of the heart and life in loyalty and dedication to Christ, the acceptance of Him as Saviour and Leader, the conscious deliberate alignment of one's life with the will of God insofar as that will is understood, all this results in a real change of state in the individual whereby the life animating that individual is changed in its quality from one that is essentially transient to one that is essentially permanent. *"He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life"* (1 Jno. 5. 12). *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him"* (Jno. 3. 36). The life that is here spoken of is not one that is conferred after death as reward for a lifetime of piety and good works; it is one that results from acceptance of Christ and His ways and it precedes the piety and good works rather than succeeds them.

It must be admitted, though, that many other Scriptures do refer to eternal life as an object of hope and future attainment, as though it were conditional upon the attainments of this mortal life. There is no man who has left house, or so on, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, said Jesus *"who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life"* (Luke 18. 30). That seems quite clearly a promise for the future, conditional upon present actions rather than present belief. Paul, writing to Titus, extolled his mission *"to further the faith of God's elect . . . in hope of eternal life which God promised ages ago"* (Titus 1. 2), and again, to the Galatians, *"he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life"* (Gal. 6. 8). One might conclude, hastily, that there is an element of contradiction in these two presentations and

that room exists for debate as to whether eternal life is in fact a present possession or a future hope.

Perhaps this seeming contradiction is due to the rather natural tendency to think of eternal life or everlasting life—the same word in the original is used for both terms—from the standpoint of that perpetual, never-ending life of the future which the Christian believes is his destiny after human death. "There shall be no more death"; this to him is synonymous with eternal life, a condition of existence in perpetuity amid all the future-worldly splendours which his theology has taught him to visualise. Now whilst all this may be very true it is not the meaning of the Scriptural term eternal life. The word "eternal", with its idea of time-perpetuity, came from the Latin versions, but in the original manuscripts the Greek word so often rendered "eternal" and "everlasting" has the significance of enduring, of the permanent as opposed to the transient. It is true that the eternal life will endure for ever, but it is because of its *quality* that it endures for ever, and it is to its quality rather than its duration that the term "eternal" applies.

Perhaps John 6. 54 is significant in this connection. *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* Leaving aside for the present the mystic significance of the flesh and the blood, here is a clear intimation that one who possesses eternal life here and now in consequence of his vital association with Christ must nevertheless pass through the gates of death and emerge into the after-life by means of resurrection, "at the last day". The possessor of eternal life, then, dies as a human being even though the life that is in him endures in the Divine care and is afterwards manifested in a new body fitted to the new world into which he has entered. The logical conclusion would then seem to be that a man does not enter the future state in order to receive eternal life; he enters the future state because he already has eternal life.

What of the non-possessors? It is a manifest fact that of all earth's millions, past and present, only a relatively small proportion come within the requirements of our Lord's words. Most of the remainder have never even

heard of the "only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved". They live, in a biological sense, but they do not have eternal life. In that state, and unless they eventually come within the scope of our Lord's standards, they must inevitably die, and be no more. The life that is in them cannot sustain them indefinitely. This, says the Scriptures, is because of sin, sin which is the element of disorder in God's creation, the continued presence of which in the individual life makes continued life impossible, just as its continued presence in any part of the creation—in this earth, for example—must ultimately render the continuance of that part of creation impossible. The story of Eden is the record of the entrance of that disorder into this world, and the sentence on Adam "*return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. You are dust, and to dust you shall return*" its consequence. The position is summed up by Paul in the cogent words "*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 6. 23).

If then the quality of life with which man is born is insufficient to carry him into the illimitable future; if he can only fulfil the God-given ultra-human potentialities of his being by becoming the recipient of what the Scriptures call "eternal life", then it is obvious that God must have provided for every child of Adam to have knowledge and opportunity sufficient to accept this free gift of God in Christ. That many have lived their lives and gone into death without that knowledge and opportunity does not invalidate that fact. In some manner and at some time every human being who has lived will be brought face to face with these eternal verities and make his choice, for good or evil, for life or death. With any rational and moral being, repentance for the past and acceptance of Christ for the future must be just as possible after death as before, and the Divine response to such an one must be always on the same principle "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,*" so the period of time in history during which it is possible for the individual to turn from "dead works to serve the living God" and receive His gift of eternal life is limited, not by the end of that individual's earthly life, but by the close of the time-span which God in His wisdom foresees will be adequate for the whole of the race of mankind to realise the issues and to make the choice. For be it remembered that God, having created and constituted men as independent living beings having powers of

free-will, cannot possibly compel them to the good life, to a forced conformity with the system of order which is His creation. There must at least be provision for a man to refuse the blessings of conscious life on the only terms on which it can be offered. It is at least conceivable that a man could be so wedded to the principles and practice of evil that he could not endure life in a system in which evil has no place; that such an attitude is possible is indicated by the Scriptures which show that in the final outworking of things God withdraws the gift of conscious life from those who cannot accept and make use of it aright. And since the progress and approach of the human mind toward that decision is a matter of time and not eternity, there must come an end to the period of human probation and a time when only those who have attained to eternal life will remain to take their appointed places in the Divine scheme.

This is where the Messianic Kingdom of God upon earth becomes an important theological factor. The Scriptural presentation of a thousand-year period, following the Second Advent and the disintegration of the existing world order, during which Heaven's rule will prevail to the infinite betterment of earth's peoples is fairly generally known, with divers variations, among Christians. It is perhaps not so generally appreciated that this period provides the very means necessary whereby the "unsaved dead" of past times may receive that knowledge of Christ which is essential to their salvation but was denied them in the past life. Jesus did say that the day is to come when all who are in their graves will hear His voice "*and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment*" (Jno. 5. 28-29). It is easy to see, in those that come forth to the "resurrection of life", Christian believers of this Age who have already received the gift of eternal life and have not subsequently repudiated it. In their resurrection they enter into the heavenly realm in the full glory and power of celestial nature and in eternal association with the Lord Christ their Leader and Head. The others, who come forth to a resurrection by judgment, have not yet arrived at the point where acceptance of Christ gives them, in their turn, the gift of eternal life. They have not yet made their decision. In many cases they have not yet received the knowledge necessary to making a decision. No wonder this is called a resurrection by

judgment; this entire Messianic Kingdom is a process of trial and judgment to those who are its subjects; by its close all will have come to the crisis of decision and made their choice—for God and His ways, or against.

That decision and that outcome is necessary, and it is final and irrevocable, because in a manner we as finite terrestrial beings cannot begin to understand, life, continuing life, eternal life, can only come to us through Christ. He is the centre and pivot of all creation and on Him all things depend. "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1. 17). That is why the New Testament insists that acceptance of the Lord Christ and union with Him is essential to salvation, a dogma that would seem unnecessarily severe were practice of the good life and the repudiation of evil all that was necessary. The whole living creation is a unity, each individual constituting a personal identity in his own right, an identity preserved by God through death of the organism in one world to resurrection in a new organism in another world, and yet the sum of all created individuals all joined together to constitute a harmonious living union animated by the life which comes from God, through Christ. Said the Apostle Paul to the

Christians at Ephesus, in the endeavour to expound this truth, "he has made known to us . . . the mystery of his will, according to his purpose . . . a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1. 9-10).

This is as far as human mind can penetrate. The possibilities and certainties of the distant future are hidden from us until in the fulness of time we have powers of thought and perception the range of which can take in the scope of those transcendent worlds which lie beyond and above the terrestrial. We can only rest ourselves in that conviction which possessed the great Apostle's Spirit-filled mind when he declaimed "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived; what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 9). There is a spiritual understanding of a life and a world yet to be in our experience, which is impressed upon our minds, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and becomes conviction, whilst as yet we cannot visualise its nature and appearance. Says the Beloved Disciple (1 Jno. 3. 2) "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is".

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Publicans - sinners - Pharisees - scribes ! They were all in the audience which listened while Jesus unfolded his story of the self-willed young man who in his arrogance turned away from his home and kindred, tasted to the full all that this world had to offer, and returned at last, chastened and repentant, to the father whose love had never wavered. So human a story it is and so true to everyday life that it has never lost its appeal. Each generation for nearly two thousand years has told and re-told the story; of all the parables of Jesus this one must be the best known to the man in the street. The individual who is neither interested in the New Testament narratives nor claims to know anything about them will readily use the term "prodigal" in everyday conversation with a very definite idea of its meaning. There is something in the story of the returned son's acceptance by his overjoyed father because he came in repentance and contrition that rings true in most men's minds. This is how God must act if He is really God; that is the

sub-conscious thought. If the story had ended with the father sternly turning the returned prodigal away from his doorstep with the admonition "you have made your bed; you must lie on it" there is little doubt that it would never have gained the immortality it now possesses. It is not just that the story has a happy ending; it is because, deep down in the mind of every man, there is embedded the consciousness that this is how a man ought to act. No matter how far he has strayed from the right way, how deeply he has fallen into things shameful and vile, his Father in heaven has never faltered in His love for His erring child and stands waiting for his return—nay, goes out to meet him on the way back. That vital truth colours and illuminates all true Christian theology.

The fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel sets out in sequence three parables illustrating the Lord's words in Luke 19. 10 "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". These are: the story of one lost sheep out of one hundred; one lost piece of

silver out of ten; one lost son out of two. The shepherd went out to seek his sheep, and there was joy among his friends and neighbours when he had found it. The young girl searched diligently for the missing coin from her betrothal string, and there was joy among her friends and neighbours when she had found it. But the father did not go out to seek his son; he let him have his way and go whithersoever he wished, but he waited and watched until the lost one began himself to seek the way back, and then he went out gladly to bring him in. And there was more than rejoicing; there was a feast, and music and dancing. Is there a hint here that when man goes out in his own self-will to live his life without God, he is allowed to do so without let or hindrance, but God is always watching and will reach out to reclaim the wanderer just so soon as that self-will shows signs of breaking down? God will coerce no man's will; none will be saved except by the exercise of his own free will, voluntarily and intelligently coming to Christ by repentance and justification by faith, and so into a condition of reconciliation with God. But it is only the first step back that the wanderer must take for himself; after that he finds his father hastening to meet him.

So this young man collected his assets, "*the portion of goods that falleth to me*" (Luke 15. 12) and went his way. In the ordinary way both he and his elder brother would have laboured in the house and on the farm in subordination until their father's death, and then would have inherited half the property each, and each set up on his own. This younger son was impatient, and he did not want to spend all his life on a farm. He wanted to see the world while he was young, and taste some of the world's pleasures which only money could buy and anyway could only be enjoyed by going away to the big city. He mortgaged his future for the present, giving up a life of honest labour which would have laid the foundation for future prosperity, for a brief time of pleasure and indulgence which would come to an abrupt end when his capital was exhausted. Then he would be poor indeed; but of that day he did not stop to think.

There has never been a nation, never a generation since the world began, in which this same drama has not been enacted time and time again. The sequel has always been the same. "*He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*" That is always the second stage. Then comes the third "*When he had*

spent all . . . he began to be in want". That is the point at which his new-found friends all left him—directly the money ran out. There has been no change in two thousand years—it still works the same way. Now the wanderer is friendless, destitute, hungry and desperate. Now he begins to think of the home he left and the many advantages he had, which he then so lightly esteemed; what would he not give to be back there and have them now! He looks on his old home and his old life in a very different light from that in which he viewed it formerly. That subordination to his father against which he had so chafed; that obligation to take his share of the household duties and farm work which had so irked him; that day-by-day routine so necessary for the orderly conduct of communal life together; he began to see now why these things had to be. He began to realise that he was one unit in a community and could not repudiate his duties and place without prejudicing the welfare of that community. He might have had words come into his mind which were afterwards put on record by the Apostle Paul "*No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself*". The thought of responsibility came into his mind and it was a thought that had never occurred to him before. And it was then that a great illumination came to him. "*He came to himself*", and there and then he determined to go back home.

How many of us realise that in those five words in verse 17 "*When he came to himself*" is summed up the whole secret of the Divine permission of evil? All too often Christians—even dignitaries of the Church—confess, in reply to questions, that they cannot understand the reason for the existence or permission of evil; it is a profound mystery. It is really nothing of the kind if the Bible is read carefully from Genesis to Revelation and the full import of the Eden story allowed to sink in. "*I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it*" ruminated the Preacher (Eccl. 3. 10) and there is the answer. God did not ordain that man should fall into sin, and the story of Eden shows that man sinned entirely of his own volition; but evil having thus entered the world, God in His wisdom does not restrain it immediately, because it is, under His providence, yielding to mankind lessons of experience just as the prodigal's life of dissipation did to him. The reign of evil has been under Divine control from the start and will persist only for the period God has

ordained, for He has declared "*As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*" (Num. 14. 21) and the day will certainly come when "*the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together*" (Isa. 40. 5). These promises, and many like them, cannot be ignored; the integrity of the Word of God is bound up with them, and they must surely be fulfilled. Evil and sin will one day be banished from God's creation and all things and all creatures will be at one in Christ. Unto him shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2. 10-11), and that means that not one soul can continue in conscious life into the eternal ages without being reconciled to God. It is literally and terribly true that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18. 4; Matt. 10. 28).

It was when the wanderer had repented and started on the way back that his father went out to meet him. The son had the right idea; he was not going to claim the privileges of sonship; he realised that he had forfeited those. He was going to ask merely to be put on the same footing as the servants. He would labour and be obedient, and take his place in the community, but he was not expecting to be reinstated in his former position just as if nothing had happened. The father, for all his love and tenderness, made it plain later on that the returned prodigal could not resume his former position purely on the basis of repentance. When the elder son, coming to the house at the close of day, reproached the father for having received the waster back, he received the answer "*Son . . . all that I have is thine*". (vs. 31). The whole of the father's property would now revert to the elder son, for the younger had already had his share. Whatever the younger son might gain in property in later life must be by his own efforts.

There is something here that demands serious thought. The repentance of one who comes to God is a great thing and there is joy among the angels of heaven over one such sinner that repenteth, but repentance of itself does not fit the converted sinner for his ultimate place in God's eternal creation. The Divine purpose in creating mankind does not envisage human destiny confined to the alternatives of playing a harp or blowing a trumpet to all eternity. Man is created to fill a definite place in creation and has to be fitted and prepared for that place. His experience with sin and evil is only one aspect of that preparation, and after repentance and

reconciliation with God there must be instruction in righteousness and a determined co-operation with God in rooting out the effects of sin from the character, so that at last the man stands as did Adam before his fall, perfect and sinless, but with the advantage, which Adam never had, of experience.

So although the young man came home to a welcome and a feast and merry-making, he came also to hard work and a re-tracing of his steps. He had got to prove himself, to show that his reformation was genuine. He had got to make amends for his misdeeds and to learn that "*what a man soweth, that shall he reap*". But in all the slow process of rehabilitation he had the supporting consciousness of his father's love. He knew that unless it was by his own deliberate wish, his father would never let him go.

That is how God is dealing with man. "God will have all men to be saved" said St. Paul in 1 Tim. 2. 4 "*and to come to a knowledge of the truth*". Israel in Ezekiel's day had the Divine message "*I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye*" (Ezek. 18. 32). The story of Jonah, and the Divine purpose to save Nineveh because the Ninevites repented; of Sodom, and the promise to avert the judgment if only ten righteous men could be found in it (Gen. 18. 32), shows that God is actively working to save men, and will save those who come to Him by belief in Christ. But belief in, and acceptance of, Christ is not merely a lip-service verbal assent to his claims, but a coming so completely into harmony with all that He is and all that He does that in all respects the life is transformed and a character built that will stand sinless to all eternity. Such a character is not built in a day. That is why we who are Christ's now have to give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1. 10), and why God has appointed a day (Acts 17. 31), the thousand year day of the Messianic Age, to reclaim all from among men who can be reclaimed, before the eternal ages of glory of redeemed mankind commence to run their endless course.

The elder brother? He was angry, jealous, resentful that the sinner had been received back home. It was not that he himself would be any the poorer. The entire property was still to be his at the father's death. The younger son still had to make his own way in life. But the elder in his passion for righteousness could not find it in him to admit the younger

*2 different words
and connotations.*

to take any part nor lot in the happiness of the family home. The youth had sinned; he should be punished for his sin and the punishment should be everlasting. He should be banished for ever from the father's home, repentance or no repentance.

Jesus meant that word for the Pharisees who were listening, those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and relegated the publicans and sinners, whether repentant or not, to Gehenna—Hell. Unhappily the same spirit is still abroad to-day. So many worthy Christians want to see the sinners well and truly punished, rather than that God in His mercy and wisdom should come out to meet them halfway and lead them to a better life. Like the disciples who wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the unbelieving Samaritans, they forget

temporarily of what spirit they are of; a little quiet reflection should be enough to realise the truth of the Lord's words on that occasion "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them".

There is a hymn which runs:

*"But men make his love too narrow
By false limits of their own;
And they magnify his vengeance
With a zeal he will not own.
"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."*

Those are true sentiments. "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

THE SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY

Among the qualifications for elders Paul specifies "a lover of hospitality", and under his general exhortations to Christians he lists "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12. 13). Peter says, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging", while Heb. 13. 2 reads, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". The deliverance of Lot out of Sodom depended upon his hospitality to the angels. In Biblical times the practice of entertaining strangers was a very necessary one, when there was no other provision for lodging travellers as there is in modern society.

Hospitality is usually associated with providing food and lodging, but it is by no means limited to this. If we really entertain others we do more than put a meal in front of our guests. We shower love and attention upon them. We do our utmost to make them welcome and to make them feel at home. Indeed so important are these other factors, especially under present-day conditions, that we should not consider it hospitality without them; neither indeed would it be, for this is the very spirit of hospitality.

But the spirit of hospitality is expressed not merely by inviting others to our houses, for this is often done for baser motives. We can invite them into our fellowship and into our

Do our hearts ache for the injustice and oppression that comes before our notice every day? Do our minds cry out in protest at some flagrant example of misery or cruelty inflicted perhaps by heartless men or soulless institutions and governments? Do we long for the wisdom and the power to go out into the

affections, making room for them and their convictions in the spirit of liberty, even though at temporary inconvenience and sacrifice to ourselves. The spirit of hospitality will create in us an earnest desire that we may be able to give some blessing and help to others on their earthly pilgrimage. It will make us generous, not only in what we give, but in what we allow in our judgment and in our treatment of those from whom we may differ in matters of interpretation. We shall have the spirit of Jesus who taught us to pray, "Forgive us, as we forgive".

The hospitality of the widow was put to the test very sorely when Elijah told her to first bake him a cake out of her last scanty handful of meal upon which the lives of her son and herself were depending. But her compliance in faith with this request brought a reward beyond her dreams. The Shunammite woman, whose hospitality freely provided a little chamber for the prophet Elisha, was also greatly blessed by God, who is no man's debtor, and never overlooks the least service done to those who belong to Him. The spirit of hospitality in our hearts, in seeking to give freely of our love and service, will most surely receive generous recompense from the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

world bringing happiness and health where now there is sorrow and sickness? These are the things that must possess our inward being like a burning fire if we will be of those who in the next Age will come forth armed with all wisdom and power to do these very things.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 14. Jerusalem Exalted

Following Israel's dramatic deliverance at Jerusalem, marked by the revelation of the Lord from Heaven and his assumption of kingly power, there is a kind of orderly procession of related events which have the effect of leading the whole world into the light and life of the Millennial Kingdom. Here in Zechariah's 14th chapter there is a short passage, verses 6-11, which has its place between the great deliverance and the full establishment of the Messianic reign over all the earth. Only after relating, in symbol, the nature of those happenings does the prophet bring his book to a close in the glories of the Kingdom itself. As with the previous part of the chapter, the physical setting of the prophecy is the literal city and its surroundings, and in fact these verses are closely connected with the earlier description of the besieged city, the advent of Israel's deliverer, and the earthquake.

So, after completing his account of the Lord's coming, with all His holy ones, the defeat of the besiegers and the salvation of the city, Zechariah says (vs. 6-7) "*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark, but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light*". Not a very lucid passage, but that is because some of the words have proved difficult to translate correctly, and even today scholars are dubious as to their meaning. The consensus of opinion is that in a general way the heavenly luminaries, the stars, and perhaps the moon, lose their brilliancy and fade into obscurity, but that at the close of that day there shall be the full blaze of meridian sunlight. "*The bright stars shall contract their lustre*" says Gesenius "*There shall not be light, but heavy clouds and thick*" suggests the Margolis translation. It is evident that the verses refer to the entire "Day of the Lord" of chapter 14 so that this darkness followed by light at the end becomes a familiar picture. As Joel says in reference to this same period "*the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining*" (Joel 3. 15) and Amos "*the day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light; even very dark, and no brightness in it*" (Amos 5. 20). The "one day known to the Lord" of verse 6 is an emphatic expression indicating that this day is a unique day, no

other day is just like it; which is just what Jeremiah says in the same connection: "*alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it*" (Jer. 30. 7). Very fittingly, therefore, do these two verses stand where they do. All that goes before them is the time of darkness, of battle and tumult and the overpowering of evil forces. That which comes after them is of the new day of light, of healing and rejoicing, of life and righteousness. In a very real sense the next verse, verse 7, can be said to picture the beginning of true Millennial blessing.

This verse is quite evidently relative to the coming of new life to the world. The King is now in control and the powers of His Kingdom begin to become evident. "*It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be*". The "former sea" (the sea in front) in Zechariah's geography is the Dead Sea, east of Jerusalem. The "hinder sea" (behind) is the Mediterranean, on the west. "Living waters" are perennial streams, not flowing in the rainy season only like so many rivers of the land, but there all the time, "in summer and in winter" so that they become truly rivers of life to the people. In symbol, therefore, rivers of life are to spring up in Jerusalem, one flowing eastward into the Dead Sea and the other westward to the Mediterranean. Zechariah is not the only prophet to take this theme. Joel, in the passage already quoted, follows the deliverance of Jerusalem by saying "*a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim*" (Joel 3. 18). The valley of Shittim (acacias) was the name of the region where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea (as indicated by Micah 6. 5 and Num. 25. 1) so that this river seen by Joel corresponds in symbol to the eastern stream seen by Zechariah. Ezekiel likewise saw a river proceeding from the restored Temple and going down into that same valley and so into the Dead Sea "*which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed*" (Ezek. 47. 1-12). And, of course, the vision of John in Rev. 22. 1-2 comes readily to mind, the seer beholding a river of water of life proceeding from the Holy City, with trees of

life on its banks, yielding fruit for food and leaves for "the healing of the nations". Quite evidently, therefore, we have here a vivid picture of the place of the restored and now victorious Holy Land and Holy Nation in the purposes of God, the agency by means of which all the Divine blessings, cleansing from sin and impartation of everlasting life, may come to the nations. Ezekiel and Joel saw this in terms of the cleansing of the land; the Dead Sea was to be made sweet that fish might live in its waters and vegetation surround its shores: but Zechariah was universal. He saw a second river of life making its way in the opposite direction to mingle its waters with the Great Sea which encompassed all the earth, so that eventually the whole world of mankind would draw benefit from its life-giving waters. In no more eloquent fashion could the universal power of Messiah's Kingdom, bringing life and health and freedom from sin to men in every place under the sun, be pictured than by this vision of the two rivers.

Is it reasonable to expect a literal fulfilment of this verse also? Will there truly be continuous rivers springing up at Jerusalem and making their way across country in the manner here described? There is nothing in the topography of the land to make such a thing impossible, although the relevance of such situation to the necessities of the Divine plans might be questioned. It is not generally realised that two such streams do actually at present exist although they are not perennial; they flow only in the winter. The Kidron, mentioned often in the Scriptures, rises on the north side of the city and flows alongside the eastern wall of the Temple, past the Pool of Siloam and in a south-easterly direction to the Dead Sea. There is the prototype of Zechariah's stream flowing into the "former sea". Then on the western side of the city, not far from the present railway station, there commences the Wady al Werd, a stream which flows westward, more or less following the railway, joining other streams en route until at last it falls into the Mediterranean, seven miles south of Tel-Aviv as the Wady Sorek. This is the stream which gave the prophet his figure for that one which flows to the "hinder sea". In other words, he took as his picture two existing streams and made of them a symbolic scene—twin rivers of life carrying life-giving energy and powers of healing to all the world in the day when God "turns to the people a pure language", that they may call upon him "to serve him with

one consent". (Zeph. 3. 9).

There are some expositors who amplify the content of verse 8 regarding the two rivers to infer that there is to be a continuous waterway from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea via Jerusalem, and onward through the south valley to the Red Sea, so that Jerusalem becomes a seaport controlling world trade between Europe and the Far East. Why the Holy City should thus become involved with mundane world affairs does not readily appear and the connection of all this with God's intention to make Jerusalem the earthly centre of Divine administration is far from obvious. In point of fact the idea is, physically, impracticable. Jerusalem stands more than two thousand feet above sea level, and no city at that elevation could ever be a seaport. The Jordan valley up to the Sea of Galilee is well below sea level so that such a waterway, if it ever came into being, would also flood an appreciable area of the Holy Land. This element of the prophecy is clearly a picture of two separate streams, each having its source in or near the City, flowing outward in opposite directions. In point of physical fact, there is only one known source of spring water in the old city; somewhere below the surface of Mount Moriah, on which stands the site of the Temple, there is a perennial spring which never fails, emerges at the Virgin's Fountain on the slopes of Ophel in the south-eastern corner, flows through Hezekiah's tunnel to the Pool of Siloam, and ultimately joins the river Kidron.

What wonder, then, that the Prophet should break out into the fervent declamation of verse 9 "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one". He might well have had in mind the noble words of Psa. 46 "the nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 'Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations: I will be exalted in the earth'. The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge". Zechariah in his vision beheld the reality of which these words were a poetic portrayal. Now the Lord had taken His great power and was reigning as King.

Once more the prophet turns his gaze upon the whole land of Israel, viewing it in his mind's eye much as Moses must have seen it from the top of Mount Pisgah, and he sees the final effect of the earthquake in the promised exaltation of the mountain of the Lord's house above the tops of the mountains (Isa. 2.2). In

this vision he saw the sinking of the highlands of Judea into the plain so that Jerusalem stood proudly erect upon the twin hills of Mount Moriah and Mount Zion in the centre. Physically, the heights of Hebron to the south and Samaria to the north tower anything up to a thousand feet above Jerusalem, so that the expression "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people" (Psa. 125. 2) is no figure of speech, but based on reality. Now, symbolically, all the heights of the country sink down to leave the Holy City towering supreme above. "All the land shall be encompassed as the Arabah" (the plain of the Jordan valley) "from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem, and she" (Jerusalem) "shall be raised on high, and inhabited in her place". So is the opening phrase of verse 10. "Rimmon south of Jerusalem" was to the north of Beer-sheba, forty-five miles from Jerusalem, at the southern end of the Judean highlands; Geba—the name of several places in ancient Israel—a town seven miles north of Samaria, now called Jaba, at the northern end of the highlands where they begin to slope down into the valley of Megiddo, some forty miles north of Jerusalem. "Geba to Beersheba" is used in 2 Kings 23. 8 as an expression indicating the full extent of the land; here in Zechariah it pictures the exaltation of Jerusalem in the Holy Land and in its extreme symbolic sense the prominence of the Holy Nation and the Holy Land in the sight of all the world, as the people and the city of the Great King. Both Isaiah and Micah spoke of Jerusalem being established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills, using the same metaphor as did Zechariah, and in none of the three cases is anything other than the metaphorical meaning intended. Any suggestion that a literal fulfilment is implied would have to take into consideration the fearful havoc and destruction to which the restored and rebuilt Holy Land would be necessarily subjected if something like half its surface area were suddenly to be precipitated between two and three thousand feet downwards into the bowels of the earth.

But there is yet more to come in this cameo picture of Jerusalem's prosperity. The same verse goes on to say that "she shall be inhabited" (or abide) "in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate: and from the tower of Hananeel unto the kings winepresses". What is to be made of this bit of geography? The inference is that the city as thus defined has up to this time lain desolate, or at least not in the pos-

session of God's Israel, but that from now on she shall be permanently established and take her place as the ruling centre of the land, and, according to verse 11 never again be disturbed: "men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."

It is of no use to look at a map of modern Jerusalem or one as it was at the time of the First Advent in seeking to understand these allusions, for the city in Zechariah's time was much smaller than in the days of Jesus, and the north and south walls were not in the same places. A number of interpreters have made this mistake. There is a certain amount of uncertainty about the precise boundaries of Solomon's and Nehemiah's Jerusalem: the eastern and western walls were practically those of the "Old City" today, but the northern wall was not so far north as at present, running more or less level with the north side of the Temple area, whilst the southern wall extended more to the south, as far as the Pool of Siloam. Zechariah's description has to be understood in this context.

"Benjamin's Gate"—also known as the Gate of Ephraim—seems at that time to have been located at the western end of the north wall, not far from the present Jaffa Gate. Some distance east of this point there had been in earlier times a gate known as the "Old Gate" or "First Gate", in Zechariah's time long since blocked up—he calls it "the place of the First Gate" indicating that it was no longer there. There were several points on the wall to which the name "Corner" was applied but the easterly direction implied by this verse seems to demand that the "Corner Gate" here was at the point Nehemiah calls the "Corner"—the eastern end of the wall where it turned south by the Temple area. Today that point is marked by St. Stephens Gate. Hence the full width of the Old City as it was then, from west to east, was defined.

The Tower of Hananeel, one of the defensive structures on the wall, was about half-way along the north wall, where the Tower of Antonia, the Roman garrison, stood in Jesus' day, adjacent to the Temple. The "king's winepresses" were in the gardens of Ophel, then bounded by the south wall. Hence the full length of the city, north to south, was thus indicated.

In this phrase, therefore, Zechariah is saying that the entire city, west to east and north to south, would be the possession of Israel and never again be disturbed or threatened. There can be no doubt that this promise is to be literally as well as spiritually fulfilled. In

the latter respect, it is synonymous with the enduring prosperity of the Holy Nation as the Divine instrument in the earth for world conversion. In the former, Jerusalem has already spread over a greater area than that defined by Zechariah but the promise remains; west to east, north to south, to the utmost extent of the Holy City.

There is a rather intriguing parallel to this passage in the writings of Jeremiah. His celebrated 31st chapter, which speaks of the final restoration in the Holy Land and the New Covenant which God will make with His people, concludes with a promise which, obscure on the surface, well repays examination. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall go forth against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord: it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever"* (Jer. 31. 38-40). Both prophets refer to much the same time in history; both take the city of Jerusalem as their stage; what is there in Jeremiah's words which may add to what Zechariah has said?

"From the Tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner" obviously means the same as the similar expression in Zechariah; this is a promise of the rebuilding of the city, or the Temple, or both. Now Jeremiah departs from Zechariah. From this corner gate, which was at the north-eastern corner of the Temple area, the measuring line is to "go forth" (go straight forward, is the meaning) over the hill called Gareb, sweep round in a curve (the meaning of "compass") to Goath, and then, including the valley of the dead and the fields of the river Kidron, come to the "corner of the horse gate toward the east". This corner was the south-eastern corner of the Temple area. The area thus delineated by the measuring line would therefore apparently be the piece of land lying immediately to the east of the Temple—the Kidron valley and the Mount of Olives.

Gareb and Goath, as place names, appear nowhere else in the Bible and not one commentator or expositor, so far as can be ascertained, has done more than suggest they must have been places near Jerusalem. It has been necessary to embark upon a little original research therefore to find some meaning in

this passage. The meaning of Ha-Gareb is the "Mount of the Lepers", the word coming from a Hebrew root defining scabs or scurvy, and used for leprosy in Syriac. The only eminence on the east side of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives, by which name it was known in the days of David, and again by Zechariah and later. But there is reason for thinking that in between these times it bore the more opprobrious name. 2 Kings 23. 13, relating to the time of Josiah, knows it as the Mount of Corruption. That at least could be fitting for a place which was the habitation of lepers. The same chapter reveals that Solomon had built, on the Mount of Olives, idolatrous sanctuaries, "high places", for Ashtoreth and Chemosh and Molech; Josiah pulled them down and defiled them "with the bones of men". What more natural that in order to complete their desecration the mountain should at that time, or soon afterwards become a place to which lepers were banished and lived their lives, and so earn the name it bore in the days of Jeremiah?

So the line went out from the north side of the Temple over the Mount of Olives, and curved round to Goath. Another difficult word! It comes from the Hebrew term for the lowing of cattle—cows and oxen. "The place of lowing" would be its literal force. How to find where such a place was located in that day? 2 Kings 23. 13 helps again here; the narrator says that the high places of Ashtoreth and the rest stood on the "right side" of the Mount of Corruption, i.e. on its southern aspect. Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, was usually represented as a cow. The measuring line, curving round Olivet to "Goath", would come to the place where Solomon built the idol sanctuary. The sanctuary itself was destroyed by Josiah; the place where it stood was still known in Jeremiah's day, perchance, as the "place of lowing"—Goath. From there a straight line back to the Temple would bring in the countryside leading down to the river Kidron, include the valley running along the east wall of the Temple, used then as it has been ever since as a general cemetery for Jerusalem's dead, and also for the disposal of the ashes from the Temple sacrifices, and finish at the Temple south wall, exactly as described in Jer. 31. 40.

What then is the purpose of this geographical exercise? It evidently meant something very real to Jeremiah; can it mean as much to us?

As an addition and a sequel to Zechariah's vision of the restored city it is full of mean-

ing. Zechariah saw the Lord descend on the Mount of Olives and, as it were, advance upon the city from the great valley that had been created and enter the Temple, never more to depart. The valley itself was closed up, just as in Ezekiel's parallel vision the East Gate was closed up, because the Lord had entered that way and never again could it be used by others. For all time that way is sacred. Now Jeremiah, seeing the city restored and knowing the Lord has come in, sees the whole tract of land thus hallowed by the Lord's coming, that whole Mount of Olives, cleansed from its past defilements, measured and marked out and separated from secular uses that it might be, as he says in chapter 31. 40 "holy unto the Lord". When one considers the stirring events in our Lord's earthly life associ-

ated with the Mount of Olives, few would dispute that it could very properly be made a holy place in the new earth that is to be. The spiritual meaning is the more important; the coming of the Lord has sanctified for ever all that formerly was evil and unclean but now is cleansed and good, but a strictly literal fulfilment of this particular vision would also be entirely proper. Perhaps, one day, when the peoples of earth come up to Jerusalem to worship and go to see the place from which the Lord of all creation ascended to His Father, they will meet, in spirit if not in letter, with the injunction "take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground".

(to be concluded)

THE QUIETNESS OF GOD

When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? (Job 34. 29).

Sorrow and griefs may, and perhaps often will, come in like a flood, but the Lord will be our stay and strength in every experience which he permits. The soul that has never known the discipline of sorrow and trouble has never yet learned the joy and preciousness of the Lord's love and helpfulness. It is in seasons of overwhelming sorrow and grief, when we draw near to the Lord, that he draws especially near to us. So the Psalmist found it, when in his deep affliction he cried to God, saying, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!" (vs. 1, 2). Feeling his own weaknesses and shortcomings, longing for full deliverance from every imperfection, and prophesying of the bountiful provisions of the Divine plan of salvation through Christ, he adds, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities (imputing them to us) O Lord; who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared (reverenced)" (vs. 3, 4).

How precious are such assurances when the soul is painfully conscious of its infirmities, of its utter inability to measure up to the perfect law of righteousness! How blessed it is to know that when our hearts are loyal and true, our God does not mark against us the unavoidable blemishes of our earthen vessel! If we come daily to him for cleansing, through the merits of our Redeemer, our failures are not imputed to us, but freely forgiven and washed away. The perfect righteousness of

our Saviour is our glorious dress, arrayed in which we may come to God with humble boldness, courage—even into the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

In every experience of sorrow and distress, and when the strain of the jarring discords and the stinging vexations and wounds that make the heart bleed, threaten to overwhelm the spirit, let the child of God remember that "he knows, and loves, and cares", and that his ministering angel is ever near to us, and that no trial will be permitted to be too severe. The Master is standing by the crucible, and the furnace heat will never be permitted to grow so intense that the precious gold of our characters shall be destroyed, or even injured. If by his grace the experiences may not work for our good, they will be turned aside. He loves us too well to permit any needless sorrow, any needless suffering.

(Selected)

Again and again have we insisted in protesting against that school of interpretation which would make havoc of the Bible by finding all its meanings exhausted in the letter. Prepared to acknowledge that the letter has its meaning, its load of thought which it discharges, and then itself passes on to inutility, we still insist that wherever there is a primrose there is a garden, wherever there is one little note of music there is a great orchestra presently to be revealed, and we shall hear singers who shall sing, and harpers who can harp, and all creation shall vibrate to the march and purpose of Eternity.

Dr. Parker

JEHOIADA, PRIEST AND PATRIOT

An Old Testament
Story

The story of Jehoiada is that of a man upright and resolute, fearless in his loyalty to God and ruthless in his hatred of idolatry. To the piety of a priest he added the sagacity of a statesman; by his courage and faith he saved the royal line of David from becoming extinct little more than a century after David's death, and in that became an instrument in the hand of God. His sterling worth shines out from the dramatic narratives in 2 Kings 11. 4 - 13. 9 and 2 Chron. 22. 11 - 24. 25, and the manner in which prosperity or adversity respectively followed the nation's adherence to, or apostasy from, the terms of the Mosaic Covenant forms a colourful background to the story.

Jehoiada was High Priest of the Temple at Jerusalem in the time of Ahaziah and Joash, kings of Judah. He died a few years before the death of Joash at the unusually advanced age of a hundred and thirty years, according to the narrative, and although the credibility of this fact has been questioned, all known sources, including Josephus, are unanimous and consistent on the point and there seems no ground on which the statement can be rejected. In such case he must have been born some ten years after the death of Solomon and lived through the reigns of nine monarchs, from Rehoboam to Joash.

The first eighty years of the life of Jehoiada were years of prosperity and peace in Judah. Four successive kings, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa and Jehoshaphat, were noted for their allegiance, in the main, to the Lord God of Israel and the exaltation of the Covenant. Idolatry was not allowed to flourish, the Temple services continued and the Aaronic priesthood discharged the duties of its office with the support and endorsement of the people. Apart from one lapse into idolatry on the part of Rehoboam, which resulted in Shishak the king of Egypt waging successful warfare against Judah, various attacks by Philistines, Ethiopians, Arabians and even their brethren of the northern ten-tribe kingdom were all easily repulsed, in some cases with signal demonstrations of Divine power. Twice is the statement made that the land "had no more war", once in the reign of Asa and once in that of Jehoshaphat. This was the golden age of Judah's tranquillity when the law of the Lord was observed in the land and the blessings of the covenant came upon the people in consequence—and then good

king Jehoshaphat died and his son Jehoram took the throne.

At once the situation changed. Jehoram had married Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, of the ten-tribe kingdom. Athaliah, like her mother, was a fervent worshipper of Baal, and so, too, was Jehoram. The royal pair immediately began to institute Baal worship in the Kingdom and seduce the people from allegiance to the God of Israel. Jehoram murdered his six brothers, the remaining sons of Jehoshaphat, to eliminate possible rivalry. Whether Jehoiada was High Priest at this time is not known; the records are fragmentary—one Amariah held the office during the reign of Jehoshaphat and may have continued into that of Jehoram, but the time of Jehoiada's entry upon the stage was in any case imminent. In the meantime, Jehoram's reign of twenty-five years, during which the Covenant was repudiated, cost Judah the loss of her Edomite possessions, and various successful invasions of peoples from the east and south, all of whom took considerable spoil culminating in the slaying of all Jehoram's sons except one, Ahaziah. Finally the king himself died a lingering death of a malignant disease and, says the narrator scornfully, "*departed without being desired*". He was denied burial in the tombs of the kings, which showed pretty clearly that the nation had had enough of him and refused him the customary honours at death.

The surviving son, Ahaziah, a young man of twenty-two, already married and the father of several young sons, reigned only one year but managed to crowd into it a considerable amount of villainy. Urged on by his mother Athaliah, "*that wicked woman*" as the Chronicler calls her in 2 Chron. 24. 7, he continued the policy of his father and got himself involved with the ten-tribe kingdom in that nation's wars with Syria, in consequence of which he was first seriously wounded in battle and then finally dispatched by Jehu the avenging Israelite who was engaged in the elimination of all royal idolators with particular emphasis upon the ruling house of the ten-tribe kingdom. Thus Judah was left without a king and the royal heirs were children of only a few years old.

At this point Athaliah, the widow of Jehoram, stepped in. She was a bold, ambitious woman like her mother Jezebel and she had no intention of retiring into obscurity. She

had a powerful court party on her side; it seems evident that Baal worship and idolatry was rampant among the nobility and aristocratic circles of the nation although the bulk of the populace were still loyal to God. Athaliah had just lost in death her brother Joram king of the ten tribes, as well as her husband. Jehu was increasingly victorious in the north and had vowed to destroy idolatry in Israel; by a bold counterstroke Athaliah determined to consolidate idolatry in Judah, by wiping out the Davidic line through whom the Divine promises were to be fulfilled. She had her forces seek out and put to death all the sons of Ahaziah, her own grandchildren, and herself assumed the title of queen of Judah, reigning supreme over a land which she intended should never again honour the name of the God of Israel.

But she reckoned without Jehoiada.

Jehoiada had married Jehosheba, a daughter of Jehoram, not by Athaliah but one of his other wives, so that Athaliah was her step-mother. She evidently shared her husband's sterling faith, and by a quick-witted stroke whilst the slaughter of Ahaziah's sons was proceeding she rescued the youngest, a baby not more than a few months old, and hid him in an adjunct to the Temple where his presence would not be suspected. There, in concealment, the child lived for six years, and grew, while Athaliah reigned over the land and Jehoiada waited and planned. How many devout souls in Judah at that time must have mourned the calamity that had fallen upon their land and wondered if God had "*forgotten to be gracious*". Little dreaming that the means of deliverance was present, unseen, in their own midst and would be revealed in due time.

It is here that the astute statesmanship of Jehoiada becomes evident. Biding his time during those six years, allowing no suspicion of the existence of the lad to arise in any mind, he evidently decided that at seven years of age Joash could be presented to the people as their lawful king. The account in 2 Chron. 23 has all the drama of a typical Eastern palace plot. Five leading officers in the armed forces whom Jehoiada knew to be trustworthy were let into the secret; they in turn went throughout the length and breadth of Judah selecting equally trustworthy Levites and heads of families and brought them to Jerusalem. Weapons which had been stored in the Temple since the days of King David were brought out and with these an armed force was created, posted to guard the approaches to

the Temple. That venerable building must have speedily taken on the semblance of a fortress.

When all was ready, the seven-year old Joash was brought from his seclusion into the Temple, closely guarded by a determined body of priests and Levites who alone might enter the sacred precincts. In the outer court were massed a crowd of spectators who had evidently been told what to expect, flanked on either side by serried ranks of stalwart armed men eager to defend their king. It is evident that a substantial opposition to Athaliah and her paganism existed in Judah and the news that a king possessing right of lineal descent from David still lived and was now to be crowned met with very general approbation among the people in general. So well had Jehoiada laid and executed his plans that it seems no one of the Baal party knew anything of what was afoot until it was too late. With all solemnity the High Priest placed the crown upon the head of Joash, anointed him and put into his hand a copy of the Law of Moses. The trumpets sounded and the cry went up "God save the King". It is an interesting point to notice that this expression, so familiar to us as a tribute of loyalty and respect to the British monarchy should have had its origin at this dramatic moment in the history of the "People of the Book".

Athaliah heard the shouting and the music from the royal palace, which occupied a position almost adjacent to the Temple, and came out immediately to investigate. According to vs. 13 of 2 Chron. 23 there were trumpets and musical instruments and choral singing so that she could hardly have failed to realise that something very unusual was transpiring in the usually quiet and deserted Temple. She only had time to see the boy-king standing arrayed in all the regalia of his office before being seized, together with apparently a small body of her compatriots in idolatry, and hurried to the valley of the Kidron below the Temple walls, where without further ceremony she was put to death. They were savage days and passions ran high, and the followers of the Everliving had suffered a great deal at the hands of the idolators; their patriotism too had been affronted by the manner in which their nation had been made almost a subservient province of Phoenicia—for Jezebel was a daughter of the famous King Ethbaal of Tyre and for generations Tyre had exercised a strong influence in Israel's affairs. Now that the opportunity was theirs the people of Judah vented their

pent-up resentment on all that had to do with the hated foreigners and their alien religion. The great Temple of Baal at Jerusalem, which stood alongside Solomon's Temple, was completely destroyed, Mattan, its high priest, slain in front of his own altar, and all the images and instruments of Baal worship in the land broken into pieces and dispersed. In a solemn ceremony, presided over by Jehoiada, the people and the king pledged themselves to each other "*that they should be the Lord's people*", implying a formal avowal of loyalty to the Mosaic Covenant and renunciation of all that was not in accord therewith.

So Joash began his reign and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. For the first twenty years or so of that period Jehoiada was undoubtedly the power behind the throne, in effect the uncrowned king of the land, guiding and instructing the young lad until he was mature enough to assume the duties of kingship himself. It is rather puzzling to note that during this twenty year period, when Jehoiada was the acknowledged director of the nation's destinies, there seems to have been singularly little progress made in restoring the Temple, rescuing it from the neglect of the past three reigns, and making it again the centre of national worship. The impulse to restore the Temple seems to have come, not from the High Priest, but from the king, and this could hardly have been before he was a young man in his late teens. In fact, so late as the twenty-third year of his reign the work had not been completed and it was the king who called Jehoiada to account over this and instructed him to expedite and finish the work. It might be charitable to conclude that the advancing age of the High Priest, now more than a century old, is the explanation of this apparent shortcoming, although he seems to have been vigorous enough in affairs of state. It might on the other hand have been that, after all, he was a better statesman than priest, that the secular cares which had devolved upon him for so many years left insufficient time and energy for his sacred duties. If so, Jehoiada would not be the only one in history to whom that has happened, and it is a lesson to all of us. "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*" is always a sound injunction, and all other things must take second place.

The saddest commentary on the story is that immediately following Jehoiada's death the whole of his work was undone. The king's new youthful advisers had scant sympathy for the old priest's piety and reforms. The

rising generation neglected the Temple and forgot the Covenant. Idolatry came back and the idol shrines once more desecrated the land. Prophets of the Lord raised their voices in protest and were unheeded; Zechariah the son and successor of Jehoiada in the priesthood publicly rebuked the offenders, and by the king's command was stoned to death in the court of the Temple. At once the Divine protection that had been over Judah was withdrawn; the penalty of the covenant came into effect. The armies of Syria invaded the land, slew all the leaders—those same leaders who had advised the king to his idolatrous course—laid the land under tribute and took great spoil back to Damascus. The disasters coming upon the nation led to a palace plot which resulted in the murder of the king. As with his father and grandfather, he was not buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah, being deemed unworthy of that honour; it is worthy of notice that Jehoiada, although not of royal lineage, was in fact buried in the tombs of the kings "*because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house*" (2 Chron. 24. 16). Throughout those troubled times, this venerable old High Priest was the true king of Israel; under the hand of God he preserved the Davidic line from extinction and he struck idolatry in Judah a blow from which it never really recovered. In after years there were periods of idolatry under Ahaz and Manasseh, but not to the extent of former times. The contribution which Jehoiada made to the outworking purpose of God was a valid and a lasting contribution, even although his personal work may seem to have been nullified at his death. It takes more than a temporary resurgence of evil to cancel good that has already been done, for good is enduring; it may be temporarily overlaid with evil but cannot be destroyed by it. A lesson for those of us who may be faced with similar situations in our own lives and in our own days is that the faithfulness and untiring service of Jehoiada bore its real fruitage, not in his own day and lifetime, but eight centuries later when the Lord of glory came to a people, a "remnant", who were the heirs and successors of all that he had done and for which he stood. Something of the faith and hope he instilled into men's hearts in those dark days was passed on through the generations until it emerged in the lives of those at the First Advent who "looked for deliverance" in Jerusalem, and, seeing Jesus, recognised Him indeed as "He that should come".

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

4. Holiness comes to a people

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, and came to dwell with them in the wilderness, He set an illustration of a two-fold aspect of the attribute of holiness. In the Shechinah Light which dwelt in the "Most Holy" we have the emblem of inherent holiness. Another term for that would be "subjective" holiness—or holiness of the "Subject" or "Being" to whom the attribute referred. To this aspect of Divine holiness God's coming to dwell with Israel made no difference, for even in those remote times when God had withdrawn Himself, and was putting forth no active power to arrest the increasing prevalence of sin, within Himself God's essential holiness remained unchanged and undiminished. Its existence as an attribute to God did not depend upon His activities against the course of sin. At rest or at work that essential intrinsic holiness persisted and continued because of Him being Who and what He was. That unchangeable attribute of God was represented by the mysterious Light within the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. There was nothing in the whole Tabernacle structure to be compared with that peculiar Light. It hung between the Cherubim, unsustained and unchanged—ever and always a mysterious glow of light emitting its rays without Priestly care or other earthly derived attention. No human labours could improve it, no human effort could quench it. It came from God, and was maintained by God. It was the token of the presence of God. It was the emblem of the holiness of God. It was of this Light God spake when He said to Moses ". . . I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat, from between the Cherubim . . ." (Ex. 25. 22). From above the Mercy Seat! From between the Cherubim! Exactly the location of that Holy Light. From that location God said "I will meet with thee". That Holy Light positioned there between the Cherubim was the nearest approach to a revelation of the exalted and holy Personality of the Lord God of Heaven and earth which could be disclosed to mortal man—fit emblem of One who had an inexhaustible fount of life within Himself, and who in Himself and by Himself upheld the absolute standards of virtue and purity.

The arrival and presence of that Holy Light

in the dark depths of Israel's Tabernacle represented that the Holy God had come down to earth to begin the preliminary stages of His plan for cleansing it from sin. To that far-distant project of purifying the world from sin God called Abraham's seed to be His servants and associates. By coming down to earth in this emblematic sense, and by drawing Israel's hosts around His dwelling-place, the native inherent holiness of God began to be active against sin. It set before itself an objective, and applied itself to that end. To accomplish that objective it gathered around itself and absorbed within itself the whole nation of Israel.

The nation complete and entire, the tabernacle in all its parts and the mysterious self-supporting Light were all essential parts of the one Divine instrument for eliminating sin. The holy Light in its relation to Israel was as the centre to the circumference, as the hub to the wheel. "It" and they were one, each in their respective place, each with its respective part to play in the great task of sanctifying the earth. That Holy Light was directive and advisory in its relation to the entire Camp. It gave guidance when need arose. That Holy Light was as the Watchman against holiness; it smote the sons of Aaron when using strange fire, unholy fire. It was—shall we say not irreverently—as the highest directive officer of the co-partnership concern. Inasmuch, however, as here on earth both manager and messenger are parts together of one firm, so God and His chosen people Israel were associated together in God's scheme to rid the world of sin.

This association of the Eternal God with the seed of His friend (Jas. 2. 20) is beautifully shown in Rev. 4 and 5. The personality of God is represented by the jasper and sardine stone, seated on the centrally positioned throne. The throne supports are of such a form as to correspond to Israel's banners—a lion, a calf, a human face, a flying eagle. This combination shows Israel associated with the throne of the Living God. Around that central throne, but of smaller size, are four and twenty other thrones, occupied by the same number of elders, crowned with golden crowns. These represent the priestly and king's attributes joined in one—kings and priests—and stand out from the elect nation

as their very elect and choicest members. It is a picture of a priesthood which has superseded the Levitical order—the great original, of which Aaron's was a type.

The jewel-pictured occupant of that central throne, the throne itself, and the circle of priestly-royal elders are joined together in solemn session, awaiting the coming of Judah's Lion—a Lamb as it had been slain, for the release of a temporarily lost inheritance. This was the great design with which the Ancient of Days set out. This was the master-draught of His plan, of which the events at Sinai, and in wilderness days constituted only a kindergarten copy. God and Abraham's chosen seed were to be as "one", to accomplish the grand redemption of the world, set out in symbolic language as a Holy City, lying foursquare (Camp-like) with ever-open gates into which all the earthly kings should bring their glory. God's purpose stands unchanged. Christ supersedes Moses, but all else remains unchanged.

When God thus set forth this scheme as His objective, the holiness which required the earth to be made free from sin—which holy intention was the basic cause for the plan being formed—became objective too. The intrinsic indwelling holiness within the heart of God began working in an extrinsic—external—manner to make His environment (which means all creation) clean. When God took Israel into co-partnership with Himself (represented by placing His Holy Light in their midst) His own objective holiness came down to rest on Israel as well.

Thus the sublime subjective holiness (represented by the Holy Light) became manifest and active, as an objective holiness too, what time it began to act and work with Israel and through Israel for the elimination of sin. God's holiness was thus revealed in its two-fold aspect (a) *subjective* (an indication of what He is—the Holy One of Israel) but it became (b) *objective* too (indicated by what He was about to do).

It is very necessary for us to make this distinction clear between these two phases of holiness, for Israel shared in one phase, but not in the other. Israel, by her association with her God, was made objectively holy—holy for a purpose—but most obviously she was not made holy subjectively, i.e. she was not holy in herself—she had no real holiness of heart. It is on this basis of a two-phased holiness that we can approach New Testament days. These things and experiences in Israel were the pattern of the "better things"

of our later days.

To teach men of this earth (in the only way that man could learn) that the Most High God claims in Himself to be the be-all and end-all (or as Paul puts it "that God may be all in all") of their being, God commanded men and utensils (altars, censers, tables, etc.) to be exclusively set apart to His service. So long as these men used these utensils in the prescribed way, that is, in His exclusive service, God accounted both men and utensils holy. This holy standard did not lapse because, at times, these men failed to follow precisely all the prescribed details of their instructions. God had made provision for the unintentional lapses, both on a national and individual scale, by means of vicarious sacrifices (sin-offerings, both personal and national—see Leviticus, chapters 4 to 7, and Leviticus 16).

When the more faithful in Israel, those who had higher vision and keener hearts than their fellows (see Heb. 11) had become thoroughly and appreciatively familiar with this kindergarten idea of holiness (separateness unto God) God advanced His purpose to a higher stage. By reason of the sacrificial death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, God was able to carry the theme of revelation (that is, redemption by blood) up from the lowly, limited, literal level of fleshly Israel, to the higher, unconfined spiritual level of spiritual Israel, in this way carrying the thoughts and understanding of the responsive among His people up to the great realities of His plan. In learning these higher things His faithful ones were still at school, still learning the one great lesson concerning holiness and sin, but were advanced upwards from the kindergarten to the qualifying grade. The little square wooden blocks of the nursery were no longer necessary for these pupils to continue developing the "building sense"—that is, the sense of holiness. This sense—the awareness of God—had already considerably developed, and now the time had come to put realities in place of typical and shadowy things; but in so doing God used the various objects of the Mosaic ceremony and ritual to illustrate the verities of the Christian faith.

The Holy Spirit used those sacrifices and ablutions and Tabernacle arrangements generally as patterns to lead Christian thought to see that the believer in Christ—each separate believer—was himself a Temple of the Living God (1 Cor. 3. 16). At the same time, but from another point of view, each believer was a "royal priest" (1 Pet. 2. 5 and 9), and from yet another point of view each believer

was "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12. 1. Rom. 6. 13 and 19). On this higher level of Christian tuition it was learned (as in Egypt on the Passover night), that a "first-born" class stood in special relationship to the plan of redemption—called to supersede the natural first born, priestly class, just as "Christ our Pass-over" (Lamb) superseded the Lamb whose blood be-sprinkled the door-posts of Israel.

A better and greater Priest with better sacrifices had superseded Aaron's line with its *bulls and goats*. A better Mediator, too, had been appointed to take the place of Moses. A better, larger, longer Sabbath had been designed to displace the typical seventh day. Thus, those lowlier, carnal conceptions, so long current in Israel, became the embodiment of better, fuller, nobler conceptions when carried up into the Christian's thought and life and experience. The form of the expression was changed, yet notwithstanding that, its germ and theme remained the same, just as the bud, fully developed into the flower, is changed in form, yet withal remains the same.

From first to last, on lowlier typical level, or on higher spiritual plane, the purpose of the Most High God remains the same. The twin-theme to-day, as it was in ancient time, is "holiness" and "sin". These major chords are made up of many accordant sounds. We speak of atonement, redemption and precious blood, we tell of baptism into His death, and companionship of Christ, and grace to help in time of need, but back of all these kindred themes stands God Most High. He it was who caused them all. Sacrifice and favour are all of His devising. It was God Himself who so loved the world as to give His Son (John 3. 16). It is His own Love which is commended by the death of Christ (Rom. 5. 8), and thus, when we rejoice together over redemption's wondrous story, each note of the harmonious chord harks back to the Most High God, who, before time began, arranged His plans to provide for every such emergency. Back of all these plans, deep in the heart of God, we reach the basic theme of all—that unchanging intensity of desire for the absolutely good, the altogether pure, the unchangeably true.

That was the first spark that fired the whole train, and from which all subsequent energy derives.

Again, we speak of evil and its long permission; of the reign of death; of the ravages of sin; of unholy men, and unrighteous rule. We speak of Gentile supremacy and of Israel's fall; we tell of Armageddon and all its fury, of a crushing time of trouble such as never was before and then we look forward to the rounding up and chaining of all these things, of Satan's imprisonment and final destruction. Back of all this permission and suppression stands God Most High. He it is Who has determined that though evil shall be triumphant for a time, it will be completely overthrown in the end. He it is Whose mighty power will bring it to its end. No one else is equal to the task.

Therefore behind the scenes of right and wrong there is One whose abhorrence of sin is so intense that He will not rest content until it is destroyed both root and branch. Again we reach the lesson's point, that Divine holiness will not permit its universal environment to be polluted forevermore. Again we reach the conclusion that the mainspring of all Divine energy and all Divine intention for uprooting all evil, and establishing forevermore the good and pure, is that supreme intense moral force which burns in the heart of God. Behind and beneath the attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power, is the unfathomably deep moral platform on which they all are built—the holiness of God.

The glorious Gospel truth in which we all rejoice is but the same theme continued, but in higher grade, that was taught to Israel in the wilderness. Moses, under God, was the teacher then. Christ, under God, is our teacher now. Things which "might be touched" and seen were the illustrations Moses used. We learn of things unseen; but through it all the lesson theme is just the same. Behind it all is God Most High, glorious in His holiness, pure beyond compare, working out His great designs to free the world from sin. Holiness must triumph over sin, and God is holiness sublime!

(To be continued)

Every man is not a proper champion for the truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of verity. Many, from an inconsiderate zeal unto the truth, have too rashly charged the troops of error, and remain as trophies to the enemies of truth.

Sir T. Browne

Who finds God in his love finds everything. He seeks but one, it is true; but that one is of universal content. Oh rare compendium of wealth miraculous! Why run we after variety? Let us hasten to lay hold of him, who being held, holds all.

— Origen

FOREFATHERS OF ABRAHAM

4. The Patriarch of the Book

*A little-known period
of the Old Testament*

It is customary to regard the time of Abraham as virtually the beginning of Divine revelation to man and of man's understanding of God. The promise to Abraham "In thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed" stands as a kind of beacon post, marking the practical commencement of God's moving to rid the world of sin by preparing the way for the coming of the Lord. That great event was to be preceded first by a span of time during which the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were successively to serve Him, and learn of Him, and after that by an Age devoted to the development and training of a nation which had the opportunity, which in the outcome they failed fully to grasp, of being God's dedicated representatives in the world and in that capacity receiving and accepting the Lord when He should come. The fact that continuous historical narrative in the Bible commences only with Abraham, and all before that is sketchy, disjointed and tantalisingly brief, has made it inevitable that, in the main, the story of man's relations with God starts with Abraham.

It is all the more important, therefore, to realise that in the course of the long ages which preceded Abraham there must have been times when men served God faithfully and kept the faith alive in a generally unbelieving world, unknown to us simply because no record of their lives' achievements was made or has survived. From a few scanty allusions in Genesis it can reasonably be surmised that some such man must have rendered signal service to the outworking purposes of God at that dimly perceived time, some seven centuries or more before Abraham, when the first city-states of Sumeria began to be and the earliest written records which have survived until today began to be compiled. The Tower of Babel and the Dispersion of tribes was, by then, at least three or four centuries—perhaps more—in the past; in the space of over half a millennium since the Deluge the family of Noah had grown into a company of nations which spread all over Middle East and was already beginning to range even farther afield.

During these four centuries the sons of Japheth had disappeared from the scene, forsaking the lands known for convenience as

"Bible lands" and making their homes in the distant north. Their brethren of Shem and Ham were not to meet them again until they encountered their descendants in far future days in the ranks of Hittites, Scythians, Greeks and other, to them, outlandish tribes. The sons of Shem had by now colonised all Syria and Aram-Naharaim, "the land of the two rivers" and were pushing down into Canaan, thus occupying a great curved territory encircling the north and west of the land of the Hamites where the Tower still stood. Sons of the desert and forest, strong and vigorous, they were soon to invade the land from which they had come and contend with the Hamites for supremacy. The sons of Ham, though, in the meantime had built up a magnificent civilisation around their cities of Ur, Babylon, Erech, Kish, Eridu, Shuruppak, and others. This, the earliest civilisation known to archæologists has never been surpassed in ^{their} own or any other land. Gadd, in his *"History and Monuments of Ur"*, said in 1929 *"In Sumer, the works of earlier ages, as they successively become known, differ from their descendant counterparts no wise so much as in their higher excellence . . . In their flourishing days and in their lavish court the arts of manufacture rose to a perfection and beauty in their products which was never seen again"*. But these sons of Ham were idolators. They had long since forgotten the God of their fathers and now built their temples and ordered their worship in honour of Anu the god of heaven, Enki the god of the sea, Enlil the god of the earth, and a host of lesser gods and goddesses besides. The city and Tower at Babel was now well established as the centre of this false worship. The worship of the One God of Noah and his sons was preserved in the main by the sons of Shem, although there is some reason for thinking that they also were not untinged with idolatry. The lands in which they lived retain to this day ruins and relics—known to experts as "Halafian" culture—which must be assigned to this period and there are indications among these relics of the worship of false gods. So, at some time probably during the lives of Sala and Eber of the line of Shem, the tribe to which they belonged found themselves back in the old land where the Tower stood, fighting the established in-

habitants to obtain a foothold. Not for another three centuries were the Semites to invade in sufficient force to become equal in power with the sons of Ham but there is some Scriptural evidence that Eber at least was there when his son Peleg was born.

We are told in Gen. 10. 25 that Peleg was so named "*because in his days was the earth divided*". A strange expression; some have applied it to the division of the nations at Babel, and Ferrar Fenton in his translation, with his usual originality, asserts that it refers to a time when the American continent, originally part of Africa, split off and drifted to its present position on the other side of the world! In point of fact the Hebrew word "*peleg*" refers to artificially made cuttings in the earth for the purpose of carrying water; in short, canals. Now this is a useful indication. Syria has no canals and never had any. A famous feature of the land of Sumir, on the contrary, from very early times right into the present Christian era, was its wonderful system of irrigation canals with their elaborate dams and sluices, reservoirs and floodgates, designed to harness the floodwater of the Euphrates and Tigris and use them to irrigate the land. Those canals endured for more than three thousand years, until in the twelfth century of this era the Mongol invader Hulaga Khan opened all the floodgates and destroyed the dams, turning the country into the desert that it is at the present time. All the early Sumerian and Semitic kings were very industrious building and preserving these canals, because of their importance to the prosperity of their country. If the data relating to the length of life and times of birth of the patriarchs as given by the LXX is taken seriously, then the birth of Peleg could be expected to coincide more or less with the beginning of the "historical" period of Sumerian history when the expansion of their city-building activities rendered the canal system an urgent necessity.

This point of time, assumed here to be marked by the birth of Peleg, is notable for a number of things. The earliest of all written records, inscribed in clay tablets in a curvilinear script which is the oldest kind of writing known, come from this period. Soon this was to give place to a kind of picture-writing and in another two hundred years to the familiar cuneiform ("arrow-headed") script which became universal throughout the Middle East and of which many thousands of examples have been found. It is also a fact that the earliest implements of war or evi-

dence of war-like activities belong to this time; it is almost as if men had lived peaceably and in amity despite their differences from the time of the Deluge and only now, when perhaps Semite was challenging Hamite for a share of the rich land, did they begin to war one with another. And it must have been just at this time that there occurred the devastating flood which laid down the eight foot clay strata at Ur which Woolley, in 1929, at first thought was evidence of the Deluge. Afterwards it was found that this flood, whilst it must have drowned most of the country folk, had bypassed the cities, built up on high ground. In fact, during the lifetime of Peleg no less than three great floods took place causing widespread disaster and loss of life so that it is not surprising that this should be a time of canal construction to avoid the repetition of such catastrophes.

There is every reason to believe that it was during the lifetimes of Eber and Peleg that the first eleven chapters of Genesis, up to the story of the Tower of Babel, were put together in their present form. Now that scholarly research into the Sumerian language has made such progress the old nineteenth century idea, beloved of the textual critics, that Genesis was first made into a written record by priestly scribes in Israel about the 8th century B.C. is shown unwarranted—even although it remains the predominant presentation in theological colleges and by many Christian students. It is now realised that chapters 1 to 11 of Genesis contain so many archaic Babylonian and Sumerian words and allusions that there can be no doubt that as original documents they first saw the light of day many centuries before Abraham and came from the pen of a dweller on the Euphrates. The geographical place names in the Eden story are those current in Sumeria at the time of Eber. The structure of the Hebrew text reveals that it is built up from a number of separate narratives which from their prescripts and subscripts show that they were originally written on individual clay tablets in the Sumerian style. Even the title of the book reveals its Sumerian origin. "Genesis" (Heb. *Bereshith*) is the Latin rendering of the first three words of the book, "*In the beginning*". This was the universal system of giving titles to books in that day. At much the same time there appeared one of the most famous epics of the Sumerians, the so-called "Seven Tablets of Creation", describing the creation and ordering of all things in the land by the god Marduk. Its Sumerian title is

"Enuma elish"—"when in the height", from the opening words of the narrative.

"When in the height heaven was not named,
And the earth beneath did not bear a name,
And primeval matter, their father
And the Divine spirit, their mother,
Mingled their waters together —

It is worth comparing those words with the first two verses of Genesis and noting the likeness, understandable if both accounts saw the light of day at much the same time and in much the same place. But the "Enuma Elish" goes on to describe the birth of many gods and all their activities; here there is a divergence between this epic and the book of Genesis which shows clearly that the one was written up, from preceding legends, by a polytheist, an idolator, whilst the other was compiled by a man who knew God and had access to true records.

The Sumerian story of the Flood has so much in common with the Biblical narrative that they must have stemmed from a common source. According to the story one Gilgamesh, king of Erech at about the time of Eber, was smitten by an incurable disease and went in search of his ancestor Ziud-Suddu, the Sumerian name for Noah, the one who built the Ark and was saved in the Flood, to enlist his help in obtaining the plant of life whereby he might be cured. He learned that Zuid-Suddu had been granted the gift of immortality and the privilege of living in the ancient land of Eden, fifteen days voyage down the Persian Gulf. Arrived at his destination, Gilgamesh' venerable ancestor, apart from telling him where to obtain the object of his quest, related the whole story of his experience in the Flood. Again the story is polytheistic, full of gods and goddesses, and although copies now in existence date much later, from about 700 BC to 1800 BC, they yield internal evidence of derivation from a Sumerian original much nearer to the time of Eber. There is not much doubt that Gilgamesh actually lived and was ruler of Erech, one of the earliest Sumerian cities where all the old histories would be preserved, so that here again there is evidence of the tremendous literary activity, recorded in an archaic script, which must have characterised the days when Eber and his son Peleg began to stand out as men of God in an increasingly materialistic society.

And now for the internal evidence. The early chapters of Genesis consist of six clearly defined sections. First comes the story of the creation of the world and of man upon

it, including that of Eden and the Fall, up to the eighth generation of the line of Cain (chaps. 1-4). Second is the genealogy from Adam to Noah, giving no narrative or historical information (chap. 5). Third is the story of the angelic rebellion and the Flood (chaps. 6-9). Fourth is the famous "Table of Nations" (chap. 10) which traces the increase and dispersion of Noah's sons' progeny from the end of the Flood to the time of Peleg, but no farther. Fifth is the story of the Tower of Babel (chap. 11. 1-9). Last comes a repeated genealogy of Noah's posterity, through Shem but beyond Peleg this time, carried down to Abraham (chap. 11. 10-32). This is the end of the section in which Sumerian words indicate a Sumerian background; from chap. 12 onwards Egyptian words predominate so that it is clear that the life history of Abraham was compiled under totally different circumstances and not, like the former chapters, in the land of the Euphrates.

The noteworthy factor here is that Gen. 10. 25 marks the time of Eber and Peleg as the limit to which the writers' knowledge extended. In this tenth chapter the compiler, whoever he was, knows very little of what happened to the sons of Japheth. Of the sons of Ham he is familiar with the descendants of Cush who had started building the Sumerian cities; he is familiar with the divisions of Mizraim into the tribes and peoples of Egypt and the north African coastlands. Canaan he knows to have become a diversity of tribes to the west of his own land. Of the sons of Shem he seems to know little beyond that relating to the posterity of Arphaxad down to his own time where the story terminates with two brothers, sons of Eber, one being Joktan whose descendants populated the entire Arabian continent to the Indian ocean—Arabs, the *Beni Yokhtan* to this day—and the other, Peleg from whom came Abraham and eventually the nation of Israel. The conclusion is very strong that the compiler of all these records up to this point was either Eber or Peleg, bringing everything up to date to their own time. It is true that the writer of Gen. 10 seems to know a great deal more about the sons of Ham than about those of Shem, but this could be explained if he was born and lived in the land of Ham. In any case his methods of describing the four rivers of the land in Gen. 2 when defining the position of the lost Eden is strong presumptive evidence that he was a dweller on or near the Euphrates.

That Eber was looked upon in later times

as in some sense a noteworthy patriarch is demonstrated by the fact that Abraham was known in his day, five or six hundred years later, as "Abraham the Hebrew", meaning "of Eber" and that the proper name of the children of Israel, by which they were known to other nations, was "the Hebrews" by which name they are described many times in the O.T. and occasionally in the N.T.; and of course their national language has always been and is still called Hebrew.

It is most unlikely that writing was unknown before the time of Eber. It is true that no records have been found which can be dated before this time but fresh discoveries are constantly being made. The separate sections of which these early chapters are composed indicate almost certainly that they were separate original documents made at different times and preserved. The Flood narrative of chaps. 7-8 is said by scholars to bear internal evidence of being a day-by-day log book of events, written down at the time of their happening. Some of the O.T. Apocryphal books, such as Enoch and Jubilees, contain frequent references to the art of writing and existence of written records in antediluvian times; it is hardly likely that a civilisation possessing the technical knowledge necessary to build a huge structure like the Ark of Noah should not have developed the arts of drawing and writing. St. Jude's reference to Enoch's prophecy presupposes a written record from days before the Flood. We can feel quite sure therefore that by the time of Eber this collection of ancient writings had been made and was preserved by someone. What more likely than that Noah, the obvious custodian of such pre-Flood writings as survived, should have entrusted them to his son Shem whom he already recognised as the most pious of the three (Gen. 9. 26) and that they should descend through the generations, with the addition of what are now chaps. 10 and 11. 1-9 until they came into the custody of Eber and were "edited" by him into the first stage of a collection which grew throughout the ages to become the sixty-six books of the Christian Bible.

If, then, this was the manner in which the book we now call the "Bible" first began to be compiled, we can imagine a quiet dwelling in a Sumerian city somewhere along the course of the Euphrates inside which a man sat at his task. He was probably the head of his tribe and a moderately wealthy man. His house would be solidly built of good brick,

ten or twelve rooms on two floors arranged around a central courtyard open to the sky and filled with shrubs. Outside there would be all the noise and bustle of city life, a wide market place where merchants from distant lands displayed their wares; a little farther away a tremendous structure towering into the heavens with a golden sanctuary at its top, the temple to the patron deity of the city, Marduk the sun-god or Sin the moon-god or Enki or Enlil or Anu or any of the many gods of Sumeria. But inside the man sat with a few little tablets of baked clay, covered with strange signs, in front of him. And as he sat, he took up a blank tablet of soft wet clay from a pile which stood ready and with a delicate flat-ended stylus, transcribing from the written tablets before him as he went, began to indent words into the soft clay: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . .*"

Where was the city? Was it Ur of the Chaldees, where Terah and Abraham, his descendants, afterwards lived? If so, and if the man was Eber, perhaps towards the closing years of his life, he may well have lived in part of the long reign of Mes-anni-padda, the first king of Ur of which history tells, and in the most magnificent era of that city's history. Many people still remember the stir caused forty years ago when Sir Leonard Woolley returned from the ruins of Ur with the magnificent gold and jewelled headdress of the lovely Sumerian queen Shub-ad; and many will have seen pictures of the reconstructed features of this lady, wearing the headdress she discarded nearly five thousand years ago. Eber, if he did indeed settle in Ur when he came into the land of Sumir, must have seen queen Shub-ad in the life. He must have been quite familiar with the luxury and high civilisation of the Sumerian cities, enjoying a standard of life which according to the archaeologists was never attained again in later years. During the space of something like four hundred years that magnificence continued, and it is perhaps not surprising if Reu, Serug, Nahor, forgot the God of their fathers and the simple pastoral life of Syria, and threw themselves whole-heartedly into the manners and practices and the idolatrous worship of the Sumerians among whom they had elected to live. The ruins of the Temple of Sin, the Moon-god, which to this very day still dominate the desert where Ur once stood, bear mute witness to the nature of the society into which these men, and Abraham

afterwards, were born, and the city which he eventually forsook.

It might not have been Ur. It could have been one of the more northern cities. In later days a great Semitic empire called Mari flourished higher up the Euphrates four hundred miles from Ur, and it might well be that in the developing stages of this settlement Eber lived here and had his home, and only in later generations did his family move on to Ur. But even in Mari he would have been surrounded by idolatry and false gods. The inference is irresistible. The Holy Scriptures, which alone are able to "make wise unto salvation", which enshrine that light for the

nations which one day is to shine to the ends of the earth, had their first humble beginnings at the hand of a God-fearing man in a quiet house surrounded by all the material magnificence and powerful forces of a shining civilisation that was utterly and completely devoted to the worship of gods the inventions of men's minds, a civilisation which boasted that with the aid of its gods it would endure for ever. Today what is left of that civilisation reposes for the most part under glass cases in museums: the book that Eber began to write is in daily use throughout the world.

(To be continued)

'GOOD IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN'

There sometimes arises a question as to the real implication of Jesus' words in Matt. 26. 24 "*The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born*". Did Jesus mean by this that there can be no possible future hope for Judas, that the enormity of his sin has precluded him from any further opportunity of repentance and reconciliation with God? It would seem hard to reconcile such view with the fact of Judas' evident remorse; "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood*": a remorse that led him in despair to go away and hang himself. If Caiaphas, who betrayed no sign of remorse, is to see the Lord again "at His appearing and His kingdom" (Matt. 26. 64), it would seem logical to think that Judas, whose guilt, on a sober appraisal of the position, was certainly of lesser degree than that of the High Priest, should at least enjoy the same opportunity and perhaps translate his remorse into repentance and consequent reconciliation. He must have been one of those for whom the Lord prayed "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*", if those words mean anything they must imply a future opportunity for repentance.

The writer, reading in the "*Book of Enoch*" the other day, came across this same expression, and remembering that a number of our Lord's sayings, and those of some of the Apostles, reveal that they were intimately familiar with this book, which was in general use at the time of the First Advent, a clue to a possible reason for our Lord's allusion immediately presented itself. The passage in question is in 1 Enoch 38, where the appearance of Christ at his Second Ad-

vent for the judgment of the wicked is described. The Book of Enoch consistently refers to the Messiah as the "Son of Man" or the "Righteous One" and in this remark of Jesus at the Last Supper, he too used the expression "Son of Man". The Enoch passage is as follows: - "*And when the Righteous One shall appear before the eyes of the righteous, whose elect works hang upon the Lord of Spirits, and light shall appear to the righteous and the elect who dwell on the earth; where then will be the dwelling of the sinners, and where the resting-place of those who have denied the Lord of Spirits? It had been good for them if they had not been born.*"

The meaning of the expression in this context is clear enough. When the Lord appears in glory and the faith of his true disciples is vindicated and honoured, where will the sinners and the apostates hide themselves in shame? Where will those who have denied their Lord go to conceal themselves from his searching gaze? In the strong hyperbolic language of the day, "It had been good for them if they had not been born"—an expression which does not mean that they were doomed to eternal death, but as though to say that rather than face the Lord they had denied or repudiated they would better not have been there at all, having never lived.

It might well be then that Jesus, talking to his disciples and Judas, was really quoting this verse from the Book of Enoch in order that Judas might recognise the allusion and thus be reminded that one day, in the day of the Lord's glory, he would be called upon to stand before the Lord he was now betraying, and experience the shame and confusion which in that day will be the portion of all who have rejected Jesus in this life.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 47, No. 5

SEPT./OCT. 1970

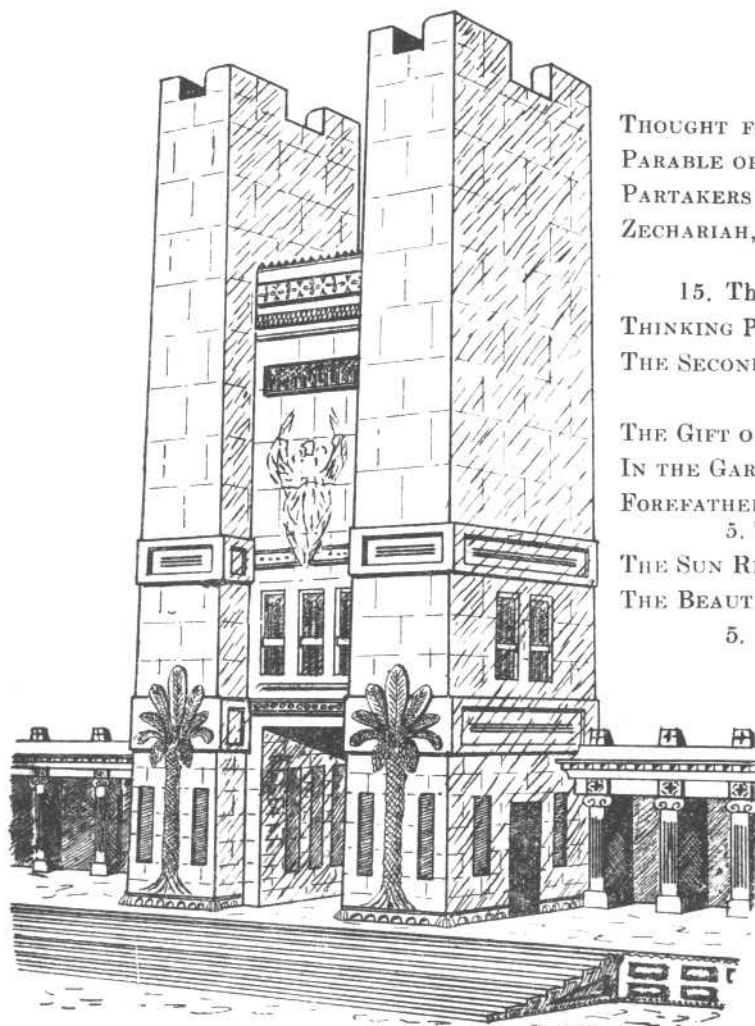
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published September 1st

Next issue November 1st

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

*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*

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

Thought for the Month

"The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God"

(Rom. 8. 14 RSV).

This is one of those statements which can only be understood when it is accepted that God is actively working in history to bring about a desired consummation which is yet future. There is nothing static about such a statement; it does not define a condition of life or society which can be expected to remain the same generation after generation into infinity. Here is a plain indication of "that far-off Divine event, to which the whole creation moves". Man, says Paul in this noteworthy passage, is at present subject to futility. There will be no disagreement or dispute as to that. One day future, he also says, men will be set free from this bondage and obtain liberty. The verse above quoted equates that desirable end with the "revealing of the sons of God". To anyone acquainted with Scripture terminology this can only refer to the manifestation of the Christian Church to all mankind "in glory" at the consummation of the Age ("end of the world" in common parlance) in association with the Lord Christ at His Second Advent at which time He puts into operation the second stage of the Divine Plan for human development—the rule of righteousness. This doctrine and expectation finds no favour with quite a few serious Christians who feel more impressed with the claims for orderly evolution of the human society toward Christian ideals than for the catastrophic or authoritarian intervention of God Most High to save men from their own folly, but the doctrine is a true one nevertheless. The fact must be faced, now in this Twentieth Century, that man, after thousands of years on this planet and possessed of marvellous

powers of perception and invention, is creating problems of survival far faster than he is solving them, and the end can only be disaster—unless God intervenes. It remains now for the Church of to-day to rise to its destiny and be worthy of being thus "revealed" when the time comes.

NOTICES

Coming Conventions

At West Wickham, Oct. 10/11, in Justin Hall, Beckenham Road, West Wickham, week-end convention commencing at 3.0 on Saturday. Details from J. F. Bignell, 28 Croft Avenue, West Wickham, Kent.

Tune Hymnal

We are asked to make known, for the benefit of that section of our readership who are interested, that it is proposed to reprint the tune edition of the "Bible Students Hymnal" published some years ago by the Bible Students Hymnal Trust. In order to appraise the probable demand it will be appreciated if anyone who is likely to require copies of the book either now or during the next few years will advise Mr. G. E. Chilvers, 111 Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, Warks, to that effect as soon as possible. This does not imply any obligation to purchase and due announcement will be made if the project goes forward.

New booklet

The series "The Mission of Jonah" which appeared in the "Monthly" during 1969 is now available to readers of the "Monthly" at 2/6 each or 4 for 8/6 (one dollar) post free to cover cost of production, packing and despatch. This booklet presents a complete exposition of the Book of Jonah with a great deal of information not otherwise available and will be found especially useful when the authenticity of the story or its relevance to Christian belief generally is in question.

Gone from us

Sis. A. Lippiatt (Bristol)
Sis. J. Matthews (late Harpenden)
Sis. A. V. Platt (Liverpool)

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

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

Luke 18. 1-8

There is a peculiarly modern ring about this story of the man in high office who cared nothing for morality and right dealing. He was there to dispense justice, to defend the innocent and restrain the evil doer. He had a double responsibility; he was accountable both to God and to man. The laws he administered were based on the Divine principles upon which God had made the world and man upon it; they were accepted and professed by men as the true basis of ordered society. It was his duty to put them into effect and enforce them, with all diligence, showing neither fear nor favour, and he had no intention of doing anything of the kind. There is no suggestion that he was dishonest or hypocritical either with himself or with others. He acknowledged his position quite frankly in verse 8. "*I reverence not God, nor regard man*". He administered his office in the way that best suited his own convenience without any regard to the merits of the cases he handled or any thought of responsibility to the mandatory power, of God or of men, from which he derived his authority. Like so many in positions of influence and power to-day, he knew of no reason why his administration should be guided by moral principles or the standards of truth and justice. He enjoyed the benefits and privileges of his position, used his power as he pleased, and governed his actions entirely by expediency. He was not particularly immoral; he was just amoral. And far too many men are like that in this present time of declining religious faith and belief.

A good many have asked why this particularly unpleasant individual should be used by Jesus to illustrate our Father's attitude to the prayers of his disciples. Surely, say some, a better simile could have been found. It might be said in reply that the fact that Jesus did use this picture to point the lesson is sufficient basis to expect some very definite truth embedded therein, for which we do well to seek, and having found, to consider. It is clear that, as in other certain parables, Jesus is teaching by contrast. If this admittedly unrighteous judge is found rousing himself at last to do his duty in consequence of the appellant's importunity, then *how much more* will God, who is not unrighteous, and unlike

this judge, is actively working to give sin-sick humanity the relief they crave, ready to grant deliverance to those who come to him. There is a supplementary question which follows hard on the heels of this answer; if God is indeed so solicitous to save, why is He so long in doing it? That question, and its answer, is also in this parable, but has to be considered in its right place, at the conclusion of the story.

The unjust judge, then, gave no heed to the poor widow's complaint. She may have had justice on her side and might well have been grievously treated by her adversary at law; the judge neither knew or cared. Her complaints went unheeded; her case was never brought up for trial. The judge, to use a modern expression, "couldn't care less". But after a time he was made to care. This widow would not take no for an answer and she would not go away. She knew that justice was available and she knew that she was entitled to justice, and justice she intended to have. She kept on importuning the judge, and at last, tired of seeing her waiting at his door and irritated at the continual repetition of her plea, he bestirred himself to look into her case, to set the machinery of the law in motion, and award her the judgment she sought. Not because he cared one jot for the rights or wrongs of the case; he was completely honest about that. All he wanted was to be rid of the woman and left in peace.

Now the really important factor in this story is the widow's fixed belief that she must eventually obtain her desire, not because the judge was upright, but because her cause was just. A man so candid as this one about his attitude could not but be well-known to his prospective litigants and no one would expect justice or consideration from him, any more than do men in similar cases to-day. The widow pursued the course of action she did on the basis of one fixed principle; the law entitled her to relief and the law must eventually be upheld. It was that fixed inward conviction which sustained her as day after day she renewed her apparently unavailing plea. Eventually her faith was justified and she received her desired judicial award.

"*Continuing instant in prayer*" says the Apostle in Rom. 12. 12. That expression

"continuing instant" has the meaning of dogged perseverance, a tenacious grasp of the thing desired which will not be loosed. Strong, steadfast, immovable. Rotherham translates the first verse of this parable "*as to its being needful for men always to pray and not be faint-hearted*". The essential nature of prayer is communion with God. We commune with God not because of the things we want of him, but because we want to be one with him; in common-union. We desire oneness with God because we have entered into full heart sympathy with his guiding principles for all creation. We, like God, desire above all things to see righteousness universal and evil eliminated, and our desire is because we have come to realise that condition of things to be the only possible basis of enduring life. Therefore "Thy Kingdom Come" is the most fundamental prayer of all and the essence of all prayer. It is because we believe and are persuaded that this ardently desired consummation to the Divine Plan will surely come to pass that we continue in prayer before God. We know in whom we have believed and are persuaded that he is able. Our constantly reiterated prayers serve to strengthen and crystallise our conviction that these things will surely come to pass, just as with the litigant widow the more she pressed for justice the more sure she became that it would be hers eventually.

This is where the other question has to be answered—Why is God so tardy in replying? We know why the widow had to wait so long, but we cannot give that reason in the case of the reality which the parable illustrates. There is no unrighteousness with God, and he is diligent to oversee the interests of the disciples. "*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry*" (Psa. 34. 15). Why then the apparent delay? Perhaps Rotherham's comment on verse 7 is enlightening on this aspect of the parable. "*Slow to smite his foes, he seems also slow to save his friends*". Rotherham's own translation of verse 7 gives a new slant to Jesus' words "*Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them?*" where Rotherham has it "*though he bear long with regard to them*". Here we come up against that longsuffering of God, his patience and forbearance with sinful man so often exemplified in history. He would have spared Sodom if so few as ten righteous men could have been found there (Gen. 18. 32). He gave the Ninevites every opportunity

and spared them when they repented at the eleventh hour. Even though it means prolonging the reign of evil, and of human misery and death, he defers his arising in judgment until in his wisdom He sees that the iniquity of man is come to the full. So he "bears long" with regard to the cry of his faithful servants because He is working in his own inscrutable way for the salvation of "whosoever will" among his rebellious creatures. That is why there is apparent delay. And that is why faith tends to die. Jesus knew that too. Even although God will avenge, and the faith of those who have waited will be abundantly justified, Jesus knew, as He told his disciples later on, "*because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matt. 24. 12). So here, at the close of the parable, He gave voice to the sad question "*Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*" (vs. 8). We need not deduce from these words that Jesus doubted whether at his Return there would be any at all holding still to the faith; the whole tenor of his teaching implies his knowledge that there would be the faithful watching ones ardently waiting for his appearance, not taken by surprise when the event occurred, and ready in every sense of the word to be "changed" in a moment (1 Cor. 15. 51-52) and so associated with him to all eternity. What Jesus did foresee was that in the Time of the End faith in the world at large would be at a very low ebb precisely because of the apparent victory of evil and impotence of righteousness. In the days of the First Advent everybody believed in God, even though in many cases their lives bore little evidence of any real endeavour to walk in his ways. In the days before the First Advent everybody believed in God; and so did nearly all men subsequently until the approach of relatively modern times. Of all ages in world history the last two or three centuries have been by far the most agnostic and atheistic. Faith in God is to-day rapidly vanishing from the earth and from the human standpoint it would almost seem as if the Christian cause is lost. Materialistic writers already talk of the need of a new religion founded on modern knowledge and devised to suit modern needs, to replace Christianity which in their view is archaic and out-worn. Vast sections of the earth's surface are ruled by political systems which have no use for God and openly say as much; by their actions most of the remaining governing powers, whilst still paying lip service, show that they too have little inten-

tion of upholding the principles of Divine rule which God originally instilled in the heart of man. So men conclude that God, if He exists, is either impotent or indifferent.

It is at such a time that God acts. "I tell you" said Jesus "that he will avenge them speedily". When the iniquity of the nations has at length come to the full; when the great Clock of the Ages strikes the hour fore-ordained of God and the time of his Kingdom has come, the prayers of the faithful will be answered, in that revelation of the Son of Man in the glory of his power which will at one and the same time overthrow the powers of evil and introduce all men to the beneficent rule

of the Messianic Kingdom. "Every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40. 4-5). This is the thing that must be, that shall be, because it is the right thing, and because evil is inherently unstable and must one day consume away by its own corruption.

The Christian whose faith holds firm in God because he knows that God is, and knows that God is good, is the one who will endure unshaken through the dark days in full confidence that at the last, God will avenge him of his adversary.

PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE

One of the most tremendous statements in the New Testament is that in 2 Pet. 1. 4 where the Apostle Peter holds before his readers the prospect of becoming "*partakers of the Divine Nature*". The very idea of the creature sharing the nature of the Creator must appear at first sight so presumptuous that some careful consideration of Peter's words would seem to be very desirable. There comes readily to mind the vivid Biblical contrast between the ambition of Lucifer who aspired to "*be like the Most High*" (Isa. 14. 14) and the serene humility of One who, in taking upon Himself human nature, "*did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*" (Phil. 2. 6 RSV) and there ought to be a very natural reluctance on our part to read anything into Peter's words which is alien to the relationship which must always exist between the created being and the One who both gives and sustains the continued life of that being.

Nevertheless the words do stand and must be accepted. The word "partaker" here means to share a thing in common, to be, as we would say, joint-participants. Thus it is used in 1 Pet. 4. 13 of those who are "*partakers in Christ's sufferings*" and 1 Pet. 5. 1 "*a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*". Again it is rendered "*communion*" in Paul's words relating to the celebration of the Last Supper "*the bread which we break is it not the communion*" (participation in) "*of the body of Christ*" (1 Cor. 10. 16). Exalted therefore as the idea may be, there is already something here which the triumphant Christian in the resurrection life does share with God.

It remains therefore to determine just what Peter meant by the expression "Divine nature". Scripture usage does not help a lot, for

the word here rendered "divine" occurs only three times (the others being "divine power" in 2 Pet. 1.3, and, as a noun, "the Godhead" in Acts 17. 29). Like a good many New Testament expressions, the word came from Greek religious thought and was already in everyday use long before Peter used it, "Divine" and "divinity" were terms applied to the attributes of the gods and goddesses of Greece a thousand years before Peter was born. Therefore to every Christian in his day the power of God, however and wherever exercised, was Divine power; the providence of God was Divine providence; the wisdom, the justice, the love, of God, because they were of God, were Divine. And the nature of God was Divine - the Divine nature.

What then is meant, in this connection, by the nature of God? This word *phusis* occurs quite a few times and is used in the same sense as we refer to a person's nature - good, bad, kindly, mischievous - today. It defines the attributes and actions characteristic of a person. Thus we have Rom. 2. 14 "when the Gentiles do by *nature* the things contained in the Law;" Rom. 1. 27 "the men, leaving the *natural* use of the woman;" Eph. 2. 3. "we... were by *nature* the children of wrath even as others;" Gal. 4. 8. "Ye did service unto them which by *nature* were no gods." Thus the Divine nature in this text refers to the elements of God's character, which are all benevolent and beneficent, goodness, righteousness, mercy, forbearance, patience, and, we must not forget, the active characteristics of creativeness, integrity, consistency, far-sightedness, and so on. When Peter holds out before us the prospect of becoming joint-participants in the Divine nature he is telling us that we shall, in all these and many more, be like

God. We shall be so much like Him that it can be truly said that we have entered into full communion—common-union—with Him.

Logically therefore Peter goes on in the next verse to encourage his readers to cultivate these elements of character. "For this very reason" he says ("and beside this" in the A.V. is a definite mis-translation) "make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, . . . self-control . . . love" and so on. Only thus will the believer experience the "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom" which is his attainment of participation in the Divine nature. Something like this was in the mind of Paul when he told the Colossians "In him" (Christ) "the whole fulness of Deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him who is the head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2. 9-10 RSV). Fulness of life; that can only be realised when the whole being is given up to complete allegiance to God and spiritual union with Him, through Christ. "Ye are dead" said Paul "and your life is hid, with Christ, in God" (Col. 3. 3). During our Lord's communion with the Father on the eve of His death He prayed for His followers "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us . . . I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (Jno. 17. 20-23). It is this one-ness of the Church with her Lord and with the Father which constitutes the joint-participation in the Divine nature of which Peter is speaking.

Our Lord was always in this position. "I do always those things that please him" He said "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I from myself, but he sent me". "As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the

Father" and perhaps the most momentous of His statements "I and my Father are one" (Jno. 8. 28 & 42; 10. 15 & 30). In all these conversations, and many more, He stressed His absolute union with the Father, even to the extent that the Father and the Son could not be thought of as acting independently; the will and the thought of the Son was always in full harmony and union with that of the Father. It is the hope and ideal of every member of the Church eventually to partake of the Divine nature; the Church's Lord always did so partake. As such He becomes the pattern and exemplar for all who follow in His steps. When Philip, slow to believe all, said to Jesus "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied", He received the sublime answer "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" (Jno. 14. 8-10). Jesus was able to stand before Philip as the manifestation of the Father just because He was in this condition of union with Him. Philip, looking upon Jesus, hearing His words, saw, heard, and realised the Father in the only possible way mortal man could do.

So with us. We can learn of the Father only as we see Him reflected to us through the Son. We become like God by becoming like Jesus. When the Man of Nazareth said "Learn of me, . . . and ye shall find rest to your souls" it was to say that if we are transformed into His likeness by the "renewing of our minds" and by continued loyalty to the end of our days, we shall have become "partakers of the Divine nature".

WANTING NO GOOD THING . . .

Psalm 34. 10 says: "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Though we know that the good thing intended here is what is spoken of in verse 22, "none shall be desolated," or in John 14. 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"—for this is a good thing indeed—yet that which most readily comes to the mind in reading these words is some earthly good thing which we may desire. We can think of some of the Lord's dear ones who are greatly burdened with trials and difficulties, and who seem to have far more than their share of illness and suffering, and it would indeed be hard to

make unbelievers realise these were "not in want of any good thing". Though this is not easy to explain by cold logic, yet the testimony of the poorest and most destitute brother or sister in Christ is: "I have wanted no good thing". The following, by Alexander Peden, dated 1682, surely explains this position:—

"I remember, as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell. The callous soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had: 'we will leave thee nothing,' said they, 'either to put in thee or on thee.' 'I care not,' said she, 'I will not want as long as God is in the Heavens'."

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 15. The sword of the Lord

The prophet's work was done. Through a long series of visions he had traced the story of the deliverance of God's people from captivity and oppression, their cleansing from defilement and the exaltation of the purified and dedicated "remnant" to be the Divine instrument for world evangelism. He had told of the restoration and rebuilding of the City of Peace, its investment by the forces of evil powers resisting the incoming Kingdom of righteousness and the dramatic intervention of God Most High to overthrow the power of evil and take control of earthly affairs. There, at the point where the "kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. 11. 15) the visions came to an end and left Zechariah contemplating the serene future in which the sovereignty of the Lord God was manifest to all and the knowledge of His glory beginning to "cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea". But even in this sunlit scene there are some shadows, and the prophet has to take note of them before he closes his book at the point where absolute holiness pervades the Millennial Kingdom and evil is no more.

To this end he divides this final stanza of his story into three parts. In the first (chap. 14, vss. 12-15) he looks back, as it were, to the dramatic intervention from above which has saved the Holy City and its people from the despoilers, and ruminates on the details of their destruction, the nature of the calamities by means of which they were defeated and the comprehensive and final nature of that defeat. Then he turns his attention to the early days of the Messianic era which is to follow, and in vss. 16-19 sees the peoples of earth rendering allegiance to their new King and acknowledging earth's new centre of government. At the same time he warns of the consequences incurred by those who refuse to offer that allegiance. But this is only a temporary intermission, for in vss. 20-21 he sees holiness and righteousness supreme. The Temple of the Lord has become, as it was originally intended to become, a house of prayer for all nations, and in that house "prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised". (Psa. 72. 15).

So he talks of the judgment which has fallen upon the forces of evil, choosing descriptive symbols suited to the picture he has

chosen in which to present that judgment, the destruction of a mighty host outside the walls of Jerusalem. "*This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth*" (ch. 14. 12). This is the first of a threefold judgment; this verse pictures what is obviously a supernatural disaster falling upon the host, the intervention of the powers of Heaven to thwart their objective. Next in verse 13 comes internecine strife whereby the invaders fall upon each other and slay each other. Finally in verses 14-15 the forces of Judah, the defenders of Jerusalem, are pictured as though they advance upon the demoralised enemy and gather all their possessions and equipment for themselves. But the commencement of this three-fold judgment is from Heaven.

Their flesh consumes away as they stand, their eyes as they gaze, and their tongue—significantly singular and not plural, in their mouth. How should this be interpreted? Not literally, for if in verse 12 they thus vanish into nothingness they would hardly be in a position in verse 13 to turn weapons upon each other and destroy each other, neither would there be anyone for Judah in verse 14 to fight. Each verse has to be understood as picturing one aspect or phase of this great debacle, and the entire four verses as enlarging in detail upon verse 3 of this chapter, the coming forth of the Lord "to fight against those nations".

The power which executes God's purpose is celestial, from Heaven, but the hosts against whom it is wielded are very much of this earth. The vision demands that there is in the forefront of the conflict a solid phalanx of armed men surrounding the Holy Land with intention of going in to possess, backed up by all the resources of a world-wide power determined to defy God. It is upon this whole combination that the mysterious catastrophe falls. "*Their flesh shall consume away as they stand upon their feet*"; that could well refer to their man-power and all their equipment of war, a mysterious whittling away of men, perhaps by spontaneous desertion or flight as in the days of Gideon or by pestilence as in

the days of Sennacherib, the immobilising or loss of equipment by reason of adverse climatic conditions. In modern warfare tanks are often held fast in mud and rendered useless, planes grounded due to fog and snow, ships confined to harbour on account of hurricanes. It only needs the impact of some of the forces of Nature—wind, rain, snow, storm—to a degree of unprecedented severity to render all the might of the invading host powerless and frustrate all their fell designs. Quite possibly this is the manner in which their flesh will consume away as they stand upon their feet, and in line with this it may be expected that the eyes which consume away in their sockets may well stand for the intelligence service of the host, all their radio detectors and look-out posts, all the means by which they evaluate the forward position and the situation of their intended victims and so plan their course of action. Even today it only needs a severe magnetic storm on the sun to disrupt the world's radio communications for twelve hours; only a super snowstorm blanketing a wide area in white to render the most efficient aerial spy camera useless. The world of Noah's day was brought to an end simply and solely—and most effectively—by the unaided forces of Nature. *"The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"* says Peter. And if such unexpected and unexplainable disasters befall the confident host which, in Ezekiel's vision of the same event, boasted that they were going in to an undefended land *"to take a spoil and to take a prey"* what wonder that the tongue is consumed away in the mouth. The tongue, the voice of authority, the power of command, the direction and leadership of the entire adventure—silent, speechless! Is it of some significance that the noun is in the singular here; not "their tongues" but "their tongue"? The supreme control of these forces of evil, frustrated in its purpose by forces it can neither understand nor withstand, stands mute in the face of defeat.

Now this is the first aspect of the three-fold judgment; intervention from Heaven. The second is an earthly one; the hosts begin to fight with each other. *"... a great panic from the Lord shall be among them: and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* (ch. 14, 15). This is a case of history repeating itself: on more than one occasion in Israel's history the people were delivered by reason of their enemies falling out with each other and engaging in

fratricidal combat. The case of the deliverance under Jehoshaphat is perhaps the most noteworthy. *"For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came... they looked, and beheld they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped"* (2 Chron. 20, 23-24). So in this case: a blind, unreasoning panic born of the inexplicable disasters and defeat they had experienced leads to internal dissension and strife in the multitude and they begin to war with each other. To what extent this conflict extends into the countries of the world from which this doomed host has been drawn it is not possible to say, but it may well be that in this verse we have a terse indication of the rapid break-up and dissolution of alliances and associations between the political powers of this world which signals the final submission of these powers to the incoming Kingdom. If so, the third aspect of the judgment, the entry of Judah into the picture, is logically next in sequence.

"And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague" (ch. 14, 14-15). It may seem a little illogical to present Judah in this verse as fighting the enemy when all through the narrative the position is that Judah stands still and leaves the fighting to the Lord. There is no inharmony in reality. It is the Lord who comes forth from His place to render the invaders powerless; it is for the people of the land, here called Judah because that was the name of the people and the land in Zechariah's day, to accomplish the subsequent "mopping-up", to use a modern military expression, and to collect the spoil. Here again there is a parallel with the historical deliverance in the days of Jehoshaphat; after the Lord had destroyed the invading armies the people of Judah went out to clear up the battlefield and to gather in the spoil, *"and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much"* (2 Chron. 20, 25). So the picture here is that of the people having a definite part to play in the fight, even although that part involved, at first, remaining passive, in faith, in Jerusalem until the Lord had given victory. Then they could sally forth and collect the spoil.

This can reasonably describe the aftermath of this great event when all nations on earth shall bring their tribute and offerings to the Holy Nation which has been so signally manifested as the beginning of the Divine Kingdom on earth. *"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts"* (Psa. 72. 10). And of course the greatest and most valuable "spoil" will be the sincere allegiance to earth's new King of such among these nations as will accept the opportunity and become reconciled to God, in consequence of Israel's evangelistic fervour. *"The nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising"* (Isa. 60. 3). *"Their seed shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed"* (Isa. 61. 9).

But all the paraphernalia of war, of strife, of man's greed and selfishness and cruelty, will be destroyed, offered up to the Lord in a fervour of devotion and repudiation of evil. This is what is meant by the plague upon the horses, mules, camels and so on. In Old Testament days, when Israel had defeated a particularly obnoxious enemy they offered up to God the captured livestock and other spoils of war to indicate that they themselves were not to be defiled by contact with the accursed possessions of the idolators. The valuable spoils were devoted to sacred purposes and the animals and perishable things destroyed by fire. A notable case is that of the booty taken by Joshua at the capture of Jericho. The gold, silver, copper and iron vessels went into the treasury of the Lord and the city with all its other contents was destroyed. Achan sinned by abstracting for his own use some gold and silver and a "goodly Babylonish garment" and suffered the death penalty in consequence, having "trespassed in the accursed thing". It is for this reason that the Hebrew word *cherem*, meaning properly something devoted or consecrated to God, is also given the meaning of accursed

or a curse, because the thing thus devoted is laid under a curse lest any should touch or take it, as did Achan. It has to be devoted to God and utterly destroyed, because it is inherently evil. Now this is the meaning of verse 25. The various beasts here enumerated were all part of the panoply of war—horses for chariots, mules and camels for carrying goods, and so on. As such they were part of the spoils of war and must be devoted to the Lord and destroyed because they are evil things. So the same plague falls upon them as upon the marauding host and thus all evil is destroyed from the land. Only the valuable things, the good things, remain, and these pass into the custody of the Holy Nation which itself is already consecrated to God.

This is the end of the rule of evil in the earth. Sin has yet to be cleansed out of the hearts of men and this process will occupy the entire Messianic reign now to commence, but the outward practice of evil and oppression ceases henceforth. *"In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth"* (Psa. 72. 7). The enemies of the Lord have been overthrown, but in their overthrow they find that the Victor comes to heal, and with the destruction of all in the world that oppresses and afflicts mankind they are left with the opportunity to rebuild their lives on the principles of truth and righteousness, if they will. So the noble Messianic psalm goes on *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him . . . men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed"* (Psa. 72. 6-17).

So that out of the turmoil and strife of a dying and doomed evil world a new world, wherein dwells justice and love, security and life, is born.

(to be concluded)

In fact, the belief in a personal, living God, and the belief in a distinct personal existence for man throughout eternity, hang closely together. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. We cannot imagine to ourselves a personal and eternal Love which had brought forth existences after His own image only again to annihilate them; which had planted wants in their bosoms that should

never obtain satisfaction. As certain as is our faith in a personal living God, so certain is our faith in eternal life.—*Neander*.

* * *

"The difference between theology and revelation is great and must not be confused. The latter is the work of God's spirit in man; the former, the work of man's mind reflecting on God's work."—*George Tyrrell*

THINKING POINT

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . . The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Psa. 19. 7-9).

There is great concern on the part of certain exponents of the "new theology" to persuade us that the growing disregard for accepted standards of Christian morality is really a good thing because modern man has matured and is able to draw up his own rules of life for himself. The idea that the Christian faith speaks with an authority that must be heeded, it is said, ought to be abandoned because the spirit of the age will not bow before authority anyway. Biblical laws and ethics are relevant to a past age but not to this. And so on.

But there is nothing new under the sun. There was a period in the history of Israel of which it is said *"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* and the calamitous results of that time when men drew up their own rules of life is depicted in the Book of Judges. It was only when Samuel stood up to assert Divine authority and rule according to Divine law that the nation began to make progress. The woolly thinking that characterises so much that is said to-day is well illustrated by a competition organised some years ago by a popular journal to find the best up-to-date definition of the Christian faith. It was won by a woman who submitted *"Our Lord wanted us to be happy and He gave us the Ten Commandments with the liberty to keep them or not as we choose"*!

Of course it is necessary to relate Christian standards to modern conditions. It would be no use quoting Paul's advice respecting the partaking of meat which had been offered to idols or what he had to say about the sisters remaining veiled when in the meetings. All that was relevant to his age but not to ours. But the one dictum may be a useful pointer to the right attitude when someone in all sincerity wishes to donate his football pools winnings to the church funds and the other when there is a question as to proper reverence in the House of God. The Mosaic Law is superseded, for Christians, by the higher law laid down by Christ; nevertheless the prohibition as to coveting one's neighbour's ox or ass can be equally well applied to the family car, and coveting his house to its modern equivalent of "keeping up with the Joneses". There is nothing out of date or impracticable with the faith as it is presented in the Bible;

the trouble is that it has not been tried by many of those who criticise it. One is reminded of Lenin's admonition to George Lansbury when the latter visited the European capitals between the two world wars in the interests of world peace. To each of his hosts the visitor put the claims of Christianity—for Lansbury was an out-and-out Christian—as an integral part of his case. The Russian leader listened attentively and at the end of the interview said quietly "Lansbury, go back and convert your own countrymen to Christianity—then come and see me again".

But as St. Paul asked in another connection "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Unless a reasoned exposition of the Faith, expressed in the language of to-day and set against the contemporary background, is presented and defended with vigour, it is little wonder that the pseudo-wisdom of the new theologians, dressed up in all the catch-phrases of the day and devised to appeal to the materialistic side of man's nature and understanding, gets the hearing and support it does. The theology of too many Christian groups is several centuries out-of-date, and even among those who were abreast of the times say two generations ago there are many who have made no progress since—and the world has moved a lot in those two generations. The cardinal error, that the Bible is a man-made book built up from the folk-lore and traditions of early times and must be suitably discounted on that account, has been too easily accepted by too many otherwise knowledgeable and earnest disciples. The plain truth is that the Bible as we have it was prepared by men under the overruling power of the Holy Spirit and is the medium of Divine revelation to man in all ages and nations. What is needed to-day is more, much more, Bible ministry based on that fact, expounding its contents not only as a code of ethics by which men may live but also as a definite guide-book to the Creator's purpose for man. For be it remembered that this life is not the only life, and life as it is now lived is nothing more than an embryo state preparatory to that which is to follow. And there is much more to life than is involved in the playing of harps and the blowing of trumpets. A clearer vision of what the Bible has to say on that subject should do much to counter the "new theology".

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN (Part I)

The Second Epistle of John is thought to have been written at Ephesus, following the writing of the First Epistle (eight of its thirteen verses are to be found in the First Epistle also) and to have been addressed to a sister in Christ otherwise unknown to history. It is this question of the Epistle's purpose that has given rise to the most disputed point in its short length of only thirteen verses. "*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth*" is how he opens the epistle. Some commentators and scholars, reluctant perhaps to give the honour of an entire New Testament epistle to a woman, however saintly, especially to one who is not identified in any other extant writing, have suggested that under that pseudonym John intended the church at Ephesus, or perhaps the entire Church on earth, to be understood. It is not a convincing suggestion; the fact that the elect lady has children who are associated with her in the greeting, and moreover has a sister who in turn also has children (verse 13) makes the supposition practically impossible of serious consideration. It seems virtually certain that John was writing to an actual person of his acquaintance, one whom he esteemed very highly "in the Lord" and the only question is, who was she?

There is not much likelihood of that question being answered, this side of the Vail. Some have hazarded the view that Mary the mother of Jesus is the one to whom the Epistle was written. That is hardly likely; Mary must almost certainly have died many years before this date. Mary's children—James, Joseph, Jude, Simeon, Salome, would have been well advanced in years themselves, almost John's own age. It has to be concluded that we have no clue to this sister's identity.

The word "lady" in verses 1 and 5 is *Kyria* which was a Greek woman's name, the equivalent of the Hebrew "*Martha*" and also a Greek term of respect roughly equivalent to our English word "madam". John would be no more likely to use "madam" in preference to the more intimate term "sister" than would we toward one who is well known to us and highly esteemed as a sister in Christ. The most reasonable conclusion then is that the sister's name was in fact *Kyria*, and that the Apostle knew her sufficiently well to address her habitually by her "Christian" name. She

was evidently a convert, perhaps Jewess, more likely Greek, probably middle-aged and with a family of children, "teen-agers" as we would say, living in one of the Greek towns of Asia where there were brethren, perhaps Colosse or Laodicea or Smyrna, within reach of the Apostle's travelling abilities. She had a sister, whose children at least apparently lived in Ephesus itself so that when the Apostle wrote this letter to his friend *Kyria* he would quite naturally add the words of greeting from those children with which the Epistle is ended.

The entire letter therefore is just a little personal word, a gem of Christian correspondence, somewhat akin to Paul's similar letter to his friend Philemon of Colosse, preserved in the New Testament as an example to us of how the believers in that day felt towards each other. John's solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his friend and sister in Christ comes out very prominently in these few words.

His reference, in verse 1, to himself as "the elder" may be equally well a reference to his age or his office. The word "presbyter" may be understood either way and is normally interpreted in harmony with the context. John must certainly have been one of the oldest brothers in the Faith at the time—probably not far short of a century of years had passed over his head. It is true, moreover, that all the other Apostles had long since gone to their rest, and it may well be that John in humility had ceased calling himself by the name of Apostle since he was now the only Apostle living, and contented himself with the title of "elder" in its sense of a pastor in the church, perhaps referring to himself as "*the Elder*" as indicative of his realisation that the office of leader or chief shepherd of the flock on earth had now devolved upon him as the sole survivor of those who once walked and talked with Jesus, having known Him in the flesh. John was the only one left on earth to have heard the memorable words "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*".

There is a world of meaning in verse 2 which we can well take to ourselves in these latter difficult days. "*For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*" So many have become apathetic

and indifferent, having lost their first zeal and left their first love, often because of disappointment with some one or other aspect of the faith in which they had placed great trust and which did not turn out as they expected. Some have built their faith on chronology, and when the arrival of the set date and non-fulfilment of the expected event has proved their hopes ill-founded, have given up the Faith in despair and disappointment. We need always to remember that if we do properly and completely appreciate the Truth and allow it to take root in us, giving ourselves in complete and unreserved consecration to God, not to a date nor to work nor on the basis of a doctrine, then the Truth that is in us will remain with us for ever, and neither the failure of the date or the work or the doctrine will make any difference to that. Even though the work and labour of a life-time disintegrate in ruins about us, all that we have constructed and supported and administered come to an end like the things in the Epistle to the Hebrews that, having decayed and waxed old, are ready to vanish away, we can stand up freed from all the obligations and responsibilities that those things have laid upon us and say "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do next?" God will never have us idle, neither will disappointment have any place in our lives, whilst we can so profit by our experiences that the Truth remains in us for ever.

Verse 3 is a wonderful greeting. "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." Here in this text we have the ideal expression of the relationship subsisting between the Father and the Son. Spoken of separately, the two are one in the bestowal of these wondrous blessings of favour, mercy and peace. We cannot say these things come from the Father more than the Son, nor yet from the Son more than the Father. John has no use here for the later "Dark Ages" idea that the Son in His mercy stands between a wrathful Father and a condemned world to save that world from the Father's vengeance. Here we have Father and Son in perfect unison and perfect oneness extending heavenly blessings upon those in this world who are in the right attitude of heart to receive those blessings. Here we have assurance that in the Age to come the Shepherd Who goes out to seek and save the lost sheep and the Father Who goes out to meet the returning prodigal are working together in the closest harmony, so that, as

Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are one".

To these blessings sent from heaven there is conjoined the twin earthly blessings of truth and love. Neither is very much use to us without the other. Together, they yield us all that we need to make our calling and election sure. Truth regulates our intellectual faculties and love regulates our emotional faculties. Neglect either, and we become unbalanced Christians, either all heart and no head, or all head and no heart. In either case we shall not be of those who will need both heart and head for the onerous work of the next Age. This does not mean that we have to excel in the accomplishments both of heart and head before we can be acceptable to God, as though in one ordinary, everyday person are combined all the attributes of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Augustine. It is not given to many to reach up to the stature of great men. What is really needed is a due balance, so that the heart does not run away with the head nor the head stifle the impulses of the heart. We, each of us, need to pay attention to both attributes, to truth and to love, in our lives.

It is in verses 4 to 6 that John impresses this point with a practical and personal application. "I rejoiced greatly," he says to the unknown sister Kyria, "that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, Kyria, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it". Here are truth and love again associated, and this time brought into contact with the commandment and so with our Christian walk, which is a practical application indeed. He finds Kyria's children walking in truth, and he rejoices greatly on that account. That is the Father's commandment and he is glad to find them so. Now he beseeches that they walk in love, which is also God's commandment. He makes haste to affirm that he knows this is not a new commandment—even though Jesus himself had called it such. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another". To John and his disciples it was no longer a new commandment; they had heard it expounded and commended to them every day of their Christian lives. But it was still necessary to re-affirm that commandment more constantly and more fervently than the

other. Even in those early days it was easier to follow the law of intellectual knowledge than the law of brotherly love.

So it is with us to-day. Too often is love despised as a weak emotional thing of no real value in the Christian conflict, and knowledge extolled as the be-all and end-all of Christian endeavours. Too easily we forget St. Paul's immortal dictum, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not love, I am nothing". (1 Cor. 13. 2). Here in this Second Epistle John remains resolutely set upon the theme which appears so prominently in his First, that the Truth of God can only be effectually manifested against a background

built up of intellectual appreciation based on absolute sincerity in the quest for Divine Truth, and a heartfelt love for the brethren and for all mankind that is an accurate reflection of the love that God Himself bears toward all His creatures. Kyria had evidently brought her children up "in the nurture and fear of the Lord" to understand well these things, and John, knowing that thus they had been taught "from the beginning" has no fonder desire than that they might continue so, to walk to the end of their days, living witnesses to the truth that dwelt in them and should remain with them for ever.

(To be Concluded)

THE GIFT OF WISDOM

Discourse on an important theme

"Whence then, comes wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? It is hid from the eyes of all living." "God understands the way to it, and he knows the place thereof." "Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." This really amounts to the perfect fulfilment of the Law, beyond the normal reach of Adam's sons. "Oh that God would speak . . . and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom." So cried the prophet in a past dispensation. In their quest for wisdom they came to a blank wall. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him."

With the coming of Christ things changed for the better, as far as mankind was concerned. Now indeed, light has been shed on the Scriptures which are able to make one wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, justification. This could be described as the heavenly wisdom, first pure then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This wisdom, like faith, is a gift of God, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. But this gift of wisdom is different to many other gifts from God, inasmuch that before it may be enjoyed it is withheld from all but those who are prepared to ask for it. It is not like the sun that shines, the rain that falls, on just and unjust; not like the wonderful air we breathe, available for righteous and unrighteous; nor

like the fruitful seasons providing food for saint and sinner. All these gifts are available freely, without money and without price, no charge made by the Giver; in fact one is compelled to accept them. The earth yieldeth her increase; there is good food and drink, good sense, sight, hearing, smelling, ours to use and enjoy, gifts already in our possession without asking for them. How we receive and employ those gifts is another story. If we employ them wisely, "this man is blessed in his deed." If we choose to employ them foolishly and find ourselves floundering it would not avail much to ask for added wisdom when all that is necessary is to correct foolish behaviour. But of this gift of wisdom, the subject of this discussion, there is a reservation attached to its possession. Of those for whom it has been reserved, each one is obliged to ask for it.

James sets it out—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not and it shall be given him." Those not needing any, along with those who have enough, do not ask. Automatically they exclude themselves from a rich heritage. People indifferent about gifts seldom put them to good purpose. They stow them away in some out of the way place, out of sight. If wisdom is employed in the daily problems weightier trials will not seem so formidable. No trial can successfully be endured; no lesson can be learnt, without wisdom. "God giveth liberally," but not to all those who do ask. The motive for the request is considered, and if it is found selfishness would be served, "they ask amiss" and might well wonder why

they do not receive.

There are two important qualifications necessary before the gift will be bestowed: faith—"let him ask in faith, nothing wavering"—in conjunction with a sense of lack. Where there is a conscious sense of lack, self examination is always under consideration. In the morning we ask for wisdom to guide us through the day ahead. But there may be no lack apparent, covering that day's experiences. It is a different story at the close of the day; reflecting, we see where we have erred, where we may have done better—many places in the day's activities, with maybe one huge blunder weighing heavily in our assessment of folly versus wisdom. Faith may now take a bold step; we have the requirements necessary to ask for the gift, confidently expecting an answer, a favourable answer, *that some portion of the gift of wisdom will now be granted.* It is no haphazard, no routine request, this asking for wisdom; it is a living faith and a consciousness of lack that assures the suppliant of a liberal supply.

Normally, among people generally, the last thing one would find would be an admission of deficiency in wisdom. Let anyone dare suggest to another, "That was not a very wise thing to do," he immediately interprets it as an accusation of foolishness, and strong resentment is voiced. How many of us over the past twelve months have specifically asked God for wisdom? If requests have been made, it is an acknowledgement of foolish behaviour. If no requests have been made, there has been no lack; no lack, no request; no request, no receive. A main reason for stocktaking is to discover shortages. If an account of the shortages is not known how can deficiencies be rectified? Guesswork is not good enough; inspection is necessary, close, careful scrutiny is demanded. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed"—a liberal amount of wisdom is guaranteed such an one.

No one could refer to Wisdom and not think of King Solomon. Universally acknowledged the wisest of Adam's sons, whence cometh this wisdom of his, thought of as being supernaturally endowed? "To him that hath, more shall be given." A previous and, in this case, generous possession of wisdom being put to use qualifies for more. "He giveth wisdom unto the wise" (Dan. 2. 21), those wise enough to exercise what they already have. Most people would be familiar with some of the

marvellously wise things done by Solomon. It would be very interesting to hear answers to the question, "What was the wisest thing Solomon ever did?" Our reply would be, when he requested the gift of wisdom above every other consideration. He wisely asked for "a wise and understanding heart, wisdom to govern this great people". He already had enough, as his request shows, of wisdom to value above everything, an increase of the same gift, to help him govern. God was so pleased with his desire that He granted benefits Solomon had not asked for, wealth, power, length of days—all given without request. David had left untold wealth and materials for his son for a certain project. But how could David's will be executed without the gift of wisdom? Solomon was one who could truly and sincerely say "Amen" to Job's appraisal of the value of Wisdom. (See Job 28. 12-19.)

Yet Solomon with all his wisdom, failed to take his own good counsel. Of the many causes contributing to his failure, without doubt one was the inability to take criticism. He would pursue his own sweet way, excusing in himself all manner of folly. How true his own words in Eccles. 10. 1. The apothecary was one who manufactured sweet and precious ointment. This ointment, in containers, was placed on shelves to await buyers. Sometimes a few flies were trapped in the stickiness and died in the ointment. The ointment was not only spoilt, but emitted a stinking savour. "So doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." A little folly in one of good reputation becomes a great blemish. True wisdom is true honour. It gains a reputation likened to precious ointment: pleasing, valuable. This kind of reputation, like the sweet-smelling ointment, is obtained with great care and difficulty. Both are rendered valueless, repulsive, obnoxious by a few dead flies in one case and a little folly in the other. A little folly at any stage in consecration, even at the end of a long and faithful service, should it be left unattended, could foul the whole effort. With the ointment, ingredients and labour were both lost. Instead of a sweet-smelling savour, a repulsive tainting of everything connected with it, even the name. Faithful and loyal service does not guarantee immunity from the effects of folly any more than good works can atone for indiscretion. "Oh that God would speak and show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is."

"As surely as sparks fly out of flint being sharpened, man is born into trouble." All people have problems and trials—no one can avoid them. Some even court danger, rushing in where angels fear to tread. Wisdom is an elusive commodity in most lives. Why? Could it be we expect a similarity of action and reaction; a sameness of behaviour pattern? Do we forget God never makes two things alike? If we could remember the diversified ways in which His spirit operates, we would be able to discern the diversified operation of Wisdom. The gift of wisdom will differ in its prescription for each individual. If the requirements of wisdom could be printed on cards for distribution, each member would have a card differing from his neighbour's; no two cards would be alike, nor would they be transferable. Each card would be like the white stone in Revelation, having a particular and personal character.

What Christian is there who does not fall into divers temptations (trials): He does not *fall in*, but *falls into*; for some unexplainable reason we become aware of a predicament and wonder why it has been placed on our doorstep. This is a case for wisdom. And because these trials are as many as they are varied, a constant surveillance is necessary.

"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." This recommendation confirms the idea that a request for wisdom comes AFTER its lack is painfully apparent. One in this state would be emotionally disturbed, and for that reason more prone than otherwise to waver and doubt, and be discouraged. Remorse retards an unwavering faith. Yet the gift of wisdom is conditional on this faithful approach to the problem. Jesus insisted, on some healing

occasions, for this unwavering faith—"Believest thou that I am able to do this?" We may even be asking for wisdom to overcome a trial similar to one or more earlier experiences. Can it be remembered how, as scholars, we came before a teacher a second or third time for the same kind of offence? What happened? "What, you again? It's time an example was given that will stop this nonsense." It is a consolation to know that nothing like this happens when we come before God, conscious of our lack, never doubting His mercy, even should we be appearing a second or third time on the same kind of mistake. Unlike the school master and natural men who chide one another for their folly, "He upbraideth not." And there should not be a doubt or waver that in coming to Him for help that we imagine a sense of disadvantage—He giveth to all men, liberally, more than enough for the occasion. Yet it is logical that with each repetitive mistake a greater lesson must be learned as more wisdom would be required to overcome an enlarged predicament. A wise man learns from the experiences of others; a fool from his own. Better to be a fool and learn by some means than be so blind as refusing to recognise corrections. The matter of our care should be the matter of our prayer. God invited us to be humbly free with Him, and in prayer unburden our care. Then an unwavering faith may find He works miracles in His providences. The deliverance we ask for in the Lord's prayer ("*But deliver us . . .*") may come, like so many deliverances instanced in the Word, by using the gift of wisdom. (See Prov. 2. 1-11.)

(*People's Paper, Melbourne*)

There are many speculative difficulties about miracles. We are used to reasoning up from them to Christ, may we not reason from Him down to them? Given a Being like Christ, and the miracles are but the fitting framework of that Divine picture. The sick healed, the bread multiplied, the water turned into wine, the winds hushed, the dead raised—all these cease to be unnatural. His name is Wonderful, therefore the supernatural is His natural element. Supernatural works are natural to Him. For the believer the person of Christ witnesses to his miracles. For the unbeliever the miracles witnessed to his person.

Bishop Alexander

* * *

Is God all wise? Then the darkest provid-

ences have meaning. We will set ourselves as God's interpreters, and because we cannot make straight lines out of crooked lot we think that God has turned our life into inextricable confusion. The darkest hours in our life have some intent, and it is really not needful that we should know all at once what the intent is. Let us keep within our own little sphere, and live a day at a time, and breathe a breath at a time, and be content with one pulsation at a time, and interpretation will come when God pleases, and as He pleases.

Dr. Parker

* * *

The language of friendship is not words, but meanings. It is an intelligence above language.

IN THE GARDEN

*A New Testament
mystery*

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

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

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

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

the Lord's disciples had thought of taking.

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

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

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

If tradition be true, Jesus had only just come from the house where lived such an one. Early Christian testimony says that the "upper room" in which the Last Supper was held was in the house of a certain Mary, the same house which afterwards became the centre of the first Jerusalem Christian Church, and where many were gathered together in prayer when Peter had been thrown into prison by Herod (Acts 12. 12). This Mary had a son, John Mark, who at the time of the

Lord's ministry was about fourteen years of age. In after years he accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journeys as a personal attendant, and later became profitable to Paul for the work of the ministry (2 Tim. 4. 11, Phil. 24). He worked with Barnabas, who was his uncle, and eventually was privileged to write the first of the four Gospels to see the light of day—the Gospel according to Mark. Early Christian historians say that he introduced Christianity into Egypt, founded the Church of Alexandria, and ended his life as a martyr three years after Paul had sealed his own testimony with his blood on the Appian Way outside Rome.

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

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

presumptive evidence that the verses were actually written by Luke.

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

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

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

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

The world is preparing day by day for the millennium, but you do not see it. Every season forms itself a year in advance. The coming summer lays out her work during the autumn, and buds and roots are foreshadowed. Ten million roots are pumping outside; do you hear them? Ten million buds are forming in the exils of the leaves; do you hear the sound of the saw or hammer? All next summer is at work in the world, but it is unseen by us, and so "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation". H. W. Beecher

* * *

We do not "belong" to any religious teacher. Religious teachers belong to us.

FOREFATHERS OF ABRAHAM

5. The End of an Era

*A little-known period
of the Old Testament*

From the time of Eber and his son Peleg to that of Terah the father of Abraham there is silence so far as Biblical history is concerned. This period, perhaps spanning some four or five centuries, is something like the four hundred years' gap which separates the Old and New Testaments, the days of Malachi from those of John the Baptist. It is almost as if there was nothing more to say concerning the old world of patriarchs, of Eden, the Flood, the Tower of Babel; the stage was being cleared for a new scene, the story of Abraham the Friend of God and all that in later centuries, even down to our own day, was to stem from that man's sterling loyalty to God. All that is recorded of the intervening period is the line from which Abraham came. Peleg begat Reu, and Reu Serug, and Serug Nahor, and Nahor Terah, and Terah was living with his family in the Sumerian city of Ur of the Chaldees, a busy merchant centre bordering, at that time, on the shores of the southern sea, the Persian Gulf.

What kind of city was Ur? Not large as modern ideas go. Since Woolley's memorable excavations forty years ago a great deal is known about it. In its earlier days, before men had multiplied in the land, and even as the capital city of the south, it boasted only twenty thousand or so inhabitants; by the days of Abraham it had grown into a great complex of suburbs and satellite towns surrounding the "old city" over an area ten or twelve miles across and possessing maybe a quarter of a million citizens. Its prosperity depended mainly on overseas trade and the manufacture of goods from raw materials brought by its ships from distant parts of the world. Two spacious harbours received the ships; factories in the city took the materials and gave employment to many of the inhabitants. In consequence Ur was a flourishing city. It is possible that Terah was a wealthy and prosperous citizen; Jewish tradition represents him as a manufacturer of *teraphim*—household gods used in every household following the Sumerian religion, but there is no likely foundation for the tradition. It is very possible though that he had settled in the city because of the material advantages it offered just as his grandson Lot chose to settle in Sodom many years later. He had rejected the God of his fathers; this much

is known from Joshua's last injunction to Israel "*your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah the father of Abraham and of Nahor, and they served other gods*". (Josh. 24. 2 RSV). At some time during the period between Eber and Terah the family had turned to the prevailing idolatry and only in Abraham did a return to God take place; yet the sacred records were preserved through that time, to come eventually into the hands of Abram so that one might well wonder how whole-hearted was the relapse into idolatry. It might well have been dictated by commercial expediency but in any case it is evident that Terah was not made of the same stuff as his son. But he was evidently well established as a responsible member of the community in Ur and had been so for a considerable time and there his family was born; Haran, the eldest, then Nahor, and finally Abram, sixty years younger than his eldest brother. Then Haran died, before his father, and his brothers married his two daughters, their nieces, a not uncommon thing at that period. Nahor married Milcah and Abram married Sarai (the name Iscah in Gen. 10. 29 AV should properly be Sarai as in the succeeding verse. The error is said by Assyriologists to be due to a misreading of certain cuneiform signs by a translator and is one of the evidences that the original language of Gen. 11 was Sumerian). Josephus confirms that Sarai was the daughter of Haran and this is quite in harmony with Abraham's statement in Gen. 20. 12 "*she is the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother*" where Terah, as head of the family, is termed the "father" of his descendants to several generations, a common Biblical usage.

These family names, appearing in the Bible in their Hebrew and not their Sumerian form, add support to the view that Terah was a devotee of the Moon-god, of which deity Ur was the sacred city. The Moon-god, known as Sin or Nannar, was one of the oldest mythological deities and especially the god of shepherds and sheep-keeping. As such he was worshipped extensively by the sons of Shem who were primarily stock-raisers. The name Terah is the Sumerian Tarakhu, meaning a gazelle, an animal sacred to the Moon-god. Haran was evidently named after the northern city of that name, also sacred to the

Moon-god, to which Terah afterward migrated. Nahor is Nakhur, another city near Haran. Abram is Abu-ramu, a title of the Moon-god. Sarai is Sarrata, a title of the moon-goddess, the wife of Sin, and Milcah is Malkatu, a title of Ishtar the goddess of heaven. There is thus some clear evidence of a moon-worship emphasis in Terah's family. It is significant that after Abram's call and commission God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations".

But now Ur was becoming engulfed in political problems. The great days of its supremacy and prosperity were coming to an end. During Terah's lifetime it began to pass under the domination of neighbouring powers; there was an invasion and fighting in its streets and destruction of property. Babylon, formerly a small and inconspicuous holy city famous only for its great Tower, was becoming more powerful and increasingly threatened Ur. It is not difficult to see why Terah decided to leave Ur and find a safer place in which to live with his family. So we have Gen. 11. 31 *"and Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came into Haran, and dwelt there."*

It was a long journey. Haran is seven hundred miles from Ur, in the far north-west, on a tributary of the Euphrates and standing at the intersection of several important routes. Unlike Ur, the town still exists, and politically is in modern Turkey. The family may have travelled by road or by boat, making their way up the placid Euphrates; in either case they would have been several months on the way. They must have felt a sense of satisfaction as they progressed, for Haran was in the centre of the territory in which the sons of Shem had settled after the dispersion at Babel, and although many Semitic peoples besides the forefathers of Terah had infiltrated the south country and mingled with the sons of Ham, this far north-west land was still primarily the abode of the Semites and it was here that the ancestors of Abraham originated. Maybe this is why Terah settled in Haran instead of going on to Canaan, another four hundred miles distant, as had been his avowed intention when leaving Ur. Perhaps also his idolatrous leanings had something to do with it, for Haran was, like Ur, sacred to the Moon-god, and Terah would find much here in line with the life he had left. It is rather interesting to notice in passing that there were four

towns in this land, mentioned in Sumerian inscriptions, which were also the names of four generations of Terah's family, Serug, Nahor, Terah and Haran. It could well be that these names were bestowed in memory of the land from which one of their forebears had emigrated and to which Terah and Abram had now returned.

It is not stated that Nahor, the brother of Abram, accompanied them to Haran, but if he did not do so at the time he must have followed them later, for when Abraham's steward Eliezer was sent to find a bride for Isaac it was to Haran he went, to the family of Nahor, and returned bringing Rebekah the grand-daughter of Nahor. Later on Jacob went to the same district to find himself a wife in turn, and there married two of Rebekah's nieces, remaining for many years in partnership with Laban the grandson of Nahor.

The length of Abram's sojourn in Haran is not stated, only that he remained there until his father's death. It could not have been more than thirty or forty years, since he was already married to Sarai when they left Ur. It is more than probable that Terah's advanced age disinclined him for the further journey to Canaan and the unknown life that would await him there and he preferred to remain at Haran and its idolatry rather than embrace the unknown. It was Abram of whom it was said *"from Haran, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell . . . and he went out, not knowing whither he went"* (Acts 7. 4, Heb. 11. 8).

So, at length, amid the glittering civilisation of the magnificent city of Haran, the city of the Moon-god, Terah died, the last man claimed by Biblical history to have exceeded two centuries of life. With his death an era ended. For an unknown span of time, at least twelve hundred years, perhaps more, since Noah and his sons stepped out of the Ark and surveyed the empty land which was now their own, until Terah breathed his last in that same land now covered with the shining cities and stupendous buildings of a great civilisation, the Most High had watched and waited. Mankind had enjoyed a second chance to justify their claim that they could govern themselves. Once before, the wickedness of man had become so great that God looked down from heaven and saw that *"every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6. 5), and He brought that world to an end and cleansed it from its evil and started again with a godly

family. Now, as He looked down once again, He saw a company of nations, arrogant in their achievements and determined each to rule over the others by brute force; He saw injustice and violence and war, the worship of false gods and all the degradation and depravity that went with that worship; He saw that "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11. 6); but He also saw a man, a descendant of a once upright family, in whom the old passion for truth and justice and righteousness had been kindled anew. He looked upon a man capable of sterling loyalty and unflinching faith, and He chose that man and called him to abandon the prosperity and glitter of the world in which he had been born, and go into a new land where he must start all over again but where God would be with him, his everlasting guide, leading him through strange and devious experiences that through him He might accomplish His purpose.

So on the day that Abram left Haran of Mesopotamia and set his footsteps in the direction of the distant land of Canaan, the old order came to an end and a new one began, one destined to be marked by the visible enlargement and outworking of the Plan of God. "In thee and in thy seed" He told Abraham "shall all families of the earth be blessed". The promise has not yet been fulfilled, even though four thousand years have passed since it was uttered, but the groundwork for its fulfilment has been laid, step by step, as century has followed century, and millennium has followed millennium. The golden star which led Abraham into Canaan shines still, more lustrous and splendid than ever, and will shine until its radiance is swallowed up by the light of that supreme day when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together".

THE END

THE SUNRISING

An Exhortation

"And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain." (2 Samuel 23. 4).

How eagerly and longingly the watchers of the morning are waiting for the coming or manifestation of the Lord—the Sun of Righteousness. How and when will He come, we often ask ourselves. In the beautiful text quoted above we have a very clear indication of the way in which He will come—even as our Lord Himself stated, that it would be in a clear and unmistakable way. "As the lightning shineth from the east even unto the west, even so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Men will doubt no longer. "Every eye shall see him."

In another beautiful text, David also says: "He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the grass."

One by one the years slip by and hearts grow weary with the strain of waiting and watching for the signs of His appearing. Yet God grant that we may be found ready and with oil in our lamps when the cry goes forth "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh".

St. Paul exhorted his disciples again and again to "be patient". He knew that the period of waiting would be very trying: so trying that many would fail to be ready and some would even be smiting others who were not quite in accord with their own views.

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the

coming of the Lord." (Jas. 5. 7 and 8.)

"Here is the patience of the saints." (Rev. 13. 10.)

How hard it is to be patient in times of anxious waiting we all know well. How our imagination runs riot and often fills us with forebodings or fears until we find the strain well nigh intolerable. When, on the other hand, some great joy awaits us, how eagerly we look forward, counting each day, and then, when the watched for day arrives, watching the clock. This is what we are told to do in these days of waiting—"watch". Not to grow weary, not to lose patience, not to doubt that the time will come at last. Oh yes, it sounds easy to talk, but as weary year succeeds weary year, and the hopes begin to grow fainter, the stoutest and most eager hearted watcher begins to sigh and groan for the longed for time. To some of us more impulsive natures, this is a hard testing time. How, then, are we to keep our hopes high and our confidence steady? Merely, brethren, by calling upon Him Who alone is able to keep us from falling, and trusting in Him implicitly, for "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the working of His mighty power". Let us ever remember that the "Everlasting Arms" are always nigh, and the overshadowing wings ever ready to cover us, and that those who put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed.

How well David knew these times of testing and oh how he cried to the Lord, again and

again, and how often did he not give thanks for his deliverances. Let us, therefore, say with him, in these dark and trying days:—

"In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast"
Psa. 57. 1.

He will "cover us with His feathers", and guard and shelter us from all that besets us. How comforting to think of those overspread wings—wings of love and protection. Let us, then, take heart and trust them.

Soon, soon, the ever growing light of this cloudless morning shall dispel the darkness. The things which have seemed so shadowy and obscure shall be clearly defined and all shall be bright and warm, as the cold morning mists give way to the glowing beams of the glorious Millennial sunrise. *"Then shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings."* The darkness will be past and the glad day arrived at last.

Take heart, weary watchers, and keep those lamps alight with the oil of love, for though "the love of many shall wax cold" in these days of abounding iniquity, He Who is our Guardian is also the Lord of Love, and can fill our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, melting down the hardness and keeping them "hearts of flesh". Ah how soon the chill winds of adversity, ingratitude and unkindness can make that poor, weak flame, flicker and, alas, even die out. Let us call upon Him to keep our hearts filled with the oil of love, therefore, that when He shall appear,

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (vs. 2).

It is manifestly illogical to take these words as descriptive of our Lord's personal appearance when one remembers that He was humanly perfect as was Adam before his transgression, and that the physical aspect of Jesus must have been one of overpowering beauty and majesty. It is unthinkable that the Son of God should walk this earth in any form other than one suited to the fact that He was indeed the Son of God. It is a significant fact that the alleged descriptions of Jesus dating from the days of the Early Church all present Him as possessed of grace and beauty; it was not until later centuries, when the dark influence of a gloomy asceticism was fastening itself upon the Church, that the conception of Jesus as physically unlovely and even repulsive took the lead, and texts like this were taken out of their poetic setting and interpreted in a grossly literal sense.

our lamps will soon be lighted, and we may go out to meet the Bridegroom. He alone can give us this oil, through the plenitude of His Holy Spirit.

David, after all the vicissitudes of the dark valley, and having put his trust in the living God, could say—

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Praise God, that in the glorious morning that awaits us "many nations shall be turned to the Lord", and many unbelievers shall be converted unto Him "whom they had pierced" Many shall then outgrow the old "earthy" nature, and "spring forth" into the "new birth" even as the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness after the refreshing rains of His Presence. Thus, in the "Times of Refreshing" which shall come from the Presence of the Lord, shall many weary wanderers turn their weary steps to Him who has said *"Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest"*.

Wait patiently, then, brethren. Let us be able to say with David, *"I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry"*.

*"He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth."*

"Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us."

The glory of Jesus was not of this world. That was the great truth over which Israel stumbled and fell and that is why they saw no beauty in Him to desire. A king must, in their eyes, be possessed of outward majesty and glory; he must be arrayed in costly raiment and flashing jewels; he must have courtiers and servants and a shouting crowd to attend him wherever he went. There were three things, yea, four, said the Wise Man in Proverbs, which "go well" and are "comely in going". A lion, which is strongest among beasts, took his admiration; a greyhound, a he-goat, and a king, "against whom there is no rising up". (Prov. 30. 29-31). He looked on the outward appearance and marvelled at the strength of the lion, the speed of the greyhound, the irresistible force of the he-goat, and the power of the king. These things, he said, are "comely"—but there was none of that comeliness in the demeanour and the life of the Prince of Peace.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

5. Reformation begun

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

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

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

with this thought we find that the first-fruits unto God (the first-born class, the 144,000 of Rev. 14. 4) are not represented as coming from Levi alone, but as though gathered from all the tribes of Israel. (Rev. 7. 4-8.) This is in keeping also with the thought in Hebrews that the followers of the Lord Jesus are called "the Church of the first-born" (Heb. 12. 23). This is in accord, too, with the position in Egypt, when the destroying Angel spared the life of every first-born sheltering beneath blood-sprinkled lintels, irrespective of tribal lineage. The first-borns of every tribe alike were in danger that fearful night, and in their "passing over" they were hallowed unto the Lord.

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

If then God spake so earnestly to the "shadow" priesthood of Israel, beseeching them to walk before Him in such holiness as was then possible, with how much greater emphasis has God spoken to the Christian Church to walk worthily before Him, perfecting holiness in His sight, from day to day. How greatly He desires that they shall shape their lives so that His Will in them shall have free course! How ardently He wants the innate qualities of His own great heart to be reproduced in them, so that they can be the first and chief portion of that long-purposed Seed, through which His Love can flow to heal the sin-sick nations of the earth. "*Be ye holy—for I am holy,*"—how intensely

these words reflect the longing of Almighty God!

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

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

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

Holiness is usually taken to mean sinlessness, undefiledness—an equivalent thought to absolute purity. Under present conditions this can mean different things to different men,

according to the creedal conceptions employed. For instance, some Christians believe they have not sinned for months and years. They claim to have kept unbroken all the ten commandments. They claim to have forborne to steal, to lie, to covet, etc., and on this ground claim sinlessness of life—i.e., they thus advance a claim to holiness. All Christians do not agree to this claim because they do not accept that definition of holiness.

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

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

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

This is where holiness begins in the Christian's life. Of His own Will God still takes hold of Abraham's seed, but in these days it is a spiritual seed, and God takes them notwith-

standing their defects. Again it is not for their deserts, but purely of His grace—to serve His own designs.

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

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

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

This two-fold aspect of holiness runs

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

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

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

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

“*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.*” (Heb. 3. 1.)

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

“*. . . the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified . . .*” (Heb. 10. 29.)

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

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

“*. . . yield your members servants of righteousness unto holiness.*” (Rom. 6. 19.)

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

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

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

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

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

(To be concluded)

The truest joys which we have experienced have come when we have had grace to enter most entirely into a sorrow not our own.

Bishop Westcott

Going to church will not make you a saint, any more than going to school will make you a scholar.

C. H. Spurgeon

M. Lehman



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 47, No. 6

NOV./DEC. 1970

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

Published November 1st

Next issue January 1st

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

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

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

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng
Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

Annual Renewals

Those readers who found a pink "renewal slip" inside their copy of the September issue are urged, if they have not already done so, to return it quickly with their request for continuance of the "Monthly". This annual check is necessary to ensure that we send copies only to those who are definitely interested in the magazine. Some will not have received a renewal slip; this is because we have heard from these in recent months or for other reasons have assurance of their continued interest. In these cases we automatically continue sending the "Monthly".

* * *

New leaflet

The article—"The Call and Purpose of the Christian Church" on page 131 of this issue is available as a four-page leaflet; those having a use for it in this form are invited to make request for same.

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Sis. E. M. Norris (*Pontypool*)
Sis. T. Pelluett (*Torquay*)

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

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THE OIL OF JOY FOR THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS

A Christmas Message

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

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

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

message that which gave it both point and urgency.

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

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

Isaiah seemed to be in no doubt as to the scope of his own commission. In a blaze of passionate fervour he throws out his arms and cries *"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations; and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations"*. This is comfort for the present evil time certainly, but comfort based upon a solid hope for the future. This clear vision of the promise and purpose of God is held forth as a positive inducement to the men and women of Israel to turn from their evil ways and return to God, who is working all things for their ultimate happiness. *"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem"* cries the prophet *"which shall never hold their peace day or night"* and then addressing those watchmen *"ye that are the*

Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth". And so the glorious message of joy and peace is to go on and widen over the length and breadth of the earth until the Golden Age of all prophecy has swept away this present world of sin and death, and the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings.

This theme of the future restoration of Israel's glory as the comfort for present distress is the constant burden of the Old Testament prophets. Not for nothing did St. Peter, preaching Restitution to the wondering crowds at Pentecost, remind them that this coming glory had been spoken by all the prophets from the beginning. There is hardly a notable name, from Moses onward, that is not associated with some one or another foreview of the day that is to be, when not only Israel, but all men of every nation, will realise to the full what great things God has prepared for those who have waited for Him and who love Him. We could roam to and fro over the pages of the Hebrew prophets and find one all-absorbing central theme, the glory that shall come when the lessons of this Age of sin and death have been learned. To those fervent, devoted men this life had no meaning except it were co-related to the future life. Sin, evil, suffering, death, were insoluble enigmas until in the distant but certain future they perceived righteousness, goodness, happiness, life. Judgment must mark the dividing line between the two; yes, they knew that. And repentance and conversion must be the only bridge whereby one may pass from the one to the other; they knew that too. But they never lost sight of what lay on the other side of the bridge. To them it was no mysterious avenue ending only in mist and obscurity, a vaguely defined world having nothing of the certainty of this one. To those men the future earth was as clear and sharp as the present, and as they saw it resplendent in the golden light of the Sun of righteousness they pointed men to it with every device and embellishment the art of description could bring to their aid.

It is true that this roseate message was always associated with stern condemnation of past and present apostasy. And the realisation of the vision always pre-supposed repentance and conversion. The people who are to inherit the golden land must be the people of the Lord. And since *"your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not*

hear" (Isa. 59. 2) there must be a Redeemer, a Mediator, one who is both able and willing to take the sinful but repentant ones and lead them along the way that will at the last bring them into the presence and favour of God. So the message of repentance and the message of the Kingdom, the word for to-day and the word for to-morrow, both have a common background, the form of the Messiah, the Saviour. That mysterious ardently desired-figure is never far distant from the thoughts and words of the prophets. Their sins barred them from entrance into the holy city, but, *"He shall save his people from their sins"*. (Matt. 1. 21.)

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

Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Since He came, not only to die for men, and minister to them, and win the love and allegiance of some, but also to raise every one of them out of death and teach them the issues of life, that the purpose of God in creating man might be accomplished, it is inconceivable that Jesus could have done anything else than preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in its future aspects as well as in its present one. It is just as inconceivable to imagine any instructed Jew receiving His message from any other standpoint. A Messiah without a Messianic kingdom is a contradiction in terms. Not one of those who gave

any credence at all to His claim to being the "sent of God" could have associated His message with anything else than the promised future Kingdom. Not one of those who gave their lives to Him did so without expecting the glory and power of the Kingdom in consequence. So the disciples must have lent very attentive ears when, in response to their question, Jesus told them that when He came again, in the regeneration, seated on the throne of His glory, they also would be seated on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. When the dying thief begged to be remembered when the Lord should come into His kingdom it was because he had been taught by the rabbis, and because Jesus had confirmed that teaching in His preaching, that the Kingdom was yet a future event but one surely to come, and the thief had believed Him.

Similarly with the Apostles, there was a strong under-current of what to-day is called in Church circles, somewhat scornfully, "dispensationalism". The mission of the Apostles was two-fold, first, to convert men and women to Christ, and second, to instruct and build up those thus converted so that they might become at the last, "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light". There were two aspects of the future Kingdom to which the Apostles had to give attention, the earthly and the heavenly. They knew, too, that the High Calling to the heavenly Kingdom was first in order of time in the Divine Plan, and it is only what we should expect to find when we do find them spending their principal efforts in exhorting, teaching and establishing those who had intelligently given themselves in consecration to God, that they might eventually be the Divine instruments in the work of reconciling all men. St. Paul in 1 Thess. 4 and in 2 Thess. 2, in 1 Cor. 15, and in a score of places, relates the present life of the Christian very closely to the consummation of the Christian hope in the celestial Kingdom.

In just the same way we find that in their preaching the Apostles could not divorce their message from the theme of the coming Kingdom. It requires only a brief glance at the record to establish this as a fact. When Jesus was about to leave them and ascend to His Father they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1. 6.) That long-cherished hope of the Messianic Age still held first place in their hearts. St. Peter's first sermon, preached on the Day of Pentecost and recorded in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, was a Messianic sermon. It took as its basis the pro-

phesy of Joel which envisaged the events surrounding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom and Peter told his hearers that the prophecy was even then entering into its fulfilment. St. Peter's second sermon, a few days later, elaborated this theme and defined his position even more clearly. He called for repentance and conversion in order that the times of refreshing, the times of restitution, associated with the Second Advent of Christ, might come to earth. The Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 connected the growing missionary work of the Church with Amos' prophecy of the Millennial day; St. Paul, addressing the philosophers of Athens, as related in Acts 17, made the whole point of God's call for repentance hinge upon the coming of that day in the which He was to judge the world in righteousness; later on, before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, St. Paul publicly avowed that the whole of his position stood or fell upon the "hope and resurrection of the dead" which to all Jews was synonymous with the Messianic Kingdom. Making his defence before Felix the Roman governor, he re-affirmed that position, and later on, before the Jewish dignitary Herod Agrippa, "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" (Acts 26. 3) he affirmed it again. (See Acts 23. 6; 24. 15 and 21.; 26. 6-8 and 22-23.) Last of all, the final glimpse we have of the missionary work of this doughty warrior is in the 28th chapter of Acts, where, a prisoner at Rome, he "*expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.*" (Acts 28. 23.) The curtain drops with Paul still "*preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Acts 28. 31.)

The glory of the Christian gospel is that it takes this life and the next life and of the two makes one harmonious and understandable whole. By explaining to us the future purposes of God it enables us to see our place in the Divine Plan *now* and to work intelligently for good. Our consecrated lives can be charged with definite purpose. We serve and labour and evangelise with a definite end in view and can see the connection between our present efforts, be they crowned with success or apparent failure, and ultimate outcome. Without the message of the Kingdom no evangelistic work can attain its highest peak. It is a noteworthy fact, attested by careful observers, that whereas of the people who respond to the message of the Gospel the great-

er proportion do so between the ages of 15 and 30, by far the larger part of these lose their enthusiasm and discard their profession of faith by the time they reach the middle forties. That is very largely because after the first flush of conversion is over there becomes evident the lack of any real guidance as to what it is all intended to lead. Some go as missionaries and others find an outlet for their ardour in some kind of church activity or social service and the rest are swallowed up again by the world. The dim vision of possible participation in the eternal songs of an everlasting heavenly choir seems a poor climax to the spiritual life which began with the tremendous experience of conviction of sin, repentance, conversion, and reconciliation to God.

The prophets of old soared into their loftiest heights of understanding and gave voice to their most eloquent appeals when their eyes were fixed on the future. The Apostles laid down their clearest definitions of Christian doctrine when they were enabled by the Spirit to range in thought backward to the beginning, and forward to the climax, of the Divine Plan. The whole counsel of God must include a wide and comprehensive view of the eternal purpose of God, and if in our evangelistic work we are really to accomplish that to which we are called, that eternal purpose

must be closely integrated with the call to repentance and reconciliation which admittedly lies always at the foundation of all our work. It is the glory of the Truth that we can speak positively of things which lie beyond the veil of the future, where so many others can only wander in a vague and misty land. It is that same certainty which can give our message the force it had in early days—if only we are truly positive about it. *"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."*

So much of Christian evangelism to-day holds out as the great attraction of repentance and conversion a kind of deliriously happy life, here and now, in which the possession of Christ evokes an eternal sunshine around all one's affairs. The idea of a calling to sacrifice and suffering is not always stressed as it should be. In the teaching of Jesus it was stressed. *"Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom."* Perhaps we are on much safer ground if we take Isaiah's words to mean exactly what they say and go out, in the power of our faith and knowledge of the Divine Plan, to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give beauty, joy and praise for sadness, mourning and heaviness, *because earth's dark night of sin is nearly at an end, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

Luke 16. 1-12

"There was a certain man," said Jesus one day, "which had a steward." By no means an unusual statement to make; all rich men had stewards, servants who had been with the family for many years and could be trusted with the duties of the position. The office dated back to very early times, for Abraham himself had a steward, "Eliezer of Damascus" (Gen. 15. 2), and to that steward was entrusted the task of going five hundred miles into Aram-Naharaim to seek a suitable bride for Isaac, the son of Abraham. The responsibilities of the steward were heavy; he administered the whole of his master's estate, saw to his business matters, controlled the routine of the house, supervised the other servants, and had charge of the children until they came of age. (This latter fact is alluded to by Paul when he says in Gal. 4. 1-2: "The heir

as long as he is a child . . . is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." The word "governors" is the one used elsewhere in the New Testament for "stewards"—*oikonomos*).

But this particular steward, continued Jesus, was dishonest. He neglected his lord's interests and wasted his resources, so that at last he was required to make up his accounts and relinquish his position. And the unjust steward was afraid, afraid for the future. He had made no friends, none to whom he could turn in this hour of adversity; he had lived a life of ease and self-indulgence and forgotten how to labour that he might sustain himself. He had been proud and haughty and now was appalled at the thought of living as a dependent upon the charity of others. "What shall I do?" he asked himself despairingly. "I cannot

dig; to beg I am ashamed." And in searching for a way out of his plight the baseness of his nature came to the top and he saw a way of making himself friends at the eleventh hour, friends who by reason of the obligation under which he would place them might at least give him food and shelter.

In order to understand the story aright we must examine its background. The setting is an agricultural one. The "debtors" who owed oil and wheat were evidently tenants of the lord's land and, as was the custom, paid their rent in kind—an agreed amount of the produce of the land. The previous expression of the steward, "I cannot dig," indicates the same thing; apparently the only manual work which was open to him in the particular community was agricultural. The scene of the story is in the country and not in the city. It would have been the steward's duty to adjudge equitable rents to the tenant farmers who leased the land, and the "hundred measures of oil" and "hundred measures of wheat" probably represented the yearly amount due. (In English measure these equalled approximately 750 gallons of olive oil and one thousand bushels of wheat.) It is sometimes suggested that the steward was executing a good stroke of business for his lord in that he secured payment of some apparently hopeless debts by offering a liberal discount for immediate settlement. Nothing of the kind! The steward, knowing he was shortly to leave his lord's service, was deliberately reducing the tenants' rents and altering the legal documents, the "leases", which stipulated the annual amount to be paid. The word rendered "bill" in "take thy bill, and write fifty" and again in verse 7, refers to such legal contracts which were usual in Jesus' day, as in our own. There is no doubt that the steward had the legal right to adjust the rents when his lord's interests demanded it; but in this instance his action was dictated by his own interests and to his lord's hurt. It may have been legally permissible, but was morally unjustifiable. In this way he hoped to place these tenants under an obligation to him so that he might reasonably expect some consideration at their hands when his stewardship terminated. He evidently did not intend to work for his living if he could find someone to give him hospitality in return for services rendered.

"And the lord" (the steward's master) "commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely"—shrewdly, according to Weymouth and the Twentieth Century versions—"for the children of this world are in their

generation wiser than the children of light." The master was broad-minded enough and sufficient of a "business man" himself, to admit that the unjust steward had shown his own self quite capable of sharp business deals when his own interests were involved. There is no indication that the notice of dismissal was rescinded; he was a rogue, albeit a clever rogue, and he had to go; but the master did at least commend him for his shrewdness as he went.

But Jesus did not commend the man. To think that He did so is completely to misunderstand the parable, and waste a lot of time and ingenuity attempting to demonstrate that the steward was doing a legitimate and right thing. Jesus called him "the unjust steward", and Jesus, by His silence as much as by His sequel to the parable, pronounced His own condemnation upon this and all similar actions which are so often justified by the glib saying "business is business".

The story was ended. Turning now upon His disciples with a swift transition of thought, He said, perhaps with a vehemence greater than was His wont. "And yet I say unto you, make friends for yourselves out of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, those friends may receive you into everlasting habitations". The verse has been paraphrased a little in order to bring out its meaning. Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, the language of Galilee—at any rate, "mammon" is an Aramaic word—and the account was written by Luke in Greek. This verse has suffered a little in the process and is not altogether easy to follow in the Authorised Version. The conjunction "and" (*kai* in Greek) often has the meaning of "and yet" or "and so" when rhetorical emphasis is involved, as in this case, and "of" is *ek*, "out of". "Mammon" is a word indicating worldly wealth or riches of any kind, and the expression "when ye fail" is more correctly rendered "when it (i.e. the mammon of unrighteousness) fails".

The disciples, then, were to do, not what the steward had done, but what he had not done. He had the "mammon of unrighteousness", worldly riches, power, and opportunity, entrusted to him, but he had not used it to make for himself true friends who could be relied upon to stand by him in the day of adversity. He had used it for his own selfish ends instead. Then when the day that it failed him came, he was compelled to resort to very questionable tactics to ensure his future comfort, with no real guarantee even then that his end would be achieved. Now that,

said Jesus in effect, may be all very well for the world. They order their daily lives in that way and they fully expect to do such things or have such things done to them and they call it "business". In their own day and generation they are shrewder than the children of light; but it is a shrewdness that will avail them nothing in the day when this world, and the fashion of it, passes away. But I say to *you*, you whose lives are given over to a higher and a holier purpose, use the possessions, influence or worldly opportunities you may have in such fashion as to win for yourselves friends in the heavens, so that when the worldly mammon fails, as fail it must at last, you will be welcomed with joy into an everlasting home.

Whilst the disciples were thinking that out, Jesus drove home the principle which His story was intended to illustrate. "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much*" (vs. 10). The extent of our faithfulness to the exceeding great privileges and responsibilities which God intends His consecrated children to hold and administer in the coming Age when the saints "reign with Christ" is measured by the degree of their faithfulness toward God in the administration of such worldly "mammon" as we may be possessed of now. If we have not placed it all on the altar and henceforth used it in the interests of God and His Kingdom, then we are not likely to be any more faithful when the day for "greater works" has dawned. "*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*" How could we expect God to do so in such case?

"It is required of stewards", says Paul in 1 Cor. 4. 2, "that a man be found faithful". He was thinking of the stewards of his own day—perhaps even of this very parable, which must have been quite well known to him. We, the disciples of Jesus, are all stewards, and it is required of us all that we make good use of our stewardship while we have the opportunity, and not wait until the end of the day of grace before we commence thinking about

it. The Parable of the Talents tells us that, as also the story of the rich young ruler who wanted to gain eternal life but not in a fashion that was going to cost him anything. And that story is repeated so often in these latter days. It is so easy to spend a few years in the first flush of enthusiasm for "the Truth", learning the doctrines of the faith and becoming familiar with the Holy Scriptures, accustomed to the routine of regular meetings and even perhaps the discharge of our duties falling to elders in the church, and then, having attained that stage, begin to devote increasing attention to a "career"—as if any earthly career matters to the child of God—or to success in business—as if any earthly business counts for aught in the sight of the Great King—or to any other of the hundred and one earthly interests which the Devil is always so industriously placing in the pathway of the consecrated. Jesus, knowing all this, told His disciples "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts (desires) of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4. 19). How true are those words, exemplified in the lives of Christians who for a time did "run well" but failed at the last.

To-day more than ever we need to take this parable to heart. There has been so much disappointment and disillusionment. So many things expected have not come to pass. As with Peter and the others after the Crucifixion, there is a tendency to go back to the fishing-nets and make the best of the world as it now is, hoping as we do so that we can fit into our place in the Kingdom when at length it does come.

And of course—we cannot. Unless we have been constantly and tirelessly faithful in all respects to the unseen things whilst they remain unseen, we shall not see them when at length they become revealed to the watching ones, and faith is swallowed up in sight. If we do not make heavenly friends *now* by our use of the earthly mammon, we shall not be of those who, when *it* fails, will be received with joy into the everlasting habitations.

This world is too big a ship for us to guide. I know from the way she swings from larboard to starboard that there is a strong hand at the helm. Be patient. God's clock strikes but once or twice in a thousand years; but the wheels all the while keep turning. Over the caravansary of Bethlehem, with silver tongue, it struck one. Over the University of

Erfurt, Luther heard it strike nine. In the rockings of the present century it has sounded eleven. Thank God! It will strike twelve.

Author unknown

* * *

Whoever helps us to think kindly of another aids the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 16. The Feast of Tabernacles

The world's deliverance from evil is followed by the last and greatest Feast of Tabernacles. Here, and for the last time, Zechariah draws upon the historical ceremonial of the people of Israel to illustrate the nature of "things to come". Everyone in all the world, he says, (ch. 14. 16) will go up to Jerusalem year by year to worship the Lord and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles; these are obviously figurative expressions to denote the response of mankind, in that day, to the blessings of the Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles in Israel was a development of the normal end of year harvest celebrations which are characteristic of every people in every age. It is probable that Israel had some such celebration when in Egypt; this is referred to in Exod. 23. 16 as the "feast of ingathering" and was made obligatory under the Mosaic Law. Upon Israel's entry into the land this feast was expanded in its scope; for seven days the people dwelt in temporary shelters made of tree branches and leaves, "booths", from which the feast was re-named the Feast of Tabernacles (temporary dwelling places). This period was one of rejoicing for past deliverance and promise of future blessing. "*Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice*" (Deut. 16 .15). Significantly, the feast was held almost immediately following the close of the annual Day of Atonement ceremonies, which culminated in the formal effecting of atonement for the sins of the assembled people by the officiating High Priest. The typical picture therefore is that of sacrifice and offering on behalf of sin ended; the people cleansed and brought into a state of reconciliation with God, the rigours of the past forgotten, rejoicing in the plenitude of present harvest blessings and joyful anticipation of even greater blessings to come. And this is why Zechariah, looking into the roseate future immediately following the establishment of the Divine Kingdom on earth, sees it as an idealised Feast of Tabernacles.

This going up of all the nations year by year to worship and "keep the Feast of Tabernacles" as related in ch. 14. 16 is obviously a picture of world-wide acceptance of

the Kingdom. Men everywhere will hail the new administration with relief and joy and hasten to proffer allegiance to earth's new King. It does not follow that this attitude of mind is universal—the process of world conversion is going to occupy a long period of time and the requirements of the text can be considered well fulfilled in the spectacle of successive contingents of converts entering into a state of reconciliation with God and, in the gladness and gratitude thus engendered, thus "keep the Feast of Tabernacles". These are they who, in Isaiah's vision declare "*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation*" (Isa. 25. 9). The delivered Holy Nation is involved in this, for the Lord says through Isaiah again (ch. 66. 18 19) "*I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory . . . and I will send those that escape*" (a reference to delivered Israel) "*unto the nations . . . and they shall declare my glory among nations*". Here is the missionary work of the Millennial Age in full operation and it is the result of this work which is described in terms of the nations coming up to Jerusalem to worship.

But not all of mankind are thus converted, at least at the beginning. Verses 17-19 of chapter 14 provide for those who do not thus "come up". The penalty is that upon them there shall be no rain. For some reason Egypt is singled out and specifically named among the general mass of earth's peoples and this may well be, as is sometimes suggested, an allusion to the fact that Egypt has virtually no rainfall and obtains all its water for crop-growing purposes from the annual inundation of the Nile. The fact that Egypt is independent of the need for rain will not absolve the dissidents among them from the penalty. The meaning, of course, is that the unregenerate of the nations have no part nor lot in the life-giving blessings of the river of water of life, the symbolic medium of transmission of Divine life to man in that day. Ezekiel describes this river as he saw it in vision, and so does John the Revelator (Ezek. 4. 7; Rev. 22). The river flows from the sanctuary of God, and together with the trees of life which grow on its banks furnishes both food and healing for the nations. It is obvious of course

that the blessing of lasting life which is offered freely to all men must be consciously accepted on the basis of true conversion and allegiance to the Lord Christ who is the channel of that life. *"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'. And let him that heareth say, 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Rev. 22. 17). That is the law of the Millennial Age, and that life is available to all who will accept it on the terms offered. Such as may decline it, in the obduracy of their hearts or in their refusal to turn from the ways of evil, *"upon them shall be no rain"*.

So the curtain rises upon the last scene. a glimpse—a very brief glimpse—of the world as it shall be when the elimination of evil is accomplished and all men and all things in the world are holy unto the Lord. *"In that day shall there be upon the bridle bells of the horses 'Holiness unto the Lord' and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar"*. That inscription appeared on the golden mitre worn by all of Israel's successive High Priests from Aaron downward; it denoted the complete dedication of the wearer to the service of God. In those days the High Priest stood out as one specially consecrated and sanctified individual in the midst of a secular society; in the world of the future, says Zechariah, everything from the highest to the lowest will be sanctified to the Divine service—even the beasts of burden. There may be some allusion here to the fact that the horse was peculiarly the symbol of war and the political power of this world; in that day it will be the symbol of Divine power and of peace, for God will have made *"wars to cease to the ends of the earth"*. The "pots in the Lord's house" were the cauldrons in which the flesh of the sacrifices was boiled, much more lowly in the scale of Divine service than the golden bowls of the altar which were used to carry the blood of the sacrifices into the presence of God. But in that day all will be equal. Whatever service or work is performed, be it lofty or menial, will be of equal value in the sight of God, for all will be done as unto Him and for His glory. Yea, says Zechariah triumphantly, every vessel in Jerusalem and in all Judah shall be holy; the distinction between sacred and secular will stand in direct relation to the eternal purpose of God and nothing that exists, nothing that is done, is outside that purpose. The whole of human life and all its activities will be holy unto God.

"In that day there shall be no more the

Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts." Of all the alien tribes and peoples with which Israel was daily in contact the Canaanites represented idolatry and defilement in its grossest forms. Repeatedly during Israel's history the Temple was defiled by alien peoples or alien worship. Not so in that coming day, says Zechariah. The Temple will be cleansed and holy, free from any suspicion of defiling influence. A loftier vision of the same truth was given to John when he looked upon the celestial city which pictured the completed work of God with mankind. *"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Rev. 21. 27).

Thus ends what is without doubt the most colourful and eloquent book of symbolic imagery in the Old Testament, paralleled only by the Book of Revelation in the New. The two books, separated in time of writing by six centuries, do in fact constitute a remarkable pair. The Book of Revelation is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects the Christian Church, the heavenly instrument in God's hand for world conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of the Church. The Book of Zechariah is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects Israel, the earthly instrument in God's hand for world conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of Israel. The two books commence their respective stories at separate periods on the stream of human history, but they coincide at their close, both culminating at the point where the Lord Christ at His Second Advent takes to Himself His great power and commences that reign over the earth which is elsewhere described as *"the desire of all nations"*. Perhaps the best commentary upon the whole dramatic story resides in the Lord's words to the prophet, to be repeated to Israel, right at the commencement of Zechariah's ministry. *"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem"*.

THE END

Christ comes with a blessing in each hand—forgiveness in one and holiness in the other, and never gives either to any who will not take both.

Thomas Adams

THE CALL AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The formation of the Christian Church is the predominant theme of the New Testament. The major part of the four Gospels contains the teachings Jesus gave His disciples to fit them for their role as the founding members of His Church; the Book of Acts relates the early history of its establishment in the Jewish and Greek worlds by the ministry of St. Paul, the Epistles concentrate upon instructions and exhortation relative to the Christian life, and Revelation pictures the ultimate triumph of the Church when its enemies have been overthrown and the object of its calling achieved. This latter factor, the object and purpose of the Church, is one to which singularly little importance has been attached in contemporary theology, but it is one a clear understanding of which is vitally necessary to every dedicated Christian. The common practice of referring to any individual Christian denomination or organisation with its full membership—or to all of them jointly—as “the Church” and equating their membership rolls with that of the “Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven”, obscures the fact that from the New Testament point of view the Church includes only those believers in Christ who have consecrated themselves completely to His service by a dedicated life in the positive knowledge that by so doing they are being conformed to His likeness. Such will be associated with Him in the eventual evangelising and reconciliation of the world. The Church is a “called out” people, its members those who find their vocation in the service of God, and identify themselves completely with His purpose to eliminate evil from the world and persuade all who can be persuaded to come into harmony with Him and take their appointed place in His creation. This is the meaning of the declaration of James at the first Council of Jerusalem “*God visited the nations to take out of them a people for His Name*” (Acts 15. 14). The general evangelical appeal to all mankind, exhorting to conversion and reconciliation, goes on after the completion of the Church, and in fact this completion is the signal for an immensely intensified and widened scope of that appeal, for at its completion the Church is joined with its Lord in heaven and invested with enhanced powers which can never be its

possession on earth.

This is the truth that lies behind the many Scriptural allusions to the reign of the saints with Christ, the “marriage of the Lamb”, and so on. “*In the regeneration*” said Jesus “*when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt. 19. 28). Regeneration here means the giving of new life; the function of the Church is to be the medium of that new life to men; the thrones of judgment symbolise the Divine authority with which the Church will execute that duty. “*They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*” (Rev. 20. 4) says the Revelator, assigning this process in time to the Millennial reign of Christ following His Advent. St. Paul had the same idea in mind when he reminded the Corinthian believers “*do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?*” (1 Cor. 6. 2). The Christian life therefore is not merely a means whereby the individual can assure his personal salvation and attain the felicity of a future life when this one is ended; it is a vocation which must be entered with dedicated loyalty to God in whatever path He indicates is His will, and for the acquirement of qualifications which will fit the individual for continued and increased active service for God in that next life. The Church is a “people for a purpose”, “called according to his purpose” (1 Pet. 2. 9; Rom. 8. 28), and the recognition of that purpose is essential to one who would “*follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*” (Rev. 14. 4)

An apparently casual remark of St. Paul extends this purpose to fields of activity beyond the race of men. “*Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*” he asks (1 Cor. 6. 3). The fact of, and the nature of, sin in the celestial world is only hinted at in the Scriptures, but that there is a time of trial and judgment yet to come for certain celestial beings as well as for man is clearly stated several times. And Christ is definitely to “*reconcile all things to himself whether they be things in earth or things in heaven*” (Col. 1. 20). It is unthinkable that Divine creative activity will ever come to an end, and the eternally close association with the Father and the Son promised to those who “make their calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1. 10) is sufficient ground for expecting that the Church will play an

important part in the execution of the Creator's future plans, whatever they may be.

Many notable Christian thinkers and writers have realised the importance of this element of future purpose in the call of the Church and have left their thoughts on record. Space permits of only one or two quotations.

"We are to be priests and kings. There are vast spaces in the universe that may have to be evangelised or ruled or influenced for righteousness. It may be that important spheres of ministry are needing those to fill them who have learned the secret of victory over the power of Satan. Earth may be the school, the training ground, the resting place for the servants and soldiers of the hereafter. If it became Him to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering, it stands to reason that His comrades and soldiers must pass through the same, that having overcome they may sit with Him on his Throne."

(Dr. F. B. Meyer: "Call and Challenge of the Unseen" 1917).

"We know not what great works in respect to the future our Creator may have in view but we do know the promise is ours that we shall be like Him and see Him as He is, and share His glory. Whatever therefore shall be the future activities of the "heirs of all things" we shall be with Him and share His work. The sacrificing will be at an end: the reigning, the ruling, the blessing, the assisting, will all have begun, and they will be entirely competent to accomplish the Divine promise that all the families of the earth shall be blessed, that "whosoever will" may come back into full harmony with the Creator and His laws" (C. T. Russell: "The New Creation" 1904).

"Not for our own sakes alone should we long for the return of our Lord and Saviour, but that the earth, now groaning and travailing in pain, may be delivered from the curse. Christ has already in His own Person triumphed over the serpent, and He now waits only for the completion of the company of joint heirs that shall rule with Him. It is an idle dream which now possesses so many that the Church is to bring in the Kingdom in the absence of the King. It is inconsistent with the foretold humiliation and sorrow of the Church during the whole of this dispensation in which she is to walk in His footsteps and be perfected by the fellowship of His sufferings. The one great hope for the whole creation, towards which, blindly and unconsciously, all are reaching forward, is the "marriage of the Lamb". It is the hope of the Bride, who shall then be one with the Lord

in all his glory, and power, and fulness of blessing" (William Andrews c. 1850).

"When the Gospel is preached again, it may be that Christ will not be the only preacher. If we are of those who have been chosen and redeemed, it may be that we shall be the happy messengers of God's love and mercy to those who are still being purged from their sins, thus entering at once into the eternal passion of God and into the redeeming work of Christ; thus afflicted, like the Father, in all the sins and afflictions of the unrighteous. It may be through our ministry that the purpose of God will be accomplished. God grant that it may be so, for that surely would be an infinitely diviner service and reward than to sit, clothed in white raiment, striking harps of gold" (Dr. Samuel Cox: "Salvator Mundi" 1877).

The standards set for those who would attain entry into the company of the Church are high. That is only to be expected if its future mission is anything like that suggested above. The first and essential requirement is unreserved dedication to the service of God, of complete and whole-hearted consecration of life, possessions, abilities, everything, to Him, to be henceforth administered as a stewardship in His interests. That is what St. Paul had in mind when he exhorted "I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12. 1-2). He touches here on the basic principle of the dedicated life—our transformation from earthly-mindedness to heavenly-mindedness by a process of renewal which is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new" (2 Cor. 5. 17). It is to illustrate this truth that the New Testament so many times depicts the entry into this "new life" as a dying to earthly things and a raising again to heavenly things. "We are buried with him by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6. 4). "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3). The consecrated believer is of necessity dead, not only to evil things of this world which are to be repudiated anyway, but also to many good things of this world, honourable and elevating and benevolent and useful interests, purely on account of his life's dedication to God which fills his hands and

his time with active service for God in the world. The very meaning of the word "consecration", which is an Old Testament term, is "to fill the hands". Hence it quickly becomes true of the believer aspiring to inclusion in the Church and ultimate association with Christ in His glory and work that, as Jesus said of such, "*they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*" (Jno. 17. 14). That might appear to the onlookers as a spirit of exclusiveness, or denoting indifference to the troubles and necessities of society, but it is not really so. The consecrated Christian life is tantamount to the position of the medical student or other aspirant to a profession who willingly gives up much of life's ordinary interests during his youth that he might undergo the training, the instruction, the discipline, necessary to fit himself for his intended vocation. Thus it is with those who would be members of the Church of Christ.

The eventual home of those who thus "*endure to the end*" and receive "*an abundant entrance into the Kingdom*" is Heaven. That, of course, is always the hope of every Christian. Ideas as to the nature and location of Heaven vary from individual to individual and much depends upon one's personal interpretation of the symbolic imagery of the Scriptures. The modern idea that Heaven is a "state" rather than a "place" means, when analysed, just nothing. We are living beings needing an environment in which to live our lives and a means of contact with that environment, which is provided by our bodies. "Heaven" is clearly defined in the Scriptures as another world, another sphere of being, in which we shall exist as individuals as truly as now, having communion with fellow-beings and activities relevant to an environment just as truly as now. But the nature of that life and the conditions of that sphere are transcendently superior to those we know now. Paraphrasing the cogent reasoning of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15, there is a terrestrial world and terrestrial body, and a celestial world and celestial body. As we now bear the image of the terrestrial, we shall then bear the image of the celestial. But since terrestrial flesh and blood cannot enter the celestial world, being of a different order of creation, we must, at the time of entry, be changed from terrestrial beings to celestial beings. The nature of that change is incomprehensible to us, for as John says in 1 Jno. 3. 2 "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*". In

another vivid picture—2 Cor. 5. 1-4—St. Paul likens the earthly body to a house, an earthly house, in which we live temporarily while looking forward to a celestial house which God is building for us in Heaven. With a swift transition of symbol he changes his thought to a set of clothing; in our desiring that which is from Heaven we do not wish to be "unclothed" but to exchange our present inadequate garments for the better ones which Heaven provides. In no clearer fashion could the Apostle have indicated the radical nature of the change that takes place when at the end of our earthly experience the terrestrial body is discarded and returns to its dust, and we are "clothed upon" with the celestial body with all its enhanced powers and attributes. As Paul so eloquently puts it, "*mortality is swallowed up of life*" (2 Cor. 5. 4).

The fact that the Church, thus developed, completed, and "changed" to celestial conditions, is then to be to the Divine instrument in the final and crucial era of world evangelisation implies that there must be a time limit to the "call of the Church". There is a point in human history after which entry into the Church will no longer be possible because the Church is complete and God is ready to speak His final word to the "residue of mankind". "*The earnest expectation of the creation*" said Paul "*waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*" (Rom. 8. 19) and in this pithy sentence he enshrines the truth that the promised era of Christ's reign over the world with its progressive elimination of evil cannot begin until His Church is joined to Him and ready to take part in this work. Hence the many Scriptural allusions which insist that the first work of the Lord at His Advent is to gather to Himself His entire Church and only then reveal Himself to the world and commence His reign. It is this consummation of the hope of the Church which is depicted as a royal marriage—the Church is the Bride of the Lamb, to use the symbolism of Revelation, and the time of the wedding feast has come. At this climax in human history the heavenly chorus is depicted singing "*Alleluia. for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*" (Rev. 19. 6-7). Immediately following this wedding feast the symbols change; the Lamb becomes a militant and avenging rider upon a white horse, issuing forth from Heaven to wage battle upon, and defeat, the massed evil forces of earth; the Bride becomes the "armies of heaven", following Him and sharing in the work that

has to be done.

The Christian gospel has been preached in the world for two thousand years. The commission given to the first disciples was "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16. 15) "Ye shall be witnesses to me" Jesus told them "to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1. 8). True to that injunction, the evangel of Christ has been carried by word of mouth or by printed page to every part of the inhabited earth, although not all of the earth's millions have accepted or even heard it. It has to be noted that Jesus did not say they would; His disciples were to be witnesses to Him and to declare His word in a world-wide manner and this they have done. But this has not been an increasingly successful campaign in consequence of which the whole world has ultimately become Christian, and with no reverses. In some lands the missionary work of one period has had its successes completely blotted out in a later period. Much of the present day Moslem world was predominantly Christian in the early Middle Ages; large Christian populations existed in China and other parts of Asia and in North Africa in the sixth to eighth centuries. Even the Western world.

Someone has spoken of the great "Society of Encouragers" who do so much to help encourage and uplift the footsore and weary in the pathway of life. It is not a great society so far as members are concerned, but it is a great society from the Lord's standpoint of all who have been helped and encouraged by it. Spikenard Mary might have been said to have been a prominent member in this society of encouragers. We may well imagine that as our Lord was thinking of the severe trials, including the cross, of the week already begun, Mary's manifestation of love and devotion would come to Him as a special encouragement and refreshment of spirit. So few seemed to understand Him! Even his disciples did not appreciate the situation. Here was one who at least loved Him, had confidence in Him. No doubt it gave Him courage for the remaining days of his journey.

* * *

Wanting to have a friend is altogether different from wanting to be a friend. The former is a mere natural human craving: the latter is the life of Christ in the soul.

J. R. Miller

* * *

We are never more like God than when we are doing good.

the world of the white races, where Christianity is nominally accepted, is increasingly rejecting the faith. One might say, hastily, that the two thousand years of preaching has been a failure and the intention of Christ not realised. But there has been no failure. Jesus Himself indicated that upon His return at the end of this Age lack of faith in Him would still be a prominent factor in the world situation. The most effective result of the witness has been the call and selection of the Church; that work has proceeded throughout the past centuries quietly, unostentatiously and yet effectively, in full harmony with the Divine intent. With that aspect of the Divine plan an accomplished fact, God will turn to the nations which as yet know Him not or will not have Him, with the full force of His persuasive power, exerted through the agency of this same Church. Those who have trodden the dark paths themselves will be the ones best fitted to lead sin-sick humanity into the green pastures and by the still waters of the Divine goodness. So it will become literally true that "*the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*" (Isa. 40. 5) and the triumph of the Church be realised.

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

* * *

We shall one day forget all about duty, and do everything from the love of the loveliness of it, the satisfaction of the rightness of it.

* * *

Many people are splendid Christians in church, but too often it happens that when the service is ended and they go out, they leave something in the pews—their Christianity.

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

He came to us; and He need not have come. He had the whole creation of angelic realms in which to find satisfaction if He wished, countless multitudes of sinless angelic beings to do him homage and with whom He could have fellowship; but He left them behind. This earth was a dark place, dark with sin and wretchedness, its inhabitants violent, lustful, cruel; and they hated him. Yet He came.

*"His Father's house of light,
His glory-circled throne,
He left, for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
He left it all for me—
Have I left aught for Thee?"*

That was why He came. He came for me, that I might be delivered from this dark abyss of sin, and rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God. He came for my fellows, too, that they might be rescued in like fashion. He came to establish the Father's Kingdom here on earth, that Kingdom which is already supreme in every other sphere of the Father's creation. He came to afford all men a full, fair, free opportunity of eternal life.

*"He breaks the power of reigning sin
And sets the prisoner free.
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me."*

He came because He was the only one who could possibly come. He is the greatest in all creation and only the greatest can make the greatest sacrifice. And his sacrifice was the greatest. No creature in all heaven and all earth will ever be able to make so great a sacrifice. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.

*"Man of sorrows! What a name
For the son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"*

He came to tell men of his plans for their future happiness, how that even their killing of him will not frustrate his hold over them. For He comes again to bring them all to himself, as many as have not utterly extinguished their own capacity for repentance. And as assurance of that restoration, He has left his

followers behind to go on telling men of the glorious Kingdom which will follow earth's dark night of sin, a Kingdom in which men will be drawn by every artifice in God's armoury to repentance and reconciliation with him, walking along the way of holiness to full acceptance of salvation in Christ. For unto him will every knee on earth bow, as now does every knee in heaven.

*"One offer of salvation
To all the world make known.
'Tis Jesus Christ, the First and Last;
He saves, and He alone."*

He came, and He comes again. Not now as a babe in a manger, but a glorious heavenly Lord, armed with all power in heaven and in earth. He comes to gather his Church to be with him, and only those who are watching for his appearing will share in that gathering. He comes revealed in the consuming fire of Divine judgment for the destruction of all those institutions of men which stand in the way of his incoming Kingdom. He comes in resplendent glory so that all men know that He has come, and at once begins to speak peace to the nations.

*"Down the minster aisles of splendour, from
betwixt the cherubim,
Through the wondering throng, with motion
strong and fleet.
Sounds His victor tread approaching, with a
music far and dim.
The music of the coming of His feet.
He is coming. O my spirit, with His everlasting
peace,
With His blessedness, immortal and complete.
He is coming. O my spirit, and His coming
brings release.
I listen for the coming of His feet."*

The angels are singing in the distance; there are just a few who can hear their song to-day. Later on all men will hear them and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, obtaining joy and gladness while sorrow and sighing flee away.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN (Part 2)

"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." (vs. 7.)

These words are virtually a repetition of those in the early part of chapter 4 of John's First Epistle. There were many theories abroad in John's own day which would, as we would say, "deny the Ransom". They were directed toward doing away with the reality of Jesus' earthly life, denying that the "Man Christ Jesus" was in actual fact the Son of God sent down from heaven, trying to find some doctrinal philosophy which would do away with the necessity of believing that Jesus did indeed die on the Cross, descend into the grave, and rise again on the third day. So they supposed, variously, that the visible man Jesus of Nazareth was an ordinary man of Adam's race in whom the Divine Spirit Jesus dwelt for three and a half years, from Jordan to Calvary, taking His departure at the moment the human man died on the Cross; or that the whole appearance of Jesus on earth was a phantom, a kind of optical illusion, the Divine Spirit being Himself invisible but manifesting Himself through an appearance like unto a man having no reality. All such theories deny the very basis of the Atonement as we understand it and as John understood it. To him, as to us, the Word was made flesh, born of a virgin, and lived on earth a Man amongst men, experiencing the joys and sufferings common to men. His death on the Cross was a real death and for that short time in Joseph's tomb He was truly dead. His resurrection on the third day was a true resurrection and from thence He sat on the right hand of God. "from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead". All this was essential doctrine to John and it is essential doctrine to us. We cannot maintain Christian faith without it and we cannot "profess and call ourselves Christians" unless we believe it. Hence John is by no means extreme or fanatical when he brands all who refuse thus to confess that Jesus came in the flesh as deceivers and antichrists.

We must note here that the creeds of Christendom themselves claim that Jesus came in the flesh: Christian churches in general do hold to the reality of our Lord's humanity. The old Gnostic and other theories of John's day no longer have any influence among

responsible Christian people. Certain small groups of "mystics" who try to create synthetic religions compounded partly of Christian ethics and partly of Hindu or other Eastern philosophies do propound views somewhat akin to these First Century heresies but such groups are manifestly far removed from practical Christianity. It is true to-day, as it was in that of John, that the real test by which professing Christians should be tried is the one that is before us here. "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?". It is true that not many have a really accurate understanding of the manner in which He laid aside the glory He had with the Father before the world was, and became Man, but if at any rate it is believed that He did in fact come to the world as Man, and did literally die on the Cross, and was truly resurrected, then at least there is no ground for the charge of being an antichrist.

"Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." (vs. 8.)

The A.V. has "we" in this verse, but it should really be "ye". John is exhorting his friend and sister in Christ to continued zeal and faithfulness. Like the Apostle Paul thirty years previously, Sister Kyria had fought a good fight and kept the faith, and now a crown of righteousness was laid up for her "against that day"—the day when all who should "sleep in Jesus" throughout the Age were to receive the things for which they hoped and prayed. But even at this point there is danger of backsliding and consequent loss. That was made clear in John's First Epistle and it is made clear again here. This verse has been a constant warning and exhortation through all time since John first inscribed the words upon his sheet of papyrus. To-day it is used as a word of greeting, a message sent from one to another, valued because of its combined assurance of glory to come and warning against losing that glory by carelessness when it is almost as it were within our reach. The very language reminds us that if we do fail of gaining the prize it will not be because God has been unfaithful but because we have been. We are not bidden to look to God lest we lose things, as though He would deprive us of them if we are not diligent in holding Him to the compact. We are bidden to look to ourselves, lest we lose. That is

where the danger lies. He ever abideth faithful; He will not let go our hands. We may insist on being unfaithful; then it is we who separate ourselves from Him and go our own way alone. So we need very carefully to watch ourselves, that we maintain our confidence and faith steadfast to the end.

"Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (vs. 9.)

This word "transgresseth" does not mean a mere departure from the right way or path. It does not indicate a lapse into some erroneous or inaccurate understanding of some element of the faith. The Greek means to go forward or beyond or in advance. The reference is to those who claim to be entering into a state of "advanced" doctrine so far forward of what has been revealed by the Holy Spirit that they are in fact running in front of God. He grants "meat in due season for the household of faith" and allows the veil obscuring further understanding of Divine truth to be drawn aside more and more as fast as His people are able to comprehend that further understanding. It is good and praiseworthy for any of us to seek the being always watchful in following that enlargement of understanding whenever the Spirit leads. But we also have to remember that for each of us individually as well as for the Church as a whole there must be the times of halting to assimilate the new truths revealed and to consolidate the ground gained. Progress in Divine truth is always characterised by this alternate advance into new light and then the halting while that new light is fitted into the fabric of Christian life and belief. Now the Apostle is not denouncing that kind of advancing neither is he branding as transgressors those who thus seek to know ever more clearly what the Lord is revealing. He is talking rather of those who in their eagerness to find something "new" or something "different" wherewith to "shine" before their fellows, would go beyond what God is opening up and themselves add to the revealed Word. That is how the 20th Century translation puts it, in words that seem accurately to represent John's thought. "Who goes beyond the limits of the teaching of Christ has failed to find God." In modern parlance, the man has over-reached himself. Rather than rest content with the rate of progress in Divine Truth which the teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit affords him, he would force his own way forward and blaze his own

trail through the unknown, putting his own imaginations for doctrines and his own words for God's. It is not surprising that in such case, to use the words of the 20th Century, he "fails to find God".

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that bid-deth him God speed is partaker of his evil deed" (vs. 10-11).

This needs thinking about. It is true that many believers are so dogmatic about their own doctrinal outlook that a text such as this is very gladly and literally received and all who do not subscribe to their own outline of doctrine and agree with them in every matter of Christian belief are unhesitatingly relegated to this category and cut off from fellowship. The thoughtful Christian knows, however, that this cannot possibly be the meaning of John's exhortation here. It is quite absurd and illogical to expect all of Christ's disciples to view every doctrinal teaching in just the same light. Differences of viewpoint arise for a multitude of reasons, many of them quite outside our own control. There is not a shadow of justification for suggesting that failure to agree on some aspects of Scripture teaching, whether it be in connection with the time or manner or object of the Second Advent, the relation between the symbols of spiritual truths themselves, details of prophetic interpretation, or any other such matter, justifies the application of this verse to any fellow-believer with whom we may have such a difference. John is talking, not about these secondary doctrines, but about the fundamental basis, the primary doctrine, of our faith, "What think ye of Christ?". It is the one who denies the humanity of Jesus Christ while upon earth who is to be excluded from the benefits of fellowship, the one who refuses to accept the basic Scriptural truth that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". It is the one who denies that we stand in need of salvation and without Christ and His atoning sacrifice can never receive salvation that must not go on his way with the sound of "God speed" ringing in his ears.

In this our day such people fall into two classes. There are those who find no place in their theology for the Fall of man, the condemnation to death, the necessity for the coming of Jesus in the flesh to give His life a ransom for all, and in His resurrection to become Lord of all, of the one class. There are the modernists, materially-minded believers.

who disown the same things and disclaim belief in the miraculous element in Scripture, who likewise have no place for a suffering Christ. In both cases the particular theology of the group may have much to commend it; there is usually a high appreciation of the ethical value of the teachings of Christ and a great reverence for Him as a Teacher, but that is all. Human salvation is to come by a conscious and deliberate conformity of one's self to the example of Christ, by one's own power. There is no admission that fallen man is quite unable to do such a thing unaided. Like Israel of old the cry is "all that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" and, again like Israel, no realisation at all that the thing is impossible.

So these are they whom we are not to receive into our houses nor bid them God speed. The injunction is not to be held to apply to the ordinary conventions of politeness and courtesy, but to the closer circle of Christian fellowship in the Church. Such are not to be granted the privileges of the brotherhood, the spiritual communion or fraternal intercourse of the *ecclesia*. "What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. 6. 15). The basis of our fellowship is the ransom for all given by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That Ransom, and the doctrines upon which it depends and which are indissolubly associated with it—Fall, Condemnation, Repentance, Justification, Reconciliation, Resurrection—are the fundamental doctrines upon which we must be agreed and without which we cannot have fellowship. Other doctrines are secondary and there is room for difference of thought provided we respect our brother's views and display tolerance in the expression of same, and there is no excuse for divisions on that account. We all would surely do well to re-examine our own position in these matters and see to it that in contending earnestly for the faith we do choose the fundamental doctrines about which to contend.

The word "God Speed" here is a translation of a Greek salutation which had the significance of wishing prosperity and success and was used in correspondence in much the same way as we begin our own letters with "Greetings" and perhaps close them with "all good wishes". Acts 15. 23 is an example of Christian usage of the word: "The Apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles" and so is Jas. 1. 1 "James . . . to the twelve tribes which

are scattered abroad, greeting". Such good wishes, insofar as the practice and service of the Christian faith is concerned, should not be extended toward those who come under the ban of the Apostle in verses 7-10 of this Epistle.

John had a great deal more to say, but for reasons unexplained he preferred to finish his Epistle at this point. The rest was to be said by word of mouth. "*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with pen and ink—but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full*" (vs. 12). The 20th Century says "I would rather not trust it to pen and ink". The shadow of persecution was still dark over the Church: perhaps there were matters to be talked about, truths to be taught, that in the then suspicious attitude of the civil powers were best not committed to paper. John expected to see his sister-in-the-faith Kyria at some future time and promised that all the rest would be said then, to their mutual edification and joy. And so with his usual thoughtfulness he closes this brief letter with the final greetings from those who were with him "*The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen*". (vs. 13.) A little homely touch, these young people in the Truth taking advantage of this opportunity to send their personal greetings to their aunt according to the flesh, their sister according to the Spirit, in the faraway city, and in so doing attaining for themselves an immortality that they never for one moment suspected. We do not know their names, until the great assembly beyond the Vail. But we know them to be our brethren and sisters in the Lord also, and we reach hands back to them over the span of two thousand years and see in them some of the great army of unnamed ones who have preceded us in the Christian walk and been faithful unto death. Perhaps this is the most encouraging thought we can take in concluding our consideration of this short Epistle. In all the ages of the Church's history there have been unnamed ones, quietly pursuing their allotted tasks and treading their allotted paths, known only to their Saviour and Master, but brought safely home by Him at the last. So it can be with us; we may never have done anything spectacular or stood in any prominent position or been known by any but the tiniest circle of brethren, but Jesus knows our names and watches our course in life, and will welcome us just as warmly as the more well-known ones, when we reach Home.

FROM THE HORNS OF THE UNICORN

Scripture references herein are from the R.S.V. except where otherwise stated.

* * *

"My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psa. 92. 10. A.V.).

This 92nd Psalm is an expression of faith in the eventual elimination of evil from Divine creation and the triumph and eternal prosperity of the lovers of justice and order in God's world—the righteous, to use what has become a theological term. The enemies of the Lord shall perish, exults the Psalmist; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered, but the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree—the tree which in the Middle East in ancient times was the symbol of eternal life. And in that day, he goes on to say, he will experience an infusion of new strength and new power because God will be with him and behind him, rendering him irresistible in all that he undertakes for God. That is what is meant by his horn being exalted like the horn of a unicorn.

The unicorn is a mythical creature known best for its place in the British royal heraldic arms. The lion and the unicorn are familiar symbols, to the English-speaking peoples at least. Because the word "unicorn" appears several times in the Authorised Version it is often thought that in some way the royal heraldic insignia is derived ultimately from Old Testament symbolism and that some connection exists but this is not really so. The figure of the unicorn as employed in heraldry is derived from descriptions of an alleged Indian animal by the Greek writer Ctesias (400 BC) and by others in later years, including the Roman naturalist Pliny in AD 70. According to these writers the animal was larger than a horse, ox-like in shape, with the head of a stag, feet of an elephant and the tail of a wild boar. One single horn three feet long projected from its head. Strong and very fierce, it could run faster than a horse and was very dangerous to encounter. The Greeks named this creature the *monoceros*, meaning single-horned, and the Latin equivalent is *unicornis* from which the English word comes. No animal completely fitting the description has ever been discovered but there is little doubt that the old writers were repeating vague impressions of the Indian rhinoceros.

This description gave rise to the popular conception of the unicorn in mediæval England. British royal heraldry began in the 12th century and at first the royal arms of England carried the lion, favourite symbol of royalty, and the red dragon of Wales. The unicorn was first used in the arms of James I of Scotland (AD 1424) on which two unicorns were displayed. In the 16th century when James VI of Scotland became James I of England one unicorn replaced the dragon on the British royal arms, creating the design familiar to us today.

The Hebrew word rendered "unicorn" in the A.V. is *reem* which is now known to denote the aurochs or wild ox, an immensely strong and massive beast akin to the American buffalo. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) in 250 BC the translators used the Greek term *monoceros* and this was carried into the later Latin versions by its equivalent, *unicornis*. This is how the English versions and eventually the A.V. came to use the term "unicorn" in the passages concerned. No modern translation uses it; the majority have the correct term "wild ox". In the meantime, however, this unfortunate association of the mythical unicorn with the Scriptures gave rise to many mediæval legends, some of which, for reasons which need not be detailed here, made this imaginary creature a symbol of Christ!

The Biblical "unicorn", then, was the wild ox, a creature so strong and powerful that it became the symbol of overpowering and irresistible force. Like all animals of its kind, it possessed two powerful horns. It was the strongest and most ferocious creature known to the early Hebrews and it is for this reason that horns in the O.T. are so often used as symbols of power and strength. In the Pentateuch, Israel, fortified by the power of God, are likened to the reem, the wild ox. *"The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them. God brings them out of Egypt; they have as it were the horns of the wild ox"* said Balaam (Num. 23. 21-22). *"God brings him out of Egypt: he has as it were the horns of the wild ox. He shall eat up the nations his adversaries and shall break their bones in pieces"* (Num. 29. 8). Moses, blessing the tribes of Israel before his death, said of the posterity of Joseph *"his horns are the*

horns of a wild ox. With them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousand of Ephraim and such are the thousands of Manasseh" (Deut. 33. 17). There is in these pages a magnificent picture of the invincibility of Israel when God is with them. They traversed the wilderness and entered Canaan like a charging wild ox and nothing could stop them. One might almost say of the achievements of their descendants in these latter days that there is something of this wild ox in their sensational advances against and victories over their enemies. One is tempted to reflect, if this is what they can do whilst still in a state of unbelief, what will be their achievement in the yet future day when, because of their repentance and faith, God is with them?

So here is the "horn of the unicorn", that irresistible power which resides in the people of God doing the work of God in faith that God is with them. "Thou hast exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; thou hast poured over me fresh oil . . . for lo, thy enemies shall perish, all evildoers shall be scattered; they are doomed to destruction for ever" sings David (Psa. 92. 7-10). As a man in his own strength he was weak and ineffectual; "I am a worm, and no man" he said on another occasion; but armed with the power of the Most High he was as a wild ox, invincible. As good king Hezekiah said when faced with the crisis of Sennacherib "Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria . . . for there is one greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32. 7-8). Something like this was in the minds of the later prophets when they declaimed the word of the Lord "On that day I will cause a horn to spring forth to the house of Israel" (Ezek. 29. 21). "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze" (Micah 4. 13). And the Psalmist was in no doubt at all. "I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for

my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame but upon himself his crown will shed its lustre" (Psa. 132. 16-17). "My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him" (David) "and in my name shall his horn be exalted" (Psa. 89. 24). In all of these rhapsodies, Israel, as a nation or as represented in David her king, is pictured as a rampaging wild ox, horns elevated proudly in the air, waiting the moment to rush into the fray and execute the work of the Lord.

What is the moral? It is that the people of God are irresistible and invincible when God is behind them. That applies equally to the Christian of this Age as to Israel in a past age. When the time falls due for another advance in the outworking of the Divine Plan and the "Watchers" are awake and ready to share in the work of that advance, nothing can stop them. There are times when the wild ox is quiescent, waiting quietly in his covert for the impulse which commands him to sally forth, but there are times too when there is work to be done, a battle to be fought for the King of Kings, a harvest to be reaped for the Great Sower. Those are the times when, in our turn, our horn is exalted. "The Lord gives the command; great is the host of those who bore the tidings. The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!" (Psa. 68. 11-12). That is the spirit of exaltation and confidence which in our day is perhaps the best equivalent to the rather more bloodthirsty manner in which Israel of old attacked and destroyed the enemies of the Lord. But our object is the same—the destruction of all evil and the turning of all men to righteousness. And when, in the power of His Advent and His Kingdom, our risen Lord leads His own in the final and most successful campaign to evangelise the nations and cause the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and in the power of His leadership our horn is exalted like those of the wild ox entering the battle, we shall cry exultantly as did David of old "the kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!"

Remember the twofold limitation of our spiritual vision. "Through a mirror in a riddle" (1 Cor. 13. 12). We do not look upon the heavenly truths themselves but upon a reflection of them; and that which we see itself needs interpretation.

(Westcott)

Preachers without spiritual illumination are like sundials in a cloudy day—they exhibit certain external marks the design for which they are formed, but are of no use till the Sun of righteousness arises and shines upon them.

* * *

Friendship is one mind in two bodies.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

6. "Be ye Holy"

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

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

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

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

attended us by fits and starts? What if we had to wait upon His moods? Thank God He is "all out", in all He does, for all the time!

Now let us trace this through and place the facts together. All of whom God takes to be His own were born children of wrath, even as others in the world. None was righteous; none was good. All had turned out of the way. Of His own Will He formed His plan to redeem and bless, in order to demonstrate to man His own great Love. When by His grace and leading we learned of this great Love, through the Saviour whom He freely gave to die, our hearts became lost in wonder, love and praise. As the truth broke out more clearly, we saw that He is calling a people for His Name, through whom to teach and bless "the residue of men" (Acts 15. 14-17). All whose hearts are right in the sight of God, and who, while they love their fellowmen, have found that all schemes of human uplift must fail, rejoice with great joy to know that *God purposes to help the human race* to throw off its burden of sin and selfishness. When they learn that God invites them to become co-workers with Him in this great task, it gives them joy untold. Though aware of their own sin, they ask "How can I be a co-worker with God—He is holy, just and good—and I am of the earth, weak, frail and tainted by my sin?" The diligent student of God's word who progresses in his studies until he has learned something of the "deep things of God" finds God's way of enabling him to co-operate set out in types and shadows of Israel's wilderness days, as well as in more direct New Testament statements. In both Old and New Testaments he learns that all who walk and work with God must be made holy. But how can that be? What part can light have with darkness; or how can God consort with sinners?

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

imperatively necessary that His mind should be the directing mind of the project, and that all other participants should subordinate their minds to Him. God only has the energy to carry it through, hence all who would share in its activities must be prepared in such manner that they become suitable conduits through which the Divine energy can flow. A million volt conductor requires much more careful preparation than a ten volt conductor.

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

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

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

Each participant in this plan, to-day, has a special place allotted him. He is accorded a first-born's place. While all the Seed of Abraham will have a primary place in the plan, they who can show Abraham's faith are made

a special Seed—a Spiritual Seed—and given a special place. This was foreshadowed and foreshown on two occasions when Israel was being separated from the nations.

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

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

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

In spite then of their vacillations and weak-

nesses, and their daily round of trespasses and sins, their holy standing is not lost. Based upon the precious blood of Jesus as the appointed Lamb of God, supplemented by their own absolute surrender to the Will of God, their hallowed standing remains secure. The Altar sanctified all that touched it, no matter whence it came. (Ex. 29. 37; Ex. 30. 29; Matt. 23. 19.) So the Church's Altar, hallowed by Jesus' own precious sacrifice, makes holy all that comes thereon no matter whence it comes. Our little sacrifice, so small and poor, so marred by nature, and defaced by sin, is savoured by holiness what time the Holy Priest of our profession takes it into His holy hands to place it on the altar-privilege. Apart from Him, it is of little worth; in His dear hands it is a holy thing. In all this elementary stage of our partnership with God He blesses us with an objective holiness, holiness received by us from an external source, holiness bestowed upon us with an "end" in view. It is "wholeness" attributed to attained men.

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

To Israel and her priesthood God said "Consecrate yourselves and I will consecrate you." That is the spirit and principle of the whole Plan. First, as we surrender our "little all" we are sanctified for the plan's sake; afterwards we are made holy for our own. First it is an holiness developed from without, then it becomes an holiness developed from within.

We become possessed of holiness which deepens every day—a real subjective holiness which increases in degree. Whosoever therefore desires God's favour to-day must devote himself "wholly" to the same plan and purpose to which God has devoted Himself. It requires a full and complete surrender to the Architect's Wisdom, to the Potter's hands, to the Sovereign Will. There must be no reservations, no half-hearted surrender, but a full and entire submission to the Purpose; as full and complete with our "little all" as that of the great Divine Father with His illimitable "all".

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

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

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

Laid on Thine Altar, O my Lord Divine,
 Accept this gift to-day, for Jesus' sake.
 I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
 Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;
 But here I bring, within my trembling hand,

This will of mine—a thing that seemeth
 small;
 And Thou alone, O Lord, canst understand
 How, when I yield Thee this, I yield
 mine all.

THE END

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