



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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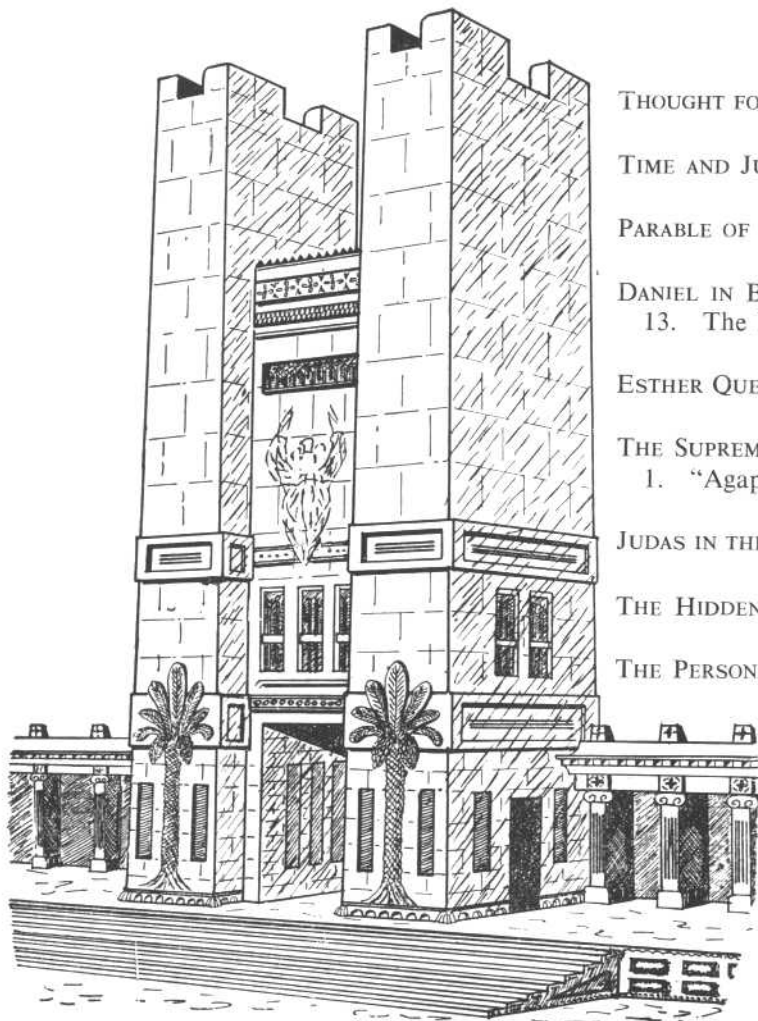
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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.*

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NOTICES

Back Numbers

There are available a number of annual sets of the "Monthly" for the years 1966-1972—and just a few for 1964—and these will be sent to any reader desiring same on request. They are likely to be of special interest to recently enrolled readers. They will be sent free of charge although gifts toward cost of carriage and general publishing are appreciated. Please state definitely which years are required; if any sets requested do not arrive within about three weeks in UK or ten weeks overseas it must be assumed that the available stock of the relevant years have been exhausted.

* * *

Renewals

Once in each year we send a reader's renewal request slip—in the March issue for some readers and September issue for others—to any reader from whom we have not heard since the previous renewal time, asking that we be notified that continuance of the "Monthly" is desired, (except in the case of readers of whose continuing interest we are well aware and we have positive knowledge

that their address remains unchanged.) This practice is necessary to ensure that copies of the "Monthly" are not sent to obsolete addresses or to readers who are no longer interested or may have passed away. We do ask that all recipients of such a renewal request slip do respond without delay; in the case of overseas readers where the "Monthly" is usually seven to ten weeks in transit we cannot expect to have the reply in less than three months or so by which time we have despatched the next issue. At least two attempts are normally made to ascertain the reader's wishes before deleting from the circulation list but it would be a considerable assistance to have an immediate reply to the first renewal notice.

* * *

Literature list

There is now available a list of all Scriptural literature published by the B.F.U. and this can be had upon request. All such literature is free of charge upon the same terms as the "Monthly". Gifts toward the publishing and postal expenses are always welcome.

Thought for the Month

"Who can know what is good for a man in this life, this brief span of empty existence through which he passes like a shadow?" (Eccl. 6.12 NEB).

That writer must have been feeling very despondent when he penned those words, but then by his own admission he was a man who had possessed and enjoyed everything of a material nature that life has to offer—wealth, power, success, homage—and found it all as ashes in the mouth at the end. None of it was enduring and at the last he was no better off than when he started. The total of human achievement, no matter what it embraces, he says in another place, is but "frailty and a striving after wind". The book is written from this standpoint, that of the futility of life if this is all that it means. But he did know better, and at the conclusion he reveals his knowledge that this life and its affairs, its actions and its achievements, are intended to serve a great pur-

pose in the future that succeeds death. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" he says; "fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12.13-14). This life only appears to be a "brief span of empty existence"; in reality it is the first stage of a developing experience which leads ultimately to full awareness of God's purpose and acceptance of the indicated place in that purpose. But because the deeds and achievements, good and bad, of this brief life are moulding our characters already in the direction of our destiny it is inevitable that they all will be brought into judgment. That is why it is so important to come consciously and deliberately into line with the Lord Jesus Christ now and in sincere consecration of life and abilities to Him begin already to walk in the way of eternal life.

TIME AND JUDGMENT

A discourse
for today

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

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

Neither has man made any better use of time. Historical records go back five thousand years. Bible history goes farther. The Bible is more candid about the results than is ordinary history, but the consequences to-day are getting plain enough for all to see. Throughout this long span of man's time, man has succeeded in doing nothing except make tolerably certain that his time has about come to an end, and that if anything is to follow at all it must be God's time. Men have had plenty of opportunity to try out their judgment on how the world ought to be run and society conducted, and all they have to show for the outcome is that the misery of man is great upon him. The only apparent fruitage of man's experiment

with time appears to be that, unless God intervenes, this twentieth century will see the end of the experiment, and time, so far as man is concerned, be no more.

But Solomon was not thinking about human manifestations and use of time and judgment when he uttered his famous dictum. He was thinking of time and judgment of a higher order, of that associated with God. Solomon knew, what so many to-day do not know, that the centre of all things both in space and time is God, and that whatever is, is by his permission if not of his direct interposition. No one who has any real understanding of the character of God would accredit him with responsibility for the entrance of sin and evil into the world, or suggest other than that God hates evil with all the vehemence of his Divine purity; that same understanding should guarantee an appreciation that the fact that evil is still with us after these many thousands of years does not by any means indicate that God has lost either interest or control. The whole point is that God is bringing two great influences to bear upon mankind. The one is time, and the other judgment. When both have done their work God will have achieved his great intention, an intention that has never altered, and man will have achieved his destiny. And if one should cavil at the suffering experienced by man while the process is being worked out, it may very reasonably be asked—*what about God?* Is He not affected also? Man has at most seventy or eighty years of life in which to experience his greatness of misery; God has been watching the unbelief, the perversity, the wickedness of man, the oppression, the injustice, the devilry, for a hundred times as long. And who of mankind can hope to understand the grief of One who created this fair earth a garden and placed upon it a creature made in his own image and likeness, only then to watch his creation reduced to a shambles and his creature transformed into the image and likeness of the Devil? For full five thousand years the love of God was held in leash until his judgment decreed the time ripe to intervene in human affairs by sending his Son to show mankind the way out. Not until then had the development of mankind progressed to that point at which the message could do its work; not until then could He inspire the sublime words "*God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life*"!

Men rejected him; their judgment at fault

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

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

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

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

One reason that time and judgment has had to delay the introduction of this long hoped for future Age of universal wellbeing has been that God, in his inscrutable wisdom, decreed that the teachers and leaders of men in that Age must themselves have been drawn from the ranks of men, and must be trained and fitted for their future work by the manner in which they make use of life's experiences *now*, and the knowledge of human frailty and sin that they gain *now*. Until the teachers are thus qualified God is not ready to

make a start. Time and judgment, therefore, is operative in a special sense towards the disciples of Christ at this day and hour. Time, because God is working to a time-table and the opportunity to join with him in the work of restoring mankind to righteousness must eventually close, and judgment, because the calling to which we are called is a serious and important one and there must be a decision at the end as to whether we are really fitted for the duties to be required of us. Jesus spoke of many who said "*Lord, lord, in thy name have we done many wonderful works . . . we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*" but He had to say, nevertheless, "*I never knew you; depart from me*". Whatever they may ultimately become fitted for, they have not become fitted for the work of administering the affairs of the Kingdom of Christ in the Millennial Age.

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

hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised". And for ever after that day He discharged that commission in terms of going about doing good—preaching the gospel of the kingdom, yes, but at the same time accompanying that preaching by acts of goodness and benevolence, so that little children ran toward him and the afflicted and sorrowing brought their troubles to him. That is the example we are bidden to follow, and although it is not within our power to work the miracles that He worked, it is by all means well within our power to manifest his spirit of kindness and benevolence toward all who are in affliction and sorrow, and do what we can to lighten the weariness of the way for those who begin to find life well nigh intolerable. There are plenty such now, and there are going to be plenty more in the very near future. "Inasmuch as ye have done it

unto the least of these my brethren" says the king at the last "ye have done it unto me!" That parable relates to humankind in the next age, but the principle is equally applicable to us in this Age and day. The sincerity of our desire to help and lead mankind into the way of peace in the Age when we have all power is attested by the degree to which we try to do it in this Age, when we have little or no power. Until the fulness of time has come the misery of man must remain great upon him. Until the judgment of God upon a dying world order has been executed the misery of man must remain great upon him. But while these two factors continue to hinder the emergence of mankind into the life and light of the Millennial kingdom there is much that we can do to alleviate the lot of some, if only a few, of earth's children, and so demonstrate that we have indeed partaken of the spirit of our Father which is in heaven.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12, 13-24.

The man broke in abruptly, breaking the thread of Jesus' conversation with His disciples. He had a personal matter which to him was more important than all that Jesus had been saying. "Master" he urged "speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me". The total irrelevance of his request to the subject on which Jesus was dwelling shows that in this case at least the Master's teaching was falling on completely deaf ears. The man was not interested in what Jesus had to say to him; only in what He would do for him.

A very noticeable factor in our Lord's ministry is the unceremonious manner in which He dismissed those claims on His attention which came from unworthy sources. Although He never missed an opportunity of doing good when such action was in accord with the object and tenor of His mission He would not use His power or authority on unworthy objects. In this case He saw through the man and refused his request without hesitation. "Man" He said—what a world of scorn and contempt lies in the use of that epithet—"who made me a judge and a divider over you?" And without another word to him He turned to His disciples and began to talk about the evils of covetousness. "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of goods which he possesseth".

It is evident that the original suppliant was a covetous man; he had become involved in argu-

ment with his brother over the disposal of their inheritance and was hoping to introduce the authority of Jesus to favour his side of the argument. That was his only interest in Jesus; he called Him "Master" but he was not particularly interested in becoming a pupil, less still a follower who would give up the interests of this world and follow Jesus wheresoever He might lead. He was a covetous man and he meant to get all he could while life lasted and if the moral leadership of Jesus could be invoked to his advantage in this argument with his brother he was going to invoke it.

The remark about covetousness was only the prelude to some more positive teaching. Straight away Jesus plunged into His parable. The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, so plentifully in fact that he was faced with the problem of the disposal of his gains. There were of course a number of alternatives. Having taken enough to provide himself with a comfortable living he could devote the remainder to the relief of the poor—there were plenty such in Israel and the need was always there. Or he could make a generous donation to the Temple treasury for the work of God. There would be no lack of worthy outlets for his surplus. But no; he intended to keep all that he possessed for his own selfish enjoyment. He decided to pull down his granaries and storehouses and build bigger ones, and there store all

that his land brought forth. Having done so, he would say to his soul, "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry*". The rich man was too covetous to part with anything that he had or to do good with it; he would hang on to it and look forward to a life of ease and indulgence.

But man proposes and God disposes. This man does not seem to have considered God in his calculations at all, but now God spoke to him. "*Thou fool*"—an epithet meaning one lacking reasoning power, unintelligent; perhaps our colloquial use of the word "idiot" is the best equivalent—"*Idiot, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*" To that, of course, there was no answer. The one circumstance in life over which the man had no control was come upon him, and in the face of that fact all his planning and expectation was come to nought. There is an expression in use in this our expressive day "*You can't take it with you*" and that is the thought which came at last to this man who had laid up treasure for himself but was not rich toward God.

Let that last point be well considered. This man's fault lay not in the acquiring of wealth or of goods. To the extent that he diligently cultivated his lands and cared for his flocks and herds he did well, for the earth hath God given to the sons of men as a stewardship, to be wisely administered and made to bear increase. Slothfulness and idleness are never extolled in the Scriptures—rather the reverse. The unprofitable servant is reproved but the one who increased the money entrusted to him is commended. Up to the point where the man had increased his productivity tenfold he did well; the fault lay in the disposal of his gains. He failed to recognise his wealth as a stewardship from God. "*All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*" sang the Psalmist but this man had forgotten that. The needs of his daily life were supplied, and well supplied; now came the question of an acknowledgment to God and some return made to God. There was nothing of that in the man's mind. He failed to admit that all he had gained came in the first place from that which God gave and that some return was meet. More than that, he also failed to realise that the purpose of man's existence is not merely to absorb food and drink and pleasure and thus enjoy the blessing of life without bearing any responsibility toward others or fulfilling some useful purpose in creation exterior to himself. "No man liveth to himself" said St. Paul. Each and every man is designed by God to live for a purpose, both now and in eternity, to fulfil

some useful function in the fabric of His entire creation. This man intended to live a life of idleness and idleness has no place in the Divine purpose. "*Ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure*" (Psa. 103.20-21) is a conception of the celestial world and its abounding activity for which we are indebted to the Psalmist; the same energy and zeal for the administration and orderly conduct of the material creation must animate men if they are to be adjudged worthy of what, in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, is called the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The keynote of creation is work—without fatigue, without sweat of brow, divorced from the unpleasant associations normally attached to the term, but work nevertheless, those activities necessary for the proper maintenance of the order of existence in which men have their being—and this man did not want to work any more. He had made his pile and he wanted to sit back and enjoy it.

So the rich man passed through the gates of death empty-handed, with nothing to show for all his years of labour. He could have laid up in store rich provision with God for the eternal future, stores of sterling character and understanding of the principles of righteousness and Divine government, that he might fill a useful place in the eternal world. He might have had stores of sympathy and compassion and experience of human folly and weakness, gained from the wise and beneficent administration, in this life, of the wealth he had acquired, qualifications which would fit him for use in God's future work of reconciliation and reclamation of men in the day of Messiah's Kingdom. But he had none of these. He came to God without anything to show for what God had done for him, a unit of creation that had yet to find his proper place in God's scheme of things.

Jesus drove the lesson home. "*Therefore*" He insisted, "*take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, nor for the body, what ye shall put on.*" Jesus did not mean that we are to give no consideration whatever to our bodily needs nor plan for the future; that would be the very negation of all His practical teaching. The Greek word employed here and in many like passages is not one that refers to taking thought in the sense of considering or reasoning, but one which means literally to be anxious for, or to have care or concern. Most modern translations render "take no anxious thought" or "be not anxious" and this is precisely what Jesus meant. We who are Christians must needs realise that God has the oversight of all our interests and will overrule circumstances

for our good; He can provide against the unforeseen events of life and we may give ourselves without distraction to His service in the security of that knowledge. That does not mean that we should live a hand to mouth existence without using any part of our present gains to make necessary provision for the future. Christian stewardship does demand that we so order our lives within the limits of our ability that we can expect to go on serving the Lord to the end. Neither does it mean that we should announce our intention of "living by faith"—which all too often turns out to be an excuse for sponging on the generosity of other Christians to avoid working at a regular occupation or undertaking any of the normal responsibilities of citizenship. It does mean that we should put the service of God and the interests of His work foremost in our lives, making all other things subsidiary and using all that comes to us in this world as aids to this supreme object.

Jesus' reference to the ravens and the lilies is liable to be misunderstood. The ravens, He said, neither sow nor reap, but God feeds them; lilies neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more magnificently than Solomon in all his glory. His words need carefully reading. God has designed creation so that the ravens can obtain their food and live their lives in a perfectly natural fashion, instinctively going to the place where food is to be gathered and finding it there. He has so ordered Nature that the lilies, as they grow, can absorb light and air and moisture, and the elements of the earth, to build the wonderful structure that is a flower. These things happen because the ravens and the flowers fit quite naturally into the place God designed for them, and so fulfil their function in creation. So with us. If we rest in the knowledge that there is a place for us in God's purposes and that nothing save our own unbelief or obstinacy or wilfulness can prevent our occupying that place

we can be as the ravens and the lilies, fulfilling our designed place in creation in complete orderliness and serenity, giving glory to God by the very fact of our being. Just as the ravens must go to find their food, just as the lilies must lift up their faces to the sun and push their roots deeper into the earth, so must we be diligent in sowing and reaping, toiling and spinning, to fulfil our own particular destiny before God, but always in the serene knowledge that He is overseeing all and we are doing His will. There need be no anxious thought then; we are units in His scheme and He is controlling all things, cognisant of every life which waits upon Him.

"Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" asked Jesus. He called this "that thing which is least" but the addition of eighteen inches to one's height would seem to be a pretty big thing. In point of fact the A.V. translators misunderstood this expression altogether. "*Helikian*" means extent of years, not extent of inches, and is rendered "age" in other translations. Which of them could lengthen his life by the shortest possible span? That was Jesus' question. No man can extend his life by worrying about it. No man can avoid entering at last into the portals of death. In the final analysis we have to trust God because we have no power of ourselves. He gave us life, all the things which are necessary to continuing life, and He alone knows the ultimate purpose of life. The things of the present are transient and must sooner or later pass away. The life that is in us is capable of eternal continuance, sustained always by God, who is all-powerful. We have to discover His purpose, and place ourselves in line to be fitted into that purpose. Everything else will fall into place. "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*" was the conclusion of the lesson "*and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

Note on Deut. 7, 9

"... the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deut. 7.9.)

How often does the eye skip over a statement such as that without realising the depths of meaning involved. A thousand generations; a very long time—and the reader passes on. But how long a time? A generation cannot be reckoned at less than twenty-five years. There have not yet been

a thousand generations of Adamic men on this earth. God's covenant and mercy is guaranteed in this text to extend into the distant future, a span of twenty-five thousand years at least. In other words, Divine care and protection is guaranteed all who are His throughout the whole of the history of sin and death and well into the illimitable future when sin has been done away and all who have at length attained the Divine ideal can stand before God in sinless perfection and need the protecting covenant and mercy no longer.

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

13. The Den of Lions

It was during the two years short reign of Darius the Mede that Daniel's enemies made one more—unavailing—attempt to get rid of him. The stalwart old man had survived many such plots in the course of his long life; perhaps by now he was getting used to them. At any rate there is no indication that his faith wavered in the slightest. As an example of the strength of character a firm faith in God can develop in a man's life the story of Daniel stands supreme. Never did he concede one jot or tittle to the forces of the enemy; at no time were his principles compromised. Fearless before kings, humble before God, his life reveals that combination of iron strength and dependent pliancy which made him so useful an instrument in the hand of God. We can look for no better instance among the records of faithful men upon which to model our own Christian lives. Some there were, following Jesus for a time, who turned back and "walked no more with him." The same sad sequel writes "*finis*" across the pages of many believers' lives when the discouragements of the way, the opposition of God's enemies, the attractions of other things, prove too strong for the faith and hope which alone will enable any disciple to "endure to the end." Like Israel of old, who "could not enter in because of unbelief," so do many Christians falter and fall in the wilderness instead of marching onward to enter the Promised Land. The example of Daniel's life shows what inflexible devotion to the things of God and unshakeable faith in His power and providence can do to a man who builds those things into his life's experience.

Nothing of this was in the minds of those presidents and princes who at this time were conspiring against Daniel. Unscrupulous men of the world, determined to dispose once and for all of the man who by his rectitude and uprightness was a constant threat to their nefarious ways, they hatched a plot which seemed certain of success. No ordinary methods would do; this was a man incorruptible, proof against either threats or bribes, influenced neither by fear nor greed. None of the ordinary methods of achieving their object would serve. They could not accuse him of disloyalty to the king or State, for he was manifestly the soul of integrity. They could not insinuate that he was guilty of personal enrichment from the public purse, or of taking bribes to pervert the course of justice; his private life was open for all to see. They could not impugn or malign his character,

for all men knew him to be blameless and irreprouchable. And in desperation at last these men said "*We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God*" (ch. 6, vs.5). They could only hope to bring about the downfall of Daniel by making his loyalty to God a crime in itself.

So the plot was hatched. It was a simple enough scheme once the bare idea had crossed someone's mind. From its very nature it could not fail to work. Daniel's very firmness of character would be the sure guarantee of his undoing. As the details were unfolded and discussed there would be many nodding heads and covert smiles. The Jew was as good as dead already. Probably the principal contestants for Daniel's soon-to-be vacant office began to eye one another speculatively and under the cover of a spurious heartiness in discussion, began to take each others' measure for the further scramble for power which would follow immediately Daniel had been disposed of.

Agreement reached, the band of rogues sought audience with the king, and outlined their proposal. Briefly put, it provided that for a period of thirty days supplicatory prayer should be offered to no God or man save the king. The brief account in the sixth chapter of Daniel gives no supporting reasons for this apparently pointless piece of authoritarianism, no arguments to justify what must have appeared to be a particularly foolish and vapid decree. Nevertheless the litigants may well have made out a case for their request, and that without revealing the true purpose behind the scheme. The Babylonians were worshippers of many gods, spirits and demons, but the Persians were monotheists, worshippers of one god, Ahura-Mazda, the god of light. The argument may well have been that this thirty days' decree would have the effect of suspending temporarily the native people's customary worship and introducing them to the idea of monotheistic worship, the worship of one God. But since the god of the Persians was not well known in Babylon, why not let him be worshipped in the person of the king as his representative? Thus the vanity of Darius would be flattered and his ear lent more willingly to the proposal. The Roman emperors had Divine honours paid to them while yet living and the early Christians suffered for refusing to give homage to them as gods; here at a much earlier date it seems that the same situation was to face the saintly Daniel.

The little that is known of Darius the Mede—and that little is based entirely upon the picture of him that we have in the Book of Daniel—seems to show him up as a weak monarch. Although he was the son of an active and warlike Median king, Astyages, he reigned only as a puppet under the direction of the more vigorous Cyrus. He was not a young man—sixty-two at the capture of Babylon—and he reigned in Babylon for only two years. The manner in which the conspirators put the decree before him and practically demanded his signature seems as though he was brow-beaten into signing. It might well have been that, faced with a united front of all his principal men except Daniel, he yielded against his own better judgment. It might not have occurred to him that Daniel would object to the decree; after all, Daniel himself was a monotheist, worshipping one God, and might reasonably be expected to support the general idea. Darius probably saw little difference between the one God of the Persians and the one God of Daniel, and perhaps reasoned that at any rate Daniel could not seriously object. At any rate he signed.

Of course Daniel behaved in the manner expected by the plotters. The habit of over sixty years was not going to be abrogated on account of the king's decree. Three times a day, from his earliest youth in Babylon, he had prayed with his face towards Jerusalem, no wall or door intervening, giving open testimony to his faith that one day the House of God would be re-established in that present desolate city. He must have done that when a lad in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in full view of his pagan companions. At first they would have mocked and derided him; later they perhaps came to respect him. There may have been an occasion when an imperious summons to the presence of his royal master came to him when thus engaged, as happened once to a British Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, in the days of Queen Victoria. He would most surely have behaved as Mr. Gladstone did on that occasion, continuing with his prayers unhurriedly, and if then faced with an angry demand for an explanation, as was the case with that Christian statesman, returned the same answer: "I was engaged in audience with the King of kings." Daniel's enemies probably knew his history and judged rightly his behaviour. Assembling at the appropriate time, as expected, they found Daniel with his windows wide open, praying to his God, in flat defiance of the royal decree.

With what glee and triumph must the plotters have hastened to the royal palace and sought audience with King Darius. They were careful, however, to get the king irrevocably committed

and to that end they first had him confirm his earlier concurrence. "*Hast thou not signed a decree . . . ?*" and so on. True enough, agreed the unsuspecting king; a decree which, once signed, cannot be revoked. That was the law of the Medes and Persians and the king confirmed his upholding of the law. Then the mask was thrown off. "*That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day*" (vs. 13).

Too late, the king perceived the trap into which he had fallen. Verse 14 says that he was "displeased with himself." He must have realised that the one man he could really trust was now, by his own stupid action, condemned to death. He might also have reflected that he himself, deprived of Daniel's loyalty and integrity, would be more at the mercy of these scheming conspirators than ever before. So he "*laboured until the going down of the sun to deliver him.*"

The presidents and princes were ready for this. They knew it would come. Before long they were back again, reminding the king of his obligations under the State Constitution. The king realised that there was no way out; the sentence would have to be executed. It must have been with a heavy heart that he gave the necessary orders, and the Palace guards went off to arrest the nation's Chief Minister and bring him to the place of execution.

Verse 16 is a little puzzling. It reads as though Darius assured Daniel that his God, whom he served continually, would certainly deliver him. Whether this was an expression of faith or merely a soothing last assurance to a man he regarded as good as dead, is not clear; when he came to the den next morning he was not half so sure about it. But it was now too late for further talk. The entire company came to the den, usually a large round pit in which the animals could roam freely but from which they could not escape, approached by means of a steeply sloping tunnel from the surface. The unresisting victim was pushed down the tunnel and slid helplessly to the floor of the pit where the lions awaited him. The iron grille at the entrance to the tunnel was shut and locked and sealed with the king's seal and those of the conspirators so that there need be no suspicion next morning that any attempt to deliver the condemned man had been made. There would, of course, be guards posted at the gate, just in case any of Daniel's own friends should attempt a rescue during the night. These precautions taken, the party dispersed; the king, to a miserable evening and a sleepless couch, the others, to a sound night's sleep in the satisfaction of a job well done.

Next morning "*the king arose very early*"—much earlier apparently, than the men whose scheming had created this situation. The account says that he "*went in haste to the den of lions.*" He must at least have had some glimmer of hope that Daniel's God had been able to deliver him, or he would not have made such an early morning expedition. His faith was only very rudimentary, however; we are told that he "*cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel . . . is thy God . . . able to deliver thee?*" He was by no means over sanguine, but he evidently thought that there was at least a chance.

Calm and unruffled came the familiar voice from the depths below. "*O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me*"

Our God does not treat all his saints in the same fashion. Plenty of Christians were thrown to the lions in the days of pagan Rome, but God did not intervene to save them. He did intervene to save Daniel. That deliverance was for a definite purpose in the Divine Plan. Daniel yet had more work to do. The death of those many Christians in the Roman arena was for a definite purpose also, for "*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*" Whether in life or in death, we are the Lord's, and He will dispose of our earthly lives in the way that is good in his sight, and in the interests of his fulfilling purpose for all mankind. Only when we are all united together in the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn" beyond the Vail, will we fully understand just how our apparently dissimilar experiences and varied fortunes in this life have been wrought together by our all-wise Father to effect the great end He has in view.

As far as Darius was concerned, Daniel's reassuring words brought about a swift revulsion of feeling. "*Then was the king exceeding glad.*" Not only was he glad for Daniel's sake, but also for his own. Here was a golden opportunity to rid himself of the men whom he now realised to be a menace to his own security. Probably some of them at least were Persians, and more disposed to favour Cyrus than Darius. This was the psychological moment, while the wonder of the miracle was fresh upon the minds of the king's soldiers and servants. The king was not slow to take advantage of the chance. In the first place Daniel could legitimately be freed, since the decree merely stipulated that he should be cast into the den of lions without defining the consequences. The plotters had hardly thought that necessary. The law had been fulfilled and now Daniel could be released. The king saw to it that he was so freed without further delay. The same guards who cast him in now had the

somewhat more ticklish task of getting him out. They doubtless hoped as they did so that the restored Chief Minister would not hold their action of the previous night against them when he resumed his administrative duties. With the same thought in mind they were probably only too pleased to show diligence in executing the king's next order, to the effect that they should arrest the men who were responsible for the plot against Daniel and cast them without further ado to the lions from which Daniel had so recently escaped. The summary nature of this arbitrary command would support the idea that the men concerned were taken from their beds before they had time to realise what had happened, were hurried to the pit and without further ceremony flung in. Their unhappy wives and families were treated in similar fashion—a piece of Oriental barbarity which was quite the usual thing in those days, the idea being to ensure that no descendant of the criminal should live or be born to perpetuate his name. This ferocious act is quite in keeping with what might be expected of Darius; his father Astyages was one of the most inhuman monsters of antiquity and it is not surprising to find a streak of the same characteristic in his son.

The story ends with another decree, this time without any prompting. Darius sent a command to all parts of the empire requiring that worship and reverence be paid to the God of Daniel. It need not be thought that this implied the conversion of Darius or the establishment of Judaism as the State religion. It need only mean that Darius was sufficiently impressed by the manifest power of the God of Daniel that he gave the seal of his royal approval upon the worship of that God, wheresoever and by whomsoever performed. It might well be that this incident provided the starting point for that tolerance with which the Medo-Persian rulers regarded the Jewish religion, leading only a year after this happening to the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and build their Temple, and later on for the favour they enjoyed, in the days of Nehemiah, when the city Jerusalem itself was rebuilt.

To Christians it is just one of the many examples in history where God shows us all his power to deliver, when deliverance is in accord with his will and his Plan. This story shows us that God *can* deliver; whether in any given case, or in our own case, He *will* deliver, rests again upon the needs of his Plan and his designs for us personally. Those of us whose lives are given over completely to serve him and be used by him would not have it otherwise; for He knoweth best.

(To be continued).

ESTHER, QUEEN OF PERSIA

The story of the Jewish maiden who became wife to one of the most powerful kings of antiquity, and thereby the means of delivering her nation from wholesale massacre, is unique in the Old Testament in that nowhere in the narrative is the name of God mentioned, neither is there any indication of prayer to Him or faith in him for deliverance, nor yet is He credited with any part in effecting the deliverance. Many suggestions and theories have been propounded to account for this unusual factor in this particular book, but when they have all been stated the fact remains that of all the women of faith who figure in Bible history Esther stands in a class by herself as one who gives no indication of her personal standing with God, and yet undeniably was used by him to effect a great deliverance.

Esther was a city girl, born and bred in Shushan the capital of the Persian empire four generations after the Jews were taken captive into Babylon. The decree of Cyrus, permitting all who so desired to return to the land of their fathers, was fifty years in the past and the restoration of the land of Judah was in progress. Esther's family and forebears had not seen fit to return; perhaps they considered themselves better off in prosperous Persia. Maybe the opposition and terrorist tactics which the colonists in Judea were experiencing from alien peoples in neighbouring lands deterred them from sharing the risks and fortunes of the pioneers. The situation in Judah was very much as it is in the same land today. At any rate, it would seem that Esther grew up in an atmosphere of Jewish nationalism and the Jewish faith against the background of a Gentile land, and her religious outlook must have been moulded thereby. The name of no great man of faith of the period is known—Daniel had been dead for half a century, Ezra, away in Babylon, was at the most a child of a few years old, and Nehemiah, the coming patriot, not yet born. The only name we have is that of Mordecai, Esther's cousin, who had cared for her since she was orphaned, and of his attitude towards God we have no knowledge either.

The king of Persia at the time was the famous—or rather infamous—Xerxes, weak, dissolute, ruthless, cruel, altogether unprincipled and probably half mad. The incidents and allusions appearing in the Book of Esther fit so closely into the events of this man's reign that there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identification. The Artaxerxes under whom Nehemiah served was Xerxes' son and successor and this provides an additional

evidence. When one compares the account of Xerxes' reign in Herodotus, the Greek historian, who lived only a few decades later, with the character of the king displayed in the Biblical Book it is easy to believe that both accounts refer to one and the same man. ("Ahasuerus" in the Book of Esther is the Hebrew form of the Persian Khshayarsha of which the Greek form is Xerxes).

It was to this monster that the Jewish girl, probably no more than sixteen years of age, was unwillingly to yield herself. There was no choice in the matter and any objections would be brusquely overruled. The kings of Persia arrogated to themselves the right to take into their harems any unmarried woman in the realm they wished. Xerxes exercised his rights to the full and in addition to his principal wife, who enjoyed the dignity of Queen, he also maintained a harem of three hundred of the most beautiful women in the land. But now his Queen had incurred his displeasure and been degraded to a lower position, and the great king was in the market for a new Queen. Apparently none of the current three hundred appealed to his probably somewhat jaded palate and his sycophantic courtiers suggested that perhaps the time was ripe for a fresh sweep through the empire in search of new candidates.

Esther was unfortunate enough to be caught in this round-up. There was nothing her guardian could do about it, but he did charge her not to reveal the fact that she was a Jewess. This is a little difficult to understand. There was no particular antipathy against the Jews in the Persian empire at the time; the fact that they were monotheists like the Persians was rather to their favour compared with the polytheistic Babylonians whom Persia had conquered in the days of Cyrus. If Esther's nationality was likely to be a bar to her being taken into the harem of Xerxes one would think that Mordecai would have revealed the fact immediately. Taken in conjunction with the further behaviour of Mordecai later on, it could be surmised that he might not have been altogether averse to his ward becoming more closely connected with the king, as a possible means of serving his own personal ambition. Upon the other hand, it might only have been that Mordecai, knowing how swiftly the tide of popular feeling could turn against the Jews, and realising that from now on he could do nothing to protect his young cousin, considered it better that no one in the royal court should have any suspicion of her national origin.

So Esther was taken to the royal palace and assigned her place in the "house of the women", a luxurious building the ruins of which still exist amongst the complex of broken-down walls and standing pillars, fragments of sculpture and tiled pavements, which is all that is left of the magnificent palace of the Persian kings at Shushan, now known as Persepolis. The whole area was excavated during the years 1931-1939 and the great throne room where Esther stood with her royal husband, the Hall of One Hundred Columns, an immense apartment over two hundred and thirty feet square, can still be traced by bits of broken wall and pavements. Pieces of the wall panels of multi-coloured enamelled and glazed bricks, arranged in ornate designs, still remain to give mute evidence to the accuracy of the description in Esth. 1.6. And here Esther had to spend a probationary period of twelve months before she would be called into the presence of the king.

The first real picture of Esther we have comes at this point. The eunuch who had charge of the harem—an important and trusted official—took an instant liking to the Jewish maiden and immediately promoted her to a leading place among her companions, giving her seven hand-maids as personal attendants and the best quarters he had at his disposal. It is probable that the king relied upon his judgment a great deal and that he was impressed by a non-assuming modesty and quiet dignity which may have distinguished Esther above the others. And this impression may well have been advanced when Esther, called at last into the king's presence, instead of claiming for herself, as was apparently the custom, every conceivable aid to attractiveness in the way of clothing or jewellery that could be suggested, was content to be arrayed according to the eunuch's judgment. When she was ready, she *"obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her"*.

She might have been several years at the palace awaiting this moment, for the king had been away for two years fighting the Greeks. The great feast described in the first chapter as taking place in the third year of his reign was evidently in connection with an important council of all his nobles and generals held in that year in which Xerxes planned the invasion of Greece as a preliminary to his projected conquest of Europe. (Xerxes was nothing if not ambitious and never erred on the side of modesty, as witness one of his inscriptions found at Shushan; *"I am Xerxes, the great king, the only king, the king of all countries which speak all kinds of languages, the king of this entire big and far-reaching earth"*). His plans laid, he set out with a vast army and a great fleet of war-galleys, drawn from all the countries of his empire, built a

bridge of boats across the Hellespont (near the modern Dardanelles) to convey his forces into Europe, and so marched into Greece. The Greek war-galleys were out-numbered three to one, but at the memorable naval battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. the Persian fleet was completely destroyed, and on land the Greeks defeated and decimated the invaders. Xerxes left his most able general, Mardonius, to hold back the enemy whilst he himself with a few picked troops fled back to Persia as fast as he could, two years after he so boastfully set out. Comparison of Herodotus with the Book of Esther shows that Esther was probably brought into his presence about a month after his return to Shushan.

The king was captivated by this young maiden, more so than by any of the others who had been collected for him, and immediately chose her to replace the discarded Vashti. So, in the seventh year of the king's reign, Esther became Queen of Persia, an exalted position which would probably have separated her for ever from her own people and had no place in the outworking purposes of God had it not been for the machinations of Haman.

Haman was an influential noble at Court who had contrived to become the king's right-hand man. He was ambitious, arrogant, and an enemy of the Jews. Arising from the consistent refusal of Mordecai to pay him the deference shown by others he conceived the idea of destroying the entire Jewish community in the Persian empire. He obtained the king's permission quite easily and the decree went forth throughout the empire, naming a day twelve months hence when the carnage should commence. In the ensuing consternation and distress Mordecai appealed to Esther to use her influence with the king to have the decree rescinded. Esther at first was hesitant; to go to the king uninvited was to risk death unless he should extend his sceptre towards the applicant, indicating his favour, *"and I"* said Esther, *"have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days"*. It may have been that, after five years as Queen, the notoriously fickle Xerxes was beginning again to look elsewhere. At any rate Esther was apprehensive of her personal safety if she interfered.

Mordecai was not prepared to tolerate this. *"Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews"* he told her sternly *"for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knowest whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* That last phrase is the nearest approach to any consciousness of

Divine oversight and power that appears in this book, and even then it may be questioned whether Mordecai had any thought of Divine overruling in his mind. It is noteworthy that all the transactions which appear in the story seem to be on the basis of human effort and power and no indication of prayer or faith in time of need is given. Esther's response bears this out. She told Mordecai to go back to his fellows and get them to engage in a three days' fast; she with her attendants would do the same, and then she would take her life in her hands and intrude upon the presence of the king uninvited; "*and if I perish, I perish*". It does not sound like the assurance of faith neither does it seem that the Queen felt she had a Protector whose power exceeded even that of the king of Persia. Joseph stood before Pharaoh of Egypt and Daniel before King Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, and these were comparable occasions to this one, but those men both prepared themselves beforehand by prayer and supplication to God and then appeared before their respective monarchs in serene confidence that God was with them and would direct the issue. There is no evidence that Queen Esther felt like that. It looks almost as if she relied upon women's wiles, arraying herself in her royal apparel and appearing before the king in as alluring a fashion as possible, rather than believe that help could come from above.

The great king was in a good mood that day. At sight of his Queen he extended the sceptre, permitting her to approach, and even before she had time to introduce her request he enquired her wish and promised in advance that he would grant it, even to the half of his kingdom. Esther had probably heard such promises before; it is likely that, knowing the unpredictable nature of her royal spouse, she felt that a gradual approach to the subject at issue was best calculated to achieve a satisfactory outcome. She asked therefore that the king and Haman his chief adviser would honour her with their presence at a little private banquet that she had arranged for them in her own apartments. The Xerxes of history is known for never refusing an opportunity of good food and good wine and it is quite in character to read here that he commanded Haman to make haste to accompany him to this unexpected treat.

At the banquet the king repeated his question and renewed his promise. He was astute enough to recognise that there was more to this than the desire to have a meal together. Esther, still playing her cards close, responded with an invitation to another banquet on the morrow, and a promise to make her real request known on that occasion.

Thus it was that on the morrow the two august

personages had cups in their hands again. The Hebrew expression really means something in the nature of a drinking session and it is more than possible that King Xerxes was rapidly passing into a benign condition of mind as once more he repeated his question, "*what is thy petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted thee. What is thy request? It shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom*". Esther realised that the psychological moment was now, and came straight out with a moving plea for her own life and the lives of her people, all subjects of a decree which appointed them to destruction and death. With the swift upsurge of anger for which this king is noted he demanded "*who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?*" conveniently forgetting that he himself had approved the decree. But he had not known then that his favourite wife and Queen was a Jewess—and neither had Haman, who now realised that he had badly overplayed his hand. Esther's next words in answer to the king greatly increased the schemer's panic; "*the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman*" and at that the king, in uncontrollable wrath, went out into the garden, perhaps to cool off. It is probable that the only one who remained perfectly calm and self-possessed was Esther herself, who now had the entire situation in her own hands. Haman, in blind unreasoning terror, had thrown himself on the divan upon which Esther was reclining, to plead for his life, and the king, coming back at that unfortunate moment, in blazing anger accused him of committing an assault upon the person of the Queen. Of course, he did not really believe that, but his wrathful outburst was sufficient hint to the attendants, who promptly took Haman into custody and stood awaiting orders. Haman had already erected a gallows on which he hoped to see Mordecai crucified, and the attendants, who seem to have had no love for him, knew this. One of them mentioned the fact, in a tentative fashion, to the king, who immediately whirled round and uttered the dread words "*Hang him thereon*". So Haman was hurried away and crucified on the gallows he had intended for Mordecai.

The instigator of the decree was dead, but the decree remained. The true relationship of Mordecai to Esther was now revealed, and the king, doubtless further to please his wife, advanced Mordecai to high honour. To Esther he gave all the household and property of the executed Haman. Now Esther set about the business of annulling the decree. This was approached by falling at the king's feet and beseeching him with tears. She may or may not have known that under the constitution of Persia a royal decree once

issued could not be revoked, even by the king. One of Xerxes' predecessors, Darius the Mede, found himself in this same dilemma when he was tricked into having Daniel cast into the lions' den. In that instance God delivered. This time plans for deliverance seem to have been made without calling upon God for help. The king appears to have indicated to Esther and to Mordecai that whilst he could not revoke the decree giving leave to his subjects to attack and massacre Jews to their hearts' content on the thirteenth day of the forthcoming twelfth month, there was nothing to stop him issuing a further decree giving the Jews leave to take whatever steps they thought fit to defend themselves and slay any who displayed enmity towards them. No sooner said than done: Mordecai, armed with royal authority, and the royal seal wherewith to authorise his letters, promulgated this second decree throughout the empire, also bringing it to the notice of all "*the lieutenants, and deputies, and rulers*" of the political divisions of the empire; these worthies, perceiving the direction in which the wind was now blowing, could be relied upon to assist the king's new favourites and see that the Jews were by no means hindered, and possibly somewhat helped, in their plans to wreak revenge upon their enemies.

It would seem that Esther was now firmly in the saddle and could do almost what she liked with king Xerxes. The time came for the implementation of both decrees, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and the Jews throughout the empire acquitted themselves well in the use of carnal weapons. In the royal city Shushan five hundred were slain and in the rest of the empire seventy-five thousand according to the Massoretic text, fifteen thousand according to the Septuagint. The king, quite unperturbed at the loss of so many of his subjects, came to Esther with the news, and asked her what more she wanted. "*Now what is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee? Or what is thy request further, and it shall be done?*" Esther has been criticised for requesting at this point that the Jews in Shushan be given leave to spend one more day slaying their enemies. She is described as blood-thirsty and revengeful. Unless the full facts of the case are known it may be wise to defer judgment. It may have been that in the royal city itself there were many enemies of the Jews still unaccounted for and they could be a source of trouble in the future. While the admittedly changeable king was in his present mood it were better to crush the anti-Jew party for good and all. It is probable anyway that in this the queen was advised by Mordecai and he appears as a shrewd and relentless politician who intended to

secure his own nation's future by any possible means. So another three hundred were slain in the city before the fighting ceased.

After all, men like David, Joshua, Gideon, were responsible for much heavier slaughter of the enemies of Israel and have been—perhaps unwisely—lauded as the champions of God. Esther, a true daughter of her people, took advantage of the opportunity she had as Queen of Persia to defend that people from enemies who would have spoiled and massacred them without cause.

So the story of Esther closes, in about the fourteenth or fifteenth year of Xerxes' reign, when she had been queen for about seven years, with the Jews enjoying prosperity and royal favour, Mordecai the Jew an important man at Court, and Esther herself firmly established as the consort of the great King. Whether this happy state continued for the remainder of the king's reign is not known, but since he lived only another six years, it is perhaps probable that it did. Mordecai has been identified with Matacas, who is recorded in history as one of the most powerful men at court during Xerxes' reign, but the identification is uncertain. The suggestion sometimes made that Esther was the Amestris, wife of Xerxes in the pages of Herodotus, is certainly incorrect. Amestris was the daughter of Xerxes' uncle Otanes and married him long before he became king; their son Darius was at least twenty years old at Xerxes' accession to the throne. It is very possible that the Vashti of the Book of Esther was Amestris and it is noticeable that although Darius was the eldest son he did not succeed as king; a younger son of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, became king after him. This of itself is interesting. Certain native Persian historians have said that the mother of Artaxerxes was a Jewess; it is also recorded that Artaxerxes was a somewhat mild and weak-willed man dominated by his mother and sister. He reigned for the unusually long period of forty years, indicating accession at an early age. If he was in fact the son of Esther he could not have been more than thirteen years of age when his father died—murdered—so that the queen would obviously act as Regent and adviser for a number of years. The brief glimpses we have of her character would seem to infer that she would not let go the reins of power easily. And if Esther did indeed bear a son to her husband in those early years it becomes easier to understand the somewhat excessive infatuation he seems to have had for her; she had given him a son, born during his reign, to reign as king after him. Xerxes himself succeeded to the throne only because his own elder brother was born before their father became king.

There is one more point which is worth a

thought. This Artaxerxes, possibly the son of Esther, is the one under whom both Ezra and Nehemiah received their commissions to go to Jerusalem. When Nehemiah recounts his conversation with the king resulting in the award of his commission, he says "*and the king said unto me, the queen also sitting beside him, For how long shall thy journey be*". . . . etc. (Neh. 2.6). The Hebrew text is actually, "*the king said unto me, and the queen that sat beside him*" (the Douay alone of translations renders thus) meaning that the queen associated herself with the question. Was this queen, not the wife of Artaxerxes, but his mother, still taking part in affairs of state? In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Esther would have been in her early fifties and her son in his early thirties. The wife of the king would hardly be likely to share in such a decision; the queen-

mother could properly so do. It is impossible to prove, but it is a fascinating thought, that the simple Jewish maid who against her will had been exalted to become Queen of Persia may have thus been a means in the Lord's hand to assure Israel's peace and security for more than half a century. From the Restoration from Babylon under Cyrus to the end of the Old Testament in the time of Malachi was about a hundred and thirty years. That time of rebuilding the nation is illumined by a gallery of famous names who rendered yeoman service in the work of restoration—Daniel, Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi. Perhaps to that company of stalwarts raised up to perform the good purposes of God we should add the name of one woman—Esther, Queen of Persia.

THE SUPREME GRACE

A study in
1 Cor. 13

I. "Agapao" and "Phileo"

"Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1. Cor. 13.13).

So run the closing verses of the matchless chapter in which the master-mind of the great Apostle splits up the pure white beam of Love into its component rays of service and experience, as these things befall us in the common round of life.

It scarcely needs to be said that nearly every version, other than the A.V. has substituted the word "love" for charity, and made the statement of Paul to say that "Love" is the greatest of these; as one gifted pen has written, it is indeed the greatest thing in the world. In the usage of today, charity does not mean what once it did. In an earlier day it stood for kindness, sympathy, tolerance towards a less favoured comrade in the strife—an attitude greatly resembling that of which Paul speaks in the former verses of this Chapter. "A favour, sir, of your charity" carried with it no such sting as it would today. In these more commercialised days it speaks too strongly of the stigma of pauperism, the processes of "Social Security"; or the whining cry of the ragged mendicant. It reminds too vividly of lost self-respect and bedraggled dignity; of an indigence that unmans a man and makes of him a cringing fawn. Yet it is a pity that this once noble word has lost its savour, for though in some senses our word Love may today stand nearer to the Greek original, and may be much the better word to express desirable relationship between man and man, even the word Love must take on the sense of charity in all

relationships between God and man. "*Charis*"—from which comes charity—in the Greek really means grace, favour, beneficence. All God's relationships towards human-kind, even to the best of men, are based on grace unmerited. That refreshing grace comes to us all in so many ways and under so many circumstances, that in each differing circumstance it needs a different term to describe it. Sometimes it reaches us as compassion, sometimes as pity, again as mercy, as succour, as relief, and so many other forms of Divine goodwill that it becomes as many-hued and as diversified as Love itself. Indeed it really is Love itself, Love en clothed in compassionate tenderness.

In the sphere of human experience every expression of this Love—when shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit—may require, according to the circumstance, a different name by which to define it, for, as Paul says, it will show itself at times as forbearance, at others as longsuffering, at still others as tolerance, as hopefulness, as kindness, in word and deed. Each occasion of loving word and deed is a "grace"—a gracious word, a gracious act—in its own self, yet, winsome as it is, it is nothing more than one constituent element of the all-embracing master-grace—of the supreme grace of Love itself.

A beam of light, passed through a crystal prism, will come out, separated into its component hues, red, yellow, orange, etc.—all the colours of the spectrum or the rainbow arch. So, in like manner, Love in its passage through a human heart into

the sphere of human experience will come through separated out into a wide array of human qualities, of both natural and spiritual kind. It may range, on the one hand, from a mere forbearance to exact due recompense from an enemy, to the most intense and reverential esteem, on the other, for the sacredness of the blessed and Holy Name, with all the wide range of sanctified experience that lies between these two extremes.

To illustrate it another way, Love could be likened to the indefinable fragrance wafted from the exotic heart of an old-world garden, where every one of a hundred floral gems contributes its quota to the fragrant ensemble, yet finding, as one wind's one's way along its paths, each one, in turn, standing out a little from the rest. While we know that the enchanting bouquet of the whole is made up of the aroma of every single bloom, yet we also know that a nearer proximity to this or that separates its own particular odour from all the rest. We could thus in-breathe and appreciate the distinctive fragrance of the humble mignonette, or of the lowly violet, with as much delight as we would find that each floral gem was needed to contribute its own quota to the fragrant "whole". So in the same way we will find that it requires every gracious and considerate act or word, expressed to either friend or foe, to add its own aroma to the delightful bouquet of Love. It is because the daily round and common task in the garden of our life covers such wide ranges of circumstances that it is so essential for us to know and understand that the all-embracing attribute must be separated into its many constituents and elements. Only thus can we hope to comprehend this master-grace for what it is.

It is a great disadvantage to the English-speaking student of Scripture that the word which has been substituted for the older word charity has to stand as equivalent for two Greek words, of very dissimilar meaning. These two words, *phileo* and *agape*, were used to express two very different emotions, the natures of which are almost entirely obscured by our general use of the word "love" as the equivalent of both. While it is true that a few translators sometimes use the word "affection" as the equivalent of *phileo*, the small number of students having access to these more precise translations robs them of any special influence they might bring to bear upon the general conceptions clustering around the word "Love". To the general reader all affection is Love, and all Love is affection, the one thing being identical with the other, while the warmer word "affection" is accounted only a milder synonym for the more robust word "Love". But such was not the case with the Greek Christian reader in older days.

The word *agape* is almost entirely a Christian word. It did not emanate from classical Greek sources. It was first coined by the translators of the Septuagint, and from that source passed into the Church's vocabulary, but in its passing from the old people to the new it took on depths and shades of meaning it never had before. Under the Holy Spirit's influence the writers of the Apostolic Church (Peter, John and Paul especially) used this inherited word to describe some of the deeper verities of Christian life and experience. In their Master's life and death they had seen an expression of something which this sordid world had never seen before. Martyrs unto death had been seen over and over again in the annals of their ancestry, but in the case of Jesus there had been more than mere heroic faithfulness. There had been an influence that gripped, yet did not excite to combativeness or warlikeness. It laid hold on their "spirits" and tamed and sobered them so that they became different men. It inspired them with a mighty urge which made them dare and do great things, yet withdrew or curbed their inborn retaliatoriness and made them ready to suffer with meekness and without complaint when reviled or persecuted. Seeking to explain the amazing condescension of He who had been rich, and for our sakes had become poor, they said "He did it all because He 'loved' so amazingly"—amazing because it was so disinterested and void of self-gratification. In their strivings to give expression to these newer hard-to-be-defined conceptions running through their minds, the ancient word was laid under tribute, but in the usage its boundaries were stretched both in width and depth, so that it came to stand for wider things and deeper things than their fathers knew. It spoke to them of a Great Cause—a Redemptive Plan—and of the Holy One Who had devised that Plan. Hence they said God had "*agapao*" for this sinful sordid world. This was the ocean-wide and ocean-deep thing which Apostolic writers tried to compress into the limits of a word. They did their best—but what a task they undertook! Taking that older word, they stretched and stretched it again, and filled and filled it yet again, with these newer thoughts and values that were filtering through from the higher world into their consciousness. For them it came to stand for "Love of the Cause"—"Love for the Plan"—"Love for the prospect and means of eliminating sin and sorrow and death". Yes, indeed, *agape* is a Christian word, for not until much later times did classic Greek absorb it into its vocabulary, and with much less depth and width of meaning than its Christian foster-fathers had infused into it.

The other word (*phileo*) was the noblest word

which classic Greek possessed to describe regard for the highest things. This is seen in some of its combinations, as for instance "*Philadelphos*" (lover of a brother), "*Philanthropia*" (lover of men), "*Philosophos*" (lover of wisdom). But it can also be linked with baser things, as for instance "*Philarguroi*" (lover of money), "*Philautoi*" (lover of self) (2 Tim. 3.2). For the baser sort of love Greek literature had another word—or series of words—*Eros*, *Erastes*, and *Erastin*. But these were words which neither Jewish nor Christian writer ever adopted; they were too steeped in carnality and tainted with vice for their purposes. Because of this they let them all severely alone. But they made the nobler word *phileo* more noble still. To the Greek who wrote and spoke of Philanthropy, the only men for whom he had any love to spare were those of his own kith and kin—blood brotherhood in some town or city-state. For the whole world of men of other blood or faith he had no love. To him Philanthropy was just family-love—the love of the national or city-family and that of his own domestic circle. The Christian Church made this noble word leap over all national or racial barriers, and incorporate in its ample folds men of every nation who, by faith, had found entry into the Divine family. It could still represent the close natural attachment which a James could bear towards his brother John, but it could also expand itself sufficiently to permit Paul to link Rufus or even Onesimus, a runaway slave, with himself in a holy brotherhood. Truly they made it a nobler word after adopting it.

It is around these two words, with all that they denote, that the heart-gripping appeal of the Scriptures revolve. It began in the heart of God in bygone times; He wanted a family upon which He could lavish his grace and generosity. The invasion of sin did not alter the gracious desire; He devised ways and means to bring the wanderers home. He sent his Son to earth to tell wayward men of that desire, and to begin the work of drawing them with the magnetism of a Father's Love. God's own Spirit laid its firm grip, first of all upon the worthy Son—and then through him it laid firm hold upon "those that thou hast given Me" and then, through them, moved on to a wider field, drawing others to his appealing arms.

The Alexandrian Fathers coined a word to record the love of "the chiefest among ten thousand" for his "Dove"—"His fair One" in translating the Song of Songs. Of this word, which

was created to translate the Hebrew word "*Ahahah*" (Song of Solomon 4.10), Thayer's Lexicon says: "*It is noticeable that the word (agapao) first makes its appearance as a current term in the Song of Solomon; certainly no undesigned evidence respecting the idea which the Alexandrian translators had of the 'love' in this Song*". That in itself gave the word a noble birth—and as a mode of expression for the young lovers in Israel it stands on a pinnacle above all the love-literature of all lands in that early day; still, even with all that unparalleled glory at its birth it pales into a mere shadow before the splendour that shines through it as it is later taken up and made the vehicle of expression between the altogether Lovely One and the beloved of his heart.

Only when we can assess the depths of love which Jesus bears for his Church, and which the faithful in that Church bear to him, can we even begin to realise what the Divine Spirit has compressed into that comprehensive word. Truly it stands for the binding-link of the whole Redemptive Plan, and has caught up into it first one here, another there, and has constrained each and all to yield himself, with all that he is and has, to the furtherance of that Plan. And then, towards each one thus caught up, an appreciative affection has come forth from the heart of God.

Of himself Jesus said, "*The Father loveth the Son*"—(*agapao* love) because of what He is in the Redemptive Plan (John 3.35), but He also said "*The Father loveth (phileo) love) the Son*" (John 5.20). Of his followers Jesus said "*If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love (agapesai) him*" (John 14.23). Yet He also said "*The Father himself loveth (phileo) you, because you have loved me*" (John 16.27). Thus to the universal love to the Plan, God had intertwined affectionate love for the faithful contributor to the interests of that Plan. And this inter-twining act of God has been made the pattern and example for all the rest who came into that Plan. Love of the brethren—loving affection for those that serve faithfully and well, is enjoined upon the whole Household of God. Around these two words revolves the sacred mysteries of the great Plan of God—the mighty energising force that moves all Redemptive action, warm-hearted affection, each for each, which binds each to other in the ties of the greatest family which time or eternity will ever know.

Nothing will do except righteousness; and no other conception of righteousness will do except Christ's conception of it. *Matthew Arnold*

God is not sparing in His riches. He gives not a trickle but a torrent. As His power is great, so is His grace. (2 Cor. 9-8).

JUDAS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Provocative of questions are the two occasions on which New Testament writers refer back to the Old Testament in connection with Judas the betrayer. In both instances the quotations are not exact and one is accredited to the wrong prophet.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27, contains a full account of the remorse and death of Judas, how he cast the thirty pieces of silver on the floor of the Temple, went away and hanged himself in the field he had bought, known as the potter's field. Matthew says that this was the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered more than five centuries previously by Zechariah, although in the A.V. the name appears as Jeremiah. The extant writings of the latter contain no such allusion but the probable explanation of the discrepancy is suggested by the fact that the principal Syriac and Old Latin versions of the 2nd century, some of the oldest manuscripts known, do not mention any name, and neither does the Sinai Palimpsest of the 4th century which stemmed from 2nd century originals. Matt. 27.9 in these versions has it "*then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet, saying . . .*" It is very possible that the name Jeremiah was added, incorrectly, by a later copyist and became fixed in the later texts.

Matthew evidently referred back to Zech. 11. 12-13 where the Shepherd of Israel, represented by the prophet himself, has been rejected by the people after a lifetime of faithful ministry and has been awarded as his wages the price of a slave, thirty pieces of silver. The Lord in his displeasure told the shepherd to cast this "goodly price"—spoken in irony—"to the potter" in the house of the Lord, the Temple, and this the shepherd did. The expression "cast it to the potter" is evidently a Hebrew idiom of the day not easily understood today but it is believed to have been an expression of contempt such as is implied by the English saying "going to the dogs". The shepherd showed his contempt for the payment by casting it back to the givers on the floor of the Temple. The coincidence between this and the action of Judas enabled Matthew to cite this as a prophecy of

what was to come. He was reasonable enough in this; the entire 11th chapter of Zechariah deals with the Divine Son of God who led and shepherded Israel both before and during his advent as Jesus the Christ. Their rejection of God in pre-Christian times was confirmed by their rejection of Christ when He came in the flesh so that Matthew is rightly led when he cites the one as a prophecy of the other. (For complete exposition of Zech. 11 see B.S.M. for Sept./Oct. 1969). The fact that the field purchased by Judas happened to be called the "potter's field" was a pure coincidence but would certainly serve to remind Matthew of the Zechariah prophecy.

The other instance appears in Acts 1 when Peter addressed the believers concerning the appointment of a successor to Judas. Speaking of Judas' defection and fate, he says (Acts. 1.20) "*For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and his bishopric let another take*". It must be noted that Peter is not claiming that these Psalms were prophetic of Judas; what he is doing is to introduce the quotations by way of illustration or analogy.

He was actually quoting two distinct Psalms; the first half of the sentence comes from Psa. 69.25 and the second from Psa. 109.8. In the first instance the prayer is that all the enemies of David, and all the enemies of Israel, shall be visited with a succession of disasters of which this loss of home and dwelling-place is but one. In the second instance it is the enemy of the righteous man, any enemy of the righteous, who is to be deprived of his position and office and condemned to penury. Judas, in the eyes of Peter the greatest enemy of the Lord and therefore of the people of the Lord, was held to be one of those who fulfilled the picture painted by these Psalms and to merit all the execrations and judgments written in these Psalms. But a fair appraisal of the Psalms shows that not only Judas, but every man who has oppressed, persecuted or injured the righteous, comes under their condemnations.

Hand and heart, instinct and motive, the whole life within and without must be transformed up to the "Ideal". And only the Omniscience of God knows what that is! And only the Omnipotence of God can sustain in the making!

"Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think."—*John Stuart Mill*.

THE HIDDEN FIRE

*A discourse on
the power of prayer*

'Men ought always to pray and not to faint.'
(Luke 18.1.)

True religion is the harmonious union of man with God and prayer is its vital link. It is more than conversation between two minds. It is a communing of spirit, a common union of thought, ideas, aims and desires, in which the lesser is charged and recharged by the mystical energy of the greater.

Enthusiasm is the hidden fire which gives to Christian life its glow, the radiant force by which natural life is changed, trans-figured, into the glory of the heavenly. The word is derived from the Greek, *en-theos*, which is, literally, God in us. An observer of the effects of prayer in the lives of the faithful has noted that to be in touch with God by prayer 'is to be in contact with the powerhouse of the universe.' No wonder it has been described by a poet as "the Christian's vital breath; the Christian's native air." It is something above and beyond the powers and forces which man has so far harnessed for his everyday needs and pleasures. It is a transforming element in which believing intelligence "lives and moves and has its being," partaking of its very godlike nature and strength; or how otherwise understand the prayer of St. Paul for the Ephesians, "that you may be filled with all the fulness of God".

Friendship without communication fades away as fire without fuel loses its lively glow. Renewal and refreshment are alike necessary to the fire which burns on the hearth and that of the spirit which burns as a secret flame on the altar of the dedicated heart. Study of the written word, fellowship with those of like precious faith, does something toward keeping the fire burning, but it is that secret link with the Invisible which gives life its wisdom, assurance and vigour.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

(Isa. 40-3).

The early heroes of faith walked and talked with God. They knew Him face to face. Theirs was a privileged state of personal friendship and communion remote from modern times. What manner of men were they, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, Joshua and David, those kings and prophets to whom God spoke, to whom they spoke freely on behalf of others as well as of their own affairs? The mental calibre of such men

must have been as vigorous as the world about them. Theirs must have been, not a primitive seeking after an unknown God, as some critics would like to have it, but a pristine freshness of knowledge, a confidence and assurance largely lost by a later jaded and faded world.

It was Jesus who roused and restored man's privilege of union and conversation with his Maker. Breathing the very essence of prayer in all He said and did, He taught his followers not only how to pray but the use and power of prayer. The apostles in their mission to men followed it up with exhortations and testimony on the efficacy of the mysterious means by which God supplies the needs of the faithful, nurtures and cultivates the filial tie between himself and those born of his love.

Down the Christian centuries prayer has been recognised as the essential element by which the problems of life have been solved and its difficulties overcome, its sorrows endured and its joys sanctified. More than a channel of blessing it has been the magnetic force which has drawn and held the human mind in the keeping power of God. Eternal light and love being the very substance and essence of His nature and character, a solemn recognition of the great privilege of prayer, of the correspondence and common union of the creature with the Creator must have a humbling effect upon all who propose in their minds to call upon him whose ways and thoughts are so much higher and wider and deeper than the limited capacity of the earthen vessel.

To "walk humbly with thy God" is no hardship to those who have learned of their own littleness and of the graciousness of One who in love and benevolence is more ready to listen than his sometimes reluctant children are to speak.

Prayer has been variously described by poets, preachers and writers of Christian literature. It is a personal experience, a tryst shared by two alone, from which one receives all the benefits. As an old French peasant described it, "while He is looking at me, I am looking at him". A wordless communion is often more deeply felt and much more effective than the long diatribes with which men have bombarded the Almighty in public or harangued him in private by what has been called "wrestling in prayer". *"Two men went into the Temple once on a time; one said his prayers in the usual way, but the other man knew no prayers to*

say; so he talked with God as a friend. And the Lord who knew from beginning to end, the forms the first man had used so long, was sure that today they would not go wrong, so He turned his ear and inclined his heart, to the man to whom praying was not an art, but who talked with him as a friend."

In that telling illustration of the publican and the sinner Jesus showed what prayer is not. It is not formalism, nor vain repetition, nor set words, nor gabbled requests, nor selfish pleadings, nor self-justification, nor weak excuses, nor the vanity that dares to advise or hustle the Almighty into a Divine interference in the affairs of the human race which are immovably tabulated in his own purpose and foresight. Before his wisdom the suppliant might well, like King David of Israel, be dumb with silence, holding the tongue even from saying what is good, to bow the heart before him who needs no counsellor, in unquestioning submission.

If there is an art in prayer it lies in simplicity, in brevity, almost in silence. The needs and longings of the human heart and mind cannot be formulated into words when the spirit is moved and drawn into closer contact with that life-giving force of God. God is his own interpreter. The human mind is an open book before him. Having made man He does not need man's words, the verbal expression of his need, his desires or dissatisfactions. He asks for the heart. If He receives that He has all, and prayer "uttered or unexpressed" becomes the tie that binds the earthly child to its Heavenly Parent.

There are times when prayer must and should be vocal. Praise and prayer are almost the same word. The humble are grateful and a grateful heart must find some means of expressing its gratitude or suffer injury to itself. So the joyous burst of praise in glorious hymns whose words and music have stood the test of time is an expression of faith and gladness, a joyous adoration which is a solid foundation for the more secret communings which transform human nature into a finer substance.

A well regulated heart will begin every day with praise and thanksgiving. "Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee". There is so much to be thankful for. Who that count their blessings know where to stop? The catalogue of natural blessings is long. If the realisation of such a full cup does not prompt heart and voice to a spontaneous outburst of praise and thanks as rapturous as a blackbird's melody in Spring, there is something sadly amiss with that heart, some hidden disorder of the spirit for which remedy should be sought immediately. If the physical voice has lost

its timbre, the inner voice can still make melody in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

It has been said that gratitude is the first essential of Christian character. That being so, it is the well-head of prayer, the place where life with God begins. Jesus certainly commended it when only one out of ten restored lepers returned to give thanks. To take for granted the common blessings of daily life, to make the words "thank God" into a common cliché is not only unbecoming conduct, but an affront to the open-handed generosity that has showered good things with absolute impartiality upon all His creatures.

While the affairs of the nations appear weighty matters to the masses composing them, to Almighty God they are no more than a drop in a bucket, the small dust of the balance, to be settled and dealt with in his own way and time; but the individual is precious. Jesus dealt with persons, with men and women, with children, knowing their needs, seeking to supply each one with more abundant life.

While He condemned the lip service of the ritualists, the hard of heart, the faithless, the self-seekers, He loved the lowly who came to him just as they were, seeking peace and comfort and life. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and He had compassion on them. He provided the way by which the weary and heavy laden might come to God and find rest. As individuals with all their differing temperaments, needs and circumstances, men and women were invited to turn, to come, to find rest in the presence and upon the shoulder of one whose arm comfortably sustains the universe.

David, in his time, had bowed himself low, subjecting himself to the all-seeing eye. "Search me O God and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting". His was the true basis of fellowship with God. Absolute trust, honesty of heart, the courage that seeks correction, the desire to be in complete harmony with God, coupled with the confidence that the heart's desire will be abundantly satisfied. This seems to be the essence and purpose of prayer, the unreserved trust of true love leaning upon the everlasting arms in perfect confidence.

Prayer is like the modern telephone. It is instant communication with a loved and trusted friend. In moments of stress the invisible line carries its message. Even before it is received the answer is on its way, help given, strength restored, the right thing said or done because a mystical power was set in motion which scientists have not yet been able to take apart and put into one of their pigeon holes of new discoveries. "The Lord is true, a

helper tried." How many have borne this testimony to those words! Courage and strength has been infused into weak moments. The sought counsel of God has become indispensable in the perplexities of life. His loving solicitude and *tenderness have conveyed his very presence into* lonely moments of sorrow, saving the downcast from complete despair. Under his pure, inspiring influence Christian pilgrims return to their task, their battles or their lone paths, refreshed, determined, better fitted to do whatever they have to do.

Much of the lassitude, doubt, discontent and depression which afflicts the lives of professing Christians is due to lack of prayer. The Scottish bard recognised that "A correspondence fixed with heaven is a noble anchor". The handclasp of faith moors life close to the Rock where storms cannot break the straining cables. Scepticism and infidelity have spread their infectious germs around so that some doubt the very existence of God or his readiness to assist his own. The unbelieving world busy on its own great inventions fails to realise that what they can do their Creator can do very much better. Swift communication, television, remote control, the great seeing eyes of the astronomers' telescopes, are mere toys in the hands of man, compared to the powers and resources of the Creator, who through his prophet asks the question, "Shall not He who made the eye see?"

Nothing goes unobserved or unheard by that spiritual realm, much less the affairs, the communings of his saints, his treasure, his children, who love him, who are loved in return with Divine concern and intensity. The dull, the cheerless, the pessimistic, the wavering, are clearly not the people of the closet who pray in secret and are openly rewarded with the shining face, the serene heart, the happy confidence, the abiding vision of things to come in which the whole earth is seen lifting heart and hands in joyous praise and endless prayer, to him that sits upon the throne.

The life which draws its strength from God does not waste time in unloading its troubles onto others equally troubled. The trustful heart takes its burdens to God, seeks counsel of no man but of the Lord only and comes away with the marks of that high communion upon his brow, carrying into the world of hustle and grab and sin a shining face, though like Moses, he knows it not.

"When sorrows like sea billows roll", what human heart, however dear and sympathetic, can reach out to our frail craft? It is God who made the heart, reserving for himself those dim recesses of longing that none but He should possess the secret shrine. Men may talk with the tongues of

angels and we remain uncomforted, unenlightened and uninspired, but let God speak in the still, small voice, upon the dedicated altar of the heart and new life begins to flow into the numbed soul. Whatever the sorrow, whatever the battle, the need, the perplexity, the heart pours out all and rests in his presence while He gives the balm, the vigour, the counsel, the strength and the guidance. All the fret, the grief, the pain, the fear, the doubt, gives place to stillness. Faith claims his promise to sustain. "I will guide thee with Mine eye". "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". "When thou passest through the water I will be with thee". "I will teach thee and instruct thee". "Fear not, be strong and of a good courage". God's faithfulness fulfils his word "exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think". His is no miser hand but an abundant, generous Fatherly hand. Power and love are there; it needs only faith to find it.

Those who have entered boldly to the throne of grace seeking his help, they only can tell of the coming away, of the enlightened heart and lighter step, of being carried through the day's business as though on unseen wings, of paths cleared and difficulties surmounted, of doors opened and battles won. True it is He dries our tears, buckles on our armour, makes a bridge of our sighs and fears, and himself bears forward on eagle wings the souls He loves and who love him, Who that has felt under him the everlasting arms but treasures the memory of the dark, hard places that called out the strength of God. As one has truly written, "It is in our darkest hour that the Day Star shines the brightest". What but prayer could bring such aid? "Call to Me and I will answer thee".

There is no confidence like that of a heart given to God. The feeble, unhappy, ineffectual life is the one that prays and asks amiss or never prays at all. Either the burden is laid down and immediately picked up and rushed away again on the back of little-faith, or it is never laid down at all, on the assumption that it isn't much use anyway. Saying prayers is not prayer. It is a mingling of spirit with spirit, seeing, hearing, leaning, walking continually with One whose love is measureless.

If you would know the experience of the mounting spirit, the lifted burden, the clearer insight, all the blessings which God has to give—be oft in prayer. If you know a man or woman walking through life with bright eyes, radiant face, light step, with kindly word and sweet smile, endowed with wisdom, dignity and grace, behold a soul much in prayer; a heart hourly in tune with God, a heart that seeks him early, in the busy noon-tide,

at the close of day.

Such come from their tryst with the life-giving touch of the Son of God upon them. The air of heaven is about them; daily life is better for them. They have the power to diffuse our mists, to warm

our chilly hearts, to quicken our belief and heal our moral diseases. Thank God for prayer and praying hearts.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength".

THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN

The literal existence of an evil spiritual being named Satan, arch-enemy of God and man, is increasingly called in question nowadays, it being considered more rational and up-to-date to view the relevant Biblical references as alluding to the abstract principle of evil. To be tempted by the Devil, it is suggested, is simply the natural human propensity to sin; to overcome the Devil the successful suppression of that propensity and adoption of the right and proper course of conduct in respect to the particular matter concerned. Whilst all this undeniably suits the temper of a society which tends more and more to reject the supernatural in religion and explain all things from the viewpoint of human material reasoning, it does ignore the fact that the greater part of Biblical mention of Satan cannot possibly be read as other than deliberate reference to an intelligent and super-human creature, moreover one whose nature is completely subordinated to evil and who is in a state of continuing rebellion against God. Against the rejection of this understanding by the intellectualism of to-day has to be placed the fact—a somewhat strange fact in the light of modern irreligion—that a public opinion poll conducted in 1968 showed that twenty per cent., one in five, of people in Britain still believe in the personal Devil. Since less than one in twenty go to church nowadays it would seem that many can hold the belief without feeling they need do much about it! It might well be that, church going or no church going, a greater number of people than might have been suspected can only account for the evil and misery that is in the world by concluding that some mighty super-human power is behind it all; and in this they are absolutely right.

The Bible writers are quite positive. From the Apostle John, writer of the last Gospel, and last of those who knew Jesus in the flesh, back to the unknown scribe on the banks of Euphrates who first set down the story of Genesis, two and a half millenniums before Christ, there is a fixed and manifest conviction that the introduction of evil and sin amongst mankind is due to such a being. Jesus spoke of Satan as a personal and powerful

adversary, and the Apostles counselled their converts to be on their guard against his devices in a fashion which can be true only of such an one. In so doing they were all on sure ground, for quite apart from Scriptural passages referring to Satan's activities in the world throughout human history, and the menace to the would-be doers of right which he represents, there are definite factors in the operation of the Divine purposes which only "make sense", so to speak, if there is indeed this powerful adversary at work.

The first of these factors arises from the position with man at the beginning. Evil was not inherent in man's nature; it was not even indwelling. The old mediaeval dogma that the flesh is basically corrupt and unclean is not true. When God introduced the first intelligent creatures upon this earth, He looked upon what He had made and found it "very good." Man at his creation was perfect and sinless, and capable of everlasting life whilst he so remained. The story of Eden makes plain that sin was introduced from outside, that an exterior agent in which sin already resided was the means of seducing the first humans from loyalty to God. That agent claimed to have a knowledge of God and of the things of God not as yet possessed by the human creation. In consequence of this successful seduction God judged and condemned that agent.

Moral responsibility cannot be attributed to an abstract principle of evil, only to an intelligent creature capable of both moral and immoral conduct. "*Because thou hast done this,*" God said to the Tempter in the story "*thou art cursed . . . and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed*" (Gen. 3.14-15.) This is not the language that would be employed were the object merely to reprove the woman for her fault and exhort her to resist the temptation in future; this speaks of a lasting warfare which was to commence and subsist between the serpent with his progeny and the woman with hers; later Scripture shows that the "seed of the woman" is Christ and that in Him and by Him the overthrow of the Devil will be accomplished. The fact that in

the last book of the Bible, Revelation, a time is shown to come when the Devil is "bound with a great chain", restrained, "that he should deceive the nations no more" (Rev. 20.1-3) whilst for a considerable time thereafter mankind are still in process of cleansing from sin and not yet reconciled to God is evidence again that it is not merely evil as such, but the personal and literal living instigator of evil, who has thus been active since the days of Eden and now at last will have been restrained from further interference with humanity by the power of God.

The Old Testament has little to say about Satan and refers to him by that name only twice. The first occasion is in the book of Job where he appears as one of the characters in the prologue to the book, the preliminary sketch explaining how Job's troubles came about. The other is in the book of Zechariah, where Satan appears, again in a prophetic vision, to obstruct the work of God in the rehabilitation of the Israel nation after its restoration from Babylon, and, spiritually, the church in its earthly career. In both cases the word Satan is prefixed by the definite article, indicating, as is verified by Gesenius, that it should be taken as a proper name. In many other instances where the word is found in the Hebrew text, but without the article, it bears its basic meaning of an adversary or opponent.

The connection in which Satan appears most vividly and in the course, not of prophetic vision or poetic drama, but of strict historical narrative, is in the story of Eden. The Book of Genesis as we have it stems from a Sumerian original and the serpent of Eden is derived from the legendary creature known as the "saraph", a mystic heavenly visitant dazzlingly glorious in appearance but in this case bearing occult and unlawful knowledge to men. This one, says Genesis, was craftier than any terrestrial living creature; every aspect of the story of Eden therefore demands that Eve did hold converse with an intelligent malevolent celestial being who set out to seduce her into disobedience and disloyalty to God.

Jesus knew the reality of His opponent. He called him "a murderer from the beginning" and the father of lies (John 8.44), acknowledged him to be the "prince of this world" (John 14.30) and asserted that in time past He himself had witnessed his expulsion from heaven, which must have been at the time of his defection from righteousness (Luke 10.18). He warned Peter that he was particularly a target for Satan's devices (Luke 22.31). The Apostles were equally certain. Peter, much later, warned his flock in turn that the Devil as a raging lion walked about seeking whom he might devour (1 Pet. 5.8). Paul said that in certain

circumstances "*Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*" (2 Cor. 11.14) and again, that "*Satan hindered us*" (1 Thess. 1.18); again, in a very trenchant sentence he declares that "*the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them*" (2 Cor. 4.4). On the reverse side of the picture he assures us that "*the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*" (Rom. 16.20), an evident allusion to the condemnation of the serpent in Gen. 3.15, and this is confirmed and amplified by the writer of the book of Hebrews in the declaration that Christ, through His death, will "*destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the Devil*" (Heb. 3.14). With all this, and more, in the pages of the New Testament it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the founders of the Church possessed a vivid consciousness of a mighty spiritual and unseen but nevertheless very real enemy against whom they must struggle with all their powers.

Another factor meriting consideration lies in the region of the occult. For a long time scoffed at in modern materialistic thought it is now becoming increasingly accepted by investigators and observers that there is a reality in certain occult phenomena, some kinds of witchcraft and necromancy, and so on, which so far has defied what is glibly called rational explanation. Such phenomena have been in evidence all down the ages, and back in the first century the Apostle Paul at least was quite certain about their reality and their source. "*Our fight is not against human foes*" he says "*but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens*" (Eph. 6.12. NEB). That there has been, in some remote past time, a rebellion against Divine authority on the part of certain ones in the angelic world, and that these "rebellious angels" have been and are in a continuing state of evil-doing which threatens not only Christ's followers but all of mankind, is plainly shown in Scripture. It follows as a matter of logic that Satan is the leader and inciter of this "host of wickedness". If indeed it could be shown on other grounds that there is no evidence for the existence of a personal Devil it would necessarily follow that, given the existence of the rebellious angels, whoever is leader among them would himself automatically fill the role. That this is the position is indicated by Jesus in the parable of the Sheep and Goats when he refers to "*the Devil and his angels*". (Matt. 25.41). All this does help to establish the solid fact that, behind the veil which shrouds things in the spiritual world from our senses, there

is a force of beings animated by evil whose leader is the one we know as Satan.

This, then, is the champion of evil. Created by God, for all life comes from God, he must of necessity have come from his Creator's hand perfect, innocent, sinless. Thoughts of rebellion and sin must have shaped themselves in his mind as in the exercise of that free will which is the gift of God to all his intelligent creatures he began to sense the possibilities which disloyalty could offer. The Bible says as much. There are two metaphorical passages in the Old Testament in both of which, under the guise of great earthly potentates, the Prince of Darkness is obviously pictured. In the one he is depicted as saying to himself "*I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God; I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly I will make myself like the Most High*". (Isa. 14.13-14 RSV). Here is overweening ambition, the created aspiring to be equal to the Creator. So came the word of God to him "*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you . . . so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God*" (Ezek. 28.15-16). This is the fall of Satan, perhaps at a time far anterior to the creation of man upon earth, perhaps, as some have surmised, at the very time of that creation. Perceiving the potentialities inherent in this new expression of the creative power of God, Satan, think some, might have determined to win this new incipient empire for himself. Whatever may have been the motive and whenever the time, the end was inevitable. In the fine language of the Authorised Version "*therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee; it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee*" (Ezek. 28.18). Here is the doom of Satan; the fire of his own sin, proceeding from within himself, destroys the life which once held such great promise but because of it having been given over completely and wholly

to sin has become incapable of reformation. Be it noted that this passage does not picture a kind of judicial execution imposed by fiat of the Most High; the extinction of being which is described in these tremendous words is the logical and the inevitable result of sin, accepted into the heart and allowed to reign unchecked until every impulse and feeling of right and truth has been eliminated and the whole personality is given over irrevocably to the pursuit and practice of evil.

It goes without saying that the mediæval conception of Satan as a hideous monster having horns and tail, armed with a trident and breathing fire, is nothing more than artist's licence of the times. As a member of God's celestial creation Satan must have been what man in his own world was when God looked upon that which He had made and found it "very good". In his own sphere and among his own companions Satan would have been transcendently glorious. He must have appeared to Eve in Eden as a radiant and assuring presence. Isaiah gives his primal appellation as the Morning Star, the planet Venus. ("Lucifer" in Isa. 14 is derived from an ancient term for Venus meaning "the splendid star" and has only become a proper name by custom). These allusions substantiate the intention to portray a particular and intelligent celestial being who was originally made, like man, "In the image and likeness of God", and by transgression fell from that high estate. According to Ezekiel he was "a cherub with outspread wings, set upon the holy mountain of God". Of his rank and position and activities in those first days before thoughts of sin entered his heart we know nothing; of the terrible results of his apostasy and commitment to total evil, so far as this earth is concerned, we have full and sad experience. Of the future, with no indication of remorse, of sorrow, of repentance, we have only the inexorable words of God, as recorded by Ezekiel "*you have come to a dreadful end, and shall be no more for ever.*"

To give praise is very becoming for the believer. It becomes as natural as breathing is to the physical body. Thankfulness and praise are twin sisters and where the one is found the other follows close in its track. Realising the deep need of love and mercy and being the recipient of the same causes the heart to overflow with gratitude to its donor. Like the Psalmist, the language is: "*I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*"

What can I wish that this week may bring to me? A few friends who understand me, and yet remain my friends. A work to do which has real value, without which the world would feel poorer . . . an understanding heart . . . a story of something beautiful the hand of man has made . . . a little leisure and the patience to wait for the coming of these things, with the wisdom to know them when they come.



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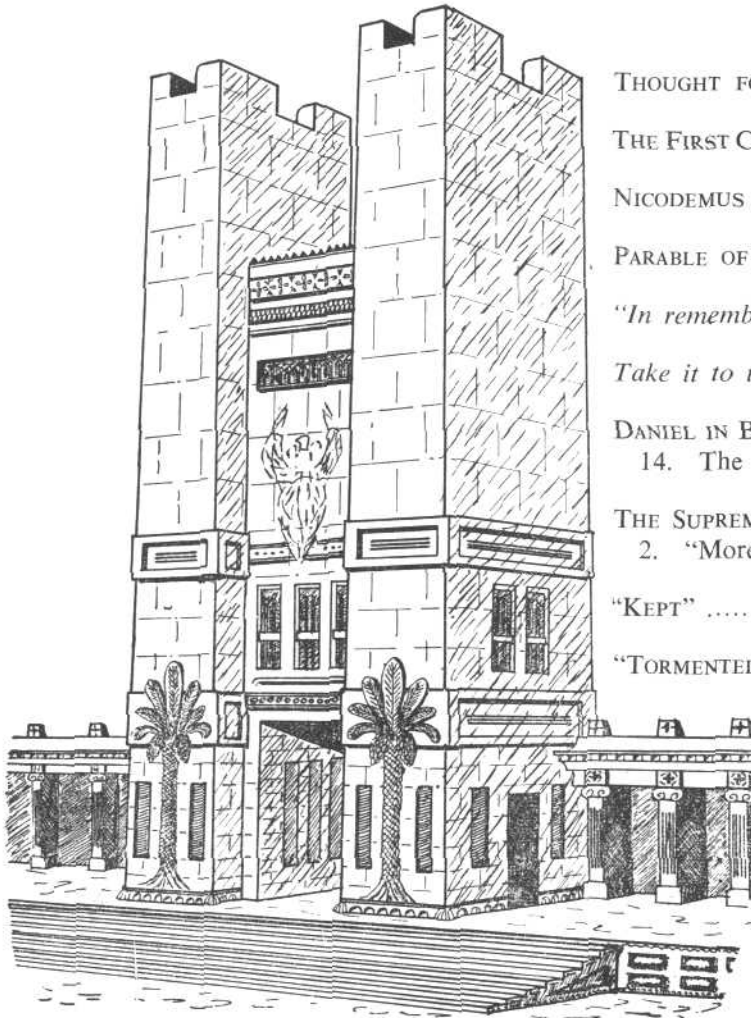
MARCH/APRIL 1973

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

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.*

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NOTICES

The Memorial

The anniversary of the Last Supper falls this year in the evening of Sunday, April 15, and this is the appropriate date for the Memorial service.

Coming Conventions

The usual Easter Convention will (D.V.) be held on Saturday/Sunday/Monday April 21-23 in the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington. Details from F. B. Quennell, 43 Ackers Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Lancs.

Friends at Blaby announce the usual Spring convention on Saturday/Sunday May 26-27. Details from A. Charcharos, 55 Greenacres Drive, Lutterworth, Warks.

The annual Summer convention held by the Windsor friends is fixed for Saturday and Sunday, June 2 and 3. Details and programmes from A. Charlton, 43 Halkingcroft, Langley, Slough, Bucks.

Gone from us

Bro. J. KILPATRICK (*Warrington*)

Bro. E. G. ROBERTS (*Paignton*)

Bro. P. WALTON (*Coventry*)

Bro. G. DARLINGTON (*Dublin*)

Sis. ARIEL HOLLISTER (*U.S.A.*)

Bro. G. SPACKMAN (*London*)

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

Thought for the Month

"God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2.36).

He is one Lord, but He is revered in "sundry" ways and "divers manners" by those who acknowledge him. There are some modern up-surgings of more or less emotional forms of allegiance which come in for severe criticism by those more conservatively minded. Sometimes the criticism is justified. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 7.21). But the fact that the object of criticism sports shaggy hair, wears "way-out" attire, and uses strange and unfamiliar, even seemingly irreverent, forms of speech, does not necessarily imply that the spirit of Christ does not reign within. After all, John the Baptist must have upset the conventions of his day pretty thoroughly by his own dress and appearance. Jesus went to the heart of the matter when He laid stress on the immortal principle: *"By their fruits ye shall know them"*. If the heart is truly sincere, that sincerity will be revealed no matter how unprepossessing the exterior or how apparently unfitting the words and actions. If sincerity is absent, this fact also cannot be concealed. And

Jesus is only concerned with sincerity. When the disciples complained to him that a man not of their company nor subject to their discipline was casting out demons in his name, He only replied calmly "forbid him not, for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me". But when the source was tainted, the story was very different. Paul and Silas, hearing the testimony to the saving power of God from the slave-girl obsessed by the Pythian Apollo, sternly rebuked and cast out the demon; that source was inherently evil and they knew it and would have nothing to do with it. So with us; our strictures should not be passed upon the appearance or the methods or the phrases in which are expressed the faith of these seemingly "freak" adherents to the cause of Christ, but rather to the results accruing from their enthusiasm. Does it lead them to a sober and genuine realisation of the power of Christ in the life and of eventual whole-hearted consecration to his service, or does it do no more than create another "cult" in which the standards and ethics, or more seriously the practices and vices, of this present world, are still there, thinly disguised by a vociferous use of the name of Christ perpetually on the lips but going no deeper? *"By their fruits ye shall know them"*!

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

A glimpse of the Early Christians at Jerusalem

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... and all that believed were together, and had all things common... and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common... and great grace was upon them all... and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2. 42-47, and 4. 32-33).

A tremendous spiritual force was born of the enthusiasm and zeal of those first Christian converts. In days of disappointment and disillusion, such as those in which many of us now live, it is difficult to realise what mighty energy resides in the concerted action of a company in which every member is animated by fellow-feeling. "The fellowship of kindred minds" is a real fellowship indeed when those minds are bent toward the realisation of a common ideal, and these early believers had an ideal of the highest and most exhilarating nature to inspire and direct their communal actions. They set out, quite naturally and quite spontaneously, to preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, with all that implied both of life and blessing for all mankind "in due time" and a high spiritual calling for those who would in this day and time be joined to this company and serve as "ministers of reconciliation", to become in due time associates of the risen Saviour, joint heirs with Christ in His Kingdom, and sons of the living God.

That was the driving force behind this wonderful family fellowship of the primitive Church. It drew its inspiration from the apostles' memories of the Last Supper. Up there in the quietness of that upper room their minds had received an impression which could never be effaced. "This do... in remembrance of Me". In remembrance of him! How could they ever forget? The mystic ceremonial of bread and wine had bound them to eternal association with Jesus their Lord, and now that they had seen him alive after death, were witnesses of his Resurrection, they knew without doubt, as Peter declared thirty-five years afterwards, that they had not followed "cunningly devised fables" but had been actual eye-witnesses of the most tremendous event in all history. *Christ*

was risen! That they knew, and now all the rest would come to pass in due time. He had gone away, but He would surely come again, and even if they in the meantime must sleep awhile in death, He would raise them to be with him in glory and manifest them with himself to all the world in that day when the golden visions of the prophets became glorious reality. There was no doubt about it; all was true; the Kingdom would surely come; and now they must cling together as brethren and "tell the whole world these blessed tidings". That was the joyous theme which engrossed their thoughts and loosened their tongues as they met from one house to another and began to lay the foundations of a Church destined to endure to all eternity.

It was in the house of Mary the mother of Mark the evangelist that the Christians first assembled. If tradition be true, it was in that very house that the Last Supper itself had been held. There, just outside the walls of the Old City, remote equally from the Palace of Herod, the residence of the High Priest, and the official quarters of Pilate the Roman governor, the ones and twos stole out of the city gate and gathered to share with each other the joys and hopes of their new found faith. There was much scanning of the Old Testament Scriptures to be undertaken; much listening with shining eyes and eagerly parted lips as the apostles, one after another, expounded the new meaning they now saw in those ancient records. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit was upon every such gathering, and as the flickering lamps cast their fitful shadows on the walls and the night outside grew dark and quiet, the subdued voices went on and on, telling of the glorious destiny in store for mankind and the mighty work of witnessing to which they themselves had been called.

The listeners became conscious of a deeper note. Their calling was not to be that of mere publicists, advertising the King and his Kingdom along purely informative and intellectual lines. They were called to *live* the Kingdom, to show all men by their own pattern of life what the teachings of their Lord could do to a man or woman who is utterly and irrevocably committed to him. It was that which came so startlingly new to those who so recently had been in bondage to the dead letter of Judaism and its law. This was a personal relationship into which they had entered with their Lord, and with that close intimacy was bound up the moral obligation, so much more compelling

than the "thou shalt not" of the Mosaic Law, to show their love for their Master by putting his precepts into practice.

So it was that, *instantaneously*, the company of believers became a family. It could not possibly be otherwise. The possessions of each were no longer personal property—they belonged to the family. The necessities of those who were without *means at once became the concern of the family*, for they were brothers and sisters in Christ. The apostles, the eleven who were known by all to have been the closest attendants on the Lord Jesus, became in a peculiar sense his personal representatives, and quite naturally assumed the position of fathers in the family. The broad lines of the community were drawn out by them, and without any question at all the company of believers accepted the apostles' "doctrine and fellowship". There were no objections; there was no dissension; the spontaneous joy which burst forth from every heart and found expression in the Pentecostal cry "He is risen" became a medium in which the fellowship of the Spirit had its birth and grew to take full possession of the infant Church.

It is in this atmosphere that Christian missionary work is effective. "See how these Christians love one another" said the wondering Tertullian a hundred and fifty years later. The witness of the life is always *tenfold more eloquent and convincing* than that of the lips. No wonder that of this time it is said "and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved". This was no arbitrary, Calvinistic act of the Father, selecting individuals here and there and attaching them willy-nilly to the growing community. The family spirit and the missionary enterprise of this band of crusaders made it possible for God to direct into their company those of Jewry whose hearts were *already in a waiting attitude before him*, and who would recognise in this new spirit that had come into the world that of which the prophets had spoken. The Lord added, but the church retained, those who came into the family, saw with their own eyes what Christ had done for these people, and remained to take their place and share in the work that lay before that family.

Little did those early believers dream that life for them was to go on into old age without their realising the fruition of their hopes. In the first rosy flush of the promise "I will come again" they looked for his appearing in the clouds of heaven to take them to be with him and to set up his Kingdom upon earth, this year, next year perhaps, certainly in the third year. He had gone away, but He would come again. They knew now, as they had not known before, why He must needs go away. He had suffered and died for them and now

in the glory of his resurrection must go to the Father from Whom he had come in order that He might receive the ovation of triumph due to a conqueror. He had overthrown the gates of death and broken down the bars of hell. Satan and all his minions were defeated and now the angels of heaven were acclaiming the One who beforetime had been pre-eminent amongst them, had laid aside the glory which He had with them before this world was, had been born of a virgin, was found in fashion as a man, manifested the glory of God in the embodiment of human perfection, and at the hands of wicked men had been crucified and slain. He had gone to be seated at the right hand of the Father whilst his disciples were to execute the commission of witnessing to his Name among all the nations. The world was a small place; they would complete that work within the next few years; and then He would come.

So it was that in their annual commemoration of that last meal together they repeated to each other the longing words "Till He come!" It became a solemn ritual among them, a phrase combining within its compass all the faith and all the hope and all the ardent desire that possessed their minds and nerved their hands to action and endurance. "Till He come"—surely it will not be long! As each lifted the cup to his lips he realised anew the significance of the action. He was partaking of the blood of his Lord; he had become blood-brother to his Lord; now and for all time he was irrevocably associated with his Lord in the work of reconciliation. "This cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins . . . Drink ye all of it." They knew that the Old Covenant was passing away, for it had failed to bring life to man, failed to effect release from the thralldom of sin. The blood of bulls and goats, offered year by year without ceasing, had given a measure of communion with God and a feeling of peace to Israel, but it had not taken away sin. Moses the deliverer had brought them out of Egypt and led them to Canaan, where they might live a life of peace and prosperity, but he had not given them everlasting life. And the unbelief of Israel had nullified and made of none effect all the glorious promises which had been told unto the fathers by the prophets. But God had promised a new Covenant, one that would succeed where the old one had failed, one that would take away the stony hearts of Israel and give them hearts of flesh, one under which every man would know the Lord and sit under his own vine and fig-tree with none to make him afraid. And now Jesus had told them that in his own Person He was about to make that new Covenant possible by the offering of his life to God, just as the blessings of

the Old Covenant were made possible by the offering of a sacrificial bullock to God. The day had not come, even when Jesus spoke, for that New Covenant to go into operation. Sin must reign unchecked yet for a season. The stony hearts could not yet be turned into hearts of flesh, nor the pure language be heard on the lips of the people. But the offering had been poured out "for sin" (Isa. 53. 10). For three and a half years had the anti-typical bullock lain on the altar, its blood covering the mercy-seat which is in Heaven itself, mute testimony to the loving devotion of that Son who had said "*Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God*" (Heb. 10. 7). But even with the final consuming of that offering the time had not come. Although those early believers knew it not, sin was to continue yet for another two thousand years the while the offering continued. "Drink ye, all of it" the Master had said. Slowly the realisation filtered into each mind that they, too, were called to devote their lives' best endeavours, their abilities, their talents, their resources, all that they had and were, to this same laying down of life because of the world's sin and the world's need of reconciliation from that sin.

What wonder then that in after days Paul told them that God had made them "able ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Cor. 3. 6)? They were to stand as representatives and ambassadors of that new order of things which was to be instituted at their Lord's return. More, they themselves were, by their devotion to and association with their Master, to be joined with him in the grand future work of writing Divine law in the hearts of men. By virtue of this mystic ceremony they had become separated from all that was of the world and were now "*fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*". They were a company of brethren, looking forward to a life of sacrificial service until their Lord should come, and then to the ministerial duties of that New Covenant under

which Israel, and not Israel only, but the whole world of man, are to receive the Divine blessing of life.

So that brave-hearted brotherhood stepped out—into the unknown. It was on the promises of God that they took their stand, and in full assurance of faith that they challenged the world with their witness. It was not long before dark storms began to rage against them—the arrest of Peter and the anxious time when the Church, gathered together, made prayer unceasingly on his behalf (Acts 12); the trial and martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7); the menace of Saul of Tarsus, and finally, the fearful catastrophe of A.D. 70, when the armies of Rome encompassed Jerusalem and the ageing men and women who had been youths and maidens when Peter preached his Pentecostal sermon hurried quickly out of the doomed city and across Jordan to Pella. They remembered the Master's prophetic words, told them by their fathers in the faith, "*When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains*" (Luke 21. 29). And when they returned, Jerusalem was no more. The alien had destroyed the city and the sanctuary, and nothing was ever the same again.

But in the hearts of those whose faith had survived even that crowning disaster there burned still the passionate hope "*He will come again!*" They waited still, and year by year continually, as old age crept upon each one of the fast diminishing brotherhood, they comforted one another with the sure and certain knowledge of the things they had learned in past and happier days, and talked of that Jesus Who had walked with and taught them forty years before. And year by year continually, as they gathered together to keep the feast, shaking hands held the cup, and quavering voices repeated, in tones of certainty and triumph, the thrilling words "*Till He come!*"

"Mysterious people. Moving amongst us, and yet not seeming to be of us. Passing through the world without seeming to be deeply concerned in its forms or fashions, its prizes or blanks; tranquil amidst its contentions, humble amidst its pomp, silent amidst its uproar, passive amidst its struggles, free amidst its bondage. Wrapped up, it should appear, in thoughts of your own, which work in you pursuits of your own; happy in your-

selfs, and never so happy as when shedding quiet blessings on all around you. How have your ways won on me, durst I but say so. How has your simple character told its tale on me, more touchingly than all the arguments of philosophy, more convincingly than all the logic of the schools. How have you almost persuaded me to be a Christian."

(*Tatian, 2nd Century, before his conversion.*)

NICODEMUS

He came by night, a most unusual proceeding for any man in that day, least of all a public figure and a Pharisee. There was no night life in those times, not even in metropolitan Jerusalem. As soon as the sun disappeared below the horizon and the swift darkness descended, never much later than six o'clock, work ceased and all good men retired into their houses, barred their doors, and remained there until the morning. Only thieves and robbers and a few homeless beggars were to be found in the open after that; in walking through the silent streets in the dark, Nicodemus was taking a decided risk and his motives might well be questioned should he fall in with one of the city watchmen. And it was quite unnecessary; Jesus was always accessible and Nicodemus would have had no difficulty in effecting a meeting and conversation with Him during daylight hours. But he came by night.

There would seem little doubt that Nicodemus did not want his contact with the prophet from Nazareth to come under the notice of his colleagues on the Sanhedrin, the highest ecclesiastical court in the land. He was not only a Pharisee but also a member of that august body and apparently held high office therein. For that very reason his movements and contacts would attract more notice than those of lesser men; much as he wanted to talk with Jesus he did not wish his interest to be generally known. The risks and inconvenience of a nocturnal visit did not weigh so heavily with him as the possible consequences of a day-time call. So he came by night.

It is not said of Nicodemus, as it was said of Joseph of Arimathea, that he "was a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews," (Jno. 19.38). At this particular time he was not a disciple at all—still an enquirer. But his attitude was probably much the same as that of Joseph. Both were highly respected members of the ruling class and both had much to lose if their interest in or connection with the Galilean prophet became known—the High Priest, President of the Sanhedrin, would see to that. It might be felt, to the detriment of these two, that other prominent and influential men had openly shown their leaning to Jesus or espousal of his mission without taking any such precautions. Simon the Pharisee, Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, the centurion whose servant was healed, Joanna the wife of Chuza the steward of King Herod's court; all these made no secret of their association with Jesus. It is true, however, that all

these were in Galilee or elsewhere remote from Jerusalem, whereas Nicodemus and Joseph were in Jerusalem where the situation was markedly different from that in the north. Perhaps we should not be too uncharitable towards Nicodemus in his caution and lack of faith.

Even so, the brief glimpses we have of him in the Gospels do seem to picture a man timid rather than confident, not at all sure about the prophet who had taken his interest, not inclined to risk his reputation and his position by an open avowal of discipleship, and yet conscious that there was something in the message which found a responsive chord in the thoughts of his own heart and bid fair to satisfy some of his own unanswered questions. In short, Nicodemus might well have been very much like so many of us, not favoured with the courage and persistence of a Paul nor yet the outspoken aggressiveness of a Peter, nevertheless desiring in our hearts that in all things we might be more like Christ and serve him all our days.

Two and a half years later Nicodemus was still not ready for an open avowal. When, at the Feast of Tabernacles six months before the Crucifixion, the Sanhedrin had sent the Temple guard in an ineffectual attempt to arrest Jesus, and sat debating their failure, his voice was raised in Jesus' defence but only in a mild and half-hearted manner. "Doth our law judge any man" he queried "before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (Jno. 7.51). Even that was too much for the arch-plotters. "Art thou also of Galilee?" they enquired sarcastically; "search, and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!" In their arrogance they betrayed their ignorance of their own Scriptures, for at least one prophet, Jonah, did come from Gath-hepher in Galilee, and some of Israel's greatest heroes, like Barak and Gideon, arose from that part of the country. It was not until the final tragedy that Nicodemus roused himself sufficiently to pay belated honours to the Lord whom he undoubtedly revered, when he joined with Joseph of Arimathea in effecting the entombment of Jesus, so saving his body from the unceremonious treatment usually accorded to executed criminals. He took his stand then, regardless of consequences, for the priestly fraternity were not likely to overlook this deliberate act of honour to the man they sought by every possible means to vilify and discredit and eventually encompass his death. From that time and forward it is virtually certain that

Nicodemus was numbered among the avowed believers in Christ now formed into a definite community under the leadership of the Twelve.

Despite this apparent early luke-warmness, there must have been something in Nicodemus which Jesus recognised as pure gold, something which, although overlaid with Pharisaic prejudices and inhibited by reluctance to risk loss of standing in his own circle, was capable of responding to the Gospel, for to him Jesus imparted some of his most profound themes. Here in the record of the conversation between these two on that quiet night lie embedded some of the basic principles of the Divine call of this Age—what St. Paul was later to term the “High Calling of God in Christ Jesus”. It is probable that at first he saw Jesus only as a prophet, somewhat in the line of the Hebrew prophets of old, able like some of them to perform miracles of healing and the like, and imbued with a burning message of reproof and encouragement as were they. It is not likely that at first he connected Jesus with the Messiah for whose coming he, with all Jews, looked. But Jesus must have seen in him the seeds of what could afterwards flower into definite understanding and acceptance of his Messiahship and on this account told him things he admittedly could not understand at the time but assuredly did later on.

First of all came the Lord’s quiet insistence “*Ye must be born again*”. This theme has been taken up and made into a cardinal tenet by some sections of the Church and the expression “a born-again Christian” is by no means unknown today. Some renderings suggest that the meaning is really “born from above” and it is said that the Greek can bear either meaning. But really it means to be born afresh, anew, from a new beginning, in the same sense in which Paul (2 Cor. 5.17) declares that if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away and all things are become new. The idea behind the expression is that when one comes into Christ, by dedication or consecration of life to him, life commences anew by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit; this in Scripture is spoken of as being begotten or born of the Spirit to a new life in Christ, which comes to full birth, or maturity, at the resurrection into the heavenly realm to be with Christ. Nicodemus, of course, could make nothing of this; trained as he was in the legalistic formulæ of the Mosaic Law he could visualise the consummation of the Divine purpose only in terms of a reformed and righteous Israel maintaining that Law in its entirety and so claiming the right to rule the nations as predicted by the prophets. The idea of a rebirth into a new kind of life and another world, the spiritual, was quite foreign to him and he could make nothing

of it.

By way of leading his thinking into right paths Jesus then indicated that something more than the Mosaic Law was necessary for entrance into eternal life. Nicodemus was familiar with the baptism by water—John the Baptist’s call to repentance and ceremonial cleansing, with its attendant immersion in water as symbol of that cleansing, was well known to him and he might even himself have submitted to baptism at the hands of John and counted himself in full accord with God’s purposes thereby. But Jesus had to tell him this was not enough, he must go on from repentance and sincerity to a full yielding of self to Christ, association with him in all that He stood for, full consecration of life and talents and all to his service, in expectation of eternal union with him in the life to come. So, said Jesus, he must be baptised, not only by water, but also by the Spirit, to come into that relation with God. “*Except a man be born of water AND of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*”. It is possible that Nicodemus could not make much of this either, at least at that time in his experience; it is certainly true that many who have sincerely accepted Christ in times since have never come to that understanding, and their Christian lives have been lived on the level of acceptance of his teaching and ethics, but not on that of unity and association with him.

The third important principle followed naturally from the first two but it had to be defined. There are two natures, fleshly and spiritual, and two worlds, terrestrial and celestial. Nicodemus knew only of one, and until he could be made aware of the other he would never enter into a real understanding of Jesus’ mission and the call of the Gospel. “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” (Jno. 3.8). The wind as an illustration of the power of the invisible Spirit is apt enough, but in fact Jesus does not seem to have been talking about the wind. This is the only occasion out of three hundred and seventy occurrences in the New Testament where “*pneuma*” is translated “wind”. In all other cases it is “spirit”. In fact the Greek word for “wind” is “*anemos*” and so occurs thirty-one times. “Bloweth” is better “breatheth” and “sound” is “voice” (*phone*). What Jesus really said to Nicodemus was “the Spirit breatheth where it desires and thou hearest its voice, but canst not tell . . .” etc. Nicodemus was accustomed to trusting in the mechanical righteousness conferred by observance and sacrifice, the vision of God seen in the miracles and outward works and material evidences of Divine power. Jesus had to tell him

that none of these things had any place in the world of the spirit, that good as they were in their own sphere, there was another in which the power of the Spirit was the motive force, the voice of the Spirit the channel of instruction, the world of the Spirit the ultimate goal, and only the spiritual senses could be receptive to these things. Just as his earthly mind and body was attuned and adapted to this terrestrial sphere, so by the power of the Spirit manifested in a new birth and new life must he expect a new mind and, eventually, a new body attuned and adapted to the celestial. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."*

And, of course, Nicodemus comprehended nothing of all this. *"How can these things be?"* he asked helplessly. Came the grave and mildly reproachful reply *"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"* Far less learned and educated men than he, fishermen and peasants and tax collectors, were already in fair way to understanding, but that was because these had given themselves to Jesus and devoted their lives to him. Nicodemus knew too much of the Mosaic Law, too much of the traditions of the Talmud, too much of the wisdom of this world, easily to comprehend and accept what Jesus was saying. His superior position and knowledge became a handi-

cap when he came into contact with the world of the Spirit.

So Jesus shifted his vantage ground and talked of other things, of faith, of belief, and the love of God which led to the sending of his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life because God sent him not to condemn the world but to save it. And he who believes has life already. Far removed was all this from the old theology of Judaism, but perhaps it was in all this that Nicodemus saw the light. We do not know, we are not told, what was the immediate outcome, or in what state of mind Nicodemus wended his way home through the streets that eventful night. But the fact that Jesus took so much trouble with him and talked with him on such profound themes, and perhaps not least that the story is recorded in such detail for the benefit of future generations, maybe justifies the inference that Jesus saw in this man's mind something which He knew would one day blossom into full discipleship. Perhaps, after all, it did need the miracle of the Resurrection to clarify all the doubts and perplexities and make Nicodemus God's man for ever, as it did with James and others. Then, if not before, came full illumination on the quiet words spoken by Jesus to the questing man who came to him by night.

The Millennial Dawn

Only those who have risen early and have watched the dawn of a spring day in the country can appreciate the feeling of exhilaration which such an experience can bring. Even while it is yet dark overhead the first flush of light appears in the east, and trees and buildings become silhouetted against the horizon; one hears the first twittering of the birds and the faint lowing of the cattle stirring lazily in the meadows. As the light strengthens the dark silhouettes become familiar objects clothed in their natural colours; the twittering of the birds becomes a full-throated song; the ducks waddle noisily to the pond and the impatient cattle call loudly for attention. Soon the roar of tractors fills the air, and the waggoners with their teams contribute to the ever increasing volume of sound. By the time the sun's bright orb has risen above the horizon the world is awake and a new day has begun.

So it is in the Millennial Dawn. The darkness of unrighteousness and injustice has long overhung the world, but those who were on the mountain top when the day dawned experienced a great thrill as they saw the truths concerning restitution

and the Day of the Lord as dim silhouettes against the horizon; how their hearts leapt as the ever increasing light revealed them in their brilliant colours.

The increasing light stirred the souls of men long dormant under the suffering of slavery and servitude, and with the increase of knowledge came the clash between rival factions, reaching the uproar which fills the earth today. This is the awakening, not of a country village, but of a world so long indifferent to the laws of righteousness and justice.

As the light strengthens and the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness steal into the cold and barren recesses of men's hearts they will learn that the law of love is transcendent above all others. So the brave new world for which men are longing will appear, not by the plans and efforts of men, but by the power of one who creates all things well. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear feel a great exhilaration of spirit as they take note of the signs and portents that betoken the dawning of the Day of the Lord.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS

Luke 7.36—47

This Pharisee was a righteous man, one who held sin and every manifestation of sin in a very correct abhorrence. One of his favourite texts was that spoken by the prophet Habakkuk (1. 13) "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*"; in every affair of life he endeavoured to keep himself undefiled by contact with the sinful and the unclean. He believed in the coming of Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom and he was sure that when Messiah did appear He would look for those who had remained true to the Pharisaic traditions and could stand before Him in the integrity of their own righteousness, model keepers of that Law which was at the first given to Moses. Such men, the Pharisee believed, would be welcomed into the Kingdom; the sinful and the unclean would be unceremoniously ejected, and after that, life would never again hold anything to besmirch or defile the purity of God's own people.

Now he had invited this new young prophet of Nazareth to dine with him. It was not necessarily that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Rather he had been much more impressed with his bearing and his words than had his brother Pharisees and he wanted to know more. It looked very much as if this young enthusiast was in the tradition and spirit of the old Hebrew prophets and the Pharisee felt that he owed it to himself to explore the matter further. He probably prided himself a little that he was not prejudiced or bigoted or dyed-in-the-wool as were so many of his brother Pharisees. God had undoubtedly spoken in the past by his servants the prophets and history was witness to the fact that if Israel had taken a little more notice of those prophets the nation might not now have been reduced to its present straits. Moses had told their forefathers what would befall them if they forsook their covenant and Moses' prediction had undeniably come to pass. This young man without doubt possessed a clear understanding of the sinful condition of Israel and He was not afraid to voice his opinions; it could very possibly turn out that here was the leader for whom all right-thinking men were looking and if so it would be a good thing to get better acquainted with him right at the outset. So the Pharisee invited him home to dinner.

So far so good. He had brought in a few friends, Pharisees of the more liberal turn of mind like himself, and they were gathered round his table

reclining in the customary manner, facing the table, leaning on the left elbow, with the feet outside forming a kind of outer ring. The meal proceeded, servants flitting to and fro attending to the needs of the guests, whilst round the table grave question was followed by equally grave answer. Simon the Pharisee rubbed his hands with satisfaction; things were going well. His guest was certainly coming up to expectations.

There was a slight disturbance at the farther end of the room where it opened out on to the central courtyard. Simon did not take any notice. In conformity with custom his courtyard was open to anyone who wished to linger there awhile, in the shade, and perchance catch a glimpse of the prophet or just satisfy their curiosity by watching the feast. As befitted a Pharisee who took his profession seriously, there would be a certain amount of provision of plain food out there for whoever felt hungry, for hospitality to the traveller and kindness to the poor were incumbent upon Pharisees. But he pursed his lips somewhat as the slight form of a woman emerged from the group in the courtyard and came forward towards Jesus where He sat. It was not her sex which brought Simon's brows together in disapproval; it was his recognition of her identity, a woman known as a prostitute in the town. Had he consulted his own inclination, he would probably have ordered her away from the house, but to do so at this moment would have been a breach of etiquette to his guests and bring an element of dishonour upon his head. Frustrated and impotent, he watched as she knelt down behind the circle, right at the feet of the principal guest. This was altogether too bad; the woman had no sense of decency. Relying on the unwritten code which she knew Simon would not break, she was taking advantage of this opportunity to bring herself to Jesus' attention. He waited, tensely, for Jesus to notice her, his fine eyes to go hard and cold, his voice chill and severe, to condemn her and bid her remove her defiling presence from the house. The Prophet of God could so easily do what he himself could not do, and so he waited expectantly.

Jesus seemed slow to observe. He was still talking earnestly with the other guests. Simon, at the other side of the table, could give his attention only to the woman. Everything else was a blur; his eyes were fixed only on her, so near to Jesus' feet.

Shamelessly, like all such women, she had removed her veil and allowed her long tresses to fall down around her shoulders. She was weeping, sobbing uncontrollably with overpowering grief, in the intensity of her emotion grasping convulsively at the Lord's ankles. Perceiving that her tears were falling upon his feet, she bent her head to the floor and used her flowing hair to dry them; from the recesses of her clothing taking a small phial of perfume, she opened it and poured its contents over them, filling the room with a fragrance it had perhaps never known before. The buzz of conversation had died down now; the assembled guests were all looking, with various expressions of disapproval or repugnance, at that crumpled figure on the floor. Only Jesus appeared to be unconcerned at her presence. He went on quietly talking, making no movement either to encourage or discourage her ministrations.

Looking at his serene face, Simon was attacked by a sudden doubt. "This man" he thought to himself, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner". He could have understood and approved Jesus receiving this kind of homage from a devout woman, but—if He were indeed a prophet—if He indeed had that extra-human knowledge which was the hall-mark of the prophets of God—why did He not shrink from that defiling touch, refuse the offering of that perfume which itself was probably the reward of sin, command the woman begone? Had he made a mistake in his assessment and was Jesus not the man of God he had imagined him to be? Simon looked down at the woman, distastefully, then back to Jesus, to find those candid eyes fixed full on him. He waited, wondering.

The quiet voice broke the silence. "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee". He felt instinctively that this was going to be a momentous word. On the one part he feared what was to come, on the other he felt there was something he had not yet grasped and he wanted to know what it was. There was something in Jesus' attitude which told him the situation was not so easily resolved as he would like to think. And he wanted to know; more than anything else he wanted to know what was the power behind Jesus. More humbly perhaps than he had ever spoken in his life before, he met Jesus' eyes and replied "Master, say on".

The room was very quiet now. The guests had all ceased eating and talking and were giving close attention. Probably more than one of them had had the same inward thought as had Simon, and were each looking upon Jesus with varying degrees of cynicism or speculation according to their respective measures of sincerity. Even the woman

had restrained her outward grief, and remained in her recumbent posture, listening intently to the calm voice.

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors". A story! the atmosphere became electric. No surer means of obtaining rapt and earnest attention, "The one owed five hundred pence" (denarii) "and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

Simon was not quite sure what connection this hypothetical case had with the situation before him, but he was prepared to be honest. "I suppose" he said—the Greek word does not imply doubt or dubiousness, but the reaching of a conclusion based on the evidence presented, as though one would say "I consider the answer is thus and so"—"I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most". Came the answer, in tones of quiet approval, "Thou hast rightly judged".

Now for the first time Jesus turned himself about and looked directly upon the woman behind him. Who can doubt that she lowered her head in shame before that countenance of sinless purity? The level voice went on. "Seest thou this woman?" That was a hard one for Simon. He had been only too painfully aware of her presence ever since she entered his house and now Jesus was talking as if he could hardly have been expected to notice her. Yes, Simon did see this woman: he only wished he could truthfully say he did not. But the next words shattered him completely.

"I entered into thine house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment".

A slow flush of embarrassment crept into Simon's face. His fellow-Pharisees were looking at him curiously. He realised, now, that he had under-estimated the man before him. Knowing him as one of the labouring classes, born and bred among the peasantry of Galilee, it had just not occurred to Simon that the courtesies normally extended to guests in his own walk of life were just as much in place with respect to Jesus. It was customary for the host to provide water and servants for the cleansing of guests' feet upon entry to the house; as a mark of special honour the host might even perform the washing operation himself. Some reluctance to treat this Galilean peasant as on the same level as his Pharisee friends must have caused Simon to omit this formality, doubtless excusing himself on the ground that the

peasantry were not so scrupulous in such matters and might even be embarrassed at the service. Every guest normally received a kiss of welcome from the host but somehow Simon could not bring himself to this act of close fellowship; there was, of course, always the question of his own friends' reaction to his too ardent espousal of the young prophet. It was true that he had omitted to have a servant anoint the visitor's head with fragrant oil, but that was pure forgetfulness in the stress and hurry of the occasion. The unspoken excuses faded from his mind again as he became conscious of Jesus' gentle regard and realised that all those excuses counted for nothing. The plain fact was that this woman, sinner though she be, had performed all the duties which he had neglected to fulfil, and performed them with an infinitely greater ardour and sincerity than he could ever have displayed. He looked again at the woman and was bitterly ashamed.

Jesus' voice was very gentle now. *"Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much; but to whom little be forgiven, the same loveth little"*. So He had known all the time! The realisation came in a flash to Simon. *"Her sins, WHICH ARE MANY"*. Jesus did not mitigate or seek to gloss over the woman's sinful state. He knew her for what she was the moment she entered the room and yet had made no attempt to restrain her in her act of love. So He was a prophet after all! Simon was conscious of a great relief on that score. He had not after all misjudged his man and perhaps his own lack of courtesy would be over-looked. But what was this about forgiveness of sins? Jesus had turned again to the woman, listening fearfully and perhaps only half comprehending what was being said. This time his eyes were ineffably tender. *"Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace"*. And she got to her feet and went out of the house to a new life.

It says much for the sincerity of those Pharisees there gathered that they did not break out at once into impassioned protest. They did not even question Jesus' words outwardly. They asked themselves, each man in his own mind, *"Who is this who even forgives sins?"* There was something in all this which was new to them and they were prepared to reserve judgment. It would seem that Simon had collected some most unusual Pharisees there that day and it might well be that they all learned a most unexpected and unusual lesson.

What of the wider implication? There is much in this incident to throw light upon that other statement of Jesus *"They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

(Luke 5. 31). Simon the Pharisee is not the only one who, priding himself upon his own rectitude and cleanliness of life, has come to God in a smug and self-satisfied attitude of mind which is none the less frightening although it is characterised by perfect sincerity. We do not necessarily have to demonstrate our repentance by floods of tears and an agony of self-reproach, as did the woman. A lot depends upon the individual temperament and intensity of feeling; some are less outwardly demonstrative than others. But we do all have to realise that of ourselves we have little wherewith to commend ourselves before God and we all come short of his holiness in a variety of ways. The woman's sin outraged and shocked the conventions and customs of the day and violated the written law; the Pharisees' selfrighteousness outraged the holiness of God and violated his moral law, and in the sight of Jesus there was no difference between the two kinds of sin. They both needed repentance, conversion and forgiveness. The difference was that the woman realised her need of forgiveness, was repentant, and went out a child of the Kingdom. In the eyes of Jesus the whole of her sin was as though it had never been. The Pharisee had not yet realised his need, had not yet come as a suppliant to the feet of the Saviour, and therefore was yet in his sins. Not for him had the golden vista of the Kingdom gleamed through the partly opened gates.

Perhaps it did in after days. It is noteworthy that in all this story there is no word of reproach for Simon, only the implied reproof at his omissions. It may well be that he, and maybe some of his fellows at that meal that day, became followers of Jesus and eventually followed the "woman a sinner" into the light of the Kingdom. That there were some such, even among the bigoted Pharisees, who thus espoused the cause of Jesus, we know; perhaps this was the beginning of the way for some of them.

As in so many instances, this story illustrates the Divine principle "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn ye from your evil ways, and live ye". The passion for the punishment of the wicked which characterised all good Jews and still characterises far too many good Christians has no counterpart in the counsels of God. He is much more interested in the reclamation of the wicked than their condemnation, and if there is any capacity for repentance at all He is going to explore that capacity to the full before He permits condemnation to come. *"The Son of Man"* said Jesus *"is come to seek and to save that which was lost"*. Both woman and Pharisee were lost; Jesus came to save both.

Neither Simon nor the woman appear in the

Gospel story again. It is sometimes suggested that the woman was Mary of Magdala, the one who loved her Lord with so fervent a passion that her faith held when that of all others had well-nigh failed, who became the acknowledged leader of the little band of women during the dark days after the crucifixion when even the disciples had fled into hiding. But there is no proof; only the fact that the character and temperament of Mary of Magdala as revealed in the Gospels harmonises very well with this brief picture of this repentant woman.

The incident in the house of Mary sister of Lazarus at Bethany, recorded in Matt. 26, Mark

14 and John 12, is a totally different one and must not be confused with this story in Luke. This one was at the beginning of our Lord's ministry and took place in Galilee; that one was just before his crucifixion and occurred near Jerusalem. The only similarities in the two stories are the use of a phial of perfume and the fact that the host's name was Simon, a very common name in Israel anyway. There is no foundation whatever for connecting the sister of Lazarus with the woman who came to Jesus on that memorable day, weighed down by the burden of her sin, and went out a free woman, rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

"In remembrance of Thee"

*We come in remembrance, dear Saviour, of Thee,
To Thee who for sinners was nailed to a tree.*

*We come, with our hearts full of sorrow and love
To Thee, so beloved by the Father above.*

*With nothing to bring that could ever repay
For the burden of guilt which Thy blood washed
away,*

*But our hearts, once condemned, now purchased
and free*

We bring as we come "In remembrance of Thee".

*Once again we remember how Thy loving hand
For Thy people broke bread in that far distant
land.*

*And Thy words "This is My body broken for you,
Take eat." This, dear Saviour, we gladly will do.*

*And as we partake of the fruit of the vine
Again we remember the shed blood of Thine.
Are we able to drink of this cup you have poured?
With Thy help in our weakness, Oh dear loving
Lord.*

*So we come, loving Saviour, remembering Thee
Thy suffering and pain and Thy love full and free.
And as we partake with our hearts bowed in
prayer,*

May we strive to be faithful our crosses to bear.

(D.D.S.)

Take it to the Father

*Take it to the Father, every little grief,
All your cares and heartaches; He will send
relief.*

*Tell Him all your sorrows, all your worries too;
He gave His radiant angels charge concerning
you.*

*He who is your Guardian slumbers not, nor sleeps,
But above you always faithful vigil keeps.*

*Take it to the Father, all your pain and woe.
Greater friend and comfort mortal cannot know.
At His dear feet kneeling, holding nothing back,
Your mistakes and failures, where you lost the
track.*

*To the Heavenly regions; steep and dim the trail.
You will find Him patient; His love cannot fail.*

*Take it to the Father, when earthly joys grow dim.
When your loved ones fail you, take it all to
Him.*

*He will soothe and comfort, take you to His breast;
By His love enfolded you'll find peace and rest.
Then from out your failures, joy and hope will rise,
And you'll view the future, through the Father's
eyes.*

(L.K.P.)

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

"Let intellectual and spiritual culture progress, and the human mind expand, as much as it will; beyond the grandeur and the moral elevation of Christianity, as it sparkles and shines in the Gospels, the human mind will not advance."

—Goethe.

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

14. The Seventy Weeks

The Persian conquest of Babylon made very little difference to the normal life of the city. The comparative ease with which the capital had fallen, with little destruction or loss of life, meant that the citizens merely exchanged a Babylonian ruler for a Persian, Cyrus. The commercial life of the city went on as usual; merchant vessels from Africa and India still came up the river to the quays of Babylon; caravans of goods still traversed the high roads from Syria and Egypt. The government was in the hands of the Persians, but the life of the nation went on much as before. It was not at the capture of Babylon by Cyrus that the vivid prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah relating to the doom of the wicked city had their fulfilment, but twenty years later, when Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege again to the city and demolished its walls. In the meantime Daniel was faced with the situation that the power of Babylon was broken, apparently for ever; Cyrus the Persian was quite evidently the coming man, and Cyrus was the name of the man in Isaiah's prophecy who should let go the captives and restore the worship of God at Jerusalem. Small wonder that Daniel went to the sacred books to discern what he could of the purposes of God.

"In the first year of his reign (Darius) I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereby the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (ch. 9 vs 2.)

An old man of ninety sat reading, as he had read hundreds of times before, words that were penned when he was a lad of sixteen or so. His whole life had been lived in expectation of an event which, even as a boy, he knew could not come until he himself was ninety years of age; whatever may have been the hopes and beliefs of his fellows as to their deliverance, Daniel himself had known all along that he was destined to spend the rest of his life in Babylon. That Return from Exile which he so ardently desired for his people would not come until he himself would be too old to share in it.

Nearly seventy years previously, in the third year of Jehoiakim King of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim tributary, taken the sacred vessels from the Temple and carried them, with Daniel and his fellows, into Babylon. In the following year the Babylonian king broke the power of Egypt at Carchemish and

thenceforth was the undisputed master of Western Asia. In that year Jeremiah uttered the message against Judah recorded in his twenty-fifth chapter, and it is that message to which Daniel referred. The Divine sentence had gone forth against the guilty people; from that third year of Jehoiakim when they became tributary to Babylon and their Temple treasures went into an idol sanctuary, they were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25. 11). At the end of the seventy years the power of Babylon was to be broken. Until then all nations were to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his grandson, "*until the very time of his land come*" (Jer. 27. 7) a prophecy which was fulfilled in a most remarkable way, for his son Evil-Merodach (Jer. 52. 31) and his grandson Belshazzar both reigned and then the kingdom came to an end. Daniel, after the death of Belshazzar and the transfer of sovereignty to the Persians, realised that the time had expired.

What were his thoughts as his eyes scanned the familiar words and his mind went back to those days of long ago? Was there a measure of sadness that so few of his own generation remained to share his realisation of hopes fulfilled? Daniel must have been getting a rather lonely man. His old friend and mentor, Jeremiah, was of course long since gone to his rest, buried somewhere in Egypt. Of his three companions in exile, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, nothing is known since the incident of the fiery furnace, nearly forty-five years in the past. Quite likely they too were dead. Ezekiel the prophet and Jehoiachin the captive king were almost certainly at rest with their fathers. The up-and-coming young men who were marked out as leaders of the nation when the Return to Jerusalem could be effected were two generations later than his own. But there was no jealousy and no repining. Daniel knew he could have no part in the stirring days of the Return himself, but he knew that prayer was vitally necessary before that Return could become a reality and so he betook himself to earnest and urgent prayer on behalf of his beloved people. And the consequence of that prayer was the revelation of a time prophecy so obviously and accurately fulfilled that it set the seal upon Daniel's book and stamped the study of time prophecy with Divine approval.

It is impossible to read Daniel's ninth chapter without realising just how the saintly old man

poured out his heart's longings to God. Here are the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, the faith that knows God is faithful, the insight that perceives the only obstacle to be unbelief, the conviction that God will surely hear, and act, because He is God, and God cannot lie. What He has promised, that He will surely perform. Every acknowledgement of God's constancy and faithfulness is made, and with that a full and frank admission of Israel's guilt. There is no evasion of the issue; Israel reaped what she had sown; deserved what she had got. But because God is good, and because, with all their faults, Jerusalem and her people are called by God's name, Daniel besought his liege Lord to return, and relent, and execute his great purpose in delivering Jerusalem. *"We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies."* Could any of us in these favoured days of spiritual understanding come more closely to the true nature of Divine forgiveness? Could any one of us come any nearer to the heart of the Father? It was to that last heartfelt appeal the Father responded. Once more a heavenly being of high rank and greatly honoured in the courts of heaven was charged with a mission to earth. We know very little about conditions beyond the Veil, the everyday life of the celestial world, but that it is a place and condition of ceaseless activity is evident. Gabriel was no stranger to the world of man and he had visited Daniel before. If one asks the question whether there truly does exist an angelic personality bearing the name Gabriel, entrusted at times with Divine commissions to men, the answer can only be that the Bible gives us no ground for disputing the fact. This "seventy weeks" prophecy could only have been revealed from heaven; Daniel asserts that it was told him by a visitor he knew from former experience to be Gabriel, the messenger of God. Five hundred years later the same personality appeared to Mary the mother of Jesus, again with a message of great import, this time to announce the fulfilment of that which he had predicted to Daniel. Although Gabriel is not mentioned by name anywhere else in Bible history, it is very possible that he is the one concerned in other appearances of an angelic being to men—to the Apostle Peter in prison, perhaps, or to Paul when he was told he would be brought before Caesar.

"Whiles I was speaking in prayer", Gabriel came. *"At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to show thee"* is the assurance of the heavenly visitor. So quickly may prayer be answered; so near to us is that celestial world where God's will is done as one day it will be done on earth. *"Before they call,*

I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear" says the Lord through Isaiah. Sin is a separating influence which puts God far away from us; prayer is a magnetism which brings us at once very near to God.

So the story of the seventy weeks was unfolded. "Weeks" is, as is usually well known, a mistranslation. The proper rendering is "seventy sevens" where "seven" is "*hepdomad*," a unit, especially a unit of time. There is not much doubt that Daniel was to have his understanding of Jeremiah's seventy years linked up with a greater seventy,—seventy sevens, in fact—leading up to the greater development of God's Plan, which would, eventually, bring to fruition all Daniel's hopes.

The seventy years of Jeremiah were literally fulfilled, several times over. The primary decree was that not only Judah, but the nations round about, were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years and then the power of Babylon would be broken. (Jer. 25. 11-12.). During that period the penalty for resistance to the Divine decree of subjection was conquest, destruction, desolation. True to the promise, from the third year of Jehoiakim when Judah passed under Babylonian domination to the Decree of Cyrus was seventy years. Likewise the period from the destruction of the Temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the completion of Zerubbabel's Temple in the sixth year of Darius Hystaspes was seventy years. Small wonder that Daniel, having lived through the first-named period, looked now for the restoration of Judah, and hence for Divine enlightenment as to the next development in the outworking of the Divine Plan.

"Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (ch. 9 vs 24) to accomplish seven different aspects of our Lord's work at his First Advent. Gabriel recited them in order; while he recited, Daniel must have listened in growing awe as he realised that greater and still unplumbed depths of the Divine purposes were being revealed.

"To finish the transgression." Our Lord's Advent was timed to come when Israel had "filled up the measure of their fathers." (Matt. 23. 32). The period between Daniel and Jesus brought Israel's guilt up to the brim and abundantly demonstrated their unworthiness of the promise.

"To make an end of sins." Jesus did that by yielding his own life an offering for sin, a Ransom for All, to be testified in due time. (Isa. 53. 10. I Tim. 2. 5-6.).

"To make reconciliation for iniquity." This is the atonement which Christ made, pictured in the Tabernacle ceremonies by the offering the blood of the sin-offering on the "mercy seat" or propitiatory in the inner sanctuary, a "covering" for human sin.

"To bring in everlasting righteousness." The Apostle Paul explained this when he spoke of justification by faith, the gift of God to all who accept Jesus as Saviour and trust in him alone for salvation and reconciliation with God.

"To seal up the vision and prophecy." The more correct rendering is "vision and prophet" and the sealing is in the sense of ratifying. The Father himself ratified both the vision and the prophet who brought the vision, when He declared from Heaven at the time of Jesus' baptism "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him."

"To anoint the Most Holy." This refers to the consecrated things of the temple, especially the altar of burnt-offerings, and can well apply to the final work of the First Advent when Jesus, glorified, anointed his disciples with the Holy Spirit of Power, sending them forth after Pentecost to commence their great work of witness.

Gabriel told Daniel (vs 25-27) that this great period of seventy sevens was to be divided into three sections of seven sevens, sixty-two sevens and one final seven. In that last seven great happenings were to transpire. Most momentous of all, Messiah would be cut off "but not for himself." No, He died for others, for men, that they might live. In the middle of that "seven" Messiah would bring to an end the "sacrifice and oblation," those literal offerings and sacrifices demanded by the law to give Israel a ritualistic righteousness. He made an end of that Law, nailing it to his cross. Never again could those offerings have any validity in God's sight, for the reality had come. Then Messiah was also to "confirm the covenant with many for one seven." True to that word, the covenant of favour to Israel which precluded Gentiles from entering the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" was continued throughout three and a half years more until it came to an end with the acceptance of Cornelius, the first Gentile fellow-heir. Because of "the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate" even as Jesus declared, weeping over the city but declaring nevertheless "your house is left unto you desolate." Then, finally, "the people of the prince that should come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" and that word was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Here is a clear outline of the light and shade, the glory and the tragedy, of the First Advent. Daniel must have perceived that all this meant great distress for his people even though it also included the fulfilment at last of the Divine promise. Naturally enough, therefore, the question must have come to his lips as it did to the disciples of Jesus half a millennium later, "How long?"; "When shall these things be?"

Daniel realised at once that the seventy sevens were sevens of years. He was already aware of Jeremiah's period of seventy years, now fulfilled, but this was a greater period, *seventy sevens*. Four hundred and ninety years; that was the vista which now appeared before the prophet's wondering mind.

The starting point is given in terms of an easily recognisable political event. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince . . ." (ch. 9.23) were the angel's words. Daniel did not live to see that event. He did come to know of the decree issued by Cyrus king of Persia in the first year of his reign authorising whosoever would of the Jews in Babylon to return to Judea and rebuild the ruined Temple. Some forty-nine thousand returned under Zerubbabel but their initial enthusiasm soon waned and the work languished. The royal edict was reiterated sixteen years later in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, third successor of Cyrus, and in consequence of the missionary zeal of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah at that time the work was resumed and in another four years the Temple was completed and dedicated. But the city around it was still desolate, its walls broken down and its gates just as they were left when Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers burned them with fire nearly a century previously. No authority or permission had as yet been given "to restore and build Jerusalem." Next came the reign of Xerxes, and then his son and successor Artaxerxes I, who in the seventh year of his reign, some seventy years after the decree of Cyrus, sent Ezra the priest to take offerings and treasure for the rebuilt Temple and to govern the little Jewish colony, but even then no word or command or intimation regarding the rebuilding of the city and its walls.

Thirteen years later, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, a royal commission was awarded Nehemiah the Jewish patriot to proceed to Jerusalem for the express purpose of rebuilding the city, its houses, walls and gates. At this time Jerusalem was still in ruins; the impulse of Nehemiah to go there sprang from a report on its condition brought to him in this same year. Its walls were still broken down, its gates burned with fire, and the houses not built. Here, it would seem, is the starting point of the prophetic period. Sixty-nine sevens from this point, four hundred and eighty-three years, to the appearance of Messiah, and one more seven for the completion of all that his Advent was to mean to Israel; this was the gist of Gabriel's intimation and Daniel knew then that the consummation of Israel's hopes was still very far away.

Looking back on history, we ought to perceive

very clearly the fulfilment of this time prophecy, for Messiah has come and we know when He came. It was in the autumn of A.D. 29 that Jesus of Nazareth stood by the waters of Jordan to be baptised by John as a prelude to his ministry on earth. There, at that time, He became the Messiah the Prince. Three and a half years later "*in the midst of the seven*"—the last seven—He caused "*the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*" by his death on the cross. By the end of that seven the special standing before God which Israel had enjoyed since Sinai was abrogated, and the Gospel was extended to all nations. The seventy weeks had ended.

Unfortunately the starting-point cannot be located in history so precisely. The Persians did not produce any reliable historians of their own; the Greek historians of the time are confused and contradictory when it comes to Persian happenings. In consequence there is dispute as to the precise date of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes with a possible variation of sixteen years, 454-438 BC. Herodotus, Ctesias, Thucydides, Ptolemy and Josephus between them have set later historians, chronologists, and commentators alike a problem which has occupied the thoughts and pens of many a writer during the latter part of this Age. But for the present purpose accuracy to a year is quite unnecessary. The important thing is that this "seventy weeks" back from the ministry of Jesus must in any case have commenced within ten years or so of whatever date eventually turns out to be that of Artaxerxes twentieth year. Ten years in five hundred is a quite close margin of error and as we look back upon this fulfilled prophecy, we can only marvel at its exactitude. Small wonder that modern critics decry the whole thing and endeavour to suggest other and earlier starting points for the prophecy so as to bring its termination in the days of the Maccabean revolt, assigning all these eloquent phrases to the petty doings of a lot of apostate High Priests and princes in Israel. We can only say "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes".

The division, in verse 25, of the sixty-nine sevens into two periods of seven and sixty-two is not further elaborated on by the revealing angel. Seven sevens, forty-nine years, from the twentieth

year of Artaxerxes must end at some time between 406-390 BC. This point of time is notable for a number of events momentous to Israel.

Darius II, son of Artaxerxes, died 405 BC. With his death the favour shown by successive Persian kings to Israel since the days of Cyrus came to an end. Upon the accession of Darius' successor, Judea lost its status as a province and was added to the province of Syria; thus commenced the Syrian oppression of Israel which became so terrible an affliction a century or so later.

Nehemiah, the last governor of Judea, died probably between 413 and 405 BC, Ezra a little earlier.

Malachi, the last Hebrew prophet, flourished during the last seven years of Nehemiah and died, it is estimated, very soon after the patriot's death.

The canon of the Old Testament was completed.

Thus, at the end of the first "seven sevens", the period of the Restoration, all the favour shown by the Persians to the Jews, all the rebuilding and re-establishment of the nation, all the fervency of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the reforming zeal of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, all that had been accomplished during that stirring time, came to an end, and the nation entered upon a new and bitter experience which progressively worsened, with only occasional periods of intermission, until the conquest of Judea by Titus in A.D. 70, and the great Dispersion among all nations began. Even that was foreseen by the heavenly visitant; "*the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*" he said (ch. 9.26). That prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

Daniel must have had much to think about when his visitor had gone. The city of his fathers, and the Temple the glory of the city, were to be rebuilt only to be destroyed again. Would the Lord never fulfil his promise to plant Israel and not pluck them up again? Long and earnestly must the aged prophet have cogitated over the problem; the ways of God are often dark and mysterious, and men comprehend them not. But for Daniel there was more to come; he was yet to be given the final vision, which assured him that despite all these disasters all would be well at the last.

To be continued

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.

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

THE SUPREME GRACE

A study in
1 Cor. 13

2. "More than these"

In order to lay emphasis upon the difference between the two words (*agape* and *phileo*) which, in our Authorised Version, are translated by the one word Love, attention is directed to two episodes from the life of our Lord. In these incidents the differences come out very markedly and help to fix these in their proper relationship.

The first incident comes from the story of Lazarus who was sick. His sisters, realising that all efforts to restore him were without effect, sent, in their desperation, a messenger to Jesus to say "*He whom thou lovest is sick*". To this urgent invitation Jesus replied "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby*". (John 11. 1-4). Then follows the specific statement that "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus*". The word here is derived from *agape*. Now this strange answer of Jesus to the messenger—seeing that Lazarus did actually die and that He himself delayed his journey to his friends in Bethany long enough to permit him to die—shows that this incident had some relation to the work and Plan of God. It was permitted to happen "for the glory of God"—that is to say, it was intended thereby to draw attention to the work and honour of God. It was to focus attention on a notable display of the mighty power of God, and bring honour to Jesus as the Son of God. We find this incident set forth by John as the last of a series of seven signs, taken from the many mighty things that Jesus did, by means of which Jesus' Messiahship was intended to be established and set forth unmistakably before the Jewish priesthood and people. (John 20.30).

Amid the whole Jewish community there was no other family, in Jerusalem or outside, through which this most emphatic sign could be set forth. Jesus, in his own person (and God, acting through his Son), had such well-founded confidence in these three pious souls, that Heaven had no hesitation in using them—and Lazarus in particular—to enact this arresting sign, so that the blame-worthiness of the faithless nation should be established beyond doubt. Only in this light can we explain the two days delay, and the unusual prayer of Jesus at the door of the tomb—"Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me . . ." He had prayed about this episode previously and here He was putting the subject of his prayer to an open test.

An episode like this was absolutely in line with the tenor of the universal Plan, because, in the

first place, it furnished testimony to the claim of Jesus to be Messiah; in the second place, it provided a stone of stumbling to the Jews, and so contributed to their fall from grace; and thirdly, it bore testimony to the mighty power of God and his ability to raise the dead. Hence the precision of the statement that "*Jesus loved (with the *agape* Love) Martha and her sister and Lazarus*". This love was "*plan-Love*"—"Love because of the Cause"—because of the part they were to play in advancing that Cause.

But the sisters knew that there was more than this between Jesus and Lazarus. Hence, in their message they said to Jesus "*He whom Thou lovest is sick*". Here the word is "*phileis*"—(from *phileo*). Again, when the watching Jews saw his grief as He approached the tomb, they said among themselves "*Behold how he loved him*" (v.36). Here the word is "*ephilei*"—again from *phileo*. The sisters already knew that Jesus loved Lazarus very tenderly, with an affection of great warmth and depth. Without doubt Jesus had sounded the depths of that pious heart, and had been drawn to Lazarus because of his fidelity to God, and undoubtedly there was great kinship of spirit between them in things pertaining to God. Thus, when Jesus saw and felt what death had meant to the stricken sisters, and what it had done for his dearly-beloved friend, He could no longer restrain his sympathetic tears, even though He knew what He was about to do.

Here the ties of mutual friendship linked together Jesus and Lazarus, each loving other because of mutual affinity. Because both loved the way of God, and sought to walk therein, each in his own sphere and capacity, their "*phileo*" affection was of a sanctified nature. But it was an affection for each other as man to man. Yet it was just because of this that Jesus considered Lazarus worthy of the part he would be called upon to play in the universal Plan as it then applied to that people at that particular time. On the part of Jesus, this confidence and trust in his friend's integrity was love of the *agape* variety. It is a principle of Scripture that brotherly affection should serve the interests of the *agape* relationship, as Peter says "*Seeing that you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently*". (1. Pet. 1.22). Here, because "*philadelphoi*" love is unfeigned it is to apply itself to the task implied in the word "*seeing*"—that is, to the

girding up of the loins of their minds, and to exhorting all who call upon God as Father to be holy because He is holy. (v. 12.21).

The second illustration of the difference between *agape* and *phileo* is taken from an experience beside the Sea of Galilee. Just before this episode occurred, Peter and his brethren had come to Galilee in obedience to the Lord's command, there to await his further instructions for future days. But waiting was proving tedious, and patience was wearing thin. Anticipating great events as Kingdom authority was established by their risen Lord, these days of waiting and frustration were tensing nerves almost to breaking point, and Peter, with his brethren, felt that they must find something to do, or nerves would crack. "I go fishing", said Peter, "I can't stand this any longer". "We come with thee" they replied. And to the old task they returned.

In the splash of oars, and throw of nets, they thought to find relief from the inertia that kills. But an observant eye was watching them. He saw them toil the long night through unsuccessfully, and then as they drew inshore a voice called through the morning gloom "Children, have you any meat?" Hearing of their ill-success the Stranger bade them cast again on the right of the ship and they should find. They did as He suggested, and the net was filled. Thus did the watchful Lord reveal himself to the tired and disheartened crew.

A simple meal awaited them as they stepped ashore. When hunger was appeased, Jesus turned to Peter, as leader of the little band, and pointing to the ship, the nets, the fish, said searchingly "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Instantly the ready tongue replied "Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee". According to the A.V. rendering (John 20) Jesus addressed this same question three times, with some slight variation, to the conscience-smitten Peter, and three times Peter is stated to have protested his love. But in the Greek original the colloquy is not quite so simple as that. Peter did not answer his Master's questions—instead he evaded them. He substituted the personal for the universal form of love in his replies. And then when Jesus came down to his own level of thought, poor Peter was deeply cut to the heart.

When Jesus put the question "Lovest thou me more than these" to Peter, the very lay-out of the circumstances added emphasis to the questioning. Peter had been called in an earlier day to become a fisher of men—a task in line with the Divine Plan of the Ages. Now, in a moment of frustration he had gone back to win the harvest of the sea. "Simon, son of Jonas, to whom or what

do you propose to dedicate your life? Do you wish to have part in my Father's Plan with me? Do you desire to share with me in the work that I have come to do?" Such was the gist of Jesus' questioning. To show "*agape*" for Jesus meant so much more merely than showing affection for his Person. Naturally one such as Jesus could easily arouse affection in the heart of a follower, but to arouse determination to follow him in the steps that God had outlined for him in the Plan was another matter altogether. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me (*agapas* me) more than these?" asked Jesus. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I (*phileo*) dearly love thee" was the reply. He says to him again a second time "Simon, son of Jonas, (*agapas*) me? And Peter again makes reply, "Yes, Lord, THOU knowest that I '*phileo*' Thee. Coming down to Peter's level now He says to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou "*phileis*" me—affectionately love me?," Did Jesus really doubt Peter on that point after all? Perhaps this was masterly psychology on Jesus' part, for three times Peter had denied and now three times he had confessed. It cut him to the heart. But even though Jesus had come down to the more lowly and personal level of Peter's mind, the resultant mandate was the same. "Feed my lambs" (vs.15). "Tend my sheep" (vs. 16). "Feed my sheep (vs. 17). "You say you love me, Peter, then love also what is mine. I and my sheep are inseparable, therefore if you have love for me, you must also have love for what is mine, for that which has been placed by my Father in my care." Can we then wonder that it was Peter who gave us the phrase "*Ye are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*". (I Pet. 2.25). That conception had been cut into his very soul on the shores of the Galilean sea.

Once more we have the distinction brought out that *phileo* is the love-link that binds the individuals together as brethren (or children) of a great family, while *agape* is the tie that unites them all to the service of a great Cause—the great objective that lies out and beyond even the calling and formation of the love-tied family.

To emphasise this distinction a little more we quote a parallel illustration given by Archbishop Trench in the Latin language. In his valuable book "*Synonyms of the New Testament*", Trench quotes from Cicero—a writer of classic Latin prose—to emphasise this distinction between "*agapao*" and "*phileo*". Writing to one acquaintance about the deep affection he entertained for another friend, Cicero says (where "*diligi*" is equivalent to "*agapao*", and "*amari*" corresponds to "*phileo*"); (English translation as given by Trench) "I do not merely *esteem* (*diligi*—*agapao*) the man, but I *love*

(amari-phileo) him". The quotation in its English form continues, "there is something of passionate warmth in the feeling with which I regard him". (This illustration and quotation is found also in Thayer's Lexicon p.653, and so also is a supplementary illustration of the same thing where Trench cites an extract from the funeral oration of Antony over the body of the murdered Caesar; "I loved him (ephilasate-phileo) as a father; and I

esteemed (agapesate-agapao) him as a benefactor".

So the same distinction is found in Latin as in Greek; it is greatly to our loss that we have but one word in our Authorised Version to translate these two potent words, expressing in the Greek original the two phases of that mighty moving force which, proceeding from the heart of God, will yet win sinful men to obey and love his Will.

To be continued

"KEPT"

A Memorial reflection

"I have kept them in thy name" (Jno. 17.12).

The surrendering up of a stewardship is always a searching time. It is not every steward who can do this with honour, and look back upon the period of stewardship with satisfaction. Happy, indeed, the man who can carry into retirement the conviction that he has not consciously been derelict in duty, and need have no fear even though heaven and earth search into his record.

In his comparable prayer, in John 17, our Lord was rendering up his stewardship, which included the task of teaching and protecting the little band of apostles and a wider circle of believers, numbering in all about five hundred (1 Cor. 15.6). These all had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and had followed the Lord throughout the most part of his ministry. And these all (the Apostles in particular) were the choicest souls in Israel, of whom the Lord Jesus said: "*Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me.*" Now He had come to the final night of his human life, and in their hearing, so that they might know how close their relationship to God had been, and also how responsible before God his own relationship to them had been, He addressed the most moving and impressive prayer within the records of Holy Writ to God, who had set his love upon this little band. How deeply it must have stirred their hearts to see and hear their Lord engaged in this most intimate prayer—a scene and prayer without parallel in the annals of time.

To hear Jesus say "*For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth*", could not do other than impress on them that they were the subjects of Heaven's care. His matchless life had been devoted to their protection and instruction—this they already knew—but here, in the subdued solemnity of that secluded room, it was their privilege to listen to the Shepherd of their souls surrender up his charge to God. "*While I was with them . . . I kept them in thy*

Name"; now, "*Holy Father, keep through thine own Name those that thou hast given me*", are the impressive words which lighted on their ears as the Man of Sorrows committed them to his Father's care. That some of those words winged themselves to the target of their hearts is sure, for one who, in that supreme hour, heard them, himself wrote: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus . . . who . . . hath begotten us . . . who are KEPT by the power of God through faith.*" (1 Pet. 3.5). Thus, the words of the Shepherd had fixed themselves in such wise that they emboldened Peter to tell all the children of God that Divine Power was active as a garrisoning force in their lives, to throw a cordon around them, and to be as an energising influence to help them in their resistance to the Adversary of their souls.

The truth that God is a "Keeper" of his people goes back a long way in Israel's history. At the very forefront of the Priestly blessing, wherewith the High Priest was empowered to bless, stood the words: "*The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . .*" Thus the sense of a Divine Protector was early impressed. In later days the Psalmist caught up the theme, and sang: "*Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy Keeper . . . the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil . . . from this time forth and even for evermore*" (Psa. 121: 4-8). Again, in a very special promise to a very particular Servant, God said: "*I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people*" (Isa. 42.6). In a variation of the same promise, God says: "*Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel . . . In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people . . .*" (Isa. 49.7-8). Thus, in various ways, by many tongues, the Lord impressed upon the faithful of Israel that the angel of the Lord encamped about

them, and that the heavenly messengers were given a charge concerning them to keep them in all their ways.

Comparing these promises with Israel's national experiences, it becomes apparent that these promises were not mere blank cheques to be filled in by all and sundry under any sort of condition or circumstance. The Lord did not unconditionally promise to keep Israel, either as a people or as individuals. Israel's chequered history is proof that the Lord did not at all times exert his power for her preservation. Israel was not an automaton which could be wound up by a promise and sent undeviatingly upon her way. She was a stubborn, hard-necked, self-willed people, which used the endowment of free-will to choose her course, and set herself to follow out her own path. And most frequently her course was found to be at variance with the Will of God.

Obviously, therefore, conditions lay behind these promises, and only by complying with the conditions imposed could the Promise itself be claimed. In what sense, then, had God promised to keep the faithful of Israel? Did He promise to preserve them from injury or death, and give them a long span of life? Let the records of those worthy names inscribed on Israel's honoured scroll (see Heb. 11) be answer to that! Individual faithfulness amid mass unfaithfulness made suffering inevitable. Royal anger and mob passion wrought their fury upon the valiant souls which dared to obey God rather than bow to the dictates of men. Thus, even the faithful in Israel fell in death, but in their fall the Divine Promise was certified. God kept them faithful to the end, when faithful testimony meant sure death. That which was precious in God's sight was not the bulk of flesh and bones, but the heart of steel, the uncorrupted character, the outlook of well guided faith. Into such faithful hearts God sent a flow of power—an insurgence of his own Holy Spirit—an influence from his sovereign Throne. It charged the batteries of stern resolve with heavenly dynamic, and made even the strongest men become stronger still. It made the weak more puissant than the loftiest kings, and showed that heaven's finger is powerful beyond even the loins of mighty men. Thus, in either life or death, Divine protection is an incontrovertible fact, an incontestable truth, and an invincible reality. Israel's stalwarts always found it so, as fiery furnace-floors, lion's dens, violence of fire, mother-hearts bereaved, bear testimony.

This little "great-word" comes down from ages past, then, freighted with the victories of such men. Men had dared, and God had given the power of conquest over self and circumstance. It tells of great responsibilities nobly borne, of great issues

faithfully met; of the shaping of men's lives and the direction of a nation's destiny. When others had fallen faithlessly, God had kept them faithful unto death; when others had been set aside, discarded and disowned, God had "kept" these as his own—his own heart's treasure and delight. "I kept them in thy Name," said the Lord. When impetuous impulse rushed Peter off his feet, and discouraging doubts laid Thomas low, and uprush of indignation made James and John desire fire from heaven, and sharp contentions of would-be greatness gave bitterness its chance! These and many other pitfalls had beset their feet, but past them all his gentle words had safely guided them. Words of approval now and then to stimulate; words sharp with rebuke to afford restraint, words pregnant with instruction to enthuse their minds with Kingdom expectations—all these and many things beside had been fraught with keeping power.

Thus, in happy season and in sad, He had spoken the words which killed jealousy, checked resentment, smothered contention, provoked love and inspired hope. But, above all else which had tended to keep them safe, was the story of the Father's love. "*I have manifested thy Name unto the men which thou gavest me*"—God's Name, God's character, God's Love, God's Holiness, God's Omnipotence—set forth in winsome little parables which shot right home and gripped their interested hearts. And then, "*they have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.*" Belief of this cardinal point helped them to stand; disbelief caused the nations to fall.

With the closing of the prayer they went forth into the night—the Master to his Gethsemane, and they to disappointment and flight. Peter fell, Thomas sank into the slough of doubt, others retired crestfallen, because He had not redeemed Israel. But into Peter's heart something had been instilled which gave vent to penitential tears, and kept him from a Judas' fall. Something had been infused into the doubter's mind, and constrained him to venture again into the upper room, where the doubt was overcome. Something had been sown in hearts that in sadness said "We trusted that it had been He", which sprang to renewed vigour as they watched him breaking bread. Thus, after one dark hour while the Shepherd lay entombed, the keeping power began again, and brought to rich fruitage the words sown in pre-resurrection days. Timid and retiring men were made strong, and neither prison cells nor lictor's rods could stop their witnessing. Many of them fell in death, but the Divine Power wrought dynamic energy in the heart, and fitted to stand

and withstand every strain. In weakness Divine Power matured, and made them more than conquerors.

Of the little band in the upper room, only one was lost. He had never been amenable to "keeping" power. A cultured man, yet withal a thief and carping critic. Cold, calculating, desirous to lead, not to be led, a conspirator and traitor to the end. When came the evil hour he fell. It was not the Master's fault that he thus fell. He had seen and he had heard all that the others saw and heard, but he had not, like them, been "keepable". Sight of eye, and hearing of ear, had produced no good effect. He was unprepared for the evil hour, and died, as he had lived, with Mammon for his God. Son of Abraham though he was by birth, in moral things he was a child of the Evil One.

Setting the traitor, Judas, and the denier, Peter, side by side, we will be better able to determine what the "keeping power" may do. Peter had his many faults, impulsiveness, impetuosity, too great a readiness to speak—but he was amenable to restraint. If he roamed a little from the path, the Shepherd's crook could draw him back. When others went away and Jesus challenged them, it was Peter's ready tongue which said: "*But where else can we go—only thou hast the words of life!*" Despite all his faults, he became one of the "inner" three—a sure token of a sincere man, with honest goodness in his heart. For him, the Master prayed when the evil hour drew nigh. He knew Peter was "salvable" at heart. He knew the rush of circumstance would sweep Peter off his feet, but He also knew he would rise again, and, after his turning about, become a tower of strength to his brethren. Peter was one of whom God said: "He is Mine". Judas was one of whom Satan could have said: "He is mine". Peter was a sheep of the Divine pasture. Judas was a wolf wearing a woollen fleece. The Good Shepherd could keep God's sheep and bring him back when wandering. He was not authorised by God to protect the wolf. The same

influences were exerted in both cases, but one was saved, while the other was lost.

Brethren in the Lord, there is a determining power in God's truth, which, because of what is inherent in the heart, becomes a savour of life unto life for some, but a savour of death unto death for others! Why is this? the difference springs from the human heart—from the motives which lead to response towards the truth. Some are severely simple and sincere through and through; others are wayward, daring, inclined to take liberties with the word and with Providence, while others are malicious, ravenous, greedy of place and power, caring not who may suffer, if only they can gain their ends. The Shepherd of the flock is not commissioned to keep and protect the destructive wolf. He is not authorised to check the wayward goat, but He is deputed to use Almighty pastoral power to keep and guard and feed the sheep of God in every circumstance. The true sheep hears his voice. The goat, too, may hear his voice. Even the wolf may hear his voice. But the true sheep obeys. The goat will wander on. The wolf will slouch around waiting for his "kill". Immediate response to the leading influence of the Lord manifested in daily Providence is the keynote of the "keepable" state; hesitation to obey or refusal to obey makes the "keeping" work impossible. Sheep do not change into goats. Neither do they become wolves. If a seeming brother falls it is scarcely likely that he ever was a sheep. The congregation may have accounted him a sheep, but the Lord knew the truth of the situation all the time. To enjoy the Shepherd's care as a true sheep is a blessed thing, but to have crept into the fold, yet not know the Shepherd's care is a state of dire peril indeed. Such may for a time range themselves around the study of the Word, but lacking the sweet binding influence of the Holy Spirit, it is perhaps only a matter of time before their studious ardour cools, and their interest is dead. But on his own word, a true sheep He cannot lose, but keeps them to the end.

It is true that we have, before all things, to humble ourselves, as we have already said. Yet we must lift up our head when God calls us to Himself. And this courage is given to all the faithful, as we see when St. Paul says that Jesus Christ has a crown laid up for all those who await his coming.

Now we cannot thus await our Lord Jesus Christ unless we are surely persuaded that He has fought with the fears of death in such a way that we are freed from them, and the victory is ours. And

though we have to battle to make ourselves feel our weakness as we should, to make ourselves turn to God, and to draw from ourselves a true confession of sin, yet we can be assured that Jesus Christ has fought and obtained the victory, not for himself but for us, that by him we may now surmount all cares and fears, and that we can call upon God with the sure knowledge that He has his arms ever stretched out to receive us.

John Calvin.

"TORMENTED FOR EVER AND EVER"

An examination of a New Testament word

The word "torment" occurs some sixteen times in the New Testament, of which about five have been used at one time or another to buttress the mediæval idea of physical suffering as the ultimate penalty for sin. A brief survey of its uses and meanings may not be out of place.

The Greek word is *basanizo*, and when the New Testament was written it did bear the general meaning of our English word "torment", but only in a secondary and somewhat restricted sense. At the time of the First Advent criminals suspected of committing, or known to have committed, serious crimes were commonly subjected to physical torture in order to extract the truth from their otherwise sealed lips. To this process was applied this word *basanizo*, derived from the name of a certain kind of stone, *basanos*, which when rubbed on various precious metals, such as gold, indicated their purity. On account of this property it was called the touchstone. Hence Liddell and Scott define the word as meaning, primarily, to rub on the touchstone, to try the genuineness of a thing, to test or make proof of, and then as a secondary meaning to put to the torture. Whenever the word is used in the New Testament it should be read either with its primary meaning, of the subject being tested or subjected to severe strain, or when the secondary sense is applicable, as an allusion to the searching enquiry and retribution which comes upon that which has entered into judgment with God. Thus Thayer, who gives the shades of meaning of words as they were used by New Testament writers, defines *basanizo* as the testing of metals by a touchstone, the questioning or investigation by torture, the being harassed, distressed or vexed as by pain. Vine applies it to the doom of evil spirits and to retributive judgments upon impenitent mankind at the close of this present Age. Thus the classical Greek primitive everyday meaning, a crucial test of genuineness with the implied rejection of the unfit, became transmuted in New Testament times to the theological concept of an intense investigation into the righteousness or unrighteousness, the good or evil, of the subject, and the consequent rejection of the evil and the unrighteous. This is how "torment" should be understood in the relevant texts, and Vine's definition of "retributive judgments", associated with the Divine law "the wages of sin is death", would seem to come near the truth.

An associated word "*basanistes*" occurs once,

in the parable of the unforgiving servant, as the name of the functionaries in the prison to which the guilty man was committed. Matt. 18.34 in the A.V. says he was "*delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due*" but the word would be better rendered examiners or questioners, as Liddell and Scott define it; the fact that these officials used torture as an aid to their work is secondary. RSV renders "jailers" although perhaps the modern word "inquisitors" would be quite apt in current English.

Three occurrences of *basanizo* relate to mental or physical stress and three more to the stress of physical pain due to natural causes—disease etc. In most of these instances the A.V. translators realised that "torment" would be an inappropriate translation and used other words more suitable to the situation—vexed, tossed, toiling, pained. Nevertheless in all these texts the primary meaning of the word—a test of fitness under stress—can be discerned. Thus we have:—

2 Pet. 2.8. "That righteous man" (Lot) "*vexed his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds*"

Matt. 14.24. "The ship was in the midst of the sea, *tossed with waves*"

Mark 6.48. "He saw them *toiling* in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them"

Matt. 8.6. "My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously *tormented*"

Matt. 4.24. "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and *torments*"

Rev. 12.2. "She being with child *cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered*"

Three more instances have to do with the final judgment of evil spirits whom Jesus is declared to have exorcised from obsessed men. They are:—

Matt. 8.29. "Jesus, thou Son of God, art thou come hither to *torment* us before the time?"

Mark 5.7. "Jesus, Son of the most high God, I adjure thee by God that thou *torment* me not"

Luke 8.28. Virtually the same as Mark 5.7.

Behind these three texts lies the Scriptural insistence that these "evil spirits" or demons obsessing the man were of those "angels that sinned" as recorded in Gen. 6. and now "reserved unto judgment" (2. Pet. 2.4.) so that the question as to torment "*before the time*" could logically infer these demons' recognition that judgment and retribution must be their lot eventually at the Day of Judgment, but not yet, not at the time of the First Advent.

There remain six occurrences of this word, one in the Gospels and five in the Book of Revelation, all metaphorical (symbolic) and therefore to be interpreted with some caution. That in the Gospels is found in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16.19-31). Putting it very briefly, the rich man in that parable pictured the unbelieving Pharisees and unbelieving Israel at the First Advent, Lazarus the despised Gentiles at that time outside the purposes of God. The position was reversed when the nation was cast off in consequence of its rejection of Jesus, and the Divine calling went to the Gentiles. This was when the rich man "*died and was buried, and in Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments*". This "torment" was that condition of judgment and retribution into which the unbelieving nation passed when its land was desolated by the Romans and the people scattered among all nations after the Crucifixion. (*A full exposition of this parable appeared in the issue of this journal for July/August 1971: Ed.*)

This leaves five instances in the Book of Revelation. Of these, two can be quickly dismissed. The first is in connection with the plague of symbolic locusts in chapter 9, emerging out of the abyss to "*torment men five months*" with stings like the stings of scorpions. The "men" thus tormented are, of course, the unbelieving world as contrasted with the "saints" who have already been "sealed" in chapter 7; the locusts with their king, Apollyon, are evil forces of some description and the torment here might very well picture the trouble and anguish brought upon the unbelieving world by influential evil powers in this world. The second has its place in chapter 11 where God's "two witnesses" are said to "*torment*" dwellers on the earth by reason of their consistent and persistent witness for righteousness. The "torment" in this case is obviously the annoyance caused to the unbelievers by the implied reproof of an expressed standard of morality and conduct which they could not refute but at the same time refused to accept into their own lives.

Finally we have the three cases which do undeniably have to do with the final judgment of God upon evil institutions and evil men and it is here that a wide and dispassionate view of the somewhat lurid symbols employed can be helpful. In chapter 14, against a setting which speaks very clearly of the end of this Age and the imminence of the Messianic Kingdom which is itself the Day of Judgment, an announcement is made that great Babylon is fallen, and that any man who continues to worship—support—the mighty complex of evil powers in this world which is what is meant here by Babylon, will incur the wrath of God and be "*tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence*

of the Lamb"—of the Lord Christ. A parallel description of the same event in chapter 18, this time from the standpoint of the "kings and merchants of the earth"—the political and financial ruling powers—bemoans this catastrophic ending to the institutions built up by the greed and selfishness and inhumanity of man, and refers to it as "*torment*" in vs. 7, 12 and 15. Now whilst one can logically conceive the process of physical torment as applied to a human being it is impossible so to apply it to a universal world system of power such as is intended here by the description "Babylon". "Torment", "plagues", "sorrow", "mourning", "famine", "death", "burning", "desolation"; all these terms are used to express the magnitude of the colossal disaster that has come upon this great system and its supporters.

Of these apostate supporters of this doomed system of evil it is said, in addition to their being "*tormented with fire and sulphur*" that "*the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*" (ch. 14.11). This allusion is a clue to the source of the symbolism. The basis of all references in Revelation to the lake of fire and sulphur ("brimstone" in Old English) and the torment of those who are cast therein, is the Old Testament story of the fiery destruction of the corrupt cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, in Gen. 19. When the subterranean bitumen and oil and sulphur deposits underlying those ill-fated Cities of the Plain erupted in one of the greatest cataclysms of Nature the history of mankind has known, the adjoining Dead Sea became a lake of fire and the heavens above rained down burning oil and sulphur over the whole area. The cities with all their contents and all their populations were wiped out in a holocaust of fire and the story has never been forgotten. From that time to this, four thousand years, the very site has lain sterile and desolate—only in these recent years since the establishment of the State of Israel have men gone back to build and plant and work in the place of God's judgment. Isaiah alludes to the same disaster when he sought a canvas on which to paint his own picture of the downfall of world evil at the end of this Age, "*The streams shall be turned into bitumen, and the dust thereof into sulphur, and the land thereof shall become burning bitumen. It shall not be quenched night or day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever*" (Isa. 34.9-10). The expression "for ever and ever" ("to the ages of the ages" in the Greek) does not indicate perpetuity as is the usual implication of the English expression. It implies a long period of indefinite length. According to Vine it is an idiomatic expression betokening an undefined

period; another definition is "the sum of all the ages in which God is working out his redemptive plan". Obviously the smoke of Sodom has not been "going up for ever"; the fires went out long ago. The fires burned while there was something to burn, and when they went out there was nothing left. So too with this latter-day repetition in the Book of Revelation. The whole fabric of our modern world is entering into judgment with God and stands in the "presence of the Lamb", for the Lord Christ at his Second Advent comes to execute the judgment. So far as men, human beings, the creatures of God's making, are concerned that judgment will be a thousand years long and there will be every opportunity and encouragement for each and all to "forsake sin and serve the living God" even though their past obduracy will have earned them the "torment" which is retribution for the past. But the institutions themselves, the vast edifices and empires of greed, graft and corruption which men have built through the ages will go at once, destroyed by the fires of their own inherent evil, and great will be their fall. No wonder that the kings and merchants of the earth will bewail the loss of all they have held dear when they perceive the "torment", the retributive judgment, which has come upon their creations. Easy it is to understand how their supporters "have no rest day nor night" while they are passing through this agonising experience.

But the end of the longest day comes at last, and after the torments have done their work these same, chastened by what they have gone through, will perceive the radiant glory of Christ's Messianic Kingdom taking the place of the old defunct world order, and a new morality, a new way of life, to which they may aspire, and, attaining, find that they *have* entered into life indeed.

The defects of a preacher are soon spied. Let a preacher be endued with ten virtues, and have but one fault, that one fault will eclipse and darken all his virtues and gifts, so evil is the world in these times. A good preacher should be able to teach plainly and in order; he should have a good head, a good power of speech, a good voice, and a good memory, and should know when to stop; he should be sure what he means to say, and should study diligently; he should be ready to stake body and life, goods, and glory, on its truth; and he must suffer himself to be vexed and criticised by everybody.

Martin Luther.

One more allusion, and this is indeed the last. At the end of that Messianic Kingdom, when sin and evil has been eliminated from the earth and all who remain have found "peace with God through Jesus Christ" and so entered into eternal life, when death is no more and mankind has achieved its true destiny, the Revelator sees the final act of the drama. "*The devil that deceived them*" he says "*was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (Rev. 20.10). The entire expression is metaphorical; there is no literal lake of fire and here again the picture is one of judgment, final and irrevocable. The torment is God's retributive judgment, the "day and night for ever and ever" "the lake of fire" indicative of the utter destruction of all that is defiled and unclean in the sight of God. The Scriptures do support the idea of a personal Devil, and present him as irrevocably unrepentant to the last. Hence his end is described in no uncertain terms: "*a fire from the midst of thee . . . shall devour thee . . . I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more*" (Ezek. 28.18). The lake of fire is that destruction, and the judgment stands for all time.

There are one or two other places in the New Testament where the word "torment" occurs but is rendered from other Greek words not always fully justifying the translation. In 1 John 4.18 *torment* is from *kolasis*, meaning restraint, in Luke 16. 24 and 25 from *odunao*, meaning anguish, in Heb. 11.37 from *kakoucheo*, to do harm, and in Heb. 11.35 from *tumpanizo*, which does mean torture in the ordinarily accepted sense. None of these words include the idea of retributive judgment as does *basanizo*.

Christianity is clear as to rules of life and duty. There is no mystery left about the directions to man, yet there is a Divine mystery unfolding it, which tells of its Divine origin, and promises a fuller revelation when man is fitted to receive it. If it were not so, we would call it man's invention. We turn from Revelation, because it contains some things we cannot comprehend; yet we plunge into a deeper, darker mystery, when we embrace the theory of an external, self-existing universe, having no intelligent creator, yet constantly creating intelligent beings. Can anyone understand how matter creates mind?



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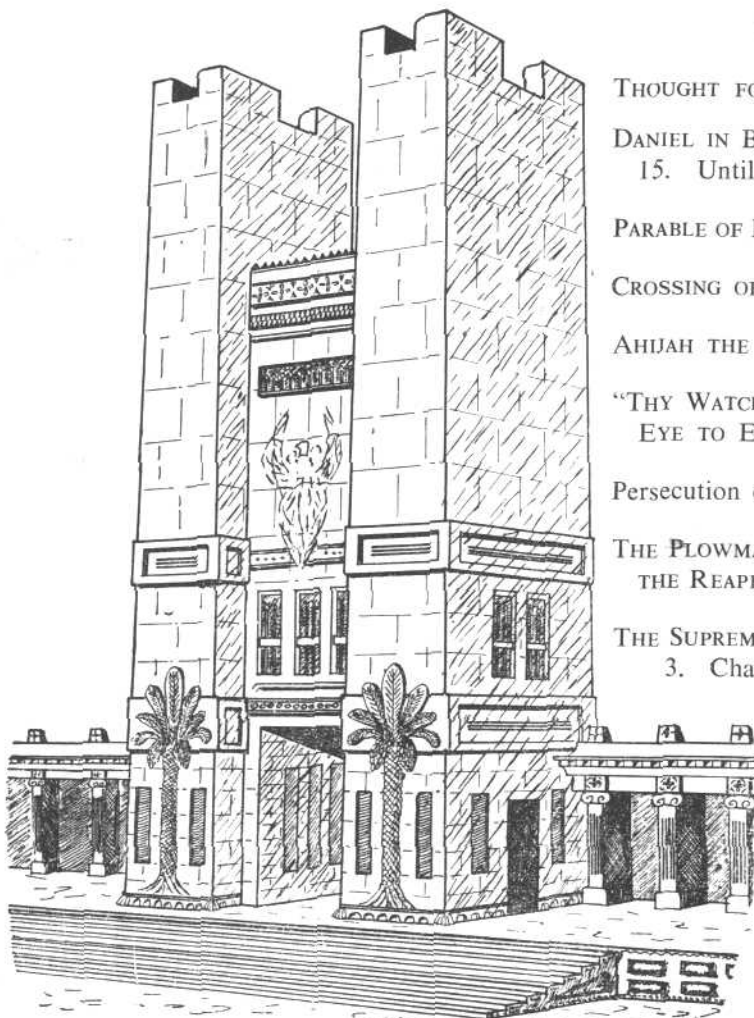
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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Thought for the Month

"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." (Eccl. 7.10).

How prone we are to look back with longing upon the "old days", those early times in the way of Christ which in retrospect seem as though surrounded by a rosy halo. In contrast with the disappointment and frustration of the present they offer themselves as much more to be desired than the things of to-day, and the fondest hope of quite a few is that in some way or other the interests and activities of long past times may be recaptured. We would fain resurrect those departed glories from the dust of oblivion, dress them up once more in their faded trappings, and seek to regain for ourselves the joys and thrills of our "growing-time" in the way of the Truth.

Now King Solomon tells us that such procedure is exceedingly unwise. He does not even recommend our sparing time to cast so much as a few longing thoughts back upon the irrevocable past. With masterly restraint of language he says "thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this". And how right he is! The successful business man may be understood if he decides to re-visit his native village and look upon the scenes of his boyhood, but should he start to run around in knickerbockers and try to accommodate his portly frame to his old school desk he will only succeed in making himself look ridiculous. And is it so very different for the Christian? We have, surely, progressed greatly in every respect since those early days. Our spiritual stature, the breadth of our theological understanding, the scope of our Christian outlook and activity, will, if we have faithfully used our privileges and opportunities, have expanded out of all likeness to, and beyond all comparison with, the crudities and immature efforts of our babyhood in Christ. Roseate as the backward view may seem, it has no place for us

now, and to achieve the aim of restoring those days and re-establishing those activities would assuredly bring disillusion and disappointment on a greater scale than anything we have ever experienced.

The Christian is not to be like a road-roller. He has to keep on going in one direction only. He is the real original inventor of the one-way street. "Forgetting the things that are behind" cries Paul "and reaching forth unto the things that are before, I press toward the mark." What a good thing it is that our God also forgets the things that are behind! Not many of us but would prefer to forget quite a lot of things that happened in those "good old days". None of us there are who, even if they could attain to their desire for a revival of the position thirty years ago, would wish for their own personal failures and mistakes and shortcomings to come to life again and be repeated. Contrary to the thought sometimes expressed, we Christians are *not* called upon to enquire for the old paths; we are expected to press forward as pilgrims seeing before their mental sight always the vision of a celestial city, thinking never of the past, not much about the present, but a great deal about the future. And if it be a choice between the roseate glow which lingers still about past glories, a glow which is a dying one anyway, like sunset, and the golden radiance of the everlasting city which is tinging the sky above the distant hills in front of us—well then, how foolish we should be to prefer the fading radiance of the past to the shining brilliance of the future. Let our eyes and hearts and hands, in all our thoughts and words and actions, be turned forever forward, recking nothing of that which is past and can never be recalled, but reaching always to that which is before, hasting ever to higher and farther reaches of endeavour and achievement until, at the last, we appear triumphantly "*before God in Zion!*"

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

15. Until The End Be

There is something heartrendingly tragic in the spectacle of an old man deprived, at the last, of the fruits of that for which he has laboured zealously and perseveringly through a long life. It happens in everyday affairs and Christians are not immune; it happened to stalwart men of God in Old Testament days. Moses led the children of Israel forty years through the wilderness toward the promised Land, but he was destined to behold that fair goal only with his eyes and never himself to set foot in it. Samuel, serving his God and his country from childhood to old age, welded a disorganised rabble of tribesmen into a nation, gave them a rule of justice and organised government, and died in obscurity leaving the fruits of his work to be reaped by King David. The aged priest Simeon, leader of the tiny band that in the days just prior to the First Advent "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" lived just long enough to take the Babe in his old arms; but he was laid aside in death before the glory of the Messiah was revealed to the believing in Israel. So it was with Daniel. Taken from his home in early youth, he lived his whole life in an alien land, passionately looking forward to the day when God would relent and set the captives free, restoring again the glories of the beloved city—but when at last the time did come he must perforce, like Moses, see his fellows go with rejoicing into the promised land, knowing that he could never go with them. Daniel had done more than any man to keep alive the knowledge of God and hope in His promise; he had interceded with God on behalf of his people; in political life he probably did much to make the Return possible, but he himself was left out of its realisation. Two years after the Restoration, we find him still in Babylon, quite definitely now waiting for the end. Daniel was one of those of whom the writer to the Hebrews afterwards spoke when he said "these all, having received a good report through faith, received not the promise." Like many another faithful warrior for God, he was laid aside to await his reward in a better day.

Two years after the capture of Babylon by the Medes came the Restoration. The Median dynasty was at an end; in Cyrus the Persian dynasty began. The change was marked by an unexpected toleration of all the subject peoples' native religions; the favour shown the Jewish captives in allowing them to revive the Judean state and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem was only one of several such

concessions granted by the Persian king to the varied peoples under his rule. Clay tablets of Cyrus have been discovered in which he speaks of his intention to rebuild various of the idolatrous Temples in much the same language that he used in his famous decree to the Jews as recorded in the first chapter of Ezra.

Daniel must have seen the jubilant company set off for Judah with mixed feelings. There would have been quiet joy that at last the promise of God was fulfilled and the Captivity was ended; the Temple was to be rebuilt and the worship of God in his own city restored. But there was something lacking; the throne of the Lord was not to be established in Jerusalem and no king of David's line would sit in regal power on Mount Zion. Zerubbabel, of the line of David and legal heir to the throne, was leader of the Restoration only by appointment of Cyrus and he was nothing more than the Persian governor of Jerusalem, responsible to Cyrus for the good behaviour of the people. Joshua of the sons of Aaron was the legitimate High Priest and fully authorised to administer the rites of his sacred office, but even with the Temple rebuilt there was still a vital deficiency; the Ark of the Covenant was not there and the Most Holy was empty. This is not the real triumph of Israel, Daniel must have reflected sadly as the joyous shouts died away and the long procession disappeared in the distance. There was still much to transpire before the good promises of God can be fulfilled. So he betook himself again to study and prayer that he might continue to be a faithful vehicle of the Holy Spirit in making known to the sons of men the things that God purposed to do.

Life in Babylon went on much as before. The pioneers away in Jerusalem attacked their task with enthusiasm at first and then drifted away to their own interests and the building of the Temple was neglected. Not much news got back to Babylon for communications were slow and difficult, and in any case most of the Jews who remained in Babylon had done so because they were not greatly interested in the rebuilding of Judea. They had mostly been born in Babylon and the land of Judah was a foreign and unknown country to them. Daniel probably had little in common with the Babylonian Jews; they were not his kind: but there were almost certainly a few remaining in the city whose hearts were in Judea but whose circum-

stances for one reason or another forbid their participating in the Return and with these Daniel would have found a common bond of interest and friendship. So for two years more he studied and pondered until at last another and a final revelation of God's future purposes was impressed upon his mind.

He was in the country, on the bank of the River Tigris, when he saw the vision. The Tigris flows, at its nearest, some twenty or more miles from Babylon and it is evident that for some reason Daniel had either temporarily or permanently left the city. It might be that he possessed a country retreat at that spot and had gone there to meditate quietly during the three weeks of mental stress to which he refers in Chapter 10. Perhaps, on the other hand, he had for the last time retired from the active administration of affairs of state—he was now about ninety years of age—and had secluded himself in some quiet country or riverside spot calmly to await his end. At any rate it was by the swiftly flowing waters of the river which divided Babylonia from Persia that he perceived the glorious angel descending to meet him and was struck speechless and helpless before the magnificence of that glory.

Ezekiel tells of seeing such a vision; so does Isaiah. Saul of Tarsus had the same experience, on the Damascus road. The fact that such manifestations are not the lot of Christians to-day is no argument against their reality to those faithful men of old time who did see them, nor the verity of their accounts. Something more than the natural sense of sight is necessary and all men do not possess that something more. The men with Saul of Tarsus saw nothing; it is significant though that a nameless fear seized upon them and they ran and hid themselves. The young man with Elisha could not see what the prophet saw, Heaven's forces passing and repassing on the mountains around them for their protection, until Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened. Sights of heavenly things can only be impressed upon the human mind by the Holy Spirit, and only Spirit-filled men can be receptive to spiritual things. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned.*" (I Cor. 2. 9-10). We in this modern materialistic Age are ourselves so cumbered with material thoughts and preoccupations of all kinds that we cannot so easily, as could Daniel in his quiet retreat and the intensity of his communion with God, lend ourselves to be vehicles of the Holy Spirit.

It is not uncommon, though, in this our day, for watchers around the bed of a dying Christian to catch a few whispered words or glimpse a sudden look in the failing eyes, as though the depart-

ing one had suddenly seen some wonderfully glorious vista of which the watchers had no consciousness. It may well be that as the material things slip rapidly away in the last few moments of earthly life the Holy Spirit finds more abundant entrance into a mind that has always been a sanctuary of that Spirit, and sights such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and even Saul perceived, appear plainly revealed to the inner consciousness.

Gabriel's message covers the whole of Chapter 11 and part of Chapter 12. It is readily recognised as an outline of world events which in Daniel's day were still future but which must be accomplished before the final deliverance of Israel. Very little of it could have been intelligible to Daniel; there is still much of it which, while not unintelligible to us to-day, is nevertheless so obscure that there are a great variety of interpretations. The first four verses of Chapter 11 are obvious enough to us; they describe briefly the passing of the Persian empire and the coming of the Greeks, the "belly and thighs of brass" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and the leopard of Daniel's earlier vision. That much was probably plain to him. The remainder goes off into a long catalogue of "wars and rumours of wars" in which the most definite factor is the climax, the coming of Christ at his Second Advent, pictured by the standing up of Michael the Archangel for the salvation of Israel. That, at least, must have been quite understandable to Daniel, but the long record of happenings which had to transpire first must have led him to realise as never before that many years were yet to pass before the great deliverance could come. It might well be that in this message Daniel realised the great truth that God will save Israel and all mankind, "whosoever will" not by patching up this very unsatisfactory present world, but by a resurrection from the dead to a new world, a world in which God himself makes all things new. That is the clear implication of Chapter 12.

One wonders how this detailed and extremely lengthy statement of things to come got recorded. Daniel listened to all that Gabriel had to say but the circumstances of the interview, the grandeur and solemnity of the occasion, entirely preclude any idea that he wrote it down at the time. We must here allow for the influence of the Holy Spirit, quickening Daniel's mind after the angel had left him, so that he remembered accurately every word and compiled a complete transcript of all that had been said.

So the failing hand of the old man traced the record of his last revelation. That it was to be for the benefit of future generations he no longer had any doubt. "*I am come*" Gabriel had told him "*to make thee understand what shall befall thy people*

in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days." (Ch. 10. vs. 14.). Therein lies a great principle of Divine revelation. Anxious as we may be to witness in our own time the fulfilment of "all things written" we must realise, as Daniel was led to realise, that God's time-scale is not as ours. We can study the prophetic Scriptures and witness the signs of the times with ardent zeal and heart-felt longing, but the best and most scrupulous of our conclusions cannot take into account all that is in the mind of God; only that which He has revealed, and He does not reveal all. Countless earnest Christians in past ages have been persuaded that Bible prophecy and contemporary events have joined together to point unerringly to their own time as the day of Divine intervention in human history for the final battle between good and evil; and none have actually witnessed the climax. But it will not be always thus. The time must surely come when the last generation of watchers has had revealed to it the last hidden secrets of God's design. Then the Clock of the Ages will strike twelve.

It behoves us all to be as sure of our faith and as fervent in our expectation as was Daniel, and others like him. To live as though the end will come to-morrow, and yet be prepared to live out the span of natural life to extreme old age, undisturbed in faith and hope whether the outward signs point to the one or the other eventuality; that is the faith of Daniel and the faith God wants in us. "Though it tarry" cried Habakkuk "wait for it, for it will surely come; it will not tarry." So many in modern times have made shipwreck of their faith because of the failure of expectations. They could wait ten years, twenty years, thirty years, for the Kingdom, but they could not wait a lifetime. But the Creator has waited through the entire span of human history and has never deviated one iota from that challenging statement of faith both in himself and in man whom He made, uttered more than three thousand years ago "As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory". The thoughtful Christian, viewing as

dispassionately as he can the insane world in which he must perforce live to-day, might be pardoned for thinking that the present order cannot possibly survive the next few years. If he is right, and the end of this Age is that much near, all Christians and all right thinking men everywhere have cause, knowingly or unknowingly, for rejoicing, for that climax means the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in manifest power over the nations. It means the end of cruelty and hate and injustice and oppression. It means the fulfilment of the inspired words of Zephaniah "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3. 9.). It means the time when "The Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him... He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." (Isa. 40. 10-11). It means the realisation of words spoken to John on Patmos "Behold, the dwelling-place 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. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21. 3-4). It means that every faithful Christian will live and reign with Christ for the thousand years, the while the "ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads... and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35. 10.).

That is what it means if the world does perish by its own hand in our own time. And if not, if the evil vitality of this old order of things prolongs its life for a season and time, the end will still be the same and just as sure, for it is written in the purposes of God and will surely come to pass. Like Daniel, we may have to wait longer than we expect and longer than we wish, but "it will surely come; it will not tarry".

To be continued

This business of Christianity would be fairly straightforward if all that was required was to preach the death of Jesus; not to live his life. But the Lord presumably knew best how his Gospel might be made understandable and it was He who said men would know his disciples by their love one for another; talked about a light which was to shine before men, and an unhidden city. Writing about him, speaking about him, it would all be so much easier. It is living like him that He requires. And there's the rub. ("Reconciliation.")

These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.—Rev. 14. 4.

Christianity is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations. *It is following a living Christ; walking as He walked; doing as He did; imitating His example in all things.* This is Christian movement—Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of His character imprinted on our new nature, and reproduced in our life and ways.

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN

Luke 18, 9-14

The word "Pharisee" in ordinary language brings up thoughts of arrogance, pride, hypocrisy, cant, sanctimoniousness; the term "pharisaical" has passed into the English language under the influence of the New Testament which has played so great a part in the development of the language as now spoken. It is true that the picture of *Pharisees displayed in the four Gospels is almost uniformly a deplorable one*. With but a few notable exceptions, in their contact with Jesus they presented anything but a commendable sight. For them Jesus reserved his severest words of condemnation, and they in their turn were His inveterate enemies. Jesus did not hesitate to tell them that the outcasts and dregs of society would get into the Kingdom of Heaven before they did, and because of that saying they were coldly furious. He stripped away the shroud of respectability with which they concealed their inward corruption, showing them for what they were, and they never forgave him.

It had not always been thus. The community of the Pharisees had a noble and auspicious beginning. Five centuries previously, away back in the halcyon days of the Restoration from Babylon, among the pioneers who accepted the offer of *Cyrus of Persia to return and rebuild their own land* there arose a body of devoted and zealous men fired with the ambition to maintain the Mosaic Law and all Israel's religious institutions against any further recurrence of idolatry or of anything that might jeopardise Israel's position as the people of God, so to preserve his truth in the world. The stability of the newly-emergent State owed a great deal to those men at that time. It was largely due to them that the nation maintained so steadfast a witness to God through the fearful times of Greek and Syrian persecution which filled the intervening centuries before Jesus came. These men became known as Pharisees, separated ones, and separated they were to the service of God. But by Jesus' time all had changed. That erstwhile upright and God-fearing society of the Pharisees had degenerated into the hide-bound, power-seeking, bigoted sect with which we are familiar in the Gospels. There were some good Pharisees, but not many. For the most part they had long since abrogated their historic role as the teachers of the people and the guardians of true religion and now the people shunned and avoided them, whilst they on their part sought the company of the rich and

influential in Israel and despised the ordinary people. John the Baptist, with his usual forthrightness, had already called them a generation of vipers, and warned them of the inevitable end of their ways if they did not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Jesus, in the burning words which occupy most of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew's Gospel, concluded his denunciation with the terrible words "*ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna?*" It would seem that our Lord's penetrating insight told him these men had come perilously close to the point where repentance and reformation were impossible because their very capacity and ability to repent and reform was well-nigh stultified and dead. When Jesus began to tell a story about a Pharisee, therefore, his audience knew within a little what to expect. They must have gathered around interestedly and composed themselves quietly to listen.

This story was not one of condemnation. It was aimed at the Pharisees, but its purpose was to awaken them, or some of them, if it were possible, to a realisation of their position before God. It was designed to bring them to the recollection of the standards which had inspired the creation of their fellowship so long time ago, to remind them that in theory at any rate they stood for the true and sincere worship of God and realisation of every Israelite's undone condition before God were it not for the Covenant whose provisions, faithfully carried out, would effect his reconciliation with God. Jesus called them back to first principles, and because He was thus calling them He refrained from condemnatory expressions. He just stated the truth of the matter from the standpoint of God and left each one who heard to make application of the story to himself. Even Matthew, recording the incident, appears to have grasped the position and softened the words in which he recorded it. He does not say, as he might well have said, "he spake this parable unto the Pharisees"; he used an expression which pointed unerringly to them but avoided the use of the name; "*he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*".

"Two men" said Jesus, "*went up into the temple to pray*". Nothing very unusual about that; sons of Israel from near and far were constantly visiting the Temple at Jerusalem for that very purpose.

Its courts were perpetually crowded, and of all who thus came to the centre of Israel's worship there were many to whom it was a profound religious experience. It was the next sentence which rivetted attention and focussed all eyes upon Jesus. "*The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican!*" That last word was enough to make everyone sit up! Even to class the hated publican in the same breath with the Pharisee was enough to send eyes hard and cold, and lips pressed tightly together. The "publican" (*telones*, tax-gatherer) was just about the most disliked member of society in Jesus' day. The Roman system of tax collection had the merit of simplicity; they "farmed out" the risk. Any man, Jew or Gentile, could purchase the right of collecting taxes in a given area. The Roman government received a definite sum by way of purchase money, the highest bidder naturally securing the concession, and thereafter Rome was no longer interested. The successful tax-gatherer then had to set about the task of collecting enough taxes to re-imburse himself and show a profit. That they could and did do so is evidenced by the case of Zaccheus, (Matt. 19) who "*was the chief among the tax-gatherers, and he was rich*". Besides being hated by the unfortunate people who had to pay taxes, which is understandable, they were also hated by the Pharisees because of their collaboration with the occupying Power, the domination of which the Pharisees only accepted under duress. A Jewish tax-gatherer was therefore regarded as a traitor to his own nation and despised accordingly. But Jesus seemed singularly oblivious to these considerations, for he pictured the tax-gatherer as well as the Pharisee as having reverence for the God of Israel and inspired with the same desire to express that reverence in action.

Both men went up into the Temple to pray. They both acknowledged the same Law, at least outwardly, but that is about as far as the similarity went. The Pharisee, accustomed to the respect of men and sure of his standing before God, returned thanks that he was the man that he was. He could think of no element in his life capable of change for the better. He already was all that God could possibly want him to be. And he preened himself in the pride of that knowledge. The publican—tax-gatherer—came conscious of only one thing, his inadequacy in the sight of God. He had come short of the Divine glory; he knew that. He needed forgiveness; he knew that too, and in an agony of self-abasement he pleaded for Divine mercy.

The Pharisee was probably a very good man. There is nothing in the account to say he was not, and the brief picture given us is at least sufficient to show that Jesus intended his hearers to picture

the typical orthodox Pharisee—zealous for righteousness and the observance of the Mosaic law; bigoted almost to the point of fanaticism in his allegiance to the "traditions of the fathers", punctilious in the discharge of every duty which custom and ordinance required of a son of Abraham. He duly fasted on the third and fifth day of every week, and took care that his neighbours and business associates knew about it. He rendered the tenth of his income to the things of God as the Law required—verse 12 should read "*I give tithes of all that I acquire*" not "possess", as the A.V. has it; he tithed his income, not his capital. Like the rich young ruler on another occasion, he could say, referring to the Divine Law, "all these things have I kept from my youth up" but unlike that rich young ruler he did not add "what lack I yet?" for in his own mind he had no idea that anything was lacking. He had done all that God had required of him and now he looked to God to do the handsome thing and acknowledge the fact.

"*The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself*". There is more than a suspicion here that the man was praying to himself; at any rate God does not appear to be much more than an opposite number in the conversation. There is no recognition of any shortcoming, no plea for forgiveness, no acknowledgment of the exalted majesty of the ineffable Divinity to whom all created beings owe their life and existence, no supplication for help in leading a better life, or guidance in approaching more nearly to the throne of God's holiness. He addressed Deity in the fashion he would accost an acquaintance across the street, not even with the courtesy and respect he would have accorded his own High Priest had he been in the presence of that dignitary. In fact it hardly seemed a prayer at all; rather more like a boastful statement of the position. "*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer*". He wanted to say out loud in the hearing of his fellows that which he liked to believe his fellows thought of him. As a Pharisee he was one of God's chosen ones and all others were inferior. One day, when the Messiah would have come, and the Romans had been expelled, his superiority would be manifest even more than now, for then he would be advanced from his present position of moral leadership to actual political leadership and not only Israel but all the Gentiles would bow down before him. After all, he and his brother Pharisees were the present successors of the tradition established in the days of Ezra when the first Pharisees stood in the breach to defend the nation against prevalent indifference to the things of God, and preserved the

Law and all that it implied for future generations. It was only right that God should acknowledge the services he and his had rendered and honour him accordingly.

Whilst thus he stood and congratulated himself the publican found courage to make his petition. He was under no illusion; he knew himself to be unclean in God's sight. He came with nothing in his hands and with nothing wherewith to commend himself in God's sight. His prayer was brief and eloquent in its simplicity. "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" The Greek has the definite article, *the sinner*, as though he counted himself a greater sinner than other men, just as the Pharisee had counted himself greater in his righteousness than other men. He asked nothing of God; he came in repentance and threw himself on God's mercy.

And God looked down from Heaven and saw those two men standing there! "*I tell you*" said Jesus "*this man*"—the publican—"*went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*". We hardly need the comment for ourselves as we read the story, for it seems so obvious. How could anyone justify the Pharisee in his arrogance and count him as more worthy in God's sight than the publican? Whether any of those self-righteous men who stood listening to the story saw the light in consequence we do not know; this talk of the exalted being abased and the lowly being raised up ran counter to all their traditions and anyway was inflammatory material. If the common people took it seriously their own positions might be jeopardised. And whoever heard of publicans being converted anyway? As lackeys of Rome they deserved only the same treatment as would be meted out to unbelieving Gentiles, Romans and all, at the last day, everlasting destruction in Gehenna. It is probable that when the group broke

up and Jesus had gone his way, the majority at least of the Pharisees who heard the story refused to accept the implication and continued in the blind arrogance which at the last swept them into the maelstrom of John's prediction. When Titus destroyed Jerusalem forty years later, the Pharisees disappeared for ever.

But the same mental attitude is met with so often among Christians. There is a type of mind which, whilst thoroughly loyal to God, takes pride in its exclusiveness and separation from "the world" and not infrequently from fellow-Christians who do not share the same outlook on the faith or the same conception of Christian service. "Spiritual pride" is a very real thing and an ever present danger to the disciples of Christ, for the very love and zeal for him which leads us to him at the first is liable to drive us into an excess of devotion which can bear fruit at the end in an unreasoning and unseeing bigotry which of itself stultifies our further efforts to do him service. We do well to remember our Lord's injunction, "*... when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do*" (Luke 17.10). The difference between the best of us and the worst of us, great though it may seem in our sight, is very little in God's sight. Repentance and devotion mean much more to him than mighty works and lavish gifts. Jesus commended the scribe who said "*to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*" (Mark 12.34) "*Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*" Jesus told that man. The publican in this parable was not far from the Kingdom of God; the Pharisee, on the other hand, had not yet even realised his need for that Kingdom.

Character never can be strong, noble, and beautiful, nor can conduct be worthy of intelligent beings bearing God's image, if Scripture truth be not wrought into the very soul by personal search and pondering. Let us not stay for ever in the primer of religious knowledge, amid the easy things that we learned at our mother's knee. There are glorious things beyond these: let us go on to learn them. The word of Christ can get into your heart to dwell in you and transform you only through intelligent thought and pondering.

In a remarkable statement, Paul tells us that experience worketh hope. Perhaps only a Christian Apostle could have made such a statement. In the case of the unconverted, it is probably true to suggest that experience, far from working hope, leads to little more than despair. Those who are living without Christ in this world can find little in their experience to stimulate a sense of hope. The wages of sin is death, and a life that is committed to evil can know little of joy, and certainly nothing of eager anticipation of the glories that are yet to be revealed.

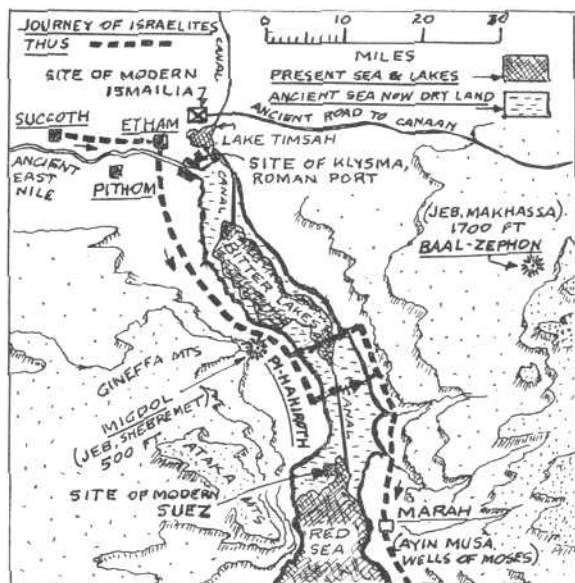
THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

The story of Moses leading the tribes of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land is one of the epics of history; the highlight of that epic is the description of the Red Sea parting its waters to allow the fugitives to cross into safety. Critics never tire of enlarging upon the impossibility of such a happening and claim this as a bit of folklore inserted into the story. But in this particular locality it is not impossible, and a close examination of the topographical indications in the narrative and some investigation into the climatic phenomena of the district shows in a reasonably accurate fashion just what did happen. It must be remembered, however, that no matter what natural forces can be shown to have been the agents of the great deliverance the overruling providence of God cannot be ignored. It was by His disposition of things that the powers of Nature came into operation at that moment of time to effect His purpose and in that lies the essence of the wonderful thing that happened.

The first factor to be considered is the territory. It was not known until almost the turn of the century that the configuration of the land has changed greatly since the days of Moses; this was established by the labours on site of the French Egyptologist, M. Edouard Naville, the British geologist, Sir J. W. Dawson, and the American geologist Prof. G. F. Wright. Between 1883 and 1900 it was ascertained by these three, working independently, that the southern part of the isthmus of Suez, where the crossing took place, has been rising, and the northern part sinking, through the ages, so that land which was once below the sea is now above it, and vice versa. Lake Menzaleh, in the Nile delta, was fertile land supporting farms and towns in the days of Moses. According to the 10th century Arab historian Mamoudy the sea began to break through in 535 A.D. and within a century the present lake had submerged the sinking land. Conversely, south of present day Ismailia the sea has receded and rising land taken its place. As late as Roman times, the Red Sea, which now ends at Suez, extended as far north as Lake Timsah (see accompanying map) and there was a seaport nearby called Klyisma. A branch of the Nile, now dried up because of the progressive elevation of the land, entered this extension of the Red Sea at Klyisma, and merchant ships from Arabia were able to sail up the Red Sea and into the Mediterranean via the Nile—a kind of ancient version of the Suez Canal. Several of the Pharaohs

from the 15th B.C. century onward found it necessary to dredge and deepen this branch on account of the rising land level; the last to carry out this operation was the Roman emperor Hadrian. Since then the continuing elevation has caused the sea to recede to Suez, leaving only the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah as evidences of its former extent.

The Red Sea thus formed a continuous barrier between Egypt and Asia except at the north, which was heavily defended against invaders. This is why the Hebrews needed Divine intervention in order to escape; the only possible land passage was barred by Pharaoh's soldiery. Hence Moses had to turn south along the seaside, a seemingly suicidal policy since no land way across into Sinai existed.



The Exodus proper began at Succoth. "They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness" (Exod. 13-20) Succoth was near Pithom, one of the store cities built for Pharaoh by the Israelites; the site of Pithom was discovered by Naville in 1883 with the ruins of many of the store-buildings. Examination of the brickwork showed that the lower courses were of Nile clay bound with well-chopped straw, the intermediate ones with more scanty straw and the upper ones with pieces of rushes and Nile water plants instead of straw, a striking confirmation of Exod. 5. 12, where the Israelites were given no more straw and had to search for

"stubble" instead. In Roman times the town was called Heeropolis and Naville found a Roman milestone here indicating nine (Roman) miles to the port of Klysmā—about eight and three-quarter English miles, showing that the Red Sea still extended thus far. In fact Strabo, the Greek geographer, refers to the Red Sea as the "Heeropolitan Gulf".

From Succoth the people marched to Etham, near modern Ismailia, about twelve miles, a reasonable day's journey for such a host encumbered with children, tents, belongings and cattle. Etham is the Hebrew equivalent of Khatem, the Egyptian name of the garrison town on the frontier through which all travellers into or out of Egypt must pass. Abraham, Joseph and Jacob all passed through Khatem. The Israelites, of course, must have encamped in the open country outside the town. Through the town and beyond it ran the road which led directly to Canaan, the Promised Land. A few weeks' journeying on that road would have brought them to their destination, had it not been for Pharaoh's soldiery barring the way, and, too, for the Lord's instruction to Moses bidding him at this juncture to turn southward, remaining still on the Egyptian side of the sea. "... *turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it ye shall encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in*" (Exod. 14. 1-2).

None of these three names have survived and resource has to be made to topography to follow the story. In going southward from Etham Moses would shortly leave the valley and find himself traversing a narrow passage a few miles wide with the sea on his left and a range of mountains, now the Gineffa mountains, on his right. This was the part of the sea which to-day is known as the Bitter Lakes. Some twenty-five miles from Etham the passage opens out into a broad grassy plain, ideal for an encampment such as Israel needed. At the entrance to this plain there stands one notable rock peak some five hundred feet high which is to-day called Jebel Shebremet, an ideal "look-out" point. "Migdol" is a Hebrew word meaning "watch tower" and this peak might well have borne this name in ancient times. Directly opposite this peak, on the other side of the sea, rise the imposing precipices of the northern end of the Rahan range, with one solitary upstanding peak seventeen hundred feet high called Jebel Makhassa. This could easily be the Baal-zephon of the narrative—the name is Semitic, meaning "Lord of the North," and it has been suggested that it might have been

conferred by Phoenician sailormen. Coming up the gulf from distant lands, the appearance of this majestic mountain looking towards the north, on their starboard bow, was a signal that the dangers of their voyage were past, they would shortly be entering the eastern Nile and so emerge into their own sea, the Mediterranean, to dock safely in their home ports of Tyre and Sidon. Here, perhaps, they gave thanks to their god Baal, unknown here in Egypt, for protection in danger and a safe voyage nearly completed.

Pi-hahiroth is an Egyptian word meaning "the place of meadows". This grassy plain in which they were now encamped well fits the name. It seems fairly conclusive that here, a stretch of several miles along the then sea, now mainly land, just south of the Bitter Lakes, was the place of the crossing.

This explains Pharaoh's exultant exclamation "*they are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in*". By following this route the Israelites were on the wrong side of the sea and had no means of escape. Southward the way was blocked by another range of mountains (the Jebel Ataka, near Suez) and behind them the narrow pass, through which they had entered, could be easily held by Pharaoh's troops. The latter part of his words really means "the wilderness is closed to them", that is, they have missed their chance of getting into the wilderness on the other side of the Red Sea outside Egypt. So he decided to recapture them. It might have taken two days for Israel to reach this point from Etham; it would take a day for a messenger from the garrison at Etham to reach Pharaoh at his capital and advise him of the position, a day to collect his force of chariots and cavalry and two more days to reach the narrow pass at Migdol. The Israelites had probably just about got well settled in their camp at Pi-hahiroth when they "*lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid*" (Exod. 14.10).

With the sea in front and the Egyptians behind, and no apparent avenue of escape, there is perhaps some excuse for their loss of faith. The position must have seemed hopeless. It were better, they said, that they had never attempted to leave Egypt. But Moses was equal to the occasion. "*Speak unto the children of Israel*" God said, "*that they go forward. Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea*" (Exod. 14. 15-16).

This startling instruction had to be passed to all Israel. The number of men, women and children involved, with their flocks and herds, would

require a stretch of land alongside the sea something like seven miles long by a mile deep and messengers had to be sent through all this area with Moses' commands. There was much striking of tents and packing up of possessions and rounding up of cattle to be done before a move could be made. All this would take time but the Egyptians were not likely to be in any hurry. They had the escaped slaves neatly bottled up, or so they thought, and were camped across the only practical exit from the plain, so they almost certainly settled down for the night with the intention of commencing operations on the morrow. That they did establish a camp instead of advancing on the fugitives at once is indicated by the narrative.

Israel, on the contrary, was wide awake. The confidence of Moses must have communicated itself to the erstwhile fearful host; perhaps memories of the wonders they had so recently seen brought a measure of shame for their lack of faith and a spirit of expectancy as they gazed across the heaving waters at the opposite shore six miles away, plainly visible in the light of the full moon. In many a heart there must have been the unspoken question "What is God going to do?". So they waited, wondering *"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left"* (Exod. 14, 21-22).

The natural cause of this wonder is attributed in the narrative to "a strong east wind" blowing all that night. Israel was facing the sea at the southern end of the Bitter Lakes, where the ground is now twenty-seven feet above sea level but at that time was below sea level to the amount of probably seven or eight feet. The sea here was probably about six miles wide but only this deep. To the south, fifteen miles away, lay what is the present head of the Red Sea at Suez, where the water was much deeper; to the north, only a mile or so, the Bitter Lakes, where the water also was deeper. The sea lay in a valley not more than twenty miles wide between the Egyptian and Sinai mountains, running roughly north-south. And there came down from the high tableland of Northern Sinai a tempestuous easterly or more likely north-easterly gale which, deflected by the Gineffa mountain range on the Egyptian side, channelled itself at increasing force down the valley, driving the waters towards what is now modern Suez and laying bare the sea bed over the ten miles or so of shallow water. Some water would remain in the

rather deeper Bitter Lakes so it was true that the waters were "*a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left*". They were safe from attack on their flanks; only from the rear could they be pursued.

This recession of the sea was not a unique phenomenon, occurring only at the time of the Exodus. The same north-easterly gale has acted in much the same way through the ages and still does so to-day. The results are not now so spectacular since there is no longer any shallow sea to be swept aside. Nevertheless the records of the Suez Canal Company show that during its first thirty years of existence the variation of sea level at the present head of the Gulf at Suez amounted to over ten feet; since there is virtually no tide in the Red Sea this is largely attributable to the action of the wind. In 1895 the water at the eastern end of Lake Menzaleh in the Nile delta was lowered six feet by this same wind, as measured on the instruments of a British Army surveyor at the time. A confirmatory example of this effect is on record by the work of a United States Government survey of wind effects on Lake Erie (reported by Prof. G. F. Wright). The difference in water level between Toledo at the western end and Buffalo at the eastern end under certain wind conditions was found to amount to fifteen feet.

This is one of the instances in Old Testament narrative where God has intervened to time a perfectly natural and not uncommon act of Nature to occur at just the moment needed to execute some feature of His purpose. It is in that fact that the essence of miracle resides.

The people of Israel, perceiving the waters ebbing away to reveal a vast expanse of flat sand stretching into the distance, rounded up their cattle, gathered up their goods, and set out to cross. The gale blew across their path but they took no notice of that. They did not go over as a procession; that would have taken an interminable time. There was at least ten miles length of exposed sea-bed and they would have crossed together as one body over much of that distance. They could have completed the six miles crossing in something like four hours. Level sand is usually quite firm after the water has left it, as witness our English beaches when the tide is out, so that progress, though slow, would not be difficult. With darkness falling at 6.0 p.m., and allowing a few hours for the waters to recede, they could have got started by 10 o'clock and the last stragglers be walking up the opposite beach by 2.30 the following morning.

By that time one of the Egyptian sentries, making his rounds, most likely had his suspicions aroused and sent an investigating party to recon-

noitre the Israelite camp. The party returned with the alarming news that the birds had flown and the sea-bed was bare. This latter phenomenon might have been no new thing to the Egyptians; unless they had known it happen before, their superstitious fears would almost certainly have precluded them from attempting to follow. As it was, they did not hesitate to drive their chariots on to the sea-bed in pursuit. The time would have been about 2 a.m. and the fugitives just about at the other side.

Chariot wheels and sea sand, even firm sand, are probably not a good combination. The Egyptians found the going difficult. "In the morning watch" the narrative says, the Lord "looked at the host of the Egyptians and took off their chariot wheels" so that the occupants were pitched out. The Hebrew morning watch was the period 2.0 to 6.0 a.m. It might have been about 4 a.m., when the pursuers began to say to each other, as the narrative has it, that they had best get back to shore for it was evident that the Lord was fighting for Israel. A new factor had come in to complicate the situation; the wind had dropped.

As the force of the gale died down the banked up waters far out in the Red Sea to the south began to return. The sands became saturated with water and the erstwhile firm surface turned into treacherous quicksands. According to *Exod. 14. 23* the pursuers had got to the midway point of the crossing so that they had something like three miles between themselves and safety. "And the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared" (this expression denotes about 5 o'clock) "and the Egyptians fled against it. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and

the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh. There remained not so much as one of them" (vs. 27-28). With the cessation of the wind, the sea would have returned from Suez in a roaring tidal wave which could easily have attained a speed of sixty miles an hour. Fifteen or twenty minutes would have seen the end. The hosts of Pharaoh had no chance. The fact that their bodies, again according to the narrative, were cast up upon the eastern shore shows that the easterly gale had been replaced by a south-westerly blowing down from the Ataka mountains near Suez, which would have brought the waters back all the more quickly.

It might reasonably be queried why the cutting of the Suez Canal through this former sea-bed, or the periodic subsequent dredging of the Canal, has not brought to light objects or weapons giving concrete evidence of this disaster to the Egyptians. It is perhaps too much to expect. The Canal at this point lies towards the western side of the ancient sea-bed, so far as the boundaries of the latter can be estimated, probably two miles or more from the area where the Egyptians must have been overtaken by the waters. The Canal itself was 29 feet deep when constructed and has been deepened to 42 feet in recent years but implements of comparatively modern or mediæval times have been found to have sunk much more than this in the alluvial soil of Egypt so that if any remains of those chariots and weapons do survive they will be lying at levels far below any man-made excavation of modern times. The evidence for the historical and literal accuracy of this enthralling story still lies in the exact correspondence between the narrative itself and the physical features of the territory in which it is said to have taken place.

"The Christians of Tyari, a small town in Armenia are in the habit of treating lunatics by burying them alive, with the full Church burial service, but leaving a small hole through which the patient can breathe. After twenty-four hours they disinter the lunatic to find that the nervous shock sometimes has beneficial results."

"In one case which came under my notice" (says the Rev. Wigram, an Anglican minister resident in the district) "the man was buried all right and in due time his friends came to disinter him. As soon as the stones were removed he sprang up, crying 'I am risen! I am risen. It is the Last Day!' Then, looking round upon the men who had come to resurrect him, he exclaimed disgustedly, 'But whoever would have expected to see you at the

Resurrection of the Just?" (Wigram in "The Cradle of Mankind.")

So many of us are inclined to limit the scope of Divine salvation to a narrow circle of fellow-believers, or consign to Divine disfavour those who may not agree with us on the interpretation of the Scriptures or the practice of the Christian life. Maybe our Master, seeing deeper than do we, does not attach over-much importance to these little eccentricities of ours. But it is good for us to realise that He is quietly choosing his own from every part of the "field", and that we do not well to condemn other earnest souls as unworthy of the Kingdom because in some fashion or another they do not measure up to our own conception of the Divine calling.

AHIJAH THE SHILONITE

The little priestly settlement at Shiloh, where the Tabernacle stood for four centuries during the period of the Judges, had lain desolate since the disastrous day when the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines in the time of Eli and Samuel. It was still inhabited, but its glory had departed, for the Tabernacle had been hurriedly taken down and re-erected at Nob out of the Philistines' reach. Later it went to Gibeon, and now, in the middle of the reign of Solomon, it had for twenty years past been superseded by the magnificent Temple the Israelite king had built at Jerusalem. But Shiloh had still one claim to its credit; it was to produce the first of the long line of Hebrew prophets who rose up, one after another, to call kings, priests and people from their indifference and idolatry back to the worship of God and allegiance to the Mosaic Covenant. That line terminated in Malachi, who, four hundred years before Christ, foretold the coming of a Herald of Messiah and then Messiah himself, the Sun of righteousness, to arise with healing in his wings. Malachi was the last of those prophets, and the first, more than five hundred years before him, was Ahijah of Shiloh.

Ahijah, like Malachi, recorded his prophecy in a book. Unlike Malachi, his book has not survived. All that is known of his preaching and work is contained in the First Book of Kings. From that brief record we can draw a picture of the man and his character, a picture which is tantalising because it is so dim. But the fact that he conveyed the Divine message to the principal figure in the secession of the Ten Tribes in the days of Rehoboam shows that he was a man of God and stalwart for the delivery of his message in a day of general apostasy.

It was at the time that King Solomon, at the height of his power and glory, had begun to relapse into idolatry himself that Ahijah comes on the stage. The great king had multiplied himself wealth and possessions beyond all kings of his own time and before, extended his dominion from the borders of Egypt to the Euphrates, increased the number of his wives and concubines, erected imposing buildings and splendid palaces, and now all these things had stolen his heart away from God. Among the people, who had been compelled to pay heavy taxes for all this glory, and labour at the arduous work involved, discontent was rife. The prediction of Samuel had come true, and the people who had clamoured to have a king over

them like other nations were now paying the price. And God, looking down from heaven, foresaw unerringly the disruption to which all this must inevitably lead. So he sent Ahijah to declare His judgment.

At a time which cannot be closely determined, but was probably about ten years before Solomon's death, his attention had been attracted to one of his servants, an upstanding, courageous and industrious young man named Jeroboam, an Ephraimite of Zereda, a village in the Jordan valley. Solomon needed a trusty man to supervise the forced labour levies in Ephraim; Jeroboam was given this commission and set out to assume his new duties. As a member of the working classes he probably had no ambitions beyond earning a reasonable living and keeping out of trouble; better men than he had dabbled in politics and either succeeded or failed and that was not for him. The duty now laid upon him by the great king was an honour and a promotion and he considered himself fortunate but that was as far as his thoughts went. Until he met Ahijah!

The way to Ephraim from Jerusalem led past Shiloh. As he drew near the almost deserted village he saw coming towards him a strange figure, a man, clothed in skins, with flowing beard and burning eyes. Jeroboam knew that this was a prophet of the Lord and entitled on that account to some respect but he could have had no idea whatever of the message and the admonition he was to receive. The story is found in 1 Kings 11; *"it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field. And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces"* (vs. 29-30). Rather strange conduct, and disconcerting, to say the least. Jeroboam, conscious of the dignity of his new position and the desirability of impressing his subordinates and workmen, had invested in new apparel suited to the situation; now this complete stranger had come up to him and torn the garment into twelve pieces. But before he could so much as expostulate, Ahijah had thrust ten of the pieces into his unwilling hands and told him that God intended to sever ten of the tribes from the kingdom of Solomon and make Jeroboam king over them. Because Solomon had forsaken God, and worshipped the abominable gods and goddesses of the

surrounding nations, and had failed to keep God's statutes as had David his father, then at his death this judgment would come upon his kingdom. Came the charge to Jeroboam *"it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee"* (vs. 38). Then, abruptly, the prophet turned and stalked away, his gaunt figure receding rapidly into the distance, and Jeroboam was left standing alone, holding the torn pieces of his new garment helplessly in his hands.

He had a lot to think about as he continued his journey. It has to be assumed that Jeroboam was at this time a faithful worshipper of God and adherent to the Covenant. The Lord would hardly have called and appointed him otherwise. That mandate and exhortation which had just sounded in his ears could only mean one thing, that he was to have the opportunity with the ten tribes which both Saul and Solomon had had with all Israel, and both had thrown away. He was to be a king, and reign as king in Ephraim. But he was to lead the ten tribes in firm allegiance to the God of Israel. *That was the condition; there is little doubt that at that moment of time Jeroboam fully intended to implement that condition.* It must have been, almost immediately afterwards, either by overt action or indiscreet word, Jeroboam revealed abroad what Ahijah had told him, for news came to Solomon and he sent emissaries to execute Jeroboam; high treason in the kingdom was not to be tolerated. Jeroboam got away to Egypt and remained there until Solomon's death, but not before he had so impressed his fellow Ephraimites that he was marked out as their champion when the inevitable rebellion broke out. So soon as Solomon's son Rehoboam had ascended the throne, representatives of the ten tribes, with Jeroboam at their head, came to the new king with requests for the alleviation of the servitude his father had imposed on them. This part of history is well known, how that Rehoboam refused *and promised them even greater burdens so that the Ten Tribes revolted from Rehoboam and set up a separate kingdom under Jeroboam as their first king.* Thus the prediction of Ahijah was fulfilled.

Now, for a span of years, Ahijah drops out of the picture. The sequel shows that he continued to dwell quietly at Shiloh. Rehoboam went to war in the endeavour to regain his lost subjects but to no avail. Jeroboam was firmly in the saddle and he set about organising his new kingdom on a

permanent basis. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity and endeavour to exalt the worship of the God of Israel among his subjects. There was one serious handicap. He had no centre of worship, no Temple as had Rehoboam in Jerusalem; instead, there was the opposition sanctuary in the town of Dan in the north, established several centuries previously by Jonathan the grandson of Moses and served still by his descendants, still nominally worshipping God but with many of the appendages of idol worship. It seems to have been this which gave Jeroboam his idea. To dissuade his people from going to Jerusalem to worship and becoming too intimate with the subjects of Rehoboam and perhaps repenting of the separation and so threatening his own kingship, he determined to institute two sanctuaries to Jehovah *in his own territory, one at Dan where the existing establishment could be utilised, the other at Bethel in the south of his dominions where he would install a priesthood of his own creating.* For each sanctuary he provided an image of Jehovah in the form of a golden bullock, and invited all his people to join him in worship. *"And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan . . ."* and Jeroboam offered incense upon the idol altar (1 Kings 12.25-33) and the people assented, and that day the fate of the Ten Tribes Kingdom was sealed.

For how long Jeroboam thus led Israel away from God cannot be determined precisely, but the judgment of God was near and the erring king was once more to meet the man who at the first had conferred the Divine commission upon him and declared the condition. Considering that he first built his new capital of Shechem and spent probably a few years organising his political framework before thinking about his religious sanctuaries the apostasy would not have come at once. It is recorded that Shishak of Egypt, first Pharaoh of the 23rd dynasty, invaded Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam and forced the Hebrew king to surrender all his treasures; since Jeroboam had been given refuge in Egypt by this same Shishak it is probable that these two had formed a political alliance aimed at embarrassing Rehoboam, and if this be so it might well have been fifteen years or so before Jeroboam's apostasy at last incurred its inevitable retribution.

The son of Jeroboam fell sick, and the sickness seemed to be unto death. Although he is called a "child" in 1 Kings 14, the word really means a son without limiting his age to early childhood; in this case he must have been at least a youth for it is stated that *"in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of*

Jeroboam." It would seem that his father had brought him up in the "nurture and fear of the Lord" to such good effect that the son had not followed his father into apostasy. He was probably the heir to the throne, and Jeroboam was deeply concerned. In this concern, he bethought himself of the prophet Ahijah whose prediction so many years ago had come so startlingly true. He told his wife to disguise herself, go to Ahijah and ask what would be her son's fate; "*he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.*"

This is where the prophet comes back into the picture. It does not seem to have occurred either to the king or to his wife that if the prophet could indeed read the future he could also see through any disguise. And, of course, the disguise was useless. "*When Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door, he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam: why feignest thou thyself to be another? I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.*" Then, in all its awful solemnity, came the judicial sentence. "*Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David . . . but hast done evil above all that were before thee . . . made thee other gods, and molten images . . . therefore I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam . . . and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam . . . for the Lord hath spoken. Arise, get thee to thine own house, and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die . . ."* (1 Kings 14. 16-12).

So the unhappy woman returned, and as she entered her house, her son died, and all Israel mourned for him, for he was well loved. But Ahijah had said that he only of all the house of Jeroboam would go to his grave in peace because he only was righteous in the Lord's sight and he was to be taken from the wrath to come. And from that day to the time two centuries later when Shalmaneser of Assyria overran the Ten Tribe Kingdom, and brought it to an end, and transported its people to remote corners of his empire, there were no good kings, only bad ones, and the people sank further and further into idolatry. There were many prophets sent to them after Ahijah, but they heeded them not, and at last the penalty of the violated Covenant was exacted from them.

Of Ahijah we hear no more. He probably died at Shiloh, and with his passing a light went out of Israel. He wrote his prophecies in a book, for it is

referred to in 2 Chron. 9.29 and from that reference it would appear that he must have lived through the reign of Solomon; the story in 1 Kings reveals that he was old and blind when Jeroboam's wife visited him. As a youth he probably saw the rise of the kingdom under David and shared in the high hopes of so many at that time that the kingdom would endure forever under David and his successors, by the power and blessing of the God of Israel. As a mature man he lived through Solomon's reign and witnessed the gathering worldliness and indifference to the things of God which increasingly characterised king and people. He must have spoken out against that. Then came his mission to Jeroboam and perhaps he had high hopes of this enthusiastic and upstanding young man whom God had appointed to make a fresh start with Israel, only to have those hopes dashed when he saw the old evils, and more, creeping in again. So, as an old man whose life's work was nearly done, he became the messenger of judgment and knew that after his death final disaster must come. Perhaps, though, it was also revealed to him, as it was to Daniel at a much later date, that despite all these apparent failures of God's purposes with Israel, there would at the end come success, a day when Israel shall have learned the lessons and come wholeheartedly to God in a loyalty that will thenceforth never falter. Like so many of his fellow-prophets, he must have died in supreme content, assured that evil will one day pass away and everlasting righteousness be supreme.

Ahijah's book has not survived. It is just possible, though, that part of the First Book of Kings is from his hand. Chapter 11 vs. 1 to chapter 14 vs. 20 constitutes a self-contained account of Solomon's decline into idolatry and its consequence in the emergence of Jeroboam, with Jeroboam's own similar course, ending with his death. The details given can only have been known to someone familiar both with Solomon's reign and the intimate incidents of Jeroboam's life. A man of God, living in the northern kingdom, is indicated. It is to be noted also that only in this account is the story of Solomon's idolatry to be found. The remaining portion of 1 Kings, and the parallel narrative in 2 Chronicles, contains no hint of this and from these accounts it would be assumed that Solomon was faithful to God to the end of his life. It might well be, therefore, that these particular chapters in 1 Kings represent all that remains of the lost book of Ahijah the Shilonite. If that is so they constitute a testimonial to a faithful man who lived his life in obscurity but was used of God to do great things.

"Thy Watchmen Shall See Eye to Eye" A well-known text examined

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (Isa. 52. 8).

The immediate setting of this text is the promised return from captivity to Babylon. There would be symbolic watchers on the walls of Jerusalem and symbolic heralds hastening over the mountains to announce to the watchers the coming of the returning hosts intent on rebuilding the Temple and city. The long night of captivity is past; the day of Divine favour is come. *"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in it, and a line shall be stretched out upon Jerusalem."* (Zech. 1. 16). Hence the stirring cry of the watchmen in the seventh verse. *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that bringeth good tidings of good, that sayeth unto Zion 'Thy God reigneth'."* (Isa. 52. 7).

Then come the words of our text. The rejoicing watchmen sing together because they see, *face to face*, the heralds of good tidings announcing the Lord returning to his sanctuary in Zion.

That is what this expression "eye to eye" means. *"Face to face."* It only occurs in one other place in the Old Testament, in Num. 14. 14, where it is rendered "For thou, Lord, art 'face to face,'" and the thought in Isa. 52 is that the watchmen see clearly, face to face, the heralds of glad tidings announcing the imminent return of their God to his people.

Rotherham's rendering is *"Eye to eye shall they look upon Yahweh's return unto Zion"*, and he further remarks on the meaning as "Probably 'face to face with the event'." Moffat has it: *"They see the Eternal face to face as He returns to Zion"*. Margolis: *"They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion"*. Ferrar Fenton: *"When clearly you see that the Lord comes to Zion"*. The Septuagint confirms the thought by having *"Eyes shall look to eyes when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion"*.

Students know that this wonderful imagery was not intended solely for fulfilment in the days of Israel's return from captivity. Paul uses the seventh verse as applicable to the heralds of the Gospel, in Rom. 10. 15. Realising that the return under Cyrus was but a picture, a type, of the greater release from captivity which should come to spiritual

Israel at the close of the Gospel Age, and the joy which the imminent Advent of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, would inspire in the hearts of the Gospel Age "Watchers", we can discern a greater and more glorious application to these glowing words.

The "Watchers" on the walls of the Holy City of this Gospel Age have waited through a long and dreary time during which the people of God have been held captive by an oppressive system which has crushed the Truth to the ground. Only a few of the "poor" have remained to be "vine-dressers and husbandmen", but these have faithfully manned the walls watching for the promised "return". The night is far spent, the day is at hand, but as yet only the first gleams of dawn are perceptible.

Then come the heralds. Hastening over the mountains, pressing toward the Holy City, so long downtrodden and oppressed, they come with glorious news. The KING is on his way. He is returning to Zion with favour. Enlightenment and prosperity is to come with him. The captive people are loosed—even now they are on their way to commence the great work of rebuilding the Temple of God, and placing within it the golden vessels, the precious truths so long submerged under the defilements of a foreign power.

How eagerly the Watchers fasten their gaze upon the heralds. They haste—therefore the news is good. Did they bring bad news their pace would be slow. They each seek to outvie the others in order to reach the city first. How beautiful the sight, heralds upon the mountains proclaiming the coming King!

So they meet, face to face. No longer any doubt. The news runs round the city. Not all the watchers receive the news at once. Not all hear exactly the same story from the different heralds, all zealous to proclaim the essentials of their message. But one central truth stands out—THE KING IS AT HAND! He may be upon the mountain approach; He may even be within the city, and making himself known to those who have perceived his entrance. There is no lack of love and zeal on the part of those who have not actually seen him enter the gate, if so be He really is now within the walls. All are united in the one joyous theme—the time has come. *"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies."*

That is the story of this closing period of the Gospel Age—a period which is now well advanced. Is the King within the walls? Is He at the gates? Whether the one thing or the other, the important teaching of the text is that we are “face to face with the event”. The Watchers and the Heralds have met, and their united testimony has been given to seekers after the Lord for three generations past. The Temple has been built; Divine Truth, things new and old, has been established in its rightful place. The work is not yet finished; the building must go on; the Temple must be adorned with yet purer and nobler vessels of truth and understanding, that the day may at length come when the great outer doors will be flung open to all mankind and the invitation come to

all men to enter and walk in its light.

The importance of a right understanding of this Scripture is great. It calls us to recognise the significance of the times in which we live; that the work begun in Christendom during the nineteenth century continues still in active preparation for the day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested in his glorious *apokalupsis*—His revelation of himself to all men, in association with his glorified Church, for man’s blessing and salvation. How beautiful upon the mountains . . . the heralds . . . proclaiming “Thy God reigneth” . . . for the time of his Kingdom is come, and the day is not far hence when He shall “reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously”.

Persecution of the seed of promise.

“We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” (Gal. 4. 28-29).

The favourite exposition of this verse is to the effect that Ishmael “persecuted” Isaac at the weaning feast recorded in Gen. 21. 8-11. The incongruity of a fifteen-year-old lad “persecuting” a young child is not easily realised when a theological implication lies behind the situation and requires to be justified. In fact the word “mocking”, in the Genesis account, which gave rise to the idea, has the meaning of light-hearted play or “larking about”, as we would say, and this much better fits the case of a teen-age lad and his baby brother.

In fact two much more momentous themes are contained within this remark by St. Paul. In the first place it should be noticed that in verse 24 he says the story of Hagar and Sarah, of Ishmael and Isaac, is, for his then immediate purpose, an allegory; what he goes on to talk about is obviously an allegorical application of the story. There are two spheres in which the relation of Ishmael to Isaac in the allegorical field enshrine this idea of “persecuting”.

In the first place, although all the O.T. evidence, such as it is, goes to show that the literal Ishmael and Isaac lived their lives apart without interfering with each other and came together in friendly fashion at the burial of their father, the same was not true of their descendants. The tribes sprung from Ishmael were often found amongst Israel’s foes and even at this very day their remote descendants as represented by various Arab peoples are amongst Israel’s bitter enemies. This is one sense

in which he that was born after the flesh (Ishmael) persecutes him that was born after the Spirit. This will not always be so; God told Abraham that He has a purpose for the sons of Ishmael, also, and would make of them a great nation dwelling in the presence of their brethren of Isaac. So that we can expect a reconciliation and unity in time to come which may seem most unlikely today when one looks at the political situation.

The other sense within the context of St. Paul’s meaning concerns the relation between national Israel “after the flesh” and spiritual Israel, the Christian church, “after the Spirit”. This was a matter of moment in St. Paul’s own day. Natural Israel, Jews under the Mosaic Covenant, bitterly opposed the incipient Christian church and did all in its power to arrest and thwart its growth. This aspect is the one St. Paul had particularly in mind. “*Even so it is now*” he says; “*We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*”. Although opposed, persecuted and liable to be ensnared by the “children of the bondwoman” he exhorts his Galatian readers to “*stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*” (Gal. 5. 1). Even here, of course, the “persecution” and the enmity is not to endure forever. Again, in the coming Millennial Age, God has a place and purpose for the natural House of Israel which will bring them into harmony and amicable relations with the spiritual House. The Church of Christ in the heavens, and restored and purified Israel on earth, will then be twin instruments in the Lord’s hand for the conversion of the world and the establishment of everlasting righteousness.

THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER

A Parable for our times

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel." (Amos 9. 13-14).

Amos was a countryman and a gatherer of wild figs (Amos 7. 14). He was also a prophet, a man deeply devoted to God and looking in faith and hope for the coming of God's Kingdom on earth. It is not surprising therefore that his visions of that kingdom were framed, not in military settings as was the case with Daniel, or priestly, temple settings as with Ezekiel, but in the rural settings of agriculture and husbandry. Because of this the Holy Spirit has given us, through him, an intimate little parable—for parable it is—of one aspect of the Time of the End which is of special interest to us to-day. It illustrates, in symbolic language, a truth that we must take to heart if we would be intelligent servants knowing what our Lord doeth.

The general background of the picture is one of unprecedented prosperity in material things. The harvest has been so plenteous that it has had to be prolonged into ploughing time, and since in Palestine the harvest normally commences in May and is over by June, whilst ploughing does not commence until October, this must have been a wonderful harvest. The vintage of grapes, which is normally gathered in August and ended by September, has been so heavy that the treading of the winepress, converting the rich yield into new wine, is still going on when sowing time commences in November. There is even greater prosperity to come, for in consequence of all this, the mountain slopes upon which the vines are grown, will "drip" (*Heb.*) sweet (new) wine; the exuberance of vines resulting from that sowing and the consequent heavy yield of grapes making it as though the mountains were literally "dripping" with wine; whilst the hills (the lower rounded eminences of the "*shephelah*") or plain of Judea) will melt (flow down—*Heb.*), an allusion to the rippling effect of the wind as it passes over vast fields of standing corn, making it appear from a distance as though it were flowing down the slopes in successive waves. Amos saw a land rich in vines and corn and growing richer, and with the Psalmist he could well say "*The little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout*

for joy, they also sing." (Psa. 65. 12-13). And to crown this sunlit vision of the future the Lord stamps it as a revelation of the End Time by telling his prophet "*And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof . . .*" (Amos. 9. 14).

Having thus noted that the real application of the picture is to the coming of the Kingdom, and believing that coming to be an imminent event, we naturally feel a close interest in the details of this parable. First of all, notice that there are two harvests and two vintages included in the picture—this fact is not always readily realised. The first harvest is plenteous but it is brought to an end by the ploughman, breaking up the ground for the work of a new year; and the result of that new year's work is another harvest so plentiful that the very hills, covered to their tops with corn, seem to be literally melting with their golden load as the wind passes over it. The first vintage is plenteous, too, so plenteous that the labours involved encroach upon the work of sowing for the next year; but evidently the sowing accomplishes its work, and in that next year even this plenteous vintage is excelled by the masses of vines, terrace upon terrace, covering the mountains as far as eye can see, so laden with purple grapes that to the poetic mind, foreseeing in anticipation the day of gathering, it is as though the mountains "drip with new wine". In our understanding of this Scripture therefore we must find room for two harvests and two vintages. It is also closely associated with faithfulness to the Lord and zeal for his service on the part of a people consecrated to his service. This is indicated by the evident connection between the words of Amos and the promise of God given to Israel recorded in Lev. 26. 3-5: "*If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.*"

A point that needs to be considered is the connection of this passage with the preceding few verses, which are quoted in Acts 15. "*After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle*

of David which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might call upon the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." (Acts 15. 16-17). The whole prophecy has to do with the active work that is going on in the end of this Age to bring in the everlasting Kingdom of God.

The realisation that there are two harvests indicated in the text yields the interpretation. Obviously these two harvests are the fruits of the works of the two great Ages in the Divine Plan, the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age. Leaving chronological considerations out of the question, it is clear that there has been for a hundred years now a great Christian activity centred around expectation of the Lord's return to set up his Kingdom, and that during that hundred years there has been a great rise of Bible Societies, organisations of students, mighty revivals, and every form of Christian witness and activity. In a very real sense it could be said that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed a reaping of seed that was sown during the earlier part of the Gospel Age.

But this has been a spiritual work, a service designed to reach the spiritually minded and show to them more plainly than before the "High Calling of Christ Jesus" which is the great pre-occupation and purpose of this Age. Whatever may be one's personal convictions regarding the Gospel Age "Harvest" in a dispensational and theological sense, it can hardly be denied that in its practical outworking it has proved to be a movement of Christian people of all denominations into a condition of closer personal relationship to their Lord and an enhanced appreciation of their High Calling. That is a rather important point. The next Age is an age of world conversion in which the ambassadors of Christ will reap abundant results from their labours; the present age, in its partial failure to convert the world, has shown that its primary purpose is the winning for Christ and the preparation for future missionary service of a smaller body of dedicated believers, "a people for God's Name". During this "reaping", therefore, our Lord has been primarily concerned with the members of his Church more so than with the world at large.

But as the Age passes on to its end a new feature develops. The end of the Church's career in earth is at hand, the glorification of the last members imminent, yet it cannot be that God leaves himself without a witness on earth. He has never done so in all recorded history. Clearly there must be some who have gained an understanding of the Divine

Plan and whose hopes and aims are directed, not towards the heavenly, but towards the earthly phase of the Kingdom. As the spiritually minded ones "decrease" so must these earthly heralds of the new Day "increase". Their work is not that of reaping the harvest of this Age; rather that of preparing the ground for the next. As the reaping tails off to its end so the breaking up of fallow ground for Millennial work will begin to come into operation. Here is where the "ploughshare of trouble", as we have called it, will do its work; for the breaking up of the "field" preparatory to the work of the new Age is not only to be done by preaching and witnessing, it is also to be done by trouble upon the nations and the failure of all men's schemes for reform and reconstruction. In fact, it may be more correct to think of the ploughman as picturing the trouble that is upon the nations, and the sowing of seed as the Kingdom message which will be proclaimed consistently until the world passes into Armageddon. There is no doubt that in the near future men's hearts are going to be ploughed as never before.

The ploughing, then, goes on for some little while after the reaping has ceased. This "harvest" of the Age evidently had its commencement over a century ago, and progressed until it became a mighty work. The ploughman of trouble first became evident toward the closing years of last century, and by now is rapidly overtaking ("coming near" is the literal Hebrew meaning) the reaper so that the reaping work is being steadily reduced and diminished by the pressure of the general trouble on the nations. Is not this true to the facts? Every tendency of the day is to the suppression of interest in spiritual things. The widest field of endeavour yet remaining to those who seek to gather spiritually minded ones to closer relationship with the Lord lies, not with the mass of men generally, as was the case say a century ago, but in Christian systems where may be found those who yearn for heavenly things. Such are the last grains of wheat in this, the final hour of the harvest.

The ploughman has not quite overtaken the reaper; but he is coming very close. Perhaps the full development of that fast approaching world system which is to force all except the faithful "Watchers" into a material, scientific, anti-Christian mould of thought and action (see Rev. 13. 14-17) will mark the completion of the overtaking. There the reaping will end; the work of the Christian Church in this Age be finished, and the glorification of the last members not long delayed.

But there will still be those who are "scattering

the seed", continuing the message of the coming earthly Kingdom. Even though the Church be gone, God will still have his witnesses in the earth, and the signs of the approaching catastrophe may be by then so evident that there may be not a few that will stop and listen to the message of the Millennial reign. But the treader of grapes will by then also be coming very near; with the completion of the gathering of the harvest of the earth it will be the turn of the vintage (Rev. 14. 18) and the One who treads the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 19. 15) will be coming forth to that dread work. "*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?*" cries the prophet (Isa. 63). The answer leaves no doubt as to the identity of the One who will both bring to the dust the evil systems of the earth and set up his own glorious Kingdom in their place. The time of Armageddon, of "Jacob's Trouble", of the last uprising of evil against the incoming forces of the Kingdom of righteousness, will have come, and the vintage will for a time press against the sowers of seed and bring their work to a temporary standstill. There will be one sharp time of trouble in which it will seem as if all the powers of righteousness have been silenced and crushed to the earth; but it is at that moment that God arises from his place to intervene in earth's affairs, and from the moment of that intervention that we are to date the Kingdom established in power.

It is from this point of time that the mountains will commence to "drop" new (sweet) wine, the true and health-giving teachings of the Kingdom. "*Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" (Isa. 2. 3). The old doctrines which have been characteristic of the "vine of the earth" will have been done away; Satan will be bound and no longer able to influence mankind for evil; the great institutions of man which have oppressed and enslaved so many will have been utterly destroyed, and every vestige

of man's former rule have passed away. This will be the "mountain" in which the Lord will "*make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined*" (Isa. 25. 6). The wine of that Kingdom will be abundant and free. "*Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" (Isa. 55. 1). That is the "sweet wine" which the "mountains" will "drop down" in that day.

It is later in the Age that "all the hills shall melt". The growth of the Millennial corn-harvest will require all the Age for its accomplishment. Then, as now, it must be "*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" (Mark 4. 28-29). All through the Age the Divine missionaries will be at work, teaching, instructing, encouraging, persuading men to turn from sin to serve the living God. They will see the immature wheat growing to full stature and turning from green into gold; one day there will be a sweeping of the Holy Spirit over the earthly wheatfield and all the erect stems will rustle and stir in response to the Divine influence that is passing over them, and it will be as though great waves are passing over the serried ranks of stalks, and one might say "see, the very hills are flowing down into the plain". But it will not be the melting that means destruction; it will be the melting that indicates a final and complete surrender of all human hearts to God, the response of the creature to the Creator, the visible effect of the work of the Divine Spirit in the earth. So will the last shadow of evil flee away, the last rebel against the authority of God reap the inevitable consequence, and the sons of men enter into the glorious sunlight of the Divine presence: "*for in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord.*"

Carlyle on Book of Job

I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew: such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book; all men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true every way; true eyesight

and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual: the horse—"hast thou clothed his neck with *thunder*?"—"he *laughs* at the shaking of the spear!" Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; so soft, and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.

(Thomas Carlyle 1795-1831. *Historian and philosopher.*)

THE SUPREME GRACE

A study in
1 Cor. 13

3. "Chalice Vessels of Truth"

At the beginning of New Testament history the two words "*agape*" and "*phileo*" were in common use, but with very restricted meanings. Taking them as they received them, linked as they were to certain modes of Greek and Jewish life, both our Lord and the Apostles used them conformably to the common use, but began to infuse into them shades of meaning hitherto unknown—a process which went on unceasingly until even these exalted words were found to be inadequate to express the resultant conceptions of the Love of God—and the Apostle of Love himself was compelled to adopt a circumlocution to state what he had to say. "Behold what manner of Love the Father has bestowed upon us"! Precise explanation had, at last, become impossible, and John, the last survivor of the little band, could only speak of the "*agape*" as he spake of God.

"*Phileo*" came into the early Church's usage permeated with the spirit of the clan-life of ancient Greece. So many of these small communities, linked as they were by common descent—often by actual blood relationship—joined themselves together for each other's good, in matters of defence and husbandry. This feeling of communal brotherhood gave to each member of the community the sense of belonging to one family. It was to them as though the kinship of the domestic family had been extended outward far enough to embrace the community. This kinship attitude, both to the domestic and communal family, was what they called the "*Phileo*". Greeks were not unique in this clan-membership, for colonies and communities of this sort were scattered throughout the earth, actuated by the same kind of friendship for those within the pale, and a like hostile attitude to those without. The special advantage in separating out the Greek clan-states arises from the fact that they had the precise word for this kinship that is now engaging us. Though "*phileo*" was the term, descriptive in Grecian thought, of the kinship bond that knit together their own communal or city-state, it also served quite well to define the bond of the Roman "*civitas*", the Jewish Diaspora, or the roving barbarians, for each alike, in its own little field, had the same kindred love for those within, and the same antipathy towards those without. This attitude of exclusiveness, so acceptable and praiseworthy to those within, tends to stamp the world "*phileo*"—or its equivalent in other tongues—with that spirit of aloofness and narrow-

ness, which as seen from without can only be defined as communal selfishness. This self-centredness, this willingness to live though all else should die, was the keynote of the pre-Christian "*phileo*". The Grecian classics spake of "Philanthropy"—the love of man—but it was not a love embracing every man, in every place of which they spake, but only love for every man within the pale; the clan would only love its own!

This exclusiveness, then, was the sense which pervaded that word when it was adopted for use by Jesus and the infant Church. Jesus early showed how much of this self-seeking, self-gratifying spirit it contained when He said, arrainging the Pharisees, "*they love to pray standing in the synagogue or in the corners of the streets*" (Matt. 6.5.). This was no attitude of love for other men, but of a love that turned inwards upon themselves. Again He said they loved "*the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues*" (Matt. 23.6.), thus revealing gross disrespect towards another of more honourable estate than they, and of selfish indifference to other interests than their own. The Master placed his finger on the spot when reminding his followers that, since they had linked their lives with his, the world would treat them as it treated him. Said He "*If ye were of the world, the world would love his (its) own*". (John 15.19). Here is the exact definition of *phileo*—and from the Master's lips. On another searching day, when about to send them into the harvest field, Jesus advised them that their direst foes would appear among their own kith and kin, who would seek to dissuade them from the work. But "*he that loveth father or mother more than he is not worthy of me . . .*" (Matt. 10-37)—whoso would permit his love to turn inwards and homewards more strongly than it turned outwards and "fieldwards" with him was not worthy of his trust or Name.

How marvellously the grace of God transformed the word in later days! And how amazing the change of attitude for which that changed word stood. From every tongue and nation men had been drawn together in a fellowship which had cut through all communal barriers—Jew, Greek, Roman, barbarian, patrician, slave—all brought near into one mutual brotherhood, each and all depending on the Lamb of God for his way of approach to the holiest Name. Even so, the tie that bound them in this new community was still the "*phileo*". Let us note the words of Paul to men

who hitherto had been members of that exclusive Greek nationality ". . . *as touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another*" (2 Thess. 4.9). Here, by the grace of God, a former Jew can overstep the boundaries of his own nationality to greet and encourage men who hitherto were Gentile dogs, "without God in the world". And they, in turn, Gentiles though they were by blood, could extend a brother's hand in fellowship to him. To co-believers in Imperial Rome, Paul could also say "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love*". (Rom. 12.10). Even into the chambers of that metropolis the spirit of another *phileo* had won its way and not all the might and majesty of Cæsar's throne could uproot this nobler thing. Within its walls sojourning Jews and men "free-born" joined hands in Jesus' Name, in holy brotherhood. Again, to Hebrews of some city now unknown, the same appealing exhortation goes forth, "*Let brotherly love continue*". (Heb. 13.1.). "Let brotherly love be firmly established among you" is another translation. And why? Because they had known the power of that mutual love so markedly in former days! "*Call to remembrance the former days, in which ye endured a great fight of afflictions.*" (Heb. 10. 32-34). Here indeed had been the "outward" turning of their hearts to others of like faith—let it now not cease so to do! How transcendently different was this attitude of "sharing together in suffering" from that more ancient Pharisaic "turning inwards upon one's self". And Peter also has a word to say, "*seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*" (1 Pet. 1.22). Here is a wonderful development indeed, for an unfeigned love of brethren had already been attained, and the exhortation now is that this sincere love should become the servant of a wider Love—the *agape*.

Thus, to the Greeks, the Romans and the Hebrews of that day the Word of Grace had been sent forth, and had wooed and won from their ancient faiths these varied companies of men and brought them, against all the deadweight of prejudice, into another fellowship! Men of alien birth were now closely knit together with a nobler "*phileo*"—still the old, old, word, but a new brotherhood! still the older vessel, but a new wine! It still stands as the symbol of family affection, but a different family—a community whose life and love were on a higher plane.

It is when we come to the Apostolic conception of this deepening, widening word that we can see how greatly the life of Jesus influenced the change. That sacrificial life was the pattern for their own,

and led them ever deeper into the mysteries of sacrifice. With that example before him and that same spirit in his heart Paul said to the ungrateful Corinthians "*I will gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved*". (2 Cor. 12.15). Here "spending" and "being spent" is the self-less expression of the "*agape*". Not what he could receive from them but rather what he could do for them was the guiding motive of his heart! To give one's self by "spending and being spent" in sacrifice and service had now become the essence, if not also the substance of "*agape*". How well this agrees with Gal. 2.20, ". . . *the Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me*". And also with Eph. 5.25, "*He loved the Church and gave himself for it*". How full this accords with John 3.16, "*God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son . . .*" Further still, it was God who "*Commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*". (Rom. 5.8). Here we find the Love of God turning outward toward another's need in overflowing measure—and this henceforth became the standard for defining the word *agape*! For Paul, as well as for his Lord, it meant "to spend and be spent".

Another aspect of the word is the universal width it has assumed. Not only has it depth in keeping with the character of God, it has width as wide as the needs of man. It was "the world" that God so greatly loved. It was the "all" of Adam's fallen sons for whom Jesus gave himself. When the love that carried Jesus to his death lays its magnetic power upon our hearts, it constrains us to see things in the same universal way. "*For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead*" (2 Cor. 5.14). The love of God moved manwards to meet his deepest need on so vast a scale that not one single soul was left outside its field. That has ever been the character of that compassionate gesture of God which Apostolic men designate the "*agape*". From being a word therefore that could at first be harnessed up to evil things as well as good it became in time so greatly amplified that it accounted equal to the unplumbed deeps of the Grace of God. And in becoming deep it also grew in breadth, till it stood as emblematic of the Universal Plan.

The Love that prompted God to undertake the redemption of the world is the very self-same thing which He sheds abroad in our hearts today—part and parcel of that mighty moving force that will win a world from sin into the ways of righteousness and truth. How did the first Apostolic men react to its energising influence? Let us remember that for the most part they were humble fishermen,

altogether inexpert in the craft of moving men by polished phrase, but even so their sense of the sublime was so intensified that they had to call upon the superlative to express what they wished to say. We cannot but stand amazed at the change wrought upon these simple men as they sought to grasp and set forth the magnitude of the "agape"! "Behold what manner of *agape* the Father has bestowed upon us" says John in ecstasy, "What manner of man is this" that can speak to wind and waves, said the awe-stricken witnesses, as wind and wave obeyed his word! What manner of man is this! What manner of love is this! Here the Apostle of love himself lacks power to define or explain the greatness of this heavenly thing that has come through from the beyond into his finite consciousness. Can we wonder then, that at last, completely overpowered by his conception of the devotion-inspiring, wonder-working thing, he elevates it to the high pinnacle of the Divine and says "God is *agapae*"—*agape* is of God, yes indeed; but God himself is *agape* from everlasting to everlasting!

The time has now come to consider the relationship of "*phileo*" in "*agape*" as they find expression in the day-today experience of the man of God, in whose life these two higher phases of love have become an actuality. To bring this relationship pointedly before our minds, an illustration, drawn from the lives of ordinary men in their domestic and communal relationships, will be used. In the lives of most ordinary men there are two circles of attachment between them and those who live around. First, there is a nearer circle where his domestic bonds and his friendship's ties abound. Here the links that bind him to "his own" are found—his parents, wife, children, brothers and his sisters, while in a slightly wider range, the ties with bosom friends and intimate confidants, with whom his life is linked at many points, may also be found. To each of these relationships he will bear a love varying in degree, which he cannot show to those without. To each he will accord right of entry, also varying in degree, into his private life.

This nearer circle of domestic ties constitutes the pattern of our "*phileo*" attachments, on the higher plane. But those who are thus linked together by this "*phileo*" attachment are not of necessity also linked by blood relationship. Only those who are linked by kindred ties as children of the one Divine Father can find entrance thereinto. Here, in a spiritual association, and on a higher plane, we would have the sphere where in a special sense the "*phileo*" counterpart to the "domestic-friendship" love would operate. Here,

in this exclusively spiritual circle, the love of brethren—the *philadelphos* love—should be found in exercise.

Outside this "domestic-friendship" circle is the wider sphere in which most men's lives touch other lives as fellow citizens of one community. Here the contacts have wider purposes affecting more or less the mutual well-being of the whole community (or nation) at large. A link of an entirely different kind cements the members of this community together both in times of peace and war.

In times of peace the well-being of the community prompts each member to accept both limitations of rights for himself and obligations of duty towards each other member thereof. Thus, in this way, a rule of established law and public order is accepted and observed, while the supervision of the magistrate (meaning for our purpose, anything from that of the king down to the lowest deputy) is assented to. In this wider public circle every member of the community is included. Even the members of the smaller domestic circle are included in this, for husband and wife in the one are fellow-citizens with all the rest in the other. The special feature of the domestic circle is its exclusiveness; that of the communal sphere is its comprehensiveness.

This civic sphere of the natural man forms the exact correspondency to that of the *agape* attachment on the higher plane, while the consenting attitude and the consequent submission to both king and law forms the precise counterpart to the true Christian attitude of submission to the sovereign Will of God. In his "*Synonyms of the New Testament*" Archbishop Trench shows that the Latin equivalent (*diligi*) to the Greek word *agape* belongs to the sphere of the magistrate and the reign of law, in its fullest sense, and as such, is capable of universal (or communal) application. And since "*agape*" is the true equivalent of "*diligi*", this statement will hold good also of "*agape*".

In this wider circle of civic life an illustration of the Christian association on the higher plane is brought to view; but on this higher plane the circle that is introduced is not less extensive in its scope than the whole wide Plan of God. The love of God that is shed abroad in the Christian's heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5.5) not only constitutes him a citizen of the Kingdom of God, but also brings his whole life into alignment with the universal Plan. He has freely shown a consenting attitude to the claims of its Kings, its laws, its objects, and to his fellow-citizens, and has pledged himself to work together with them all for their common good, both for immediate and coming days. In this way,

the love of God—the love that prompted God to frame the Plan, with all its love, its duties, and its obligations—will have taken a controlling hold upon the life, in its every phase, and will thenceforth be shaping it into accord with the great design. Seen from this point of view, all that Jesus did, by way of sacrifice and likewise all that we are called to do, as we seek to follow Him, can be reduced to the single matter of becoming permeated and saturated with the love of God.

Now it is most essential that the man of God should look outside the small sphere of the local "ecclesia" for the exemplification of the love of God. Should he concentrate his vision only upon that small community, he may find himself uttering only the merest platitudes as he exhorts and is exhorted to have love for one another. He must look outside the fellowship if he is to know and understand something of the measure of that mighty moving force that planned a world's redemption and has competence to carry it through. The love that he is called upon to exemplify in his association with others of like faith is no more than a mere chip from the universal block, a scant reflection from an all-illuminating Sun. Were there nothing more in the love of God than that which at times he sees exemplified in the ecclesia's life, he may be excused if he comes to think that love's energy has waned, and that its heat has cooled. But there is more to it than that; there is an energy of love that springs from God, and remains constant throughout the passing years, seeking entry into every receptive heart, and a passage through it to the wider world beyond. Love is like water in a reservoir; it is there in great abundance, but awaits the opening of the spigot or tap. Opened just a little way and a little only will come through, but opened wide there can be a mighty flow. It is indeed a "shedding abroad" in our hearts (Rom. 5.5) of a power that comes in from without. And, if this energising love does enter every heart in such measure as it ought, every ecclesia's life would be intense, and every one of its members would be alive with the spirit of the great Divine Plan. The *agape* residing in every heart should really be a tiny "mickle" shed off from the mighty "muckle" that has set itself the task of winning unto righteousness every sinful heart.

What would that mean in the lives of all true saints? It would instil an ever-deepening reverence in the heart for the holy Name. Having learned so much of his good intents toward man would lead us more and more to say "Hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven". It would deepen our gratitude to

our beloved Lord for all that He has done to set us free from sin, and bring us into this grace wherein we stand. That would be the "mickle" of our love answering back to the "muckle" of his! Towards our brethren there would be the response of a grateful heart reaching out to mingle with their own grateful hearts, one and all seeking to hold each other in high esteem for the Kingdom's sake, of which we are a part. That would be true spiritual patriotism; a spirit of loyalty and devotion to the Cause, as well as to the King. To our enemies or opponents it would reveal itself as an attitude of tolerance and goodwill; an attitude that would leave all recompense for God to administer in his own time and way; while seeking for ourselves to requite their evil with our good.

The spirit of Divine Love extends the right hand of kinship and fellowship to every other member of the flock. Even if in person they are unknown to us, the attitude of kinship is there. Should they live beyond the seas, and unlikely to cross our path, still the attitude that reaches out and prays for them is there. And even if they have passed to their "Rest" from this vale of tears, we feel that the link has not thereby been snapped, for the "Love" that grips us today, is a love that would not let them go. Sometimes these faithful souls of days gone by, though dead, yet speak, and bring an influence to bear upon our lives, as truly as they whom we see and hear. Thus the *agape* that comes to us from God is an all comprehensive thing—it is the link that binds the whole community of God into "one" as truly as the spirit of patriotism in the civic sphere binds all the members of the community into one people or nation.

But the "*phileo*" is different from this. There is no "*phileo*" expended on those whom we do not know. It is only in the sphere where lives are in close touch that the "*phileo*" spirit can abound. This is based upon affinity—a something in the spirit and outlook of one that draws and binds another to his heart, and in consequence a deeper friendship comes to exist—akin to that of David and Jonathan, but on a higher plane. It is not wrong to cement a friendship of that kind; had it been so, surely our Lord would not have had his special friends. But friendship should always be directed to the fostering of the wider *agape*. The "philadelphian love" should always be the handmaid of that wider love, whether in the ecclesia, or in the more private sphere of one's life. To brotherly love, *agape* should be super-added. (2 Pet. 1.7). Having purified one's heart by attaining to an unfeigned love of the brethren (the *phileo*) we are to use it to promote the wider love (*agape*) purely and fervently. (1 Pet. 1.22).



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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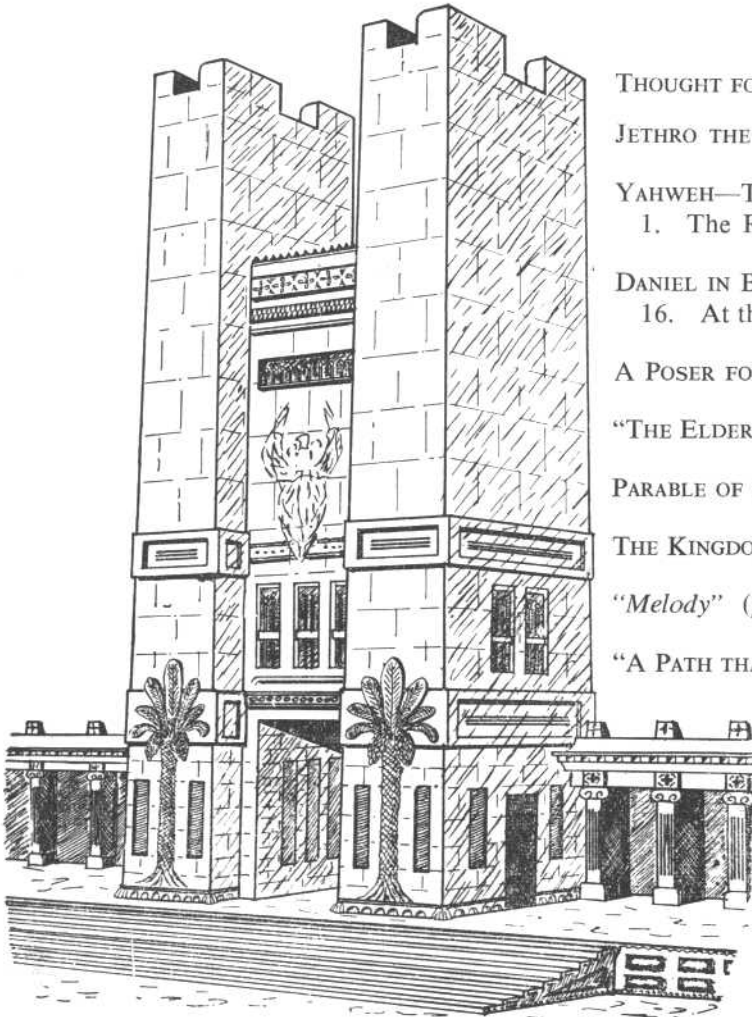
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isa. 55.1)

Enough to send shudders down the spine of every right-thinking economist! After all, it is a basic principle of economics that foodstuffs which cannot be sold at a handsome profit must be burned, dumped or otherwise destroyed and in no wise allowed to get into the hands of people who need them. The primary requirement of human beings is food—nothing is more important—but this world is so organised that the satisfaction of this basic need is subordinated to the making of private gain by the few in the passage of that food from the producer to the consumer. One would think that in this modern age of State control over so many areas of daily life the feeding of the nation would be undertaken by the State in the general interest, but no; transport, communications, fuel, power, all these are State controlled but not the most vital of all. When harvests are bad due to adverse weather and there is a consequent scarcity, prices go up; but when there is a "glut"—the name they give to God's superabundant bounty to the sons of men when weather is good—it is not often that prices go down neither is the surplus made available to the starving millions of the "third world" except in rare and very occasional instances; it has to be destroyed in the sacred name of stable markets or some other glib expression which is but another term for crass human selfishness and greed for money.

The problem is not a simple one. In an order of society organised and ruled by commercialism, where every conceivable activity and labour and product has its price, the majority obsessed by the urge to make money and yet more money, and the financial kings study every possible means of

squeezing a little more and ever a little more profit out of their operations, it would seem impossible to exempt the provision of food from the general laws which govern all production. What is wanted is a new economic system which eliminates the profit motive because all those living under that system are actuated, not by greed and selfishness, but by altruism and unselfishness. A system under which all men willingly play their part in the world's production and distribution, and take only their own share of the product. A system under which money is no longer used because it is no longer necessary. A system under which a bounteous harvest is no longer an embarrassment and an occurrence to be deplored, but one which automatically brings an increase of willing workers to convey it where it is most needed.

Utopian? Certainly! Wouldn't work; you can't change human nature! Man cannot, but God can; and God will! Isaiah in his foreview of the coming Age of Christ's rule over the world touches upon this particular feature of that Age; "*without money and without price*". This is the keynote. "*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*" demands the prophet scornfully. He points to a much better system under which all men will have all their desires fulfilled and their labour a source of satisfaction to them, and that without money. "*Incline your ear, and come unto me*" says God, "*hear, and your soul shall live*". Under the wise and just and all-powerful administration of that Age men will be weaned away from their old habits of greed, and led to accept that better way which alone can ensure a full and happy everlasting life.

The economists and the big business tycoons, of course, will be issued with shovels and have to get down to some basic digging themselves. That also will be a good thing.

For notices see page 86

JETHRO THE MIDIANITE

Handsome of person, tall and lean, thoughtful in demeanour and a man of few words. That is how the mediæval Arab commentators of the Koran described Jethro the Midianite—Shoaib as they called him, surnamed Khatib al Anbiya, "preacher of the prophets". The Koran says it was he who gave Moses the power to work miracles before Pharaoh, and speaks with pride of the fact that he was Moses' father-in-law; pride, because Jethro was not an Israelite, he was an Arab, and as an Arab was used to play a prominent part in the outworking purposes of God.

The Koran has not much else to say about Jethro, and what there is has little value compared with the much more detailed and life-like picture given in the Bible. This hitherto unknown desert sheik was destined to play a vital role in the preparation of Moses for his memorable work as the Leader of Israel in their journey to the Promised Land.

The story commences forty years before the Exodus, when Moses, becoming aware of Israel's need of a champion, had killed an Egyptian taskmaster and in consequence was being hunted by Pharaoh's officers. Somehow or other he must flee Egypt and find refuge in some distant land where Pharaoh could not find him. He got across the frontier without being apprehended and found himself on the Sinai side of the Red Sea where forty years later all Israel was to cross with a mighty deliverance. His first impulse was probably to make his way to Canaan, two or three weeks' journey through sparsely inhabited territory, but he would quickly reflect that Canaan was under Egyptian influence and he might easily be detected or betrayed and taken back to Egypt. The alternative was to turn southward and plunge into the mountainous terrain of Central Sinai. Even so he must needs observe caution, for in that direction, only forty miles from Mount Sinai itself, were the copper mines of Serabit el Khadim, where a strong force of Egyptian soldiery superintended the work of the slave miners, and the high road to the mines, always busy with travelling officials and convoys of copper being taken to Egypt. Moses must have made his way cautiously, perhaps travelling mostly by night, until he was clear of the mines and well on the way to the south.

So it came about that, seeking to put as great a distance as possible between himself and Egypt, he rounded the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula,

climbed the mountain barrier which rears its peaks five thousand feet in the air and divides Western Sinai from Eastern Sinai, and then, looking down from those heights, saw the place he sought.

They call it Sharm el Sheikh nowadays; since the six-day war Israel has been busy building a holiday resort there. When Moses looked down upon the land he saw a green plain something like fifteen miles long by ten wide, bounded upon three sides by the mountains on which he was now standing, and upon the fourth by the blue waters of the Gulf of Akaba. A perfect haven, he must have thought; cut off from the world, far from Egyptian influence—he had come nearly three hundred miles since leaving Egypt—and an opportunity for his identity to be lost so that Pharaoh would never hear of him again. Thankfully he made his way down the mountain slopes into the grasslands and sat down to rest beside a well.

It was there that the seven daughters of Jethro found him—seven shepherdesses, come to draw water for their father's flocks. Once more Moses found himself involved in a fight. A party of shepherds jostled the girls out of the way in order to get water for themselves; Moses intervened and compelled them to desist. The seven went home to their father full of their story of the Egyptian stranger who had so chivalrously taken their part. And Jethro, true to the traditional hospitality of the Bedouin Arab, insisted that the stranger be found and brought to his tent as an honoured guest.

Jethro was a Midianite, and Midian was a son of Abraham by his third wife Keturah. Nearly five hundred years had elapsed since Abraham's time; the descendants of Midian had grown into a company of tribes inhabiting both sides of the Gulf of Akaba, Sinai on the west side and Arabia on the east. With some of these Midianite tribes Israel was later to come into violent conflict and after the settlement, in the days of Gideon, to win a notable victory over them. It is evident, though, that here in this remote corner of Sinai the little community of which Jethro was the head had become more or less separated from its brother clans and was leading a quiet untroubled existence undisturbed by their fellows in the wider world. The fact that Jethro is described in Jud. 1.16 as "the Kenite", which in the Hebrew is "of Kain", shows that he had a forebear named Kain who gave his name to this sub-division of the Midianite

people. The names of Midian's five sons are recorded in Genesis 25; there would have been three or more generations between those sons and Jethro and in one of those generations this Kain probably settled in this spot and gave his name to the growing community.

It is evident that Jethro formed a liking for the stranger and invited him to make his home with them, an invitation which Moses accepted. Similarity of religious faith probably had a great deal to do with it, and also the fact, which must have quickly emerged in conversation, that they shared a common ancestor, Abraham. Moses served and worshipped the God of Abraham, and so did Jethro. It is likely the latter had not previously known of the existence of the Israelites, or of their sojourn in Egypt; after the death of Abraham, when Jacob was only fifteen years old, there was almost certainly no contact between his father's family and the sons of Keturah, now forming their own settlements well outside Canaan. But his forebears had evidently remained true to the faith of Abraham so that Moses on his part must have been greatly interested in finding another people, not of the line of Isaac and Jacob, who also served and revered God. The two men must have had a great deal to talk about and perhaps Moses, who had known of the Arab descendants of Abraham only by hearsay heretofore, learned many things which were to be of inestimable value in later life.

So Moses became a member of Jethro's household and undertook the duties of shepherd and herdsman, the occupation of probably nearly all the male members of the tribe, and perhaps anticipated spending the rest of his days in this quiet and sunlit valley, almost another world compared with the Egypt he had left. Eventually—perhaps not at once, but eventually—he married Zipporah, one of the daughters of Jethro, and became the father of a son. The roots were beginning to strike deep. As the years multiplied—for he spent forty years in this valley—he must have wondered at times whether God did indeed intend to use him at all, or whether Israel would in fact be delivered from Egypt. It is very probable that at such times the sage counsel of the older man allayed his impatience and quieted his restless spirit. When the day's work was done, the darkness of the night settled over the land, and the lamps flickered low in the tents, long and earnest must have been the conversations between these two, as each related to other those things relating to the One true God which had come down to them from their respective forefathers. Much of Moses' deep insight into the character of God and the inviolability of his promises was probably instilled into him by

Jethro; part of the credit for the successful outcome of the Exodus must assuredly be awarded to this almost unknown desert sheik.

There is one other significant contribution which Jethro may have made, although there is no proof, only deduction. The origin of the Book of Job, and how this Arab book having only Arab actors in its drama, got into the Hebrew Bible, is a mystery to all except those modern scholars who assert that it was a much later compilation by some pious Jew and falsely accredited to an ancient but mythical hero. The internal evidence of the Book discredits that fanciful theory anyway. The background of the book, and its allusions, no less than its plain statements, attest that it relates to events which happened in the territory to the east or south east of Canaan a few generations after Abraham but at least several centuries before the Exodus. Israel in Egypt could not have known the book, for the happenings it records took place whilst they were in Egypt. At least three, perhaps more, of the historical characters in the book were descendants of Abraham, and one of them, Bildad, did in fact derive his ancestry from Shuah the brother of Jethro's own forebear Midian. The land of Uz, in which the story of Job is set, was in the area peopled at the time indiscriminately by Midianites, Edomites and Amalekites. Is it reasonable to entertain the possibility that a copy of the Book of Job in its original form, already a couple of centuries old, was in the possession of Jethro the Midianite, whose people had originated in that very land, and that when Moses set out for Egypt and the execution of his life's mission one of the treasures he carried with him was this book which afterwards became incorporated in the Old Testament to the enrichment of the Word of God and the inspiration of succeeding generations? There is no proof that it was so, but the hypothesis does at least provide a suggested solution to a problem that otherwise has so far remained an enigma.

But now things were happening in Egypt. Says Exod. 2.23. "*It came to pass, in process of time, that the king of Egypt died*". Thothmes III, one of the greatest military conquerors of all time, after a reign of thirty-four years went the way of all flesh. He it was who sought Moses' life and caused Moses to flee into Midian. But that was nearly forty years ago and the new Pharaoh, Amon-hotep II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, had not been born then. The affair of Moses was past history and forgotten; it was safe for him to return to Egypt. But after so long a time in Midian he needed some very special indication from God that he was indeed to go back, and that sign he received in the incident of the burning bush. Traversing

the mountains of Horeb somewhere near Mount Sinai, Moses underwent a tremendous spiritual experience in which he heard the voice of God telling him to return to Egypt, "*for all the men are dead which sought thy life*", and prepare to lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land. Moses demurred at first; he was not at all convinced that he was the man for this great work, but at last he accepted the Divine commission and went home to tell Jethro.

A vivid sidelight on the old man's character is revealed here; one might have expected him to object. Moses was as good as a member of the tribe now; he was married to Jethro's daughter and his sons were Jethro's flesh and blood. The proposed course of action could only lead to hard labour and travail for his son-in-law and his daughter and he himself would see them no more. But there is no word of dissent or opposition. Jethro must have realised that this was the Divine leading and like all true servants of God he bowed to the Divine Will. "*Go in peace*" he said to the younger man, and Moses went.

They met once more, a little over a year later. The Exodus had become a fact, Israel was across the Red Sea and in Sinai, and Moses was leading them to their goal in Canaan. News came to Jethro that the host was approaching Mount Sinai, only forty miles from his village, and he went to meet Moses, taking with him Zipporah and her sons who had evidently been left in safety with him while the dangerous process of negotiation with Pharaoh was proceeding. Now for the first time Jethro saw for himself the kind of task with which his son-in-law was faced—it is probable that the old Midianite had never seen so many people all at once in his life before. Exod. 18 recounts the meeting. He listened to Moses' recital of all the wonders the Lord had wrought on behalf of Israel and of all his hopes for the future, and he rejoiced with him and acknowledged the mighty power of God. When in verse 11 he says "*Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods*" he is not indicating a sudden conversion to a faith he had not formerly professed; the expression is a Semitic idiom testifying to a renewed confirmation of a faith already held and does not even imply a belief in the reality of other and lesser gods. "This is a proof to me that the Lord is supreme above all things" in the fact of his power manifested against the power of Pharaoh and his hosts.

Now here is a strange thing. Jethro offers sacrifices of burnt offerings to God on behalf of Israel, before Moses and Aaron themselves had organised or embarked on any such innovation themselves. The making of the Covenant at Sinai and the insti-

tution of the Aaronic priesthood were yet in the future and the erection of the Tabernacle was not to be accomplished for another twelve months. The sacrificing of burnt offerings at this juncture and the ceremonial meal shared between Jethro, Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel on behalf of the nation was a solemn act of thanksgiving to, and communion with, God on account of a great boon. In this case it was clearly an act of national thanksgiving for the deliverance from Egypt and a symbol of entry into the family of God. Says Exod. 18.12 "*...and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.*" The meaning of this ritual was that God himself shared a meal with the participants, his portion being represented by the consumed burnt offering. In accordance with the age-old custom of the Semitic East, those thus having eaten bread together could never be enemies henceforth; they were tied together in the bonds of family relationship. In a very real sense Jethro had anticipated the Covenant so soon to be made at Sinai, and taken the lead in expressing to the Most High on behalf of Israel the gratitude for deliverance, and the pledge of family union, which Israel so far had failed to express for themselves. For, be it noted, despite the marvellous deliverance they had experienced, the delivered ones had so far done nothing but grumble. Just before the Red Sea crossing they cried to Moses "*because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*" Three days later, at Marah, the people murmured against Moses saying "*What shall we drink?*" A few weeks after that, in the wilderness of Sin, the cry was "*would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt . . . when we did eat bread to the full, for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*" Then at Meribah, the complaint was "*Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst.*" Apart from the song of triumph immediately after the crossing there was no acknowledgement to God, and even that song savours more of exaltation over the fate of the Egyptians than humble gratitude to God for the deliverance. It was left to someone outside the commonwealth of Israel, a desert Arab, of the despised sons of Keturah, to be the first to offer up formal thanksgiving to God for the wonderful thing He had done for his people. In that solemn act Jethro identified himself with the people of the Lord and testified to his

conviction that God would indeed fulfil his declared intention of making this nation his own *chosen instrument for the progressive fulfilment of his eternal purposes*. It was no credit to Israel, but to the eternal honour of Jethro, that he was the one who spontaneously performed this act.

The astuteness of Jethro's perception is shown by the next great service he rendered Moses. On the morrow after the ceremonial feast he stood by whilst Moses held his usual daily audience of the people, *dealing with all comers, adjudicating in all disputes, great or small, from morning to evening*. Jethro expostulated with him on the impossibility of one man carrying such a load of detailed administration indefinitely. "*Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone*" (ch. 18.18). He urged on Moses the imperative necessity of delegated authority and decentralised administration, the appointing of local overseers over thousands, and hundreds, and so on, to handle normal matters so that Moses was only called upon to deal with really important cases. The calibre of the man is well attested by the qualifications he counselled Moses to look for in the candidates he would thus appoint "*able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.*" It is good to know that Moses took his father-in-law's advice and organised the national administration on such sound lines that the principles he laid down continued more or less unchanged for six or seven centuries thereafter.

This is the last we see of Jethro. "*Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land*". He never saw him again. He was an old man, probably nearing a hundred and twenty which was a normal life span in those days. A year later, when the host was about to leave Sinai for the long trek to the Promised Land, Moses invited Hobab, the son of Jethro, to throw in his lot with Israel and come with them, and although in the narrative in Numbers 10 Hobab declined the invitation, it is evident that he did eventually accept, for his descendants lived in Israel until the Babylonian captivity. Probably Jethro felt himself too old to undertake such a venture and retired to live out his remaining days in his own quiet valley in the south; Hobab, younger and perhaps equally

persuaded of the Divine calling of Israel, went with Moses accompanied by a few of the younger members of the tribe, and these became the progenitors of the Kenites who lived in Israel in later centuries. They remained tent-dwellers, nomads, never assimilating to the settled pastoral and city life of the Israelites, but always sternly rigid in their allegiance to the principles they inherited from their illustrious forefather. So late as the days of Jeremiah, when the Babylonians brought the kingdom of Judah to its downfall and the independent nationhood of Israel came to an end, the Kenites were among them and still dwelling in tents, abstaining from wine, and in all respects following the traditions of their noble predecessor. So great was their faithfulness in these respects that the Lord cited them as an example to Israel (Jer. 35. 6-19) and promised that there would always be a man of their house to stand before him for ever. Known at that time as the House of Rechab, a Kenite who lived about B.C. 900, they have given their name to a modern Friendly Society based on the principle of temperance, the Rechabites, and in this at least there is an echo of the sterling rectitude of the remote ancestor of Rechab whose name is forever linked with that of Moses.

What of the future? Has God anything in store for this son of Abraham who rendered such faithful service in those long-past days of Moses' exile and the succeeding Exodus? It is well established that the patriarchs of Biblical history who "*received a good report through faith*" (Heb. 11.39) are to be leaders and administrators upon earth in the days of Christ's kingdom, when righteousness will prevail and evil be restrained with firm hand. Here also is one who was faithful to God and zealous in his service, who played a vital part in the Divine purpose in his day, a man who for uprightness, mature judgment and loyalty to God ranks with those who are indicated in Scripture as destined for such high office. May it not be expected that God, who is no respecter of persons, with whom there is no intrinsic difference between Jew and Greek, Israelite and Arab, has already entered upon the roll of those who in the Millennial Day shall emerge from the grave to be "*princes in all the earth,*" the name of an upright, courteous and wise old Bedouin, Jethro the Midianite?

Illustrating how rapidly God's command to "breed abundantly" (Gen. 8. 17) after the Flood could be obeyed by the lower creation is the fact

that two rooks imported into Australia in the year 1900 increased to half-a-million by 1950, and now present a major problem to farmers.

YAHWEH — THE SACRED NAME

I. THE REVELATION OF THE NAME

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth . . ." (Exod. 34.6)

If we would appreciate aright the deep significance of the Name under which the Almighty revealed Himself to Moses, both at the Bush and on the mountain top, we must probe beneath the surfaces both of the language used and the occasions on which the language was used. No part of Scripture invites more serious reflection than does this enunciation by God of his holy Name, and it well becomes the investigator to proceed with reverent care in the elucidation of the profound truths which lie buried therein.

There is no need for the reverent student to adopt the Jewish attitude when meeting the Name in his studies. For centuries the Hebrew reader has substituted some other word, such as "lord", or "god" for the "tetragrammaton" (the Hebrew word of four consonants, YHWH, given to Moses as the Name of God) when reading his sacred Scriptures. Jewry's most respected writers have called this "the uncommunicable Name"—too sacred to be communicated by one to another—too holy to be taken upon the most devout lips. This reluctance to utter or use the holy Name was adopted in order to avoid the possibility of taking it in vain. Out of deep respect for the command "*thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*" they preferred not to speak it at all, neither in reverence nor in levity. Thus the danger of using it lightly or in anger was avoided. A severe penalty was appointed for any rash or vain usage of the Name. (Lev. 24. 10-16). Commenting upon the commandment (Ex. 20.7) the Jewish translator, Isaac Leeser, says "*This means that we shall not utter, 'bear on our lips' the blessed Name.*"

The English reader will note in his Bible that this sacred Name is printed in small capital characters. In the A.V. it reads "*THE LORD, THE LORD GOD . . .*" This is the vital part of this Scripture. The word "LORD" in these capital letters is used as a substitute for the actual word which could be transferred to our tongue from the Hebrew language. It is used in our Bible as a substitute some seven thousand times for the word "Jehovah", but this word Jehovah is a hybrid compound combining the four consonant letters of the "tetragrammaton". (J.H.V.H., where the English J replaces the Hebrew letter Yod) with the

vowel sounds of another Hebrew word meaning "lord" (*Adonai*). It is not at all of ancient usage, having been introduced into Christian literature so recently as the Reformation, around 1520 A.D. In 1611 A.D. it was introduced into the English Bible, thus giving us a word unknown to our Lord and the Early Church, and unknown to the Christian Church for about fifteen centuries. Rotherham (*Introduction to Old Testament* p.25,) says it is about as hybrid a combination as it would be to spell the name "Germany" with the vowels in the word "Portugal"—viz., "Gormuna." Jewish writers therefore are by no means responsible for the introduction of this hybrid word. They *did* use substitute words for the Holy Name, but they did not graft other letters on to it, as Christian theologians have done. Rotherham says further: "*They intentionally wrote down alien vowels—NOT FOR COMBINATION WITH THE SACRED CONSONANTS, but for the purpose of cautioning the Jewish reader to enunciate a totally different word, viz., some other familiar name of the Most High.*"

The use of the word Jehovah in some versions, and the practice of printing the word LORD in place of it in nearly all occurrences in the A.V., has hidden from the view of the ordinary Bible reader some of the most profound and beautiful thoughts which the Word of God affords. The one who comes to know the beauties of this sacred Name will never need nor desire to bury these beauties under other names, nor will he ever use 'the ineffable Name' irreverently or 'in vain'.

This Name, represented in its four essential letters Y.H.V.H., should (according to the suggestions of the most eminent scholars) have two syllables only, the first two letters being joined by an 'a' or an 'e' thus forming the syllable 'YaH' or 'YeH'; the two latter being joined by an 'e' thus forming the second syllable 'WeH'—the whole word thus compounded being 'YaHWeH' or 'YeHWeH'. Scholarly preference is generally for the first of these words, 'YaHWeH'. This is the word used in Rotherham's translation without exception. To quote Rotherham "*This word is almost always regarded as the third person, singular, masculine, imperfect tense, from the root 'hawah', an old form of the root 'hayah'. The one meaning of 'hawah' is 'become'. Thus the force of the word 'yahweh' (used as a verb) would be 'He becometh' or 'He will become'. When the word is*

used as a name (a noun) its meaning is 'He who becometh' or 'the Becoming One'.

A companion form of this word, but in the first person, singular, is found in the word 'ehyeh'. This is the word used by God at the Burning Bush when commissioning Moses to become the agent of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. In this Scripture our A.V. translation has the remarkable phrase, "I AM THAT I AM". The Hebrew text has the word (see Rotherham's introduction to the Old Testament) "ehyeh" "asher" "ehyeh" and should be translated in the imperfect or future tense "I will be what I will be" or "I will become what I please to become." Thus the word "Yahweh" is the word another would use when speaking to third parties about the Most High; as for instance in Psa. 91-2 'I will say of Yahweh, He is my refuge and fortress, "Ehyeh" is the word God would use when speaking for himself and of himself, assuring his hearers that He would become this or that, or do this or that as the occasion required.

When God introduced himself to Moses at the Bush (Exod. 3), the descendants of Abraham were in bondage. The four hundred years period which was to terminate with Abraham's seed in bondage was drawing to its close. The iniquity of the Amorites was almost full (Gen. 15. 13-16), and the due time was near when Israel should be delivered. God was proposing their deliverance to Moses, and the promise and pledge of that deliverance was the wonderful Name which the Most High used to commission and encourage Moses to undertake that task. When Moses demurred to undertake the task, God said "certainly I will be with thee." To this Moses replied "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say, 'What is his Name?' what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses 'I AM THAT I AM'; and He said 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.'" And God said moreover unto Moses (as he further remonstrated) "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YAHWEH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you...." (Exod. 3.13.15). Thus the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were in grievous bondage, crying day and night for release, and God was preparing a great deliverance for them. "Go and tell them, that 'I Who will be what I will be' have sent thee unto them." Thus God related his

ability and intention to their great need, and promised to become to them all that they needed. "I have seen their affliction; I have heard their cry; and I am come down to deliver." Such was the assurance God gave to Moses. In their dire need God promised by his holy Name to supply that need.

Passing over Moses' repeated remonstrances, and God's promise to be with them, and be unto Moses what he needed him to be (Exod. 4 and 5), we proceed to consider the second revelation of the holy Name on the mountaintop. (Exod. 34). This people had reached a crisis in their lives. For their idolatrous sin the blood-sealed Covenant had been abrogated. They had broken the solemn pact and taken another god in the place of their fathers' God. In strict justice God could have cast them off and left them to fend for themselves, even had He not destroyed them out of hand. To the greatly distressed plea of Moses, repeated again and yet again, God re-affirmed his gracious intention to be to this erring people all that He was pleased to be, and in such a way, and in such conditions, that Moses could assure that people for all time that "He will become (to you) what He will become".

"And Yahweh passed by before him and proclaimed, I AM YAHWEH, YAHWEH ELOHIM, Merciful and gracious: longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. 34.6.). Never before since the dawn of time had such words been heard by mortal man. Men had known of Yahweh before Moses came, but not in this light. Here, at last, God Most High proclaimed his compassion and pity for fallen man, in terms of touching tenderness and indescribable beauty. The heart of God was aflame with love for a rebel race, and on this mountain top it broke through its restraining bonds and began to send its rays to earth. From that time on, prophet and psalmist took up this uplifting song, and wove these assuring words into prophecy and psalm. Scores of passages of later date pulsate with the sublime promise enshrined in that holy Name. It was put forth as a promise—a most gracious promise—assuring one and all that Divine power and capacity were adaptable to any circumstance, to any difficulty, to any necessity. It becomes a veritable bank of faith to such as love God and keep his commandments, no less to us of Christian faith than to Israel of earlier days..

To be continued

God is not sparing in His riches. He gives not a trickle but a torrent. As His power is great, so is His grace. (2 Cor. 9-8).

There is far less danger in an enthusiastic layman talking heresy than in a dull cleric talking dogma. (Archbishop William Temple)

DANIEL IN BABYLON

The story of a great man's faith

16. At the End of the Days

The old man's task was done. He sat, quietly scanning the little pile of tablets the writing upon which he had just completed. There would be no more to put on record. The revealing angel had said his last word, and departed. The story had been told, ranging far into futurity, into that dim time when God, rising up in judgment, would have abolished evil and brought in everlasting righteousness. And Daniel was old, too old to take in any more, too old to do any more writing. He began to realise that now. He had to accept the fact that his life's work was finished and he must lay down the responsibility and wait for the call. What was it the angel had said? "*Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*" He began to feel that was what he needed—rest. He had led a full and busy life; survived hazards and dangers; administered great tasks and discharged heavy responsibilities; manifested sterling allegiance to God in the face of opposition and persecution. Now he was ready to yield himself to the care of God whom he had served so faithfully. He prepared himself for the rest of death knowing of a surety that at the end of the days he would stand in the resurrection of the just and see with his own eyes the reality of the visions he had just now recorded. With that he was content.

Daniel's final revelation led him far beyond the political events and foreshadowings of his own time. It spoke, not only of kings following kings, and empires following empires, but also of the gradual emergence, on the stage of world history, of a determined and calculated enemy of all righteousness and goodness, an enemy that would at the last stand up to oppose the power of God come forth to win the world for himself, and be utterly destroyed before that power. It spoke of the kingdom which will never pass away, the world in which God's will shall be done as it is done in heaven; of the resurrection of the dead and the triumph of the righteous; of all those glorious themes which coloured the words of the prophets and inspired their hearers. It set the seal on his work of sixty years and constituted him instructor for the coming twenty-five centuries of prophetic study.

It is probably true that Daniel never understood much of the detailed prophetic meaning inherent in that angelic revelation of world history which constitutes chapters 11 and 12 of his book. Even to-day there is considerable uncertainty and differ-

ence of opinion as to the right interpretation of much of these passages. Admittedly the opening verses of chapter 11 deal with matters which would have been plain enough; he had already learned, eleven years earlier, in the third year of King Belshazzar (Chap. 8) that the Persian power would one day give way to that of Greece. Although that event was still two centuries away the influence of Greece was already being felt in Daniel's time and he would not find it difficult to interpret that part of Chapter 11. But after that the story went into details which must have been completely incomprehensible to the aged prophet. He could only have come to the conclusion which Jesus at a later date had to impress upon his own disciples, that there would be "wars and rumours of wars", that "nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but the end is not yet". After a lifetime of studious and devoted waiting upon God to know when the golden time of blessing was destined to break upon the world, he eventually had to accept the Divine decree, which those other disciples had in their day and turn also to accept. "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but my Father only.*" There is a lesson in that for all Christian students of prophecy. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter how closely imminent the words of the Book and the signs of the times make the Day of Deliverance appear to be, the day and hour is locked up in the counsels of the Most High. It may be an age hence; it may be to-morrow night. We have to be ready for either eventuality.

Although Daniel would not be able to anticipate the detailed outworking in history of the strange story he had written on the tablets, there were certain embedded principles which he would be able to follow. He was of course by no means the first Hebrew prophet to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to transmit knowledge of God's designs for the end time. Joel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, all had spoken and written of those things in previous years and Daniel would assuredly have possessed and been familiar with their writings. He was by no means a stranger to the general tenor of Divine revelation concerning happenings of the End. This crowning revelation, coming to him at the end of his life, was in considerable degree supplementary to what he already knew from his studies in the books of the earlier prophets. He must have been familiar with the prospect of a

day to come when the hosts of the north, the enemies of Israel, would come out of their place to invade and destroy the chosen people, and God would intervene with the powers of heaven to destroy those forces of unrighteousness and deliver them. The factor which was new to Daniel in his own revelation was the delineation on the one hand of a personal figure who would be the Divine Leader and champion in this battle—one like the Son of Man; Michael the archangel—and on the other hand the crystallisation of all those world forces allied against God, the Antichrist, into one figure.

It is to Daniel that we owe the first shadowy silhouette of that dark, dread figure which has so intrigued—one might almost say obsessed—Christian thought through the centuries. "*He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*" That was St. Paul's definition in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Who or what is he; man demon, or world system? On what stage does he appear; Greek, Roman, or yet to be: Rome, Babylon, Jerusalem? Christians have bandied these questions to and fro for centuries; only in a planned prophetic study can they be properly discussed, and certainly Daniel had no consciousness of the developments of thought into which his dim picture of a godless and all-conquering king who met his doom at last on the sword of Michael would lead.

Perhaps, though, these last two chapters of Daniel's prophecy do sow the seeds of a prophetic distinction which only comes to full flower in the New Testament, the slow but inexorable heading up of all the various and mutually antagonistic forces of evil in the world into one iron spear-head of resistance which as a single unit meets the powers of righteousness and by them is utterly broken. Daniel saw the development of earthly empires and the rising arrogance of man and the lining up of those powers into two camps—the king of the north and the king of the south. Whether we do or do not understand the extremely detailed narrative of the continuing conflict between these two powers does not alter the fact that quite evidently a long period of time is indicated. But when we come to the end of chapter 11 and the time when Michael stands up to wage final war, there is only one enemy. How it comes about, and when, may or may not be certainly apparent, but here in Daniel, as in the New Testament, God rises up in judgment at the time of his kingdom to find one united enemy, and one only, standing against him. Perhaps the vision of Revelation 19 where the Rider on the white horse comes forth from heaven to do battle, is more lucid. In that scene the powers of earth are clearly seen united as they

have never yet been united in history "to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army".

It might be, then, that Daniel at the end of his life did see, in shadowy outline, a far future day when all the world and every power in the world save that of the relative few who have retained their allegiance to God, has coalesced into one single, well-disciplined, determined fighting force, drawn up in solid phalanx to resist the coming of the Kingdom of God. That must mean that individual jealousies and national rivalries have been laid aside in the face of what all can see is a greater threat. No longer will it be a question of which type of man-made government is to rule in the earth, but whether man-made government is to survive at all. The standing up of Michael, the opening of the heavens and the emergence therefrom of the Rider on the white horse, is the answer.

From that time onward affairs in the world will take a different course. "*At that time thy people shall be delivered.*" "*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.*" "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*" The Rider on the white horse; Michael who stands up; these are none other than our Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, come to overthrow the power of evil and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth under which all men and nations will be instructed and led in the ways of God, and the message of repentance, justification and reconciliation preached as never before.

So the old man closed his eyes in complete confidence that it would surely come. He knew and had proved throughout a long life the faithfulness of God. He knew that, like Peter in a time yet to come, he had not followed "cunningly devised fables," but had been an eye-witness of God's majesty. What was it that the saintly Polycarp said when exhorted by the pagan magistrate to save his life by forswearing Christ? "*Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never failed me. How can I deny him now!*" Daniel must have felt like that. Perhaps his mind went back to the early days of boyhood, when he first learned of God and his plans for eventual world deliverance, at the feet of his mentor, Jeremiah the prophet. Maybe he recalled dimly, because it was a long time ago, the journey to Babylon as a youth of eighteen or so, and his companions Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who together with him had refused the rich foods of the palace and because of their abstemiousness had eventually found the king's favour and attained high office in the

State. That would have brought before his failing eyes the picture of the arrogant king whom he had been able to serve so faithfully, and the king's family which he had known so well, the gentle Queen Amytis, and Nitocris the king's daughter who had remained so staunch a friend through all the vicissitudes of a life time and into old age. They were all dead now and only he was left. He remembered the king's dream of the image, and how God had given him the interpretation and the understanding that four great empires were to rule on earth and then the kingdom of God come. The leaping flames of the fiery furnace flickered before his eyes, and again he heard the awed voice of the king "I see *four* men, *loose*, and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods." The thin hands moved restlessly; again he was in spirit endeavouring with Queen Amytis to restrain the mad king as he sought to emulate the beasts of the earth, and once more he knew the thrill of hearing the voice of Nebuchadnezzar, restored to sanity, professing allegiance to the God of heaven. The days of dreams and visions passed across his mind, the visits of the revealing angel, the years of study and reflection when he lived as a private citizen, waiting in patience for the revelation of God from heaven. The shadows in the room gathered and he entered again into the darkness of Babylon's last

night, when the Persians besieged the city; the blaze of light at the palace banquet, the writing on the wall, the end of the empire, his brief time of service under the Median King Darius, his deliverance from the lion's den. Rapidly the pictures passed before his mental vision and at the end of them all, a golden glory in the background, he saw the fair beauty of the world that is yet to be, the world for which he had waited all his life, the world in which he himself was to stand, in his lot, at the end of the days.

He could see them more plainly now, those his friends and companions of days so long ago. They had all gone in front of him; he had not seen them for a long time. They were there, waiting for him. In the land yet to be, in the end of the days, he would take up his task with renewed strength and ability, and once more serve God to whom he had been faithful, and who had been so faithful to him; serve him in that glory transcendent that will never pass away.

The room was getting very dark now, and it was quiet, quieter than Daniel had ever known it. The golden visions flickered on, beckoning him . . . He was going to rest now, as the angel had promised . . . but he would stand in his lot . . . at the end of the days.

The End.

A poser for NATO

In March of 1967, the whole organisation of NATO air power in Germany came to a halt for several months. A new aerial menace grounded the combined Air Forces of the R.A.F. the Luftwaffe and the Canadian Air Force. Aerial manouvres came to an end and ten radar units, with one hundred observer posts, were set up to detect the approach of the enemy—not to fight him but to keep out of his way and avoid any chance of a conflict.

This rather unusual type of military strategy was dictated by the form of the threat. The invaders advanced without anything in the nature of guns, bombs, radio or other instruments of offence or defence as normally understood by civilised human beings. They just came—and after one encounter in which a plane crashed and killed its occupants, the authorities decided to give their opponents best and keep out of the way.

Lest it should be thought that a certain great power had devised a new secret weapon which the West was unable to withstand let it be said at once that the invading forces came, not from Eastern Europe, but from the tropics; that they were not men, but birds; storks and cranes, many thousands of them, flying to Baltic lands in their

usual migration after spending the winter in Africa. Two cranes downed a military plane and after that it was decreed there should be no more flying until the migration was ended. The radar scanners and observer posts kept watch for the flocks and relayed "early warnings" to all airfields as soon as they were sighted.

It could be argued that the birds had right on their side. After all, they have been following this regular route for thousands of years—long enough to have established prior right of way—and men in planes have trespassed on their territory only in the last few decades. But there is no evidence that the birds have thought very deeply over the matter; they have always gone that way and the presence of a few planes in the fairway is neither here nor there. They still go that way. And they have won.

A somewhat humorous example perhaps, but an example, nevertheless, of the manner in which Nature can frustrate the works of men. In the last great conflict in which, by Divine intervention, the powers of Heaven join issue with those of world evil, among the weapons of Heaven might well be included the forces of Nature, outwitting human strategy in a manner men can neither imitate nor overcome.

"THE ELDERS YE YOUNGER" A discourse on 1 Peter 5. 1-5

The early Christian churches were not less prone to difficulties than are ours to-day. No assembly of which we have received knowledge through the Scriptures was immune from frictions and jealousies any more than others throughout this Age. Even the exemplary and sympathetic Church at Philippi had its little rift in the harmony—Syntyche and Euodia being the particular participants in its time of discord.

There is probably no community of men in the whole wide world where the music runs smoothly all the time. Even in cloisters, where implicit obedience is imposed by solemn vow, unspoken discontent has been known to smoulder over long years and then burst into flame under moments of intense strain, producing disruption and strife between Abbot and monk, or Abbess and nun. Temperamental differences in men and women make harmonious contacts over long periods extremely difficult to maintain. Such differences are not always due to perversity or cantankerousness. They more often arise out of variations in the mental and physical structure of the individuals concerned. These things usually determine and govern personality—and as no two personalities are identical, the result in our lives—that is, in our own particular ways of thinking and doing things—is that we tend to approach and assess the facts of life a little differently all round. This is a state of things which cannot be evaded or avoided, since, possessing, as we each do, a degree of freedom of will, as well as of the mind, we each tend to exercise these faculties as we deem best, and that usually means differently in every case. Ingrained habits, together with strong personal preferences, often make a person "hard to get on with". Human nature being what it is, adaptation and adjustment, each to each, is a necessity in any association where men and women come together for communion and fellowship. Everywhere, among people of every class, each society or community of men has to use compromise and adaptability as the cement to give cohesion to the whole.

When we come together in the name of the Lord the same difficulties intrude themselves. Mutual belief in the Cross of Christ does not cancel out, automatically, all the incompatibilities that arise from personality. Even those called to be saints can still rub and fret and chafe each other till they become raw in some part or other of their sensitivity. It is to help us in these times of

difficulty that God has provided for us a "regulator"—His own Holy Spirit,—to enable us to discern and apply the necessary adjustments between members of the Church, and to mollify and soothe, as with holy anointing oil, the sores which friction could inflame and mortify. With the Holy Spirit shed abroad in each heart it ought to be possible to see the mutual intercourse between Christian men at its highest level, and yielding its most edifying results. Unfortunately things do not just work out that way, because there is not always heart-room sufficient for the supply of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we are like an engine that will not work because there is not enough power to make it work.

It seems to have been something like that in Peter's day. From the evidence he gives, some of the churches of the "Diaspora"—the strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1. Pet 1.1) had been experiencing difficulty from these natural human causes. Elders had been applying regulations and controls too stringently, and the younger element seems to have been in revolt. Peter sought to remind them of the need of suitable adaptation to each other for the sake of the flock of God (1 Pet. 5.2 & 5). Obviously the churches had been up against a problem as old as man, the thrust and drive of youth at variance with the maturing sedateness of advancing years. In communities cradled and reared in the traditions of patriarchalism this was remarkable, and seems to indicate how severely the Elders had been "lording it over God's heritage". Not lightly would the younger men raise revolt, yet this is just what the context seems to indicate.

Peter had a word of exhortation and advice for these Elders, basing his appeal on his own seniority, and upon remembrance of the price his Lord had paid to free them all from sin and make their Christian fellowship possible. He also had a word for "ye younger", because there was both precedent and propriety in their proper subjection to maturer men. He besought both old and young to be clothed with humility, seeing that God would reject either old or young who ventured to assert their pride by placing self-assertiveness before the best interests of "the flock of God"!

The same "joie de vivre" that makes the lamb skip and gambol in the field also prompts the youthful member of the human tribe to seek outlets for his upsurge of energy and enthusiasm. Experience and observation have shown that if the

young cannot give effective vent to their joy in life in acceptable righteous ways, they are likely to do so with gusto and exuberance in other ways. The "sowing of wild oats" has often been, alas, the outcome of some over-strict, over-careful parent's indiscreet attempt to protect and shield its offspring from the "world". Undue restraints, in bygone days, applied with too much stringency by a too austere presbytery has driven forth into rebellion and sin thousands of young lives which the Church could ill afford to lose. The Puritan attitude of old, which made the whole life—not merely the garb—a drab thing (even to forbidding the young, because it was the Sabbath day, the pleasure of puckering their lips to whistle off their joy), tried, and tried in vain to dam up the blithe exuberance of youth, and had much to do with making England the sink of wickedness which Wesley found when he ventured forth to visit the extensive parish which he claimed for his own.

Adaptation and adjustment is always essential where two or more people come together in the Name of the Lord, but it is even more essential when the "comers together" are both old and young. The wisdom of the "seniors"—the seniority, for that is the term which in this place contrasts best with the words "ye younger"—is put on its honour so that Christian men may advise, suitably and understandingly, as to the avenues in which the "younger" can unleash its drive and energy so that it can be of service to the entire flock. Such advice, rightly directed and conditioned, is the thing that Peter here advises as requisite to make co-operation between old and young a realistic experience for all and for the flock of God.

Let us see what it is that Peter has to say to both old and young. The A.V. text says "*Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be ye clothed with humility.*" (1 Pet. 5.5). That rendering is considered doubtful by the Diaglott, yet other versions give renderings very similar to the A.V. It reads as though the "elder" and the "younger" were to take turn and turn about in their subjection each to each. But such a notion is at once ruled out by the first word of the verse—"likewise". Evidently Peter had exhorted and advised the "elders" to submit themselves (not to the younger, but) to the "Shepherd of the flock", and serve both him and it out of a ready mind, and of a good free will. Not for greed or gain, nor yet to satisfy a dictatorial craving, but as servants and under shepherds serving under him who has the care of all the flock in his heart. And in like manner as "they" submit themselves to the leading of

the Lord, so were the younger to submit themselves for guidance to the leaders of their seniors. This is where the "likewise" comes in, and thus throws upon the seniors the grave responsibilities both of copying the Lord aright, and of serving as examples to the younger element, so that they can follow in their steps. If then the Elders take their cue and pattern from the Lord, the words of Peter expectantly assume that the "younger" will copy them, taking their advice with profit to themselves and to the whole flock of God.

There is some variation in the second part of the text in various translations. The Diaglott reads, "Be ye clothed with humility". Knox says "Put on humility which is the 'livery' you must wear". Twentieth Century reads "Put on the 'badge' of humility in mutual service". Rotherham and Weymouth both have "Gird yourself with humility". Evidently the exact shade of meaning has not been easy to discover. But Weymouth in a footnote gets down to the exact thought—he says "the Greek means as with the apron of one who waits upon others". Moffat comes right out with this thought in his text. He translates:—"Indeed you must all put on the apron of humility to serve one another". Here we have a definition that suits every translator's thought. The apron was the "badge" of servitude; it was the "livery" of all who serve; it could be "girded" on, "put on", and with it a servant could be "clothed"!

It was the custom in both Greek and Roman households for a slave to don an apron to protect his flowing tunic in his working hours. It was intended to shield him from any contaminating substance met with in the course of his task—much as the housewife finds to-day when doing her household work. It caught all the smears and dirt, shielding the drapery beneath from becoming soiled or grimed.

Peter desired to see his brethren gird themselves for the task on hand, both old and young, with the slaves' "livery" and "badge", remembering the while that both the elder and the younger elements were responsible concerning the flock to the Shepherd of the flock. But it is quite possible that a deeper illustration ran through Peter's mind. The girding of the apron would recall for him that fateful night when the great Shepherd of the flock himself took basin, water and towel to wash their road-stained feet. Taking for himself the opportunity which every follower despised, the Master girded himself and set before them the lesson, once for all, that lowly service was sweet and precious in his sight. "*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*" he said to this very man himself—nor had Peter ever forgotten that

scene, nor the lesson it was intended to teach. He had come to "know hereafter" what it all implied. "*Ye ought also to wash one another's feet*" said the Master in the upper room.—"*Ye all should put on the apron of humility*" said Peter to his own followers—it seems to have been just his way of repeating the Master's words!

"The Order of the Towel" (if we may not irreverently describe the scene in the upper room) had but one member in its illustrious rank—the "Order of the Apron" stands open to all who will don its badge and insignia of surrender and servitude to the Shepherd of the flock. It is the badge of sincere under-shepherd care for the sheep of his pasture lovingly and faithfully rendered as unto him. If then the "younger" see this badge faithfully and lovingly worn by the "Seniority" they too will come with ready zeal to throw all their fresh young energy into their desire to "Copy Him"! Wise old Peter! How well he knew that you must bring the "young" face to face with the Lord himself, if you would enlist their thrust and drive in the work of the ministry. He knew and understood that their glimpse of him—of his life and death, his resurrection and Shepherd care—would control and restrain them better far than all Church restrictions or Board-of-Elder regulations. The "One" they would obey with joy, immediately; the other they might defy, with sullenness, continuously.

So much, then, for the wearing of the "apron" itself—but what is that grace, that quality, that virtue with which it is associated? What is this humility? Is it not that attitude of self-depreciation which rises in a Christian's heart when he realises his utter inability to repay the debt he owes to God for his redemption? Is it not also that sense of insufficiency that grips the Pastor's mind when he comprehends the immensity of the task to which he has been called? The humble mind is the one that both knows and confesses that any natural endowment, or any deeper understand-

ing or any more mature development which he may have attained, more than another of his brethren, is owed entirely to the bounty of the Lord and not to his own achievement. He will always say "What have I that I have not received as a gift from God?"

Seeing then that all, both old and young, are under a debt to God they can never pay; seeing also that all we have attained is a gift from his hands, what ground have we for pride or self-conceit in our service for the flock of God?

God's pattern of humility was seen at Calvary, when One who was rich emptied himself of all his glory to serve the Plan of God, even unto death! The recognition of those sufferings—as Peter asserts (v. 1.)—is enough to subdue our vaulting pride, and all our braggart airs when we remember that it was that precious blood and not our own worthiness that opened wide to us the gateway into the Fold.

Thus Peter's words take 'the elders which are among you' and 'ye younger' also to the scene of their redemption, to remind them, each and all, of the infinite price that He has paid; to assure them of its present outcome in the existence of a "flock of God", and to invite them, old and young, to gird themselves with the "apron of humility" that they may serve the flock of God with faithful loving service to the end. With right appreciation of the great sacrifice pervading every heart, both "Elder" maturity, and "younger" enthusiasm can be linked together, under God's hand, to serve its every need. Thus beneath the great Shepherd's care all the little differences that arise from variations in personality can be blended into a greater unity to serve a mutual need.

The invitation to us all is to "The Order of the Apron"! Let us see to it that neither youthful exuberance or assertiveness nor senior sedateness or rigidity, shall mar or smirch the "insignia" of our noble profession in the Lord.

NOTICES

The September/October issue of the "Monthly" will be published and despatched on September 28th instead of 1st as usual, consequent upon related circumstances. Readers are advised therefore not to expect this issue until early October or some four weeks after the usual time. The November/December issue will be published on November 1st as is customary.

It may be opportune to remind readers that an acknowledgment is sent for all gifts of 50p or one dollar and upwards, but not for gifts of lesser amount, since the high cost of postage and stationery would absorb a considerable proportion of such gifts, and it seems a pity when someone has made the effort to send such gifts from what might be their very slender store that the full benefit of their loving zeal should not be applied to the intended purpose.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

Matt 13, 47—50

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew is a collection of six parables, and of these there are two, that of the Wheat and Tares and that of the Dragnet, which are so similar in their main principles although set against different backgrounds that they are frequently assumed to bear the same meaning or to have much the same application. This is not necessarily so. In both parables there is a gathering together of two classes, the worthy and the worthless, a process of differentiation and separation, the acceptance of the worthy for preservation and the rejection and destruction of the worthless. At a time when Christian theology insisted upon the final separation of all created beings at death into two classes, destined for heaven and hell respectively, there was not much room for discerning any difference between the two parables. It is now being increasingly realised that God is working in successive ages of earth's history to effect, first, the selection from amongst all mankind of a dedicated community, the Church, to be associated with the Lord Christ in His future work of world conversion, and second, the reconciliation to God of all of mankind who can thus be reached in the Age which has been ordained for that purpose. On this account there is latitude for the discernment of shades of difference and application in these two parables. Whilst they obviously both have reference to aspects of the Divine purpose in separating between that which is good and that which is evil, and ensuring the permanence of the one and the elimination of the other, it may well be that each parable is intended to have its impact upon one particular aspect of this two-fold Divine Plan.

The Kingdom of Heaven, said Jesus, is like a drag-net that, being cast into the sea, gathered a full haul of varied fish, and was drawn to shore. The fishers proceeded to sort out their catch, gathering the useful and good fish into their baskets and throwing the worthless away. Just so, said Jesus, will it be in the end of the Age; there will have been a great gathering of worthy and worthless; the time for the cessation of gathering will come; the angels will proceed forth and effect the separation, and the worthless will be cast into a furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The words are few and simple; the parable as it is recorded is very brief; but there is deep dispensational truth hidden in its half-dozen sentences. This is obvious from the use of

the expression "the end of the world" (*aion*, age, meaning an age in human history or in the development of the Divine Plan, not necessarily the end of all things terrestrial). There are four significant elements in the explanation which Jesus gave for his disciples' enlightenment and to understand the parable aright we have to consider, first, what these elements stood for in the minds of the immediate hearers, versed as they were in the theology and expectations of Judaism, and second, what the same elements imply when set against the background of our own Christian understanding of the Divine Plan as it has been revealed in later times by the Holy Spirit. These elements are:—

- (a) The end of the age
- (b) The angels
- (c) The separation of righteous and wicked
- (d) The casting of the wicked into the fire.

The physical picture which forms the substance of the parable must have been commonplace enough to the disciples. Fishers themselves, several of them, or closely associated with the fishing activities carried on around the Sea of Galilee as the remainder of them must have been, they would all readily have entered into the Master's thoughts. So often had they themselves assisted in just such an operation, going out in their boats to extend their long net, usually between two boats, over a wide stretch of water and coming steadily towards land, sweeping into its confines all living creatures in its path. Then the strenuous task of hauling the heavy net, with its living load, out of the water and up the beach to a place where they could sit down and begin to sort their catch. With what satisfaction and delight would they watch the growing pile of good fish in the baskets; with what contempt toss the worthless ones down the beach towards the water, not caring whether they went back into the lake or not, so quickly were they forgotten and the attention turned to the better specimens which were the objects of their quest. Not every variety of fish was suitable for their purpose, but everything in the water that could possibly be taken must be gathered in, so that no creature which could by any means be found of use should be missed. The purpose of the operation was to gather in all the worthy, that only the truly and demonstrably worthless should be rejected.

But Jesus introduced a new set of ideas even while the disciples' minds were still busy with the picture He had drawn for them. Not the close of a day's work, but the end of an Age! Not fishermen, but angels! Not the casting back into the sea, but into a furnace of fire! These symbols belong to an altogether different range of thought; the simple story was, after all, only a means to an end; now they must perforce turn their attention to another background with which they were at any rate equally familiar, the knowledge and instruction that had been drilled into them from childhood concerning the coming Day when God would rise up to make an end of evil and evildoers, and usher the righteous into everlasting bliss. The usual tacit assumption of zealous Jews was that the separation at the Last Day would be in the main between Jews and Gentiles, the Jews, as the chosen people, to be ushered into eternal felicity and the Gentiles consigned to everlasting destruction. One of the purposes of this parable was to teach them that the distinction and the separation, when it did come, was not to be on the basis of racial origin but upon that of worthiness or unworthiness.

The disciples at that time knew nothing of that three-fold "end of the Age" which is so familiar to New Testament students to-day—the respective endings of the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age. They knew of one Age only, the Age in which they lived, and which they believed was to be brought to an end by the appearance of the Messiah and his holy ones, his angels, the destruction of all God's enemies in a furnace of fire, and the exaltation of his friends, his followers, to reign over the submissive nations of earth forever. That had been the expectation of Jewry for centuries past and when Jesus explained the parable in these terms this is how they must have understood those terms. They apprehended the matter correctly enough in principle but had only a very rudimentary conception of the reality towards which our Lord was pointing.

We should expect to see this parable in more detailed and possibly more accurate form than did the disciples, for we have the advantage of a much more detailed knowledge of the ages and dispensations marked out in the Divine Plan. That period of time which to the disciples was one Age, terminated by the "Last Day" and the destruction of all evil, has to us become three Ages, known generally as the Jewish Age, terminated by the ending of Jewish national existence forty years after the Crucifixion; the Gospel Age, terminated by the Second Advent, and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom upon earth; and the Millennial Age, terminated by the end of the incorrigibly sinful and

the entry into everlasting life of all redeemed and perfected humanity. The expression "end of the world" (*aion, age*) refers sometimes to one and sometimes to another of these Ages. Thus Heb. 9.26 "*Once in the end of the world hath he (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*" refers obviously to the end of the Jewish Age, the time of the First Advent. So also must 1 Cor. 10.11 "*They are written for our admonition (the early Church) upon whom the ends of the world (ages) have come*".

At the other extreme we have 1 Cor. 15.24. "*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father*" referring undoubtedly to Jesus' surrender of his Millennial Kingship at the close of his Mediatorial work, at the end of the Millennial Age. Then there are such words as Matt. 24.3 "*What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?*" and Matt. 24.14 "*This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness, and then shall the end come*" clearly, whether the disciples realised the fact or not, applying to the end of the Gospel Age and the time of the Second Advent. To which of these three Age-endings shall the judgment of the Drag-net parable be applied?

The nature of the story affords an indication. It is a picture of the taking of fish, and fish in large quantities at that. The "fishers" are the angels, the "holy ones" who appear with the Messiah in returning glory. The general setting therefore would seem to be after the Second Advent has taken place, when the "angels" are equipped and qualified for their work. But who are these "angels" who appear so often in association with the returning Messiah at his Second Advent? The word, of course, merely means messengers; to the disciples, who knew of no Divine messengers save the glorious beings who constantly wait on the presence of God, the words of Jesus could only conjure up visions of celestial visitants coming with him to do his work. It could only have been after Pentecost that they realised the great truth that they themselves, if faithful, would be among that triumphant company that is commissioned to do the work of God upon earth during the next Age. This is an important matter. It is sometimes suggested that the angels of the heavenly courts are referred to in passages such as this, but that is mainly the consequence of traditional ideas regarding the angels of heaven, always engaged in what might be described as the extra-terrestrial works of God. When it is realised that the resurrected Church, "changed" to celestial conditions and fully equipped to engage, in association with the Lord, in the evangelistic work amongst men which

is to characterise the Millennial Age, fully and completely meet the requirements of the parable, the term "angel" takes on a much wider significance. The Apostle Paul declared that "the saints shall judge the world". The Revelator speaks of the Church as living and reigning with Christ over the nations for the thousand years, which is a synonym for the Millennial Age. It is clear then that the "holy ones" who at our Lord's Second Advent and throughout the entire thousand years of his Mediatorial reign are executing all his work for and amongst men, will be the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of this Age, raised to the glory of spiritual being, resplendent in their celestial bodies. To men on earth, of course, they will be as angels; angels of the highest possible order, the constant companions of the Lord himself.

The universal gathering-in of the dragnet, therefore, well symbolises the world-wide evangelical work of the Messianic Age in which "*the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22.17). None will then be able to escape the drawing power of Christ. He himself did say "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me*". "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31.34). And the use of fish as a symbol of humanity in the mass is appropriate and Scriptural. "*Man also knoweth not his time*" says the Preacher in Eccl. 9.12 "*as the fishes that are taken in an evil net*". God is said to "*make man as the fishes of the sea*" in Hab. 1.14, and Amos 4.2 has a somewhat similar allusion. And more impressive, because nearer home, is the well known expression of Jesus in Matt. 4.19 "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*". It may well be concluded, therefore, that the towing of the dragnet through the sea pictures such a work in the future day, and its being brought to shore, with the consequent separation of good and bad fish, the final judgment upon each individual man and woman as to their worthiness of everlasting life in God's then sinless creation, or unworthiness through conscious and deliberate refusal to come into union with God and accept life from him, which refusal can only eventuate in the loss of life.

This latter alternative is pictured by the furnace of fire. What is this? Is it a refining and purifying fire, from which that which is thrown into it will be taken, cleansed and perfected? Or is it a consuming fire, burning until all that has been cast into it is consumed into ashes and is as though it had never been? Clearly the latter. There is no suggestion that the worthless fish are subjected to some remedial treatment that renders them accept-

able and fit for use after all. They are already beyond hope of being put to any useful purpose, and they are cast out to be destroyed, utterly and without hope. Here again is another pointer to the interpretation of the parable. It is only at the end of the Millennial Age that what might be termed the "wastage" of God's creation suffers the penalty of its failure to come into harmony with the Divine Will and reach up to the Divine ideals, and in consequence is utterly consumed. This is the fire of Divine condemnation on sin and sinners, and just as, in the picture, the fishermen cast the worthless fish away only when it was clear it could serve no useful purpose, so in the Age which God has appointed for the reconciliation of "whosoever will" among all men, none will be lost eternally until it has been abundantly demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt that the continued conscious existence of such could bring nothing but misery to themselves and to others. None will be cast out until God has exhausted every power at his command to bring them into harmony with those laws which are both the rules which God has ordained for life and the principles by which alone life can be sustained.

"*There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*". As in other New Testament instances where this figure of speech is used, it pictures the impotent rage and resentment of those thus rejected. It does not imply remorse or repentance; the same allusion in the Old Testament indicates the fixed enmity and hatred of the wicked for the righteous. It is only a figure of speech; that which is cast into the fire is in no position either to wail or to gnash teeth. It does serve to stress the fact that those thus barred from the light and life of the eternal state maintain their enmity and their rebellion to the last. Had there been any possibility of repentance and conversion in their hearts God would have waited, for an aeon if need be, to receive them to himself. But in these cases there is no such possibility, there is no hope, and the life that will not have God comes to its inevitable end. Some there are who maintain that there will be none such, that the drawing power of God will eventually succeed in reconciling all men, without exception, to himself, so that eventually all men will be saved. Should that indeed be the happy outcome all who love the Lord will rejoice, for that is the desire of the Father himself and no one of his followers can desire less. But if so, it can only be because all such have in the exercise of their own free will and of their own volition come to him in full loyalty and dedication of life. The Scripture reveals the principles upon which God is working and the relative destinies of those who

become righteous on the one hand and those who deliberately refuse to become righteous on the other; perhaps it will be found at the end that the number of those who steadfastly refuse to accept the appeal of the Lord Jesus is going to be very small, very small indeed. We can at any rate be

sure that if God allows any of his created sons to go into the darkness it will be because even He is powerless to keep him in the light—powerless in the face of the man's own will. For that is a fortress which God will never take by force; allegiance and loyalty must be of voluntary yielding or not at all.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

An Expository
Talk

The New Testament begins properly with the birth of One who is earth's rightful king and immediately the introduction is made commences the ministry of John the Baptist calling upon the nation of Israel to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And thus a momentous change began in God's dealings with his chosen people. Throughout their history men of God had arisen among their own nation calling them back to their allegiance to the Lord God and the law of his servant Moses, but to none of those faithful prophets was given so vivid and so definite an announcement as was charged upon John. Though those ancient worthies had spoken of and looked forward to the day when God's kingdom would be upon earth, and of the glories of the King who would reign in righteousness, not to them the honour of heralding, and seeing that King. That so signal a message was given to John to announce was not unexpected when we recall the miracle of his birth and the prophetic words of his father concerning him and his destiny which caused the people to exclaim "What manner of child shall this be!" To him, the last of the old line of prophets, was deputed the honour of introducing Israel's king to his own people. What an honour! What a message!

John "*grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing to Israel*" and it may well be that by the time he had grown to prophetic manhood some of the prophetic words about John had been forgotten and a new generation had arisen; yet there was in Israel an air of expectancy that God was about to intervene on behalf of his people. That He did intervene at that time through the prophet John and his Son the King of Israel is the basis of the New Testament gospel, though not as supposed by the people. Though John was of priestly descent his mission did not begin at the temple or in the city. It was ever so with prophets—no code of practice governed them as kings, priests and judges were ruled; they arose any time and anywhere. Their

unconventional appearance on the scene of Israel's life often made for their rejection by the nation and John was no exception though many were baptised of him and his message stirred the rulers in Israel enough to send emissaries to hear from John himself his status and message.

What did the Jews understand by the mandate of John, or better, what should they have understood; and further, what should the Christian of to-day, looking back over the years, see in the phrase the Kingdom of Heaven? Because the Scriptures were read every Sabbath day the Jewish nation would know of the exhortation to impress upon their own hearts and minds the words of the Mosaic law and promises, and by that would know in themselves that they had failed as a people to reach that standard of righteousness which would give them the "days of heaven upon earth" (Deut. 11, 18-21), and thus they would reason that the prophets' call to repent was to encourage them back to their obligation to their God and Saviour. But there was more in it than that. And those who heard John would recall the words of Daniel that "*the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High*" and they would assume that the days were near when they would once more be in their proper status at the head of the nations. If they were expecting their own national ascendancy the course of events and the passage of time would prove that the kingdom was not at hand as they hoped. And the course of events has induced Christians to hold differing thoughts as to the meaning of the kingdom of heaven. Some Christians think of the kingdom *in* heaven, some apply the expression to the church of God or to missionary work, yet it must be clear that none of these ideas quite fit the story. Others believe that John was calling on all to repent, for the king, not the kingdom, was at hand. The king was there in their midst, yet He did not encourage Israel to believe that because the king had come the kingdom on earth was imminent. (In point of fact the

work and mission of Jesus at that time was more in keeping with his title of Son of Man—his title of king being more appropriate when He reigns over all his subjects.) As He drew near to Jerusalem for the last time and knew that the people would receive him with "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" He gave to his disciples the parable of the ten pounds so that they might not harbour false ideas of the imminence of the earthly kingdom. But how quickly the mood of the people changed, for some charged him before Pilate that He claimed to be a king. Pilate straightly asked him "Art thou the king of the Jews" and even had the words "This is the king of the Jews" placed over his head on the cross in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, that all might know. What was in Pilate's mind we cannot know. Possibly he considered that of all men Jesus was most worthy to be Israel's king if imperial Rome would allow it, for he had clearly heard of the teachings and miracles of Jesus and his wife regarded him as being a man of God. Shortly after the resurrection of our Lord the disciples asked him "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They were thinking of the kingdom in terms of earthly glory. Though their expectations were incorrect, their question was pertinent, for in their midst now in resurrection glory was Israel's king and many Scriptures had already been fulfilled concerning him.

What did the coming of the king entail upon Israel? From later verses in Matt. 3 it is apparent that his coming meant a time of judgment and no claim that they were the children of Abraham would avail them then—hence the need to repent lest they be burned as chaff in the fire of judgment. The chapter closes with the opening of the ministry of Jesus, yet the voice from heaven which inaugurates and blesses his mission did not proclaim him as Israel's king. He then received his anointing and benediction but not his kingdom. Shortly after the tempter offered him the kingdoms of this world which offer was rejected out of hand. The tempter was in fact insulting the King, inasmuch as no usurper can offer a kingdom to its true king. All these considerations have not served to explain the meaning of the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" and we must look elsewhere in Scripture for help, particularly in regard to the first Advent of Jesus Christ. The king was there but not the expected kingdom on earth under the rulership of heaven. Yet in spite of the fact that Israel rejected their own king and had him crucified by the Roman power the announcement of the kingdom of heaven being at hand was not annulled thereby. In fact some remarks of our Lord tell that the

kingdom of heaven had come to Israel whether they accepted their king or not. Luke 10. 9-11 is an example of this. Here the commissioned seventy disciples were to heal the sick and say to them that the kingdom of heaven *is* come nigh, and if they were received ungraciously by the cities they visited they were still to say the kingdom had come. And so we observe that whether received well or scorned the kingdom had come to those people who had heard the message of grace. Hence the judgments to come upon Chorazin, Tyre, etc., who rejected the specially chosen disciples endued with powers to gather the harvest of that time. Luke 16. 16 is another example of this—"The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it". Strange words indeed if in no sense the kingdom had come! These very words may help us in our examination of the topic for they speak of dispensational change—the law and the prophets ordained of God closed with John; since then something new which the Bible calls the kingdom of heaven is in vogue. This reminds us of John 1. 17 "*For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*"—dispensational change again. These words do not mean that prior to the coming of Jesus Christ the grace of God was unknown and that since the coming of Christ the law of Moses is no longer necessary. But it is certainly true that before the First Advent the love of God was set upon one people who had entered into covenant agreement with him on the basis of the law mediated through Moses, and that since his coming a much freer approach is made for all men, whether Jew or Gentile, and the grace of salvation is theirs in believing that this Son of God is the redeemer of all. This is grace and this is truth. It was even possible for the publican and sinner to enter into this grace, this kingdom of heaven, before the meticulous observer of the law and traditions who prided himself on his works. To this agree our Lord's words (Matt. 21. 31-32) "*... the publicans and harlots go (not will go) into the kingdom of God before you, for John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him*".

It will be observed that the expression "the kingdom of God" appears synonymous with the phrase "the grace of God" in these few texts and the question must arise as to whether we may regard them as alternatives in other cases. A good example of this alteration occurs in Paul's words to the Ephesian church (Acts 20. 24-25) "*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course*

with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify *the gospel of the grace of God*. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching *the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more". How clear it is that in Paul's use these phrases are interchangeable! Surely this is why we read of the gospel of the kingdom! For in that kingdom (present or future) and that gospel, the grace of God shines forth. Let us examine sundry texts where the kingdom of God is mentioned to find what grace of God is intended.

Mark 12. 33/34. Here the scribe had discerned that love to God and to one's neighbour as himself far surpassed countless burnt offerings. The sacrifices year by year under the law had never taken away sin and had become formal, and the scribe saw that a heart striving to love God and neighbour was worthy of more consideration than them. Jesus noted that he answered discreetly and said "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God". He was very near to it, for when he heard the gospel of grace he would have all things falling into place—love to God and neighbour summing up the requirements of the Law and the old Mosaic law sacrifices transcended by the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God soon to be accomplished.

Matt. 18. 1-4. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus did not ask who *will* be. Who enjoy the grace of God now; who at that time were blessed of God? Throughout the ages He has been pleased to be gracious to those who humble themselves under his mighty hand. The disciple of our Lord's day, the Pharisee, the publican had all to go this way of humility to receive the grace of God.

Matt. 20. 1-16. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard, or as some call it, the parable of the penny. Here the grace of God, seen as wages rather than grace, is given equally to those who work for the husbandman from the eleventh hour and those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. The Pharisee whose life had been spent in exact performance of the law and the traditions did not view with pleasure the new message of the grace of God (the kingdom of heaven) which gave freedom from sin and condemnation even to those who as it were came in at the last moment. He believed, he had always believed and meant to continue in the belief, that the gifts of God are dependent on meritorious work. How glad we should be that the new message of the kingdom of heaven is one of grace, unmerited and free.

Luke 16. 16. These words follow the stories of the prodigal son and the unjust steward, given apparently in the hearing of the Pharisees, and,

says the context "they derided him". No doubt they realised that these stories and that of Dives and Lazarus were undermining their standing in Israel. To them Jesus said "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts . . ." From their own standpoint they were righteous, but God knew their failings. And Jesus continuing, said in effect:—all your security which you think you have is passed away, you claim your standing in the law, but that standing has gone, "the law and prophets (in which you trust) were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached (the message of grace) and every man presseth into it (the common people, the publicans and sinners were pressing to hear it)".

Matt. 23. 13. How could the Pharisees "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men"? By their traditional teaching and decrying the new message of grace and entering not in themselves (being self-righteous) they hindered the poor from believing the gospel.

Matt. 21. 33-44. The parable of the wicked husbandmen (a parable teaching judgment and condemnation of the nation) tells that after Jesus notes that they had fulfilled Scripture in rejecting him as the stone which became the head of the corner, of the kingdom being taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And all Christians know how the Gentiles received the gospel message of grace.

Matt. 8. 5-13. The story of the believing centurion, of whom Jesus said he had not found such great faith, "no, not in Israel." And He continues, "Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (or in other words, the outsider from countries far from Judea shall enjoy the grace of God even now and surely in the coming kingdom if he has the faith of the Roman centurion. "But the children of the kingdom (those who should have received their king) shall be cast into outer darkness" (lose the benefits of those in the light of truth).

Matt. 11. 11/12. How puzzling a statement if some views of the kingdom of heaven are correct! In this tribute to John the Baptist, our Lord tells of the least in the kingdom of heaven being greater than him. So great a man, so faithful a prophet, did not receive (though he himself started the message) that standing of grace and justification in the gospel which is the portion of the believer since his days! These amazing words show very clearly the change of dispensation, the church and gospel dispensation which was just then commencing. And the kingdom of heaven was suffering violence (the message was opposed by the rulers in Israel)

and the violent were taking it by force (they rejected John, who was in prison, and said he had a devil (v. 18) and conspired against their own king Jesus). Then follows our Lord's upbraiding of the favoured cities of Chorazin, etc., who had not repented in spite of the mighty works done in them.

Luke 17. 20. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God should come. Clear it is from his reply that the kingdom would be set up in the days of the Son of Man, but to the Pharisee He gave the answer true to the change of dispensation. He said in effect, the kingdom cometh not with outward shew, so that one could say, "Lo here or there" but do not fail to see that phase of the kingdom which was already in their midst or "among them". The advice is true to-day also—the Christian looking forward to a glorious kingdom on earth must not forget or neglect that present phase, the gospel of God's grace.

These references in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are well known examples of the use of the phrase "the kingdom of heaven." There are many others, including parables beginning with the phrase. All will bear the idea of some expression of the grace of God in the gospel, but not necessarily the same expression of grace. And when we read the phrase in the Pauline epistles (Rom. 14. 17, Gal. 5. 21, Col. 1. 13, 2 Thess. 1. 5) we may well conclude it has reference to some aspect of the Church's life present or future, but that does not give us authority to read "church" into every use of the expression in the gospels. This we shall conclude—that the first coming of Jesus began the new dispensation of God's grace, and that his second coming brings, first, glorious grace in the Heavenly kingdom to his true followers, followed by grace, though with judgment, to mankind in the Heavenly kingdom on earth—the fulfilment of the prayer "Thy kingdom come".

Melody

*Unfinished poems, stray gleams of gold,
Wisdom expounded in words that are bold
Or wonderfully tender, like love after pain,
A symphonious echo of heavenly gain.
A World that is passing; Israel at home,
Our God's vindication proclaimed from the
Throne;
A brighter age dawning for those who love truth,
A spiritual love-song, like Boaz and Ruth.
This is no day-dream, His fiat is sure
So too is His justice that endures evermore;
Heaven's blest benediction implanted shall be,
Into hearts that are lowly, whose conscience is free.*

*Not the self-righteous but those who love,
These are the jewels He gathers above;
Man's destiny opens, expands with the day,
Embracing all heavens, Christ-led all the way.
So shall be strengthened the things that remain,
The goal is in sight and on it His Name.
Hold fast then, be victors, keep the mind pure,
Crown, throne, and 'all things' for those who
endure.
The word of his patience, a song like this,
Enables his people to escape the abyss;
Thus faith is rewarded, hearts thrill with joy,
As we hasten to enter our Father's employ.*

A.C.R.

Not a single sheep will be wanting, they shall all be safely folded by Divine love. "I will make them to pass the second time under my rod." This refers to the oriental manner of counting the sheep—they had to pass out of the fold under the rod. And God made the sheep pass under the rod in his covenant in the past eternity with his Son—they were all carefully numbered. He will make them pass under the rod again in the eternity to come, and not one shall be missing—the two numbers will perfectly correspond.

Dr. Cynddylan Jones.

To give praise is very becoming for the believer. It becomes as natural as breathing is to the physical body. Thankfulness and praise are twin sisters and where the one is found the other follows close in its track. Realising the deep need of love and mercy and being the recipient of the same causes the heart to overflow with gratitude to its donor. Like the Psalmist, the language is: "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

A PATH THAT NO FOWL KNOWETH

A Study in Job 28.1-11

The Book of Job excels in descriptions of the virtues of Divine Wisdom. "Where shall wisdom be found" asks Job "and where is the place of understanding? The depth saith 'It is not in me' . . . but unto man God saith 'Behold the reverence of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'" (Job. 28.28) It is in the development of that theme that Job prefaces his picture of the search for wisdom with a natural illustration which must have been familiar to all of his hearers—a description of man's quest for mineral treasures below the surface of the earth. Job's description of a miner at work in his own day is a fine piece of literature.

It is not merely as literature, however, that we look upon this passage. The Bible is much more than an anthology of the world's finest writings. It is a book of instruction for the man of God, and every one of its chapters has been set in its place by the overruling providence of the Holy Spirit, to the intent that teaching, exhortation and encouragement may be given to those who in every age have sought to know God's ways. Even so prosaic a subject as a day in the life of a Sinai copper miner has been transformed by the inspired tongue of this man of God into a vivid illustration of the search for Divine wisdom, and an analogy with the salient features of the Divine Plan, the embodiment of that wisdom.

The passage in question is Job 28. 1-11. It is primarily descriptive of the art of mining as carried out in Job's own day and betokens his own close acquaintance with the details. As he reflects aloud on the ardour with which men search underground for metals and precious stones whereby to serve and enrich the life of man, he directs the mind to that parallel search "in the dark places of the earth" for the wisdom that will eventually make men like gods, "knowing good and evil". There is a striking contrast here between the attitude of the first human pair, who sought to obtain that knowledge by the easy way of self-indulgence, and failed, and this conception advanced by Job in which Divine knowledge and wisdom can be attained by men, but only at the cost of great suffering and hardship—perfection coming through suffering, as in the New Testament setting, "through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom". (Acts 14. 22).

Job commences his parable by alluding to the known fact that the valuable metals—silver, gold, iron and copper—could be obtained only by sinking mines in the mountains and rocky places of the earth. He goes on to describe how men take no heed of the darkness of their mine workings, how they sink a shaft and are let down by ropes, swinging to and fro until they reach the bottom; how that the birds and animals of the earth will not venture into such places, but the intrepid miner, burrowing his tunnels under the very mountains themselves, restraining and leading off the waters that break out and would flood the workings, diligently seeks and finds the precious objects of his quest. So he comes out again into the light, enriched with his discoveries. So, says Job, is the lot of the man who has found Divine wisdom after harrowing experiences of this world of sin and death.

The translators of the Authorised Version were academic scholars but not technically minded men, and when translating the Book of Job, a book which abounds in technical terms connected with the arts and sciences of the ancients, they were often uncertain or ignorant of the meanings of those terms. The A.V. renderings in the Book of Job often require correction in the light of present-day knowledge. In such light read the patriarch's words, adapted from the A.V. with necessary corrections.

*For there is a mine for silver;
And a place for the refining of gold.
Iron is extracted out of the ore,
And copper is smelted out of the rock.
Man setteth an end to darkness.
And searcheth out to the farthest bound.
He hath sunken a shaft away from the
dwellings of men
They have no support for the foot;
They hang down, far away from men
They swing to and fro.
Out of the earth cometh bread,
And underneath it is turned up—as it were fire!
Among its stones are found sapphires,
And it hath ore of gold.
That path no bird of prey knoweth!
Neither hath the vulture's eye seen it.
The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the lion passed thereby.*

*He putteth forth his hand upon the red granite
And undermines the foundations of the
mountains.*

*He excavates channels among the rocks
And restrains the streams that they trickle not.
His eye discovereth every precious thing,
And the hidden things he brings forth to light.*

There is an indication of the date of the Book of Job in the first verse. The order of the four metals is the order of their relative value at the time before the Exodus. Silver was extremely rare and therefore of more value than gold until after the entrance of Israel into the Promised Land, and iron was more valuable than copper. Not until the Phoenicians began to bring silver from Spain during the times of the Judges did gold become the more valuable metal. There is this indication that the passage is older than the Exodus or the time of Israel in Egypt.

Modern research has demonstrated the accuracy of Job's description. He speaks of iron and copper being smelted from the crude ore. The blast furnaces of Egypt are referred to in Deut. 4. 20, and remains of such furnaces dating back to the time of Abraham have been found in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Blast furnaces have been found in Cyprus almost identical in principle and construction with those built in the North of England during the 18th and 19th centuries. The description of the mine shaft in which men were let down standing in a loop of rope, or a crude box, swinging to and fro, with "no support for the foot" is true to life. Such shafts, up to three hundred feet deep, and four thousand years old, have been found in the Sinai mountains. But the Holy Spirit did not cause this description to be recorded for the light it sheds upon the industries of the ancients. It was preserved for the light it can shed upon the life of the man of God, and it is because Job, with his knowledge of God and his close communion with God, was able to frame his description in words which suggest deeper truths to our minds that we can linger over this chapter with profit.

Silver, gold, iron, copper and sapphires. These are the fruits of the seeker's activity. To obtain them he must separate himself from the world of men, tunnel a way through the darkness under every possible condition of toil and danger and fight against floods of waters which threaten to break through and overwhelm him. Dark and dismal is his lot, but he is at least shielded from the danger of wild beasts and birds of prey whilst he remains in the mine; they do not dare to penetrate the "secret place" in which he abides.

There are several analogies which may be drawn with this picture, but the one which comes most readily to the mind is that which applies familiar Scriptural symbolism of the metals mentioned. Taken in harmony with the theme of the chapter, the search for wisdom, it presents a miniature picture of the Divine Plan. The first obligation laid upon one who renounces the world's interests and becomes a "co-worker together with God" is to seek Divine wisdom, the Truth from above—and silver is often used in the Scriptures as a symbol of that wisdom and truth. "*The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*" (Psa. 12. 6). "*The tongue of the just is as choice silver*" (Prov. 10. 20). "*If thou seekest her (wisdom) as silver*" (Prov. 2. 4). Just as the ancient miner went first for the silver, esteeming it as of more value than anything else, so do those that seek the Lord search for his truth, counting it as of supreme value to their lives and standing before him.

From this receiving of heavenly wisdom, truth from above, into good and receptive minds, comes the understanding of Divine law which leads us so to walk before God that we may become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1. 4), symbolised by gold—another object of the miner's quest. The crude ore, as gathered from the mine, had to be completely crushed and the pure gold refined,—an apt picture of the crushing, fiery experiences which are necessary to us before the fine gold of the Divine nature can be revealed in us. But when at length that longed-for end has been achieved, comes the turn of the iron. Iron, too, is a symbol, a symbol of earthly things that are strong and unyielding, and in this connection an apt illustration of the strong, irresistible rule that is to be established upon earth after the "sons of God" of this Age have been clothed upon with the Divine nature and shone forth "*as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*". (Matt. 13. 4'). It is this event for which the world is waiting, as seen so clearly by Paul when he said "*the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*" (Rom. 8. 19).

Even this strong rule of the coming Age cannot be set up without prior preparation and endurance. The strength of that kingdom lies in the fact that its rulers, its administrators, have all been previously tried in the fire and found worthy. Iron is weak and valueless until it has been smelted from its ore in a blast furnace, and then worked by rolling, forging and hammering until all its latent strength is brought out. So with the rule of the Messianic Age. Its force, its power, its authority, its very effectiveness, is not derived merely from

an arbitrary decree of the Most High, but from the rigorous course of development and testing to which its "princes" have been subjected. The "kings and priests" of that Age will have found their way to that position through the darkness of the mine workings and therefore the "iron" that they have produced is adequate to every demand that will be made upon it. The kingdom will not break in pieces like other kingdoms, but it shall stand for ever. (Dan. 2. 44).

So to the copper—familiar symbol of perfect humanity. Just as the silver of heavenly wisdom and truth results in the bestowment of the gold of Divine Nature upon the Church, so does the iron of Kingdom rule result in the copper of perfect human nature to mankind. The final fruitage of the miners' activities will be the "smelting of copper out of the rock". Men in the next Age will achieve perfection only through hard trial and endurance; that Age, pleasant and favourable in many aspects, will have its call to stern endeavour and endurance. Men must build strong characters and be able to stand for righteousness to all eternity. The copper must literally, in the words of Job, be melted out of the rock.

Thus is achieved the overspreading presence of God's majesty in all his creation. "*The dwelling place of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and be their God*" (Rev. 21. 3). When all that hath breath shall praise the Lord, and every tongue in heaven and on earth gives honour and glory and blessing to him that sitteth upon the throne, for ever and ever (Rev. 5. 13) then indeed will the miners of this Age have extracted the last treasure from the earth. Perhaps Job was guided by the Holy Spirit when, of all the dozen or so precious stones mined by the ancients, he chose for mention "among its stones are found sapphires". Sapphires are pre-eminently stones of faithfulness which guarantees that as truly as God lives, all the earth shall be filled with his glory. "*I will lay thy foundations with sapphires*". He

says to Zion (Isa. 59. 11). There was under his feet, when He appeared in vision to the elders of Israel in the days of Moses, a "paved work of a sapphire stone" (Exod. 24. 10). When, later on, Ezekiel also saw him in vision, there was "an appearance as a sapphire stone" (Ezek. 1. 26). So it will be when God at last appears to men in the accomplishment of his plans; his faithfulness will be manifest; there will be a sapphire stone "as the body of heaven in clearness" (Exod. 24. 10).

Let the miners, then, go on in all diligence, seeking precious treasure. The enemies of God and righteousness, the birds of prey and the fierce lions, will not be able to harm them as they go about their work, for such do not know that path. The vulture's eye does not see it; the wild beasts do not tread it and the fierce lion dare not enter. "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty . . . there shall no evil come nigh thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling*" (Psa. 91. 1, 10). That is the promise; whilst we are doing the work of God, the Lord will preserve us from all evil, and we shall come forth into the light of day bearing precious treasure for the world's salvation.

So do we challenge this world and all its might, fearing not to put our hands upon the solid granite rocks in faith that those rocks can be riven by the power of our God. So do we tunnel under the foundations of the mountains, taking from the very heart of the kingdoms of this world those things which shall be treasure indeed in the kingdom to come. So do we excavate channels among the rocks to entrap and lead off, to dam up and restrain the floods of error and opposition, of evil and unrighteousness. So we go on, in supreme confidence that it may be said of us, as was said of that unknown miner of long ago: "*his eye discovereth every precious thing; and the hidden things he brings forth to light.*"

The truths revealed in the life and teachings of Christ are of sovereign power, and are the most influential upon motives and the conduct of human life. They go to the very root of moral consciousness. They reveal human character by applying to it a standard higher than any that was ever before applied to it. They define and mark the nature of sin in human conduct. They establish

obligations upon immutable grounds, leaving them not to the shifting ingenuity of human reason, but imposing them according to Divine principles. They reveal the infinite reach of moral conduct and its eternal consequences. Thus they reveal to man the nature of himself, the nature of the government under which he lives, the nature of God, and the nature of immortality.

H. W. Beecher, 1813-1887.



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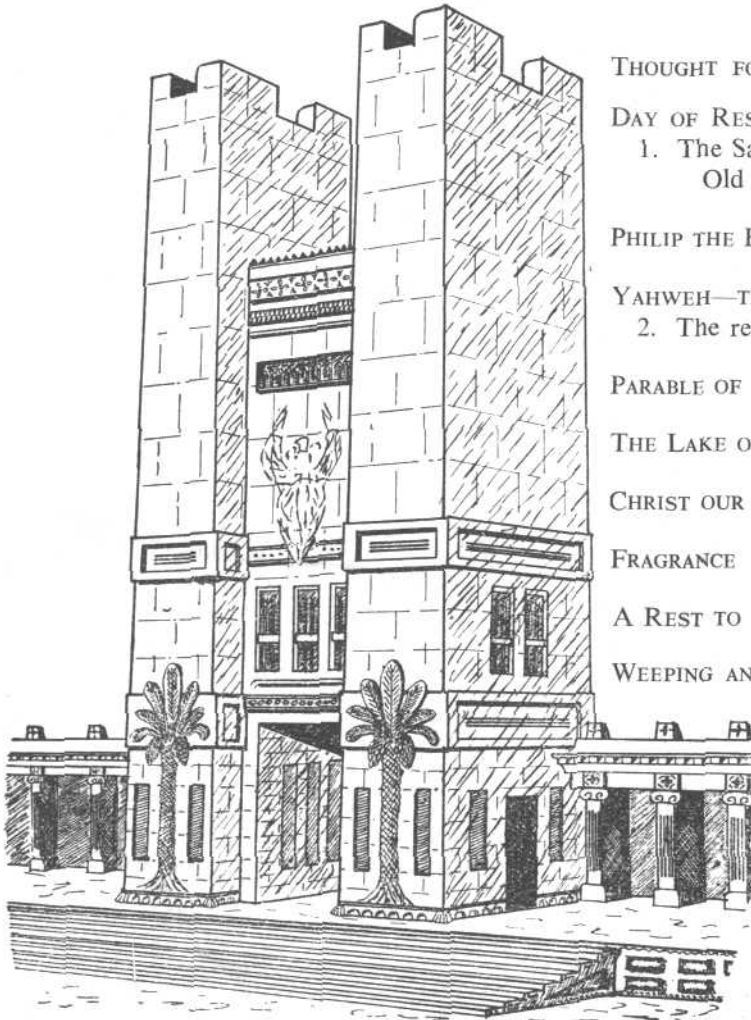
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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Thought for the Month

Most people are familiar with the sensational claims made by the Press for the capabilities and powers of modern calculating machines, robots and automatic computers. These fruits of human inventive genius, it is said, possess "memories" by means of which they can store information and release it when required; they can perform intricate mathematical calculations in a fraction of the time possible to mere man. They can, in fact, writes the reporter enthusiastically, practically think, responding to external stimuli in the same fashion as does a human brain. Of course this is all nonsense; the most intricate of such devices is a pure machine, operating mechanically or electrically in accordance with the laws of mechanics and electro-technology. One blown fuse and the computer is dead until someone comes along and puts in a new fuse. But the whole thing is symptomatic of man's desire to do something that God has already done, but without God's help—and the result is a miserable caricature of the real thing. Much better to be honest and admit that man can build wonderful machines of almost fantastic attributes, but he cannot create life and intelligence.

Some years ago an Australian scientist came along with the statement that it will soon be possible for medical men to operate on the brains and vocal chords of monkeys and the like so that they may be given the intelligence and the powers of language of man. He looked forward to a day when the menial tasks of life will be undertaken by intelligent talking monkeys, thus setting men free for more leisured pursuits. That such a prospect would imply a slavery every bit as hideous as that from which the black races were only recently emancipated does not, apparently, trouble him in the least. Truly, the arrogance and selfishness of modern educated man appears to know no

bounds.

All the same, here is a splendid opportunity for the modern "science fiction" novelist. Suppose the thinking machines and talking monkeys got together and produced a race of hybrid creatures which decided humans were a nuisance anyway and were best out of the way! An armour-clad monkey thinking and acting a thousand times faster than man might prove a formidable proposition. One could only pray that a fuse might blow at the critical moment! It all leads one to wonder if there is not some factor in human nature which induces deterioration of intellect, feeble-mindedness, in the educated man who deliberately leaves God out of his life. The actions to-day, not only of scientists, but of statesmen, might well justify some such conclusion. Speaking to ancient Babylon, which was a prototype of this modern world, the Lord through the prophet Isaiah said caustically "*Your wisdom betrayed you, omniscient as you were, and you said to yourself 'I am, and who but I?'. Therefore evil will come upon you and you will not know how to master it. Disaster shall befall you, and you will not be able to charm it away. Ruin all unforeseen shall come suddenly upon you. So much for your magicians, with whom you have trafficked all your life. They have stumbled off, each his own way, and there is no one to save you*" (Isa. 47.10-15 NEB). Is modern Babylon heading in the same direction?

"God hath made man upright" said King Solomon "*but they have sought out many inventions*". (Eccl. 7. 29). The Hebrew word, strangely enough, denotes mechanical devices, and comes from a root meaning to think or compute, in a mathematical sense, with a secondary meaning "to devise evil". Perhaps the wise king was more far-seeing than we give him credit for. At any rate his words are very apt to our own times.

DAY OF REST

A two-part essay
on Sabbath and Sunday

Part I. The Sabbath in the Old Testament

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy".

How many, reading those words, realise just how far back in history we must go to find when men began to keep one day in seven a day of rest? Some think of Sunday as a somewhat tiresome and awkward kind of day. Others frankly have never thought of it as anything else but a day to be given over to the pursuit of amusement. Still others use it for the advancement of self-interest—continuing to conduct their business affairs or perhaps labour at their craft for the sake of the double pay usually associated with Sunday work—whilst many unfortunate ones are compelled to serve their employment on Sunday as well as week-day because modern society demands that it shall be so. Probably very few have ever paused to enquire how it was that Sunday came to be instituted at all.

Professing Christians often associate the day with recollections of the Law given to Israel at Sinai. They are conscious of a prohibition against engaging in any kind of labour, and of an obligation to devote the day to worship and religious observance. Since religious observance in the days of our immediate forefathers had a tendency to be gloomy and morbid, it may not be altogether surprising that few could find it in their hearts to say with the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Perhaps it was for the same reason that men did not enquire particularly into the reasons underlying the giving of the Fourth Commandment, and so failed to realise that it is a fundamental necessity for all men to enjoy a periodic day of cessation from labour.

The custom of observing this weekly rest from the normal occupations of life did not begin with the giving of the Fourth Commandment. That law only stated in formal terms what men had known and practised from much earlier times. Long before Israel existed as a nation the peoples of Sumer and Akkad, the lands which afterward became Babylonia and Assyria, had incorporated Sabbath observance into their national life. The earliest record of its observance now extant dates back to the days of Sargon of Agade, a ruler whose kingdom extended over the lands bordering the Tigris and Euphrates five or six hundred years before Abraham. In a calendar of the period the word "*Sabbattu*", as the day was called, is explained as meaning "completion of work, a day of rest for

the soul," and this day was to be observed five times in each month, viz., the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st and 28th days. On these days it was unlawful to transact business, labour for gain, cook food, or conduct civil, political and military functions. The whole life of the community came to a stop, just as did that of Israel in the wilderness many centuries later.

There are in existence inscribed tablets dating from the time of Abraham which give a Babylonian version of the work of creation. The fifth of these tablets describes the establishment of the heavenly bodies and the ordering of the calendar, and accredits the institution of the Sabbath to God in this wise: . . . "*every month without fail he (God) made holy assembly days . . . On the seventh day he appointed a holy day, and to cease from all business he commanded.*"

Shem, Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, then, must all have been familiar with the keeping of the Sabbath, even although no direct mention of the fact is made in the early books of the Old Testament. That the months were divided into weeks we know from Gen. 29, 27-28, and can infer also from Job 2, 13 and Gen. 7, 10. Since the people of whom Abraham came were regular Sabbath keepers, he himself must also have observed this ordinance, which he must have known was hallowed by God at the time of creation.

These Babylonian records are probably greatly distorted versions of the same historical facts which are set down with such accuracy in the early chapters of Genesis. The extract given above is reasonably harmonious with Gen. 2, 2-3: "*. . . he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work . . .*" In these few words in Genesis we have the earliest written reference to the institution of the Sabbath. And they teach that the first to "keep Sabbath" was the Most High Himself—surely the supreme example!

The meaning of the term "Sabbath"—Hebrew "*Sha-bath*"—is that of ceasing or resting from activity or labour, to observe as a day of rest. It is used in the Bible not only in respect of men, but also of beasts and the land. The ground itself, which is made to bring forth food for man, must have its periodic times of rest, during which it may recover strength and fertility. This is the basic prin-

ciple behind the observance of one day in seven as a day of rest and worship. Man, no less than the land from which he draws life, needs a periodic cessation from the daily round, that his physical and mental vitality may be recuperated. Without this recuperation he cannot continue to function at normal efficiency, and this fact is well known to medical men and to industrial leaders. A seven-day working week has been proven impracticable, and eventually leads to breakdown.

In the Divine arrangement this necessary break from daily routine has been made the opportunity for greater attention than would otherwise be possible to the chief need of human nature—communion with God. The dependence of men upon their Creator is not often acknowledged nowadays, but the need is there, and spiritual separation from God is a potent factor in the progressive degeneration of the human race. Our Lord Jesus derived his strength by continual communion with his Father, and men will eventually learn to do the same. The Sabbath day of rest, because of its freedom from everyday cares and interests, becomes the natural day for communion and worship in ways which are not so practicable on the other days of the week.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the children of Israel were already Sabbath-keepers when they left Egypt. The evidence for this conclusion is to be found in Exod. 16, 22-30, in which it is recorded that after crossing the Red Sea and entering the wilderness of Sin (so called after Sin, the Babylonian Moon-god), they commenced to gather manna. Upon each day they gathered enough for that day only, speedily finding that it would not keep overnight (vs. 20). But on the "sixth day" (vs. 22) it appears that they gathered two days' supply, quite spontaneously and without being so bidden, and the rulers of the assembly came to Moses in some concern over this action.

Now, why did they gather two days' supply on the sixth day, when they already knew that the manna would not keep overnight, if it were not that they were already in the habit of observing a sabbath of rest, and their faith told them that they must needs gather two days' supply on the sixth day and trust God to preserve it that night? In the following verse, vs. 23, Moses confirmed the rightness of their action, and laid down the rule that on every sixth day they should gather sufficient for two days.

It appears that some of the Israelites did go out on the sabbath to gather, and found none (vs. 27), and in consequence the Lord's words came to Israel through Moses: "*How long refuse ye to*

keep my commandments and my laws?" This, be it noted, was before the Law was given at Sinai. It seems clear, therefore, that Israel already regarded the sabbath as a Divine institution, and the Law at Sinai merely confirmed the rule.

Perhaps the great feature of the Fourth Commandment given at Sinai was the revelation of a relationship between the sabbath ordinance and God's own work in creation. Exod. 20, 8-10 bade the people of God not only to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, but told them that "*in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*" This connection of the two themes is important, for at any rate it shows that man is bidden to do that which God himself has already done. It is even more striking to observe that when, upon a later occasion, God repeated this injunction to Moses, He told him that "*in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed*" (Exod. 31, 17). Does this mean that even the Almighty Himself must needs "cease" from his creative activity for a time, in order to concentrate his great power for some other creation at some future time? We are quite unable to enquire sufficiently closely into the attributes of Divinity to say, although there is no doubt at all about the meaning of the expression. It is used in Exod. 23, 12, where the servants and domestic animals were to be "refreshed" by the keeping of sabbath, and in 2 Sam. 16, 14, where David and those with him, weary with their journey, came to a place at which they "refreshed" themselves. (The word is "*naphesh*," meaning primarily to take breath, as when fatigued by heavy labour; to breathe or pant strongly; being, in fact, the root from which "*nephesh*"—breath—is derived). We can content ourselves with the reflection that after six days of incessant creative activity, culminating in the emergence of man, the Most High "ceased" from creating, not for ever, but for a span of time, and from a human standpoint He "rested, and was refreshed." After his seventh day of rest, God surely commences to labour again, although of that labour the Scripture tells us nothing.

The institution of the sabbath, then, lies back in the mists of pre-history. We do not know when it originated. It may have been with Adam in Eden. If its observance is a fundamental requirement of human nature it probably did originate in Eden, and was observed more or less sincerely in the centuries following. The earliest knowledge we have of its national observance dates back several centuries before Abraham, and even then its insti-

tution is accredited to God. The Israelites were sabbath-keepers when they came out of Egypt, and had doubtless inherited the ordinance from their ancestors. At Sinai, the rule was elaborated into a code with minute details of its application to the affairs of Israel's national life.

Briefly stated, the Mosaic laws provided for:—

- (a) A weekly sabbath observance for man and beast (Exod. 23, 12-13; 31, 12-17; 35, 2-3).
- (b) Special additional sabbaths on the occasion of the great feasts (Lev. 23, 23-32; 24, 15-21; 16, 30-31).
- (c) A seven-yearly sabbath for the land (Exod. 23, 10-11; Lev. 25, 1-7).
- (d) A special sabbath for man, for beast and for the land on the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25, 6-12).

In all these observances the close connection between rest and worship is noticeable. The "feast" sabbaths were "holy convocations" to the Lord, when all the people forsook their tents and their occupations and gathered in companies for praise and worship. These feasts were closely connected with the first fruits and the harvest (see Exod. 34), and were designed to lead the minds of men to reflect upon the vital relation between the labours of their own hands and the beneficence of God, who had made those labours both possible and productive. The promise of God was that their observance of the sabbath would enrich and not impoverish their lives—the ground would bring forth enough in the sixth year to last them through the seventh; and enough in the forty-eighth year to last them through the sabbath year and the Jubilee year as well. So sweeping in its scope was this promise of God that it even assured them there would be a surplus of old provisions to be cast forth when the fruits of the next "first" year became available (Lev. 26, 10). There is no possible danger of lack if the Divine law is observed!

So the sabbath became firmly established. Its observance was still a long way from the Divine ideal; still far short of what the sabbath can be and will be when restored humanity has fully accepted the Kingdom of God upon earth, and the nations are walking in the light of the New Jerusalem. From those days in the desert when Israel cried: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient," men had, and still have, a long way to travel. But the story of the sabbath has unrolled a little more since then, and shown us a fair vision of what will be, when not only the Church of Christ, but all men, have fully

entered into the "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

There is remarkably little said about the sabbath in Israel's early years. Apart from a few casual allusions the word is not so much as mentioned until the times of the later Kings. This very silence is eloquent; it seems to indicate that as an institution the sabbath system was a normal custom calling for no special mention for quite a few centuries after the entrance to Canaan. We read in Num. 15, 32-36 of the man who was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day, and of his fate; but that was in the wilderness, and thence forward throughout the time of the Judges and until the days of David there is no intimation whatever of the manner in which the sabbath was observed. After this, however, there are one or two allusions which go to show that it was regarded as a settled institution. 1 Chron. 23, 31 mentions the sabbaths in connection with David's ordering of the priestly courses, whilst 2 Chron. 2, 4 and 8, 13 give evidence of the same in Solomon's time. The exquisite picture of the Shunamite woman in II Kings 4, 23-26 reveals a sincere sabbath keeping, the woman's husband puzzled at his wife's sudden decision to go to the man of God, seeing that it was "neither new moon, nor sabbath." Evidently the Shunamite was a faithful adherent to the law of Moses, and probably many in Israel shared her faithfulness. At much the same time the sabbath was a sufficiently marked day to become the occasion for periodical changing of the Temple guard (2 Kings 11, 4-11 and 2 Chron. 23, 4-11).

During this period, a span of about six hundred years from the Exodus, there is no mention of violation of the sabbath. Israel until the days of Solomon was an agricultural and pastoral people. Industry and trade, and the consequent intercourse with other peoples, had not touched them. It almost seems as if the simple pastoral life is especially conducive to the keeping of God's sabbath rest. Even in England to-day Sunday is observed more faithfully and sincerely in country districts and among agricultural populations than it is in the cities and towns and industrial areas. In harmony with this, it is worthy of notice that it was only after Israel began to lose its pastoral simplicity, and entered into intercourse with other nations, joining in their trade and industry, that the prophets found it necessary to denounce their sabbath faithlessness.

The earliest of such denunciations in the Old Testament is that of Isaiah, who commenced to prophesy in the reign of Uzziah, about six hundred

and fifty years after the Exodus. By this time Solomon had been dead for many years, but the taste for luxuriance, ease and other fruits of commercialism, introduced by him, had remained, and Israel was well on the way to becoming the nation of traders it has been ever since. Isaiah shows (1. 13) that in his days the sabbaths had become a mere formality; they were an abomination in the sight of God, and He would no longer accept them. Later on in Isaiah's life (56. 2 and 58. 13-14), in greater maturity, he called Israel to come back to their original sincerity and zeal in sabbath-keeping. "*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight . . .*" etc. At much the same time Jeremiah exhorted the people to cease from desecrating the sabbath (Jer. 17. 19-27). Ezekiel, a generation later, felt the same burden, as recorded in the 20th, 22nd and 23rd chapters of his prophecy, whilst Amos, contemporary with Isaiah's early days, has preserved for us a vivid picture of the Israelites chafing under the sabbath law, and mentions the very thing which led to their rejection of the sabbath, their greed for gain. "*When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit*" (Amos 8. 4-7). It seems clear that in the days of Amos and Isaiah, when King Uzziah was reigning, the sabbath was still observed, but in a perfunctory, formal manner. Men were impatient for its passing that they might turn again to the buying and selling which was rapidly creating in their midst an economic system of the same kind that has produced such evil results in the world today.

Such evidence as the Old Testament affords, therefore, seems to indicate that Israel observed the sabbath system until the time of the Kings, and that with the entrance of trade and industry and consequent partial abandonment of pastoral pursuits they abandoned the sabbath also. For a few centuries more the nation blundered on from disaster to disaster—for all the great invasions and captivities fall within this period of sabbath rejection—until at last there came the greatest catastrophe of all, and Nebuchadnezzar's armies razed the Temple and the Holy City to the ground, taking away to Babylon all but a few of the poorest, left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. Even these fled into Egypt a few months later, for fear of the Chaldeans. The desolation was complete, to remain so "until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths".

So was realised the dread prediction given to Moses eight hundred years before, a declaration that if the sabbath arrangements were violated and ignored by Israel, the nation would eventually be driven into captivity and the land lie desolate in compensation for the Sabbatic years in which it had not been allowed to rest. "If ye will not . . . hearken unto me . . . I will scatter you among the heathen (nations), and will draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land . . . because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it" (Lev. 26. 27-43).

After the Babylonian captivity there was a great change. Strong influences were at work to maintain an increasingly rigid observance of the sabbath. When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem he found alien traders in the habit of selling their wares in Jerusalem, and Jews conducting all manner of business, on the sacred day, and sternly forbade such practices (Neh. 13. 15-22). This zeal for the day developed into an extreme fanaticism during the four centuries which elapsed before the First Advent. The records of the Maccabees, those stalwart patriots of this intervening time, show that many Jews even refused to fight their enemies on the Sabbath, choosing to be slain rather than violate the day by lifting weapons. By the time of our Lord the simple commands of Moses had been overlaid by a vast mass of detailed prohibitions equalled only by those governing the English Sunday in the days of the Puritans. To practise as a physician and accomplish works of healing on the sabbath was forbidden; hence our Lord was accused of breaking the sabbath because some of His works of healing were done on that day (see Luke 6. 6-11, 13. 11-17, 14. 1-6, and Jno. 5. 1-16). In like manner it was declared that His disciples, rubbing corn between their hands on the sabbath (Matt. 12. 1-8) were technically guilty of threshing wheat. One wonders to what extent our Lord's injunction, "*Pray ye that your flight be not . . . on the sabbath day*" (Matt. 24. 20) is not an allusion to the restraining power of "orthodoxy" on those who are "watching for His appearing", remembering that the Rabbis forbade any man to travel more than two thousand paces—about one mile—outside the city on the sabbath!

So was the sabbath desecrated by God's professed people—at first by indifference and hostility, then, secondly, by fanaticism and intolerance. In both cases the results were disastrous, not only for themselves, but for generations yet unborn.

(To be concluded)

PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

He first appears in those early days of the first Christian community when the believers had "all things common" but were beginning to find that sincerity of purpose in their sharing was not enough; a certain amount of system and order was necessary if anomalies were to be avoided and all who were in need to have their needs equitably met. So a working party of seven was appointed to oversee and administer this aspect of the community's activities. Men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, is the definition in Acts 6 relating to these men. Philip was one of them, probably a young man in his twenties, zealous and energetic, highly esteemed by the brethren, and with considerable potential evangelistic ability. Whether or not he had been a follower during the lifetime of Jesus is not known, but the balance of probability is against. There had been a massive gathering of converts to the original little band of Resurrection days, and although that momentous event was still not more than a year or so in the past, by far the majority of the believers had joined themselves since then, and it is a virtual certainty that there were men of ability among such who would speedily be marked out for special service. Thus did Philip enter upon his life of service for Christ. An active member of a virile and rapidly growing Church, he found plenty to do. *"And the Word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"* (Acts 8.7) is how Luke's record describes the situation. The Sanhedrin, following the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5. 34-40) had abandoned their endeavours to stifle the new movement; for a little while the gospel of Jesus the Risen One could be proclaimed without let or hindrance, and converts were being gathered in by the thousand. It must have seemed to those ardent young workers that they were going to progress unmolested from triumph to triumph until they had fulfilled the commission the Lord had given them, and carried the message of His Kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Then the tide turned. Christianity was getting altogether too popular and the more orthodox of the Jews became restive. The while it could be considered merely a sect of Judaism it could perhaps be tolerated, but it was becoming obvious now that it was not going to be a sect, it was

taking on the form of a new faith, one that would challenge Judaism and perhaps destroy it, so Philip's colleague Stephen, the leader of the seven, was apprehended on a trumped-up charge, arraigned before the Sanhedrin, and put to death—the first Christian in history to die for his faith. That aroused the persecuting ardour of Saul the Pharisee, afterwards himself to espouse the faith and in his turn meet the death of a martyr; at the moment, however, his intervention sparked off the first wave of organised persecution of the Christian church and the halcyon days of care-free fellowship in the faith were gone, never to return.

The believers in Jerusalem did one of two things; they either went underground, or they scattered away from the city. It is evident that one of Philip's temperament would not long endure a passive role "underground"; he elected instead to go away, to a place where his evangelistic fervour might find an outlet. What better choice than Samaria, only a few miles north of Jerusalem, still in the Roman province of Judea but free from the power of the priests and the Sanhedrin, for "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4.9)? *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them"* (Acts 8. 4-8). His ministry met with instant success, and something of the enthusiastic scenes which for the past year or so had been seen in Jerusalem now began to be re-enacted in Samaria. In fact, there was much that was reminiscent of the ministry of Jesus, for at the instance of Philip the lame and the paralysed were healed and demons cast out. It would seem that what Peter and John had done immediately after Pentecost in Jerusalem Philip was now doing in Samaria; the people wholeheartedly "believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" and demonstrated the sincerity and fulness of their conversion by undergoing baptism. There was even a false Messiah, a man named Simon—known in later tradition as Simon Magus around whom many legends have gathered—who himself abandoned the claims by which he had long deceived the Samaritans, became a convert and was baptised. How long this revival led by Philip lasted there is no means of knowing, but that it was

a most effective one and constituted the second significant development in the history of the Church there is no doubt.

There was one important missing element; despite their sincerity of conversion and their baptism, the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them, and in this they were in the same position as the Apostles and the rest of the hundred and twenty original believers had been prior to the Day of Pentecost. It seems as if some outwardly perceptible demonstration had to be the portion of these Samaritans as it had been with their predecessors. The account in Acts 8 relates that when the Apostles at Jerusalem were apprised of the results accruing from Philip's work they despatched Peter and John, who, having arrived and seen the position for themselves, engaged in prayer for the conferment of the Holy Spirit upon the converts, laid their hands upon them in the traditional manner, "and they received the Holy Spirit" (ch. 8. 17). It looks as if there was a visible manifestation of much the same nature as that which characterised the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and for the same reason, to convince these very immature converts of the reality of the experience. There is no indication when this took place and in fact the visit of Peter and John might have been a considerable time afterwards and perhaps even after Philip had left Samaria to execute his next commission.

That commission had to do with the Ethiopian eunuch. An angel of the Lord (not "the" angel as in the A.V.) appeared to the evangelist and told him to take a journey towards Gaza along the high road which runs south from Judea into Egypt. It is evident that by now he had returned to Jerusalem from Samaria since this was his starting point. No indication of the purpose of his journey was given; he was merely to set out along the road and head southwards. It was thus that he met the Ethiopian eunuch, somewhere on the desert road near Gaza. An important man in his own country, steward of the palace of his queen, a man of "great authority" as Luke puts it, he had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple and now was on his way home in his chariot—incidentally this is the only mention of a wheeled vehicle in the New Testament. He was evidently a Jew of the Dispersion; probably his family had lived in Ethiopia for several generations and like Jews everywhere had come to occupy positions of influence and trust. The Ethiopia here referred to was not the present country of that name but a land on the upper Nile more or less in the vicinity of the present

Assouan Dam, adjoining the southern frontier of Egypt and often involved politically with Egypt. Ancient historians say that for a period it was ruled by a line of woman monarchs known as the *Kandaka*, a title like Pharaoh or Cæsar, the "Candace" of Acts 8. This eunuch was an educated as well as God-fearing man, and now as he reclined at ease in his probably sumptuous chariot with servants to attend to the driving and to his needs, he was spending the hours of a certainly wearisome journey by reading from a scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah.

This gave Philip his opportunity. Trudging along by the wayside, he either heard the eunuch's voice as the chariot overtook him or else perceived the nature of the parchment he was reading. At once his evangelistic instinct came to the top and in a flash he knew why he had been sent on this mission. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot", (ch. 8.29) With the freedom of approach so customary in the East he called out to the eunuch asking if he understood what he was reading. "How can I, except some man should guide me?" was the response. High official though he was, he manifested true humility in being prepared thus to accept guidance from an unknown wayside traveller; he invited Philip to join him in the chariot and showed him what he had been reading.

No better passage for the evangelist's purpose could have presented itself. The eunuch had been perusing Isaiah's 53rd chapter and pondering within himself as to its meaning. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this" he queried, "of himself, or of some other man"? Beginning at the same Scripture, Philip "preached unto him Jesus". It takes little imagination to visualise the nature of that discourse, the fervour in the evangelist's voice, the rapt attention of the other man. In that day the eunuch became conscious of a new revelation, an understanding of the Scriptures he had never known before, a meaning in life he had not dreamed existed. In that moment he found Christ, and became Christ's man. That he was a man of positive convictions and accustomed to quick decisions is shown by the immediate sequel; as they progressed on their journey the charioteer encountered one of the many rapid streams which cross the road on their way to the sea, and immediately the Ethiopian saw the possibility. "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" Verse 37 of this chapter in which Philip is quoted as responding "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And

he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" is missing in the oldest manuscripts, including Sinaitic, Vatican and Alexandrian, appearing only in 8th century MSS, from which it is surmised that this verse was inserted by some zealous sectaries anxious to regularise the eunuch's baptism on the basis of good Church doctrine, but it is quoted in the writings of Irenæus (AD 178) and Cyprian (AD 250) so that it may well have appeared in the earliest versions and later lost. In any case, Philip must have said something like this in response to the plea; the eunuch was duly baptised, "and he went on his way rejoicing." Nothing more is known of him but there can be no doubt that he returned to his own country a missionary for Christ and must have had much to do with the establishment and growth of the Church in his land.

The instrument of his salvation was already away on the next assignment. A rather strange word; "and when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more . . . but Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he preached in all the cities until he came to Cæsarea". The words "caught away" are from *harpazo*, which in the N.T. generally has the meaning of being suddenly and violently snatched away (as in I Thess. 4. 17 "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds") although the basic principle is that of being taken by force. Agreeably to normal N.T. usage, the expression here could mean that Philip was miraculously and instantaneously translated by Divine power to Azotus (Ashdod) which could have been ten or fifteen miles distant, and there would be nothing incredible in this at a time when "miracles" of all kinds were commonplace. It would however be quite consistent with the phrase to take it to mean that under the influence of the Holy Spirit Philip was seized with an overpowering impulse to make his way at once to Azotus and so found himself there with no clear idea of how he came to be there or why he had come. In either case, he was now in Azotus and immediately began to preach Christ, continuing thus from town to town along the sea-coast until eventually he came to Cæsarea, fifty miles north of Azotus, and the political capital

from which the Roman governors ruled Judea. Here he seems to have settled. Nothing more is known of him until twenty-five years later when Paul and his party, en route to Jerusalem for the last time, stayed in his house for a period. There seems little doubt though that during those years he must have travelled up and down the coastal towns of Judea, always an active evangelist, preaching the faith and establishing converts, with Cæsarea his permanent headquarters.

The last glimpse we have of Philip is on the occasion of Paul's visit. Luke was one of the party and he must have acquired a great deal of his material for the early part of "Acts" from the evangelist; it is Luke too who gives him this title, here in Acts 21.8. Luke also tells us that Philip now had four daughters "which did prophesy"; this must mean that they also, though still in their twenties, were preachers of the word and evidently associated with their father in his ministry. Something of the evangelist's fiery zeal and inexhaustible capacity for hard work must have reappeared in his family.

There the Scriptures leave Philip the evangelist, still in active service. Greek tradition has it that he eventually became Bishop of Tralles, not far from Ephesus in Roman Asia, but Latin tradition insists that he died at Cæsarea. The latter is more likely to be correct. Philip was not possessed of the urge, like Paul, to scour seas and mountains in far distant lands to preach Christ to the nations; he found abundant scope for his missionary zeal in the highlands and the valleys and the coastlands of Judea, perhaps never in all his life going more than fifty miles from the city where first he had accepted Christ and entered the fellowship of the Church and served awhile as one of the first seven deacons. The importance of his life's work is indicated by the title awarded him by Paul and Luke; the work of an evangelist in Paul's list of the Divine helps in Eph. 4. 11 comes next in order after apostles and prophets but before pastors and teachers. He is one of the only two—Timothy being the other—to whom the title is given in the New Testament. Perhaps that is a measure of the effectiveness of the life's ministry of this zealous and warm-hearted young soldier of Jesus Christ.

How lovely are the lilies which grow in the water! They never pine with thirst; for their root is in the stream, their leaves float upon it, and their flowers peep forth from it. They are fit emblems of

those believers who dwell in God, who are not occasional seekers of Divine fellowship, but abide in Christ Jesus. Their roots are by the rivers of water, and therefore their leaf shall not wither.

YAHWEH — THE SACRED NAME

2. THE REVELATION IN THE NAME

The disclosure that the Divine purposes were embodied in the holy Name was made to Moses by way of revelation. No one, of his own observation or intuition, could have wrested these intentions of God from the rocks or stars, for they were not hidden there. Even the early friends of God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, needed to be told by God about the great things He proposed to do. Otherwise they could not have known or understood how God's great love would one day measure itself against man's great need, and overcome that need.

In some aspects of His nature the Most High is the 'Great Unknown'. Occasion to reveal the tenderer side of his disposition had not previously occurred. Originally, men had known of his power and Deity (Rom. 1.20), but even these attributes they had chosen to neglect and forget, so that when God gave them over to follow their own vain way, knowledge of God became almost extinct. Willingly men had chosen to become ignorant of God. As the dense clouds of superstition darkened man's understanding of the Divine being, the light of heaven became overcast and hidden from men's view. Black night descended and spread its sable wings over all the earth.

Into this dark scene, God, at times, sent forth some rays of light, to be a source of guidance and comfort for such as loved the better way. They could never have been deduced or discovered by man. Restoration of such knowledge depended essentially upon revelation—revelation FROM God, revelation TO man. Various stages in this process of Divine self-revelation may be noted, as when, for instance, the Most High revealed himself to Abraham as 'God Almighty' (*El Shaddai Gen. 17-1*), and then again to Israel as 'Yahweh Elohim' (Exod. 34-6) or *Yahweh Nissi* (Yahweh, my Banner Exod. 17-15), or *Yahweh Sabaoth* (Yahweh of Hosts, 1 Sam. 15-2), or *Yahweh Ra'ah* (Yahweh my Shepherd, *Psa. 23-1*). Each such disclosure of the Divine attributes was occasioned by some tremendous need among God's chosen people, whether few in number or many. God revealed himself as 'the God who is able' (God Almighty) to Abraham and Sarah when hope was dead and Nature's forces spent. They were but two; their need however was overwhelmingly great, and the promise

enshrined in the new-given Name was the Divine answer to that need. Numbers will be exceeding great when 'Yahweh Tsidkenu,' is revealed (*Yahweh our righteousness*). But when the revelation is made it will meet universal need. (Jer. 33-16). The 'eyes of God' run to and fro in all the earth, to witness and observe the extent of man's need. When the need of man becomes exceeding great, God comes near again to meet that need, and enshrines his purpose in some new Name. Thus Name and Need appear together — the promise embosomed in the Name being ever great enough to fully satisfy the need.

'Name' and 'Need' sprang forth together at the Bush (Exod. 3. 7-18) when Moses was informed that Israel's need had mounted high as heaven and that now, at last, (because the time was ripe) High Heaven would come down to earth to meet that 'Need'. Out of the darkness God flashed another beam of light to illuminate the unknown future of his chosen race, and through them, of the whole world.

What was that 'Need' which occasioned Israel in Egypt both groans and tears. And what was to be found in that Divinely-given 'Name' to meet that need?

First, Israel was enslaved by Egypt's king and people. The men of Israel slaved agonisingly in the kilns. Their groans were echo to the lash. Day in, day out the tyrant swung his spite into each stinging blow, with none to stay or assuage. Israel's huts were filled with offspring born only to bear the same hateful load. The parent's day was dark—the children's would be darker still. No help was near, no helper seemed at hand. Days, months and years, on into generations to come and only toil and groans and death awaited sire and son!

Into this hopeless night God sent the pledge and promise of his Name. But would that avail? What good could the Name of an almost unknown God provide Israel? If that God were indeed their father's God, why had He forgotten their father's children — themselves and their households? Let us try to put tongue into the needs of this crushed and hopeless people to learn what that holy Name could promise them. Let us ask the questions we think they might ask when the messenger from God arrived, and found them in their dire distress. "Art Thou able to

fulfil the promise Thou hast made to us and to our children in generations yet unborn? Art Thou likely to live on to care for our sons, when we have passed away, and have been gathered to our fathers?" And the answer that would come back would be "I AM—I am the Ever-living One, inhabiting Eternity—I am He who was your father Abraham's God—and I WILL BE your children's God to the end of time. I AM the fountain of all life, and my years shall know no end." Let NEED now ask again "If Thou art the Ever-living One, by whose permission dost Thou live? Is Thy life dependent upon another's will, or to circumstances subject to another's will, or art Thou fully independent of every will and circumstance? Art Thou existent solely of Thine own will and volition?" To this the answer would come "I AM—I am entirely self-existent! I can exist and will exist above and apart from every circumstance. No enemy or circumstance can interfere with Me or My purposes by threat of death or incapacity. **'I AM', THE ONLY SELF-EXISTENT ONE.—I LIVE BY MY OWN POWER AND VOLITION, AND 'I WILL' CONTINUE SO TO LIVE FOR EVER MORE!**"

NEED asks yet again "Wilt Thou be unto our children as Thou art proposing to be unto us? Wilt Thou change with every passing mood as we poor mortals change? Will our children find Thee as we find Thee to-day? Or art Thou unchanging and steadfast? Will thy word stand fast, as long as Thou art alive?" And the answer would come "I AM CHANGELESS — I CHANGE NOT! My Word is not mutable, it will stand forever! "I will" KEEP MY PROMISES FOR EVERMORE.

Again, NEED asks "Art Thou liable to sin, in any wise, as we mortals are? Canst Thou become defiled by unholy thought and act? Will thy promise to us, and to our children become invalidated by thy lapse from rectitude? Or art Thou impeccable and sinless beyond the possibility of defilement?" And again the answer would come "I AM HOLY, INCORRUPTIBLE, IMPECCABLE! "I WILL" MAINTAIN MY HOLINESS FOREVER!"

Again NEED asks "Wilt Thou ever leave us, or our children untended and undefended? Or art Thou able to be ever present with us and ours in every change of life? Art Thou ever engaged too far away to hear our cry, or art Thou able to watch over us in our little world, and supervise Thy wide heavens too?" And the answer comes "I AM able to be present with you everywhere, at every time, in every condition.

I dwell in my Heavenly Place, but I will walk with all who love my Name through every path in life. "I WILL" both attend and defend mine own sheep for evermore."

Again NEED asks "Art Thou able to see and understand our needs in every dark hour, or wilt Thou forget or fail to understand. Thou art God; we are but men; is thy understanding too lofty to comprehend the sorrows of mere men, or art Thou able to KNOW us as fully as Thou knowest thine angels of light?" And the answer comes "I AM ABLE TO DO ALL MY PLEASURE! I speak and it is done! I build worlds and clothe them in their verdant beauty—I stretch my line across the skies. I bring the sunshine and the rain! I clothe the fields with living grain, and paint every glorious tint and hue! I AM OMNIPOTENT! ALL POWER IN HEAVEN AND EARTH IS MINE! I CAN AND WILL FULFIL ALL MY GOOD PLEASURE!"

Let NEED now ask its last and most searching question. "Thou hast great and many attributes, O God Most High!—Thou art ever-living, self-existent, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, but art Thou kind and compassionate, and pitiful. Art Thou, like heathen gods, hard, austere, exacting, giving little, but requiring much? Dost Thou ask the last farthing from frail sinful man? Dost Thou look down with cold, un pitying official gaze, and tell the sufferer his suffering is but just? Hast Thou no pity in Thine eyes, nor kindness in Thine heart? or art Thou touched by man's distress? Art Thou compassionate, and pitiful, and merciful to all who on Thee call?" And the answer comes aloud and deep and strong, "I AM YAHWEH! YAHWEH ELOHIM, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin—I am Everliving that I may be gracious to all generations; I exist of my own volition, that none may ever hold my kindness in fee; I am unchanging that I may attend the last generations as I did the first; I am impeccable, so that I may rebuke wilful sin in small or great; I am ever-present with all, all the time, that I may hear the faintest cry from the tiniest child; I am omniscient, that I may solve every difficulty of life; and I am omnipotent that I may bring all my power to their relief. But all these things are necessary only to a greater thing. These things are contributory to my love and to my great regard for men. It is my delight to bring all I AM into service for my earthly sons, and I WILL ever find my joy in being unto them as they need

Me to be. Even the present distress *I will* yet turn into joy—all the baser passions *I WILL* transmute into the pure gold of perfect character. And *I WILL* rid the world of all that would defile and destroy, for *I will* not clear the guilty man who delights in his sin, now, or in future days. For “I am what I am” and “I will be what I will be” for the sake of fallen man. That is “My Name for ever and this is My memorial to all generations” (Exod. 3.15).

The scenic setting of the Revelation of the Ineffable Name was partly in the wilderness of Midian, and partly on the crest of Horeb, in the long-ago days of Moses; but it was revealed there for all time. That holy Name contained the germ of the whole plan of redemption—for the execution of the complete intention was embodied in that peculiar sacred Name. Later generations and latter prophets amplified the great theme, as its immensities and implications came to be understood. It set the tongues and hearts of Israel's saintliest men singing with hope and expectation, and inspired the most sublime literature the world has ever seen. That holy Name was Israel's richest heritage. ‘Yahweh’ was Israel's God exclus-

ively for a time. For a whole Age ‘Yahweh’ had neither blessing nor favour for any people save Israel. But that exclusive favour to Israel was a means to an end, for through them, when they were refined and purified God's love, like a mighty flood, was intended to flow to all nations. The people whom *Yahweh* gathered around his holy Name were to be vessels of his mercy to all. Thus that blessed Name—too holy for Jewish lips—stands both as pledge and promise of a wide-reaching Plan to bless all nations through Abraham's earthly seed. God's great purpose is outlined in a promise—the promise is concentrated in a Name. There was a revelation OF the Name; there was a revelation IN the Name. This Name is God's Name, to which Name He will ever be faithful. He revealed that Name to Israel, to hold in trust for a time, but its pledge and promise was for all. The NEED which *Yahweh* pledged himself to meet in Israel, was the NEED of all men everywhere.

“Praise ye Yah, for good is Yahweh, Sing praises to His Name, for it is full of delight.”
Psa. 135-3. (Roth).

To be concluded.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Mark 4, 3—23

“There went out a sower to sow” (Mark 4.3)

So simple a beginning to a story but how full of potential instruction. In the sowing of seed there reposes infinite possibilities. On the one hand, arrant failure, if weather is unpropitious and the soil sterile; on the other, continuing growth and fruitage, further seeding, and increase through season after season that may never end. The deserts of the earth are the cemeteries of bygone plants and trees that once flourished but whose seeds eventually perished and failed to reproduce their kind; the lush pastures and thick forests of the earth are the descendants of countless generations of plants that fruited and seeded and brought forth anew year after year because the soil was good, and sun and rain played their part. All this was inherent in the word-picture Jesus drew for the multitude that this moment was gathered by the lake-side to hear His teaching.

The parable is evidently intended to illustrate the various degrees of receptiveness to the Gospel message displayed by different hearers. Here is

the reaction of every man who evinces any appreciation of the Word of God and the appeal of Jesus Christ whatever. Here are the varied results of the lodgment of the seed of righteousness in the hearts of men. This parable is fulfilled over and over again as generation succeeds generation, in all the years that have elapsed since Pentecost to the present. It is not, like some of the parables, a picture of some aspect of the end of this Age or the characteristics of the coming Kingdom of God. It is not a dispensational parable. It is the story of the impact of the Gospel upon the mind and heart of every one who gives heed, if only for a moment, to its message, and the ultimate consequence of that impact.

“There went out a sower to sow”. A simple approach, but how direct! The vision is flashed as in a moment on the screen, and we see the wide, ploughed field awaiting the seed, the pathway skirting its borders, the line of rocky boulders and large pebbles, cleared from the field, lining the pathway in ragged profusion, and the sower himself, striding along the narrow track, his hand

already in the capacious bag of seed slung across his shoulders. "There went out a sower to sow." His methods were not as the methods of to-day. To and fro across the field he must needs walk, scattering the seed handful after handful, trusting to wind and rain to spread it evenly and bed it down into the soft ground. No drills to turn up the ground and soften it to receive the seed; no great wheeled machines to accomplish the task in a fraction of the time human hands would require to do it. No mechanical aids at all; the seed was simply broadcast over the waiting ground and found lodgment where conditions were favourable. So it is with the message of Jesus; it succeeds best when it is sown without the artificial assistance of man's devising, publicity schemes and organised pressure groups and the like. As with Paul, who knew nothing among the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" following the relative failure of his more intellectual approach to the philosophers of Athens, so with all who would be efficient "sowers". The simplicity of the Gospel is its greatest recommendation.

But as the sower walked along the edge of the field the winds carried the seed across the hard, beaten pathway he had just left, and there it lay, bleaching in the sun. He went on his way, and the flocks of birds, watching from a safe distance, swooped down quickly on that pathway and quickly devoured every visible shining grain before the return of the sower caused them rapidly to take flight and settle on the trees bordering the field, watching. There was nothing he could do about it. The seed had to be sown broadcast so that at least every piece of good ground received its quota, and in the process it was inevitable that some should fall on ground that was completely unreceptive. Perhaps in another season of sowing that same ground, softened by rain and broken up by man's labour, might receive the seed again and this time allow it to germinate and bear fruit. God does not limit his offer of salvation to one opportunity only; it is open for so long as there is any chance or possibility of response, and hearts that may at the first be hard and unyielding may eventually by the circumstances of life or the persuasiveness of God become soft and receptive and at the last produce the fruit of the good ground. But in the meantime, the word of God falls on the ears but leaves no lasting impression. Idle it lies, finding no real lodgment, no vibrating chord, until Satan, the arch-deceiver, by one of the many means at his disposal obliterates the transient impression which had been made and it is as if the word had

never been spoken at all. Like Israel in the days of Ezekiel "*Thou art unto them a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and that can play well upon an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do them not*". The word spoken has vanished as surely as did the seed on the pathway after the birds had swooped.

Now he was coming back, a little farther from the path this time, but even so, much of the seed fell among the piles of rocks and boulders which separated path from field. It was safe enough there in the nooks and crannies; the birds were unable to reach it and there was a certain amount of soil and moisture which allowed the seed to germinate and grow. But later on, as the green stems began to show above the pieces of rock, the fierce heat of the sun dried up what moisture there was and the tender green shrivelled up and vanished away, for there was nothing in which the roots could spread and find sustenance. The seed was, after all, only seed. It had within itself the power of life but must take to itself the constituents of growth, the soil, moisture and air necessary to enshroud that life in a material entity which would ultimately play its part in the economy of the world. So often it happens that there is a conversion inspired by the enthusiasm of the moment, engendered perhaps by the emotional atmosphere of a revival meeting or the apparent attraction of finding a life of peace and satisfaction "in Jesus" without realising that such a life is going to involve more than just taking the word from him without doing anything about it or beginning to "grow up in him". Such will receive the word with every manifestation of appreciation and gladness. "This is what we were looking for" say they, and for a while they are very vocal in their expressions of joy and appreciation. But presently there is difficulty, opposition or persecution. Perchance they become disappointed or impatient. Things are not as they expected; the test of time finds them out; the life of consecration to God's service is too narrow, too onerous. It involves giving up things they do not wish to give up. They are like the man who, having put his hand to the plough, looked back, and so manifested his unfitness for the Kingdom of God. These, then, like the seed falling upon the rocks, endure for a time, but when the sun's heat beats upon them, they wilt and vanish away.

Turning the corner of the field, the sower trampled over a patch of weeds and thorny scrub. Unheeding, he scattered his seed over that patch and it germinated and grew, strong and healthy at first. But the weeds and thorns grew too, and faster and stronger than the wheat, and soon there

could be seen only a few pallid fruitless stalks half-hidden among the fast spreading thorns. Discouraging for the sower; the weeds and thorns had only been incipient and barely noticeable when he scattered the seed. Later on, after he had left the field for sun and rain to do their work, they grew so strongly and quickly that the stems and leaves resulting from the good seed became eclipsed and ultimately completely submerged. The nature of the ground may have had something to do with it; weeds normally grow in poor ground, soil that has become deficient in the essential constituents required to make good plants. Perhaps prolonged fertilising was what was wanted here, and a clearing away of weeds and thorns so that in another season seed might be sown that would have a better chance of maturing. At any rate God has provided a future Age for such a re-fertilising and elimination of all that offends so that the seed may be sown again in ground that then may be found more responsive. But this does not appear in the parable, for Jesus was talking about the Gospel as it is preached in this Age, the Age in which it is possible for the *"cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in"* to *"choke the word"*. So here must be seen those who attain a more advanced position at first. More resolute, more determined, they are not easily turned aside by opposition or persecution. They ride over the disappointments and disillusionments and become pillars of strength in the Christian community, and as the years pass by it seems impossible that they could ever fall away. Yet they do fall away. Some meet with success in business and become wealthy in the riches of this world; some attain high honour among men; some have their attention distracted by other aims and pursuits and interests. Imperceptibly at first, but none the less surely, their progress in the things of the spirit slows, and stops, and so they become progressively surrounded and hidden by those interests of this world upon which their hearts have become set, and at last, they are seen no more.

And now the sower is well into the field, his strong hands flinging handful after handful of seed over the soft, yielding soil, where it will lie and germinate, and grow stronger and taller, receiving nourishment from the soil along with the benefit of sun and rain, until at last it stands, proudly erect, a golden glory awaiting the coming

of the reaper. This is the kind of labour and reward that every witness for the truth as it is in Jesus desires to experience and receive. *"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields"* He said *"for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal"*. That is the vision which inspires every one of the sowers as he goes out like that worker in the parable, ardently scattering the seed on ground which he knows to be good, and because he has that knowledge already sees in his mind's eye the harvest that will surely come. Despite the wayside, the stony ground, the weeds and thorns, there are still those who not only hear the word and receive it into sincere hearts, and allow the Spirit to do its great work, but throughout life, be it short or long, remain faithful to their covenant with God, in steadfast faith looking unto Jesus who is not only the Author but also the Finisher of their faith. These survive all the vicissitudes of storm and tempest, the gales of wind and the crushing hail, by virtue of their strong roots penetrating far down into the good soil and taking firm hold thereof, their long, shapely leaves reaching up into the air to receive the sun and rain which is God's gift, attaining at the last that full-fruited maturity which the Apostle Paul in Ephesians calls *"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph. 4.13).

To the end this parable talks of individuals, and the response of individuals to the message of the Gospel. Although it is true that the sowing in good ground eventually produces a company of dedicated and tried and approved believers associated together in one Church which is the Body of Christ, a means in his hand for the reconciliation to God of *"whosoever will"* in the Messianic Age, there is no reference to this or trace of it here. The sown seed comes to maturity because it was sown in good ground but there is no intimation of the ultimate purpose for which it was sown or the use to which the crop will be put. That belongs to a different sphere of thought. There is no question of reaping or harvest here. The end is reached when the sown grain has reached the stage of bringing forth fruit, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold, it matters not. After the full cycle of development has been traversed, the sowing of the seed of the Word has brought forth its fruit in the life of the individual, and that individual is ready for God's purpose.

"To find the Maker and Father of this universe is a hard task; and when you have found him

it is impossible to speak of him before all people."
—Plato.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

One of the most vivid symbols of the Book of Revelation is the lake of fire and brimstone into which all that is evil is cast at the Last Judgment and annihilated. In times gone by, literally interpreted, it was synonymous with Hell, the place of eternal conscious torment for the wicked. Today, in certain by-paths of Universalist theology, it is considered descriptive of the final purification of the unclean and sinful so that they may at last be admitted into the fellowship of the saints. Rightly to appraise the function of this symbol, however, it is necessary to explore its derivation and to consider what the expression must have conveyed to the minds of the first readers of Revelation in the days of the primitive Church.

It is usual in the Gospels to refer to the fate of the finally impenitent as being cast into *Gehenna* ("Hell" in the A.V.). *Gehenna*, the Greek name for the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where the city garbage was cast and burnt, was an obvious choice for a symbol of the destruction of the worthless. Its ever-burning fires gave it the appearance at night of a valley of fire and the New Testament references to "hell fire" are based on this fact. *Gehenna*, however, is not mentioned in the Book of Revelation; the Lake of Fire takes its place, but it is easy to see that the more highly coloured imagery of the Book of Revelation has transmuted *Gehenna* with its fires into a veritable lake of consuming fire.

There is a very striking correspondence between the Lake of Fire of Revelation and the vivid descriptions of the place of final punishment for Satan, evil angels, and sinful men, in the Book of Enoch. It is commonly accepted that this book, which was widely known and read in the days of Jesus, had a great influence on the background setting of many allusions in the New Testament, and that Jesus based some of his parables and sayings upon its contents. Jude quoted directly from it in his epistle. The time of its origin and the nature of its authorship have only been approximately ascertained, but that it enshrines the general views of Judaism a few centuries before Christ on the subjects of righteousness and sin, ultimate rewards and penalties, the Messiah and his Millennial reign, and the resurrection, is undisputed. Hence it is of value in elucidating what these later visions of Revelation were intended by the Holy Spirit to convey to the

primitive Church, and therefore to us.

The Book of Enoch pictures the same fiery doom for the unregenerate as Revelation does by the symbol of the Lake of Fire. Enoch calls it the "chaos of fire" as, for example, speaking of the doom of the fallen angels "*In those days they shall be led off to the chaos of fire, to the torment and the prison in which they shall be confined for ever*" (1 En. 10.13). Again, this time referring to unregenerate men "*Ye who have done good shall wait for those days till an end is made of those who work evil, and an end of the might of the transgressors. And wait ye indeed till sin has passed away, for their names shall be blotted out of the book of life and out of the holy books, and their seed shall be destroyed for ever, and their spirits shall be slain, and they shall cry and make lamentations in a place that is a chaotic wilderness, and in the fire shall they burn . . . here are cast the spirits of sinners and blasphemers, and of those who work wickedness, and of those who pervert every thing that the Lord hath spoken through the mouth of the prophets*" (1 En. 108. 2-6). Another passage is reminiscent of Rev. 20 concerning the binding of Satan during the Messianic Age and his judgment at its end: "*And the Lord said to Raphael, Bind Azazel (Satan) hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert . . . and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, that he may not see the light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire*" (1 En. 10. 4-6).

It has been customary to use these and similar passages as an argument for belief in eternal torment among pre-Christian Jews but although it may well be true that some did interpret them in that fashion just as Christians have interpreted the "hell-fire" symbols of the New Testament similarly, it is probable that the author or authors of the Book of Enoch intended these rather lurid passages to be taken metaphorically, for elsewhere in the book it is fairly evident that the penalty for sin was envisaged as eternal death. For instance: "*I will give them over into the hands of mine elect. As straw in the fire so shall they burn before the face of the holy. As lead in the water shall they sink before the face of the righteous, and no trace of them shall any more be found . . . they shall fall and not rise again, and there shall*

be no one to take them with his hands and raise them; for they have denied the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed" (1 En. 48. 9-10). Again, "For the sinners there is judgment impending with me, so that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth" (1 En. 45. 6). "When the secrets of the righteous shall be revealed and the sinners judged, and the godless driven from the presence of the righteous and elect . . . none shall seek for themselves mercy from the Lord of Spirits, for their life is at an end" (1 En. 58. 3 & 6).

It is against this background that the meaning of the allusions in Revelation should be viewed. It is noteworthy that Jesus used the same figure of speech upon occasion, as, for instance, in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, where the sentence upon the sinners is "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25.41). He quite evidently used the expression in the same sense as does the Book of Enoch, and in fact almost certainly based this entire parable upon certain passages in that book.

So far as the New Testament is concerned, reference to the Lake of Fire occurs five times, always in the Book of Revelation. In ch. 19.20, as the culmination of the vision of the Rider on the White Horse from Heaven—our Lord in glory at his Second Advent—engaging in the final conflict with, and defeating, the forces of evil of this world at the end of this Age, the two principal opponents, the "Beast" and the "False Prophet" are said to be cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone. These two symbolic creatures can be briefly described as picturing the religio-political anti-Christian forces of this Age, and their casting into the fiery lake "alive", their consignment to destruction whilst in the midst of their active hostility to the Lord Christ. There is no suggestion as to their ultimate reclamation from this fate; the fires are not purificatory, but destructive. Following the overthrow of the evil institutions of man's creating, preparatory to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom upon earth, they pass out of existence never to return. The allegiance of men to these systems and their influence in men's hearts will be gradually nullified during the process of evangelism and conversion which is the purpose of that Age. The Beast and the False Prophet disappear for ever.

The remaining four instances are located in point of time at the end, rather than the beginning, of the Messianic Age. These four deal with happenings associated with the Last Judgment. In Rev. 21. 6-8 it is indicated that those who have

not by that time become sons of God by conversion, but elect instead to remain in their sins, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." The same ones are referred to in ch. 20.15 by the expression "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Later on, in ch. 21.27, it is stressed that nothing that defiles or is of sin and evil will enter the symbolic Holy City, the eternity of blessedness which God has ordained for the redeemed, but only "they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life". This allusion goes back to the days of the Exodus, when Moses came to the Lord to confess the apostasy of Israel in making themselves an idol god. "This people have sinned a great sin" he said, imploring forgiveness, and then, because of his love for his people and his solicitude for God's great purpose for them; if God could not forgive "then blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written". To which the Lord responded with an enunciation of a basic principle in his redemptive purpose "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exod. 32. 31-33). The Book of Life in Revelation is the New Testament counterpart of God's Book of worthy Israel in the Old. In that case those who proved themselves worthy were preserved for God's future purpose and went into the Land of Promise. The unworthy, because of unbelief and apostasy, were erased from that Book and their carcasses fell in the wilderness; they never entered the Promised Land. Similarly, those who respond to the drawing power of God in Christ, who become sons of God by a renunciation of evil, and acceptance of Christ and dedication of life to him, even although that conversion and dedication take place at the eleventh hour of the Messianic Age, devised to afford all men abundant opportunity for the same, are assured of eternal life in the infinite ages of the future; they enter the Holy City. But those, if such there be, who steadfastly and irrevocably reject the Divine offer of salvation in Christ, whose hearts are so fully set in them to do evil that there is nothing left in their minds and hearts upon which the love of God can work, who use their God-given gift of absolute free-will to say "I will not"; for these there remains nothing and can remain nothing but the loss of God-given life, life which can only endure eternally if in union with God through Christ. The antithesis of life is death; the Divine law is "the soul that sinneth it shall die". In the Book of Revelation that final destruction is pictured as consignment to the Lake of Fire, "which is the second death".

The first death, of course, is that which all men experience at the termination of their mortal span, organic death the signs of which are manifest in the world every day. That death is reversed by the resurrection, when all men will stand before Christ in the glory of his Messianic reign not only to answer for the deeds already done in the body but also to receive so complete a revelation of the power of God and so full an understanding of the way to life through Christ that none can fail of attaining eternal life but the wilfully obdurate, and the consequent death which such knowingly and deliberately bring upon themselves is, logically, the "second death".

At the same time, Satan the Adversary, "*the devil that deceived them*", who had been rendered powerless throughout the Messianic Age, the Millennium, "*that he should deceive the nations no more*" (Rev. 20.3) and upon his release at the end of the Millennium is shown in ch. 20.3 to demonstrate his continued enmity to God by seeking to stir up rebellion amongst mankind again, is said in ch. 20.10 also to be cast into the lake of fire. The inference here is that this is his end; he does not appear any more in the story. There is no indication of repentance, only of continued espousal of sin and evil; this being the apparent intimation, there can be only one end. The law of God against sin is not restricted to man, it applies to all created intelligences on whatever plane or of whatever station.

This 10th verse requires some consideration. It reads in full "*and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*". Read grammatically, this would assert that the Devil is to be thus tormented and with the English use of "ever" the implication is that the torment is eternal. This is not in accord with Christian theology; the wages of sin is death, not eternal torment, and if the Devil is unrepentant to the last the only possible consequence is death. It can be that the A.V. translation is not above question; the Greek is literally "where the beast and false prophet (are) and they-shall-be-tormented" etc., the verb here being third person plural, so that the expression cannot be limited to the Devil as the A.V. has it, but either to all three, or, perhaps more likely, to the beast and false prophet alone. This latter is adopted by the Douay version which renders "*the Devil, who seduced them, was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beast and false prophet shall be tormented for ever*". The torment referred to is the retributive

judgment of God which can be remedial if there is any hope of reformation on the part of the subject, but is final where there is no such hope. (see article "*Tormented for ever and ever*" in *BSM March/April 1973*. Ed.). The expression "for ever and ever" is misleading wherever it occurs in the N.T. It is literally "unto the ages of the ages" and it denotes, not necessarily infinite time as the English expression would imply, but simply the duration of ages whose time-length is not specified. "*Aion*"—age—means an age or epoch, a span of time, as when we speak of the Ice Age, the Stone Age or the Millennial Age. *Aionos ton aionon*—the ages of the ages—has been defined as the sum of all the ages in which God is working out his redemptive purpose. According to Vine it is an idiomatic expression betokening an undefined period. In every case the subject which is qualified by the phrase has to govern the application. Thus when we read that the Lord shall reign for ever and ever, unto the ages of the ages, the implication is that the reign is never-ending. When, as in this case, the subject relates to the destiny of an evil system or a sinful being, the application is to the sum of the ages which brings that system or being to the final end which is the result of sin; hence here the "ages of the ages" terminate with the end of the Millennial Age when all that is of evil shall vanish and be no more.

The final allusion is in Rev. 20.14 "*And death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire*". If any further confirmation that the symbol is one of utter and final destruction was required this is it, for it is fundamental in the Divine Plan that death and the grave are to vanish forever out of God's creation. "*There shall be no more death . . . for the former things are passed away*" says the Revelator in Rev. 21.4. "*All that are in the graves shall come forth*" said Jesus (Jno. 5, 28-29). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit the prophet Hosea declared the Divine decree "*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death, O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction*" (Hos. 13.14). Hades, as the place of departed humanity waiting for the resurrection; Death, as the inescapable interruption of life which comes to every man, will be no more. All who live beyond the end of the Millennial Age and onward into eternity will do so because they have been completely cleansed from sin and evil and have entered into a state of union with God. The whole long sad history of sin and death will have come to an end; Death and Hades will be no more. The Lake of Fire will have served its purpose.

CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. 3, 25).

The thought behind this word "propitiation" is that of a means of blotting out sin, not that of conciliating an offended Deity, the idea upon which much erroneous Christian theology has been built. To our English minds this fact does not come so easily as it did to the first readers of Paul's epistle to the Romans, for when their eyes fell upon the word "*hilasterion*", which has been translated 'propitiation', they thought instantly of the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and so of Christ as being set forth a "mercy-seat"—a means of covering sin and reconciling man with God.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, several centuries before Christ, the translators were faced with the problem of finding a suitable Greek word to describe the "mercy-seat". They chose "*hilasterion*", which was the word for an altar or other means of offering sacrifices to appease or placate the pagan gods of Greece. This Greek translation, the Septuagint, was the one in general use in the time of Paul, and he would naturally use the same term, which is quite correctly translated "propitiation" in English. In a similar fashion, centuries later, the first English translators of the Hebrew Bible adopted "mercy-seat" to express the Hebrew "*kapphoreth*" because, as it is quaintly expressed in one early rendering "There God appeared mercifully unto them; and this was a figure of Christ".

Now "*kapphoreth*" means simply and solely a place of covering, and the "mercy-seat" was so named because the sins of Israel were "covered" by the annual sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering. "*Kaphar*"—to cover—is not used in the sense of putting a roof on a house or a hat on one's head, but it is a word which implies the absolute obliteration of that which is covered. It means, primarily, to paint an object with pitch or bitumen, and is used in reference to an animal

that is covered with a shaggy fur, or of the obliteration of writing by drawing the writing instrument completely over the characters. Here are some examples of its use:—

Gen. 6, 14. "Thou . . . shall *pitch* it (the ark) within and without with pitch."

Isa. 28, 18. "Your covenant with death shall be *disannulled*" (i.e., the written agreement or covenant shall be obliterated).

Prov. 16, 6. "By mercy and truth iniquity is *purged*."

It is this thought of covering, so as to obliterate completely, that lies behind the terms "reconciliation" and "atonement" in the Old Testament, for both these words are translated from "*kaphar*". Thus we have:—

Lev. 8, 15. "To make *reconciliation* upon it" (the brasen altar).

Dan. 9, 24. "To make *reconciliation* for iniquity."

Ezek. 45, 17. "The meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make *reconciliation* for the house of Israel."

Lev. 16, 6. "And Aaron shall . . . make an *atonement*."

Lev. 16, 30. "On that day shall the priest make an *atonement* for you."

Ezek. 16, 23. "When I am *pacified* toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord."

And so God says (Isa. 44, 22) "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud . . . thy sins." When the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the "mercy-seat" on the Day of Atonement he was covering over and obliterating the sins of Israel from the sight of God.

There is perhaps, more of mystic truth than we have recognised in the lines of that familiar hymn:

"The Cross *now covers my sins,*
The past is *under the blood;*
I'm trusting in Jesus for all,
My will is the will of my God."

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

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

Jeremy Taylor.

FRAGRANCE

"The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (John 12.3. Weym.)

Fragrance is one of the extras which a benevolent Creator has bestowed upon mankind. Out of all the bounties of Nature, perfume is one of its peculiar treasures. The vegetable kingdom could easily perform all its essential purposes and remain scentless. Yet the manifold fragrance of bark and stem, of root and flower, of oils, gums and resins, of spices, leaves and fruit are proof that God designed for man's benefit a fragrant world.

Man's first home was a sweet scented garden. Botanists have discovered an odoriferous flora in all parts of the globe. Their estimate that one in every thirty plants is perfumed is not likely to be exaggerated. A walk round any garden or down any country lane will call the attention to many perfumes which linger in the memory. The western nose is still familiar with the fragrance of lavender, rosemary, mint and thyme, once highly prized in herb gardens, where the heavy scents of old roses, of pinks and wallflowers, lilacs and honeysuckles, limes and sweet briars filled the air with rustic sweetness and the peace of country life.

The sweet scent of drying hay, of crushed grass, the fragrance rising from a field or garden, even from a dusty road newly washed by a reviving shower of rain, have the power to awaken half forgotten things, to create a yearning for peace and beauty, to soothe somewhat the fret and strain produced by the pace and sounds of the hectic, modern world.

This supply of fragrance and the sense of smell are not without design. As the appetising smell of food prepares the stomach to relish and digest the life-sustaining viands, so the sweet perfumes of flowers uplift the spirit. Aromatic perfumes soothe the nervous system, they refresh, renew and stimulate the exhausted, jaded system wearied by close confinement or too close pressures with the discords and staleness, the more noxious vapours of crowded life.

Perfume of a rich and spicy odour was lavishly used in the East. Kings and priests received a costly anointing, while the ceremonial of religious services smoked with burning incense. The ritual of swinging censers was a means of worship. As sight and sound appealed to the mind, the heart was gratified by the fragrant clouds which rose

from the altar of incense. The Bible is rich in metaphors borrowed from sweet smelling plants. The recipe for the holy anointing oil and for the incense of the sanctuary was a closely guarded, Divine prerogative, not designed for private use but for man's communion with God.

Worship and prayer were the sweet odours of the devout, loyal human heart, ascending to heaven through a fragrant veil in which the Spirit of God commingled awhile with the spirit of his people. The pre-arranged benefits of these rich perfumes expressed the delight and satisfaction of God in such pure worship, while the worshipper was revived, stimulated and refreshed through the medium of perfume.

The sweet-smelling savour which rises to the Throne of grace is that of sincerity. Worship in spirit and truth; prayer which springs fresh from the heart. In John's vision of he that sat upon the throne he saw the four and twenty elders having not only harps in their hands but golden vials "full of sweetness" which are the prayers of saints.

Perfume is more than a distilled essence. It is the fragrant breath of Nature exhaled by forest, meadow, mountain and garden, a sweetening of all the air in a silent acknowledgement of the love and loveliness of the creative spirit. If prayer be its counterpart, then it is the spiritual breath of life, as natural and spontaneous, as constant as that floral breath which flows in health-giving waves from vigorous trees and plants. Both are a sign of health, a symbol of joyous care-free existence. When things go wrong in either of these spheres of life, disease, decay and death put these pleasant odours in reverse.

The incense of the earth which has anointed kings and hallowed the altars of the Most High has its equivalent in the human heart. The compelling charm of the human being lies not merely in a pleasing, outer appearance, but in an inner grace. As every lovely thing is beauty so every grace is love, the very heart and centre of being, the very essence of God. "*God is love and everyone that loveth is born of God*". Love is the hallmark of God, stamped upon all his creation. The tiniest fish, the smallest song bird shows some signs of affection and intelligence. As fragrance lies in the heart of Nature, so love lies in the heart of human beings. When given whole-heartedly to God and unselfishly to others in willing service,

it constitutes that fragrance of the heart which fills the house, any and every house, where its essence flows from a generous service to refresh and inspire by its stimulating properties.

When Mary of Bethany took her "pound of ointment of spikenard very costly" for the anointing of Jesus, she at least knew what she was doing. So did the recipient of her generosity, for He knew himself to be both King and High Priest, shortly to complete his sacrificial work upon the cross. Hers was no mere phial of distilled sweetness, but a vase of rare and expensive perfume whose odours would linger on through many days, doubtless refreshing the last hours of the Son of Man, hustled from court to court and finally to Calvary.

"*Against the day of my burying hath she done this*". Nicodemus also came with spices, and the women who were first at the tomb. Eastern perfumes were the products of Arabia, India and the spice islands. Great skill was required in their blending. It was a high art and the apothecary of that day was not a seller of medicines but a maker of rare perfumes. The costly spikenard came from a plant growing on the mountains of India. Many aromatic plants grow in the high places, entombed in snow half the year, their flowers white as though expressing that purity and isolation from the valleys below in which they could not live.

Blended with oils and resins the spikenard was sealed with wax into an alabaster container. Some of these have been found in ancient tombs, some still sealed, others broken, their perfume still strong and lingering after the passing of centuries. It was such a vase that Mary unsealed, pouring out its rich contents on the Lord as he sat at supper, the perfume rising like incense, filling the whole house, enveloping all who were there in a holy fragrance which lingers today about all who read the Bethany story.

It was no accident, but a long, foreseen incident that He who was both King and Saviour should be publicly anointed with a king's anointing. His very name was "as sweet ointment poured forth". No other name has so refreshed and stimulated with hope and adoration the hearts of men and women down the years as the sweet name of Jesus, and no life can have ascended to God in such rich clouds of incense as the sacrificial life of the Lamb of God who gave himself and was given of God that love may yet prevail over all that is crooked, evil and perverse.

Jesus both gave and received the choicest perfumes. The inspired Psalmist saw him "*anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, out of*

the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad".

It is the picture of the heavenly bridegroom, the Kingly Son of God equipped with power and authority to bring gladness to the earth. In his first brief ministry the healing of his seamless dress, the hem of his garment, brought relief and strength to the touch of faith. He passed through crowds or stood surrounded by sick, neglected people and the perfume of the high places from which he came flowed to them in compassion. He went about in the cities and villages teaching, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

What an illustration of heavenly perfume poured out in fragrant earthly ministry! What a glorious hope of things to come! When the same power wielded by wisdom and love releases to all flesh the unstinted flow of universal blessing, the very atmosphere will be cleansed and charged by healing virtues. The burgeoning earth, the blossoming deserts, the joyful fields, the rejoicing trees pouring out their fragrances upon the benevolent breezes, will recreate that old, lost garden which had the tree of life.

Jesus prized the lily of the fields, seeing in it a lovely beauty that far surpassed the royal dress of kings. The most fragrant plants are often lowly, humble of dress and inconspicuous in size, yet their hearts are laden with that delicious perfume which cheers and inspires. Large, flamboyant blooms often have little to give but their outward show. The fragrant are tiny bells and florets, the small trumpets, sometimes pouring their perfume on the night air. So does God hide his sweetness in a lowly heart. Behind many a plain face beats a golden heart full of true devotion. The best is brought out of many quiet lives when trouble and sorrow, pain and distress, lay their hands upon the lives about them. The unsuspected kindness and unrevealed goodness breathes out a healing, comforting fragrance into those dark hours.

The precious spikenard is owned by those who dwell with Christ in heavenly places, far removed in thought and conduct from the Babylonish marts of this present world. Like Mary they pour the heavenly perfume garnered from the mountain tops into a fragrant earthly ministry. The lingering incense of their lives writes their daily commendation in the Master's words, "*What she could do she did*".

Not creeds but deeds, fragrant with loving kindness, is chiefly what most people need. The fragrance of love, gracious, delicate, discerning, stimulating, generous and responsive is God's greatest gift to all creation.

A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

"We which have believed do enter into rest . . . there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (Heb. 4, 3 & 9.)

Most Christian people—except perhaps the young and the naturally energetic—are conscious at times of a desire for rest. Rest from the eternal conflict; a cessation of the tiring struggle against unrighteousness and injustice and every form of evil. It were unnatural were it not so, for the Christian life was always intended to be a conflict and a struggle, and where those things obtain there must be at times a desire for rest. The traditional Heaven of mediaeval days was always depicted primarily as a place of rest. The well-known—and probably completely unhistorical—story of the epitaph carved on the tombstone of the poor old worn-out charwoman whose life had been one of unending toil *"Gone to do nothing for ever and ever"* is well-known only because it delineates a real trait in many Christian characters, the longing for rest. The oft-expressed hope of the early Christians was for rest from the wickedness of this world; in those days they had much more justification than have we for weariness on that score. And the secret of the intense longing felt by many believers, of more devotional turn of mind, for their Lord's return to take them to be with him, is largely their desire to be associated with him in what they picture as an eternal rest.

But the writer to the Hebrews is not speaking of any kind of possible future rest to follow the toils of this life. He is speaking in the present tense and the rest into which we are invited to enter is one that is ours *now*, if we will. Here is a very real sense in which we can cease to strive and struggle, and enter a condition of complete rest, yet without forsaking in any degree that life of service and activity which is ours and should always continue to be ours while we have any talents or opportunities whatever to expend for Christ. This rest we are strongly exhorted to attain. *"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest"* (vs. 11) is the word. A paradoxical statement, "labour" to "rest" but a profound truth lies behind the exhortation.

The world to-day knows no rest. "Peace, peace, but there is no peace" has become a truism. It is a condition of mind not to be envied. There is upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking

to the things coming upon the earth. So, said Jesus, would it be in the last days and to-day the word is true as never before. But Christians are to be a contrast to all this. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" is the Divine injunction and unless we can reach up to that level we are missing much of the real essence of Christian living. Faith has to play an important part in this; we have to develop a faith based upon a sure knowledge of God and His ways, a sure conviction that He is steadily working in the world of men to bring mankind to himself. It is when we come to that realisation we can endure with greater confidence the many circumstances of life which would seem to give the lie to any assertion that the world will yet be saved from itself. On this faith, and in the quietude of this rest, is Christian character developed and God's Will done in our minds and hearts.

What then is this rest?

Before trying to answer the question, look back to the words in Hebrews 4. The writer is talking about Natural Israel at the time of the Exodus. They were plodding through the wilderness on the way to a Promised Land, but they were suffering all kinds of hardships and misfortunes meanwhile. They had a "rest" offered them; an entry into a land "flowing with milk and honey", a land that would gratify their fondest desires. After the rigour and perils of the wilderness their life in that Promised Land was to be indeed a "rest". But they never attained it. A later generation inherited the land; the generation that left Egypt with such high hopes and sojourned in the wilderness forty years never entered in. Why? Hebrews 4 gives the answer. *"They entered not in because of unbelief."* (vs. 6.). That is a most amazing sequel to their pilgrimage. They had enjoyed every possible outward evidence of the Divine power and protection extended on their behalf—far more in a physical sense than we have to-day. The pillar of fire protected them by night and the cloud led them by day. The manna and the quails and the water from the rock all came at their times of greatest need. With an high hand the Lord delivered them from the Egyptians and brought them to himself. What more could they want or expect? The Promised Land was in front of them, waiting to be entered. True, there was fighting to be done, but there was the definite promise of victory. Why then the failure? "Be-

cause of unbelief." They sent the spies to search out the land. Joshua and Caleb returned with the heartening assurance "Let us go up, for we are well able to possess it", but they disbelieved, and murmured, and rebelled. They refused to go up and possess the land. So came the sentence "To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." That is the penalty of unbelief, the wilderness. There are two kinds of wilderness; the wilderness *with* God and the wilderness *from* God. It is good for us if we are in the wilderness *with* God; there we can learn of him and grow strong in his ways. It is hard for us if we find ourselves in the wilderness *apart* from God, but this is the penalty of unbelief.

So this rest is one into which we enter because of complete faith in and dependence upon God, and in this rest we find spiritual strength. It does not imply idleness or sloth; the vigorous activity of a full Christian life can be assiduously pursued in complete possession of this rest. The Bible itself gives us enough examples of that in its accounts of great things in early days; those historical narratives illustrate the various aspects from which we view this rest.

Consider the story of creation. Out of the chaos and clashing elements came the peace and calm of Eden. The Lord God created man and put him in the garden, and woman was brought to him. Then God entered into his rest, that seventh day on which He rested from all his works which He had made, a cessation of creative activity in relation to his Plan for mankind. Creation must still have continued, for God is ever a Creator, but at Eden He left his Plan for this earth to run its course, being confident and restful as to its outcome. That was the rest of *knowledge*. He knew that his Will would be accomplished and what He had purposed would come to pass. We too need the rest of *knowledge*. We *know* and therefore we are content.

Adam and Eve in the garden entered into a rest. They had the Divine commission to till the ground and reap its fruits and that implied diligence and activity. They knew themselves bound to render worship and adoration to their Creator and observe the laws which had been revealed to them and that implied loyalty and obedience. But in this life they enjoyed a rest, the rest of *dependence*, dependence on God. We too need the rest of *dependence*. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Noah in the days of the antediluvian world was told an unheard of thing, a thing that the wisdom of that world knew not of and could not credit.

A flood that was to come would destroy that whole order of things but by the building of an Ark Noah could save himself and all who with him believed God. In the turmoil and confusion of that doomed world Noah achieved complete rest, the rest of *confidence*. In the power of that confidence he triumphed and was saved. So it may be with us. "*In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.*" "*Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*" We must have the rest of *confidence*.

Abraham was called the Friend of God, but his life was, nevertheless, a stormy one and he was called upon to pass through many strange experiences. His faith was tested to the uttermost; yet the story of his life reveals a calmness and serenity which declares in no uncertain tones that his life was lived in a condition of rest with God. His was the rest of *obedience*. He was obedient because he believed, and that belief earned for him the honour of justification by faith. We also, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are obedient, also are justified by faith and we also enter in to the rest which comes from *obedience*.

The first disciples of Jesus, between his death and the Day of Pentecost, were disturbed and perplexed, not knowing what to do, but when they gathered "with one accord into one place" and the Holy Spirit descended upon them, they one and all entered into rest. All the best of the lessons of past men's lives was built into their experience; their rest was one of knowledge, of dependence, of confidence, of obedience; in the power of that rest they were able to go forth in all boldness to preach the Word and become known eventually as the men who had turned the world upside down. They believed; therefore they entered into rest, and nothing could destroy that rest. That same rest is for us, if we also believe. It is complete and unassailable, based on our relationship with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Accepting Christ's finished work, at his hands, we enter into rest. This rest is our rightful inheritance; none can deprive us of it but we ourselves can throw it away. The Promised Land is before us; Jordan is held back; there is nothing in the way. There are enemies in the land, seeking to destroy our rest, but "greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us" and we have nothing to fear—except unbelief. Except we believe, we shall in no wise enter in.

"*Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*"

WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"
(Matt. 8.12)

This used to be considered the principal occupation of those unfortunate enough to be consigned to the old-time Hell; now that a more logical view of the purpose of God for man has for the most part replaced that old belief there is scope for a fresh examination of this expression and a fresh appraisal of its meaning. It occurs seven times in the New Testament; six in the Gospel of Matthew and one in that of Luke. Three times it is associated with outer darkness and twice with a furnace of fire, Luke's reference is a parallel account to one of Matthew's so that there are really six instances; five of these are parables which are in their contents symbolic of spiritual or dispensational truths.

In each of the six cases those represented as thus giving vent to their feelings are shown as having lost some greatly desired prize or been excluded from some greatly desired position, and are expressing their resentment, their impotent fury and frustration in the face of this loss. Repentance or remorse is not implied, only rage and animosity. The word for weeping or wailing in these instances, and only once else in the N.T., is *klauthmos*, which is an intensive development of *klaio*, to weep, and denotes a violent breaking forth or paroxysm of disappointed grief. The gnashing of teeth is used in the Scriptures as an indication of hatred and enmity of the wicked against the righteous, as can be perceived by the following instances. Job 16.9. *"He who hateth me teareth me in his wrath; he gnasheth upon me with his teeth. Mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me"*. Psa. 35. 11-16, speaking of David's enemies *"False witnesses did rise up . . . they rewarded me evil for good . . . in mine adversity they rejoiced . . . they gnashed upon me with their teeth"*.

Psa. 37. 12. *"The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth"*.

Psa. 112.10. *"The wicked shall see it" (i.e. the prosperity of the righteous) "and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish"*.

Lam. 2.16. *"All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee; they hiss and gnash the teeth"*.

In the Greek Septuagint the word for "gnash" is rendered in Prov. 19. 12 the "roaring" of a lion,

and in the Apocrypha, Eccus. 51.3 "delivered me from the teeth of them that were ready to devour me". These examples illustrate the malevolent nature of the action thus described.

Coming now to the occasions in which the expression is used, the first occurs during Jesus' encounter with the Capernaum centurion (Matt. 8.12) when He commended the centurion's faith as greater than that of Israel generally and said that many from outside the polity of Israel would come from east and west and north and south, and sit down with Abraham and others in the kingdom of God. *"but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"*. The "children of the kingdom" were, of course, all Israel to whom our Lord came and who by virtue of their Divine calling, originating with the Mosaic covenant at Mount Sinai, were the first to whom the opportunity of accepting Christ was offered. In the main, they rejected him, and in consequence, as Jesus said on another occasion, *"the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21.43). The "outer darkness" was the exclusion from this aspect of the Divine purposes and the weeping and gnashing of teeth the animosity and resentment of those thus excluded. The early chapters of the Book of Acts reveal the intensity of that animosity. The parallel reference in Luke 13.28 may or may not refer to the same incident but the situation was the same and the purport of the Lord's words is the same as in Matthew.

The next example, in Matt. 22.13, concerns the man in the parable of the marriage of the King's Son, an invited guest who was discourteous enough to decline the usual proffered festal garment at the feast. In consequence he was cast into outer darkness where was weeping and gnashing of teeth. This parable relates to the successive calling of Jews and Gentiles to the Gospel of Christ, the acceptance of those who answer the call on the basis of their justification by faith in Christ (Rom. 5.1) and the elimination from this company of the unfit who repudiate that justification. These latter could include, at the time Jesus uttered this parable, those Jews who trusted in "the works of the Law", salvation through the Mosaic Covenant, rather than through faith in Christ. Consequently they were excluded from

the feast in the parable, "cast into outer darkness", suffering the same fate as their fellows in the earlier reference. It must also include those who in later times repudiate their justification and so lose their places in the Church of Christ.

The third example occurs as the sequel to the Parable of the Talents in Matt. 25.30. Here the servants who traded with their talents and made increase were commended but the one who allowed his to lie idle and useless went into the outer darkness and the weeping and gnashing of teeth. The general application of this parable is to the Christian life and opportunity of serving our Lord's interests during the course of this Age prior to his Second Advent. The "reckoning" at the end of the parable, when the master returns and enquiries as to the use his servants have made of the "talents" entrusted to them, is not the Last Judgment or anything like that. It relates to the members of the Church of this Age, the dedicated followers of Christ who, if faithful to their calling, will be associated with him in the evangelical work of the next, the Messianic Age. The decision as to the fitness or unfitness of each such individual will be made at the Advent when the Lord comes for his own, and the casting of the unprofitable servant into outer darkness and the weeping and gnashing of teeth is again a figure of speech for the exclusion from that high honour. An important point to observe here is that progress is a law of the spiritual life as it is of Nature. The fault of the unprofitable servant was not that he had failed to achieve great things like the one who had doubled the value of his trust but that he had achieved nothing at all. He could at least have put his lord's money in the bank and had some interest to show for the period, but he had not done even that. He threw his lord's bounty back in his face and libelled him into the bargain and demonstrated, not merely apathy, but hostility to his lord; so, like some of the Pharisees of old, he well merited the sentence of exclusion from the heavenly kingdom which his hostility had earned.

After this comes the story of the faithful and evil servants of Matt. 24:51, one in which the ministers of Christ are pictured fulfilling their task of "feeding the flock of God" (1 Pet. 5.2) in watchful anticipation of the imminent Second

Advent. One such minister has no faith in the imminence of the Coming and he uses his position, not as a faithful minister of the faith, but to serve his private interests and indulgences. Again, as in the previous case, the Lord comes unexpectedly and passes the same sentence. Because of unworthiness and apostasy from the obligations of his sacred mission he is cast out and again there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The final two instances form a pair. The parable of the wheat and tares culminates in Matt. 13.42 by the tares being cast into a furnace of fire where there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth". That of the dragnet culminates in Matt. 13.49 by the useless fish in the catch being treated similarly. In both cases the combined allusion depicts the exclusion of the unfit from the society of the fit at the end of the period of trial. The sowing of the wheat and intrusion of the tares pictures the work of this present Age with the harvest of the wheat, the true and faithful adherents of Christ, and separation of tares, the opponents of Christ, at its end. The sweeping of the net gathering fish of every kind and the process of separation into good and bad equally well pictures the work of the Messianic Age when all mankind will be brought into the net of the Divine call and invitation of that Age, and once again, the true and the apostate will be separated.

One vital principle runs through all these instances. The symbol of gnashing of teeth indicates that those who fail to attain their invited place in God's purposes do so, not because of ignorance, inability or even apathy, but because of deliberate hostility to God. They depart as they are bidden, but as they depart they gnash their teeth in rage and enmity. That was true of the Pharisees who could have entered the Kingdom but refused, and hounded Jesus to death. It is true of those who, having once entered and embraced the Christian way, deliberately repudiate it and engage in hostile action against it. It is true of those who, at the end of the Messianic Age when mankind's Day of probation comes to its end, resolutely defy the goodness of God and the only basis upon which life can continue, and remain unrepentant to the last. There is a terrible finality in the words of those men in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19) "*we will not have this man to reign over us.*"



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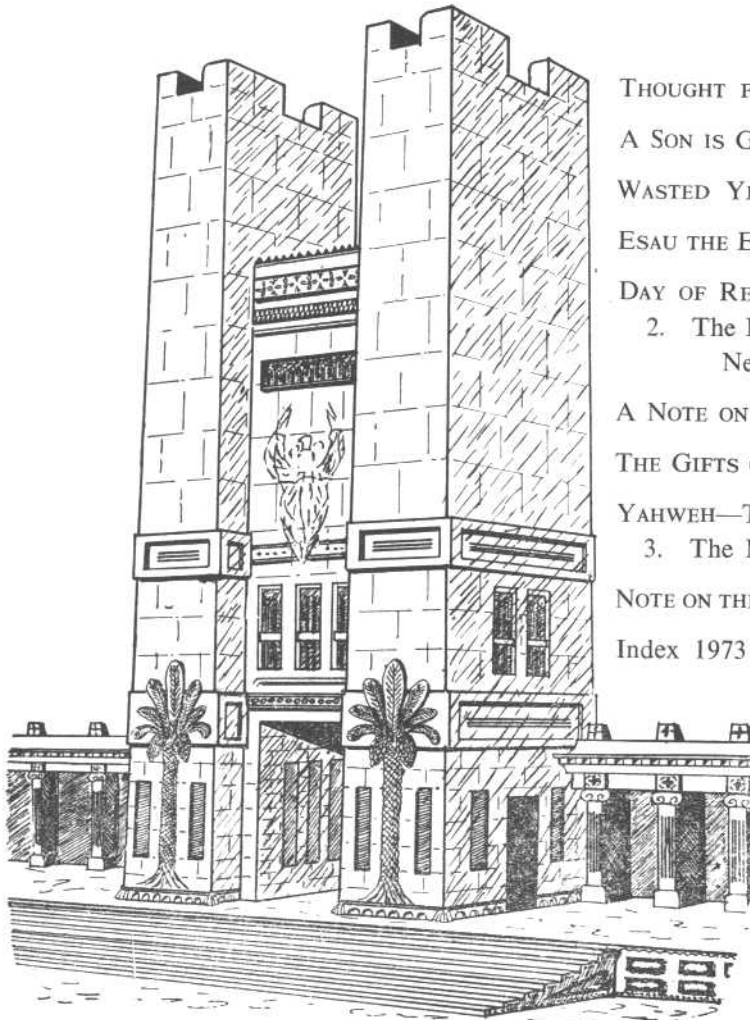
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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Thought for the Month

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness".
(Psa. 65.11).

The cynic, looking upon the world as it is to-day, may be pardoned for doubting the validity of those words. It might have been all right in those far-off days when the world was comparatively young, its unspoiled and fertile lands responding prolifically to the tilling of men who found time between labours for religious observance and cogitation on the place of God in their lives. They did not have to live in a world threatened with over-population and insufficient food production, a world slowly suffocating in its own pollution, a world menaced by the fear of nuclear destruction. Where is the logic, some may ask, in speaking of the goodness of God when the ordinary man is faced with so many dangers he can neither avoid nor control?

In point of fact those early days were not so halcyon as the rapturous strains of the Psalmist would seem to infer. Life was no more secure then than it is now. True, the soil had not been exhausted by "scientific" farming and the crops were plentiful and health-giving, but there was not the knowledge of conservation and preservation against lean times so that the threat of famine was always very real. The so-called "deficiency diseases" and psychological maladies characteristic of this modern world had not made their appearance, but men had not learned how to deal with the diseases they did have and so they died just the same. Violence, battle, murder, and sudden death were just as much in evidence then as now. Yet men could lift their hearts to heaven and say with sincerity "thou crownest the year with thy goodness". The difference was that men in that day—most of them—did believe in God, that He was not unmindful of their woes and distresses and that He would at the end bring them forth into a world of everlasting peace. They did not

profess to understand much of the philosophy of the permission of evil—by no means so much as we with our greater knowledge of most things ought to understand now—but they were sure that God held the whole world in His hands and would eventually put right everything that was wrong. So they went about their tasks giving thanks for the benefits they did receive and in faith that all that is of evil will one day pass away.

It is that consciousness of Divine overruling in the affairs of men that is lacking to-day and therein lies the cause of so much dissatisfaction and frustration and discontent. Men have been taught by their latter-day prophets that their welfare depends upon their own efforts, that they have no obligations toward others of their fellow-men and certainly none towards a distant and probably mythical Creator; in any case it all comes to an end at death and after that there is nothing. No wonder they blunder on, in St. Paul's telling phrase, "having no hope, and without God in the world". Men have the knowledge and the ability to make this earth a paradise, to alleviate or banish most of the ills from which they suffer, to create a condition of peace and security in which every one can live a full and satisfactory life—but they will not. They will not because it involves acknowledging that God's way is best, and rendering allegiance to him as Creator, and that they will not do. But in the patience and providence of God, and in the day of Christ's kingdom on earth, the lesson will be learned.

The inevitable and utter breakdown of this present world order consequent upon human misuse of all God-given powers and gifts, compared with the peace and order of the Messianic kingdom which succeeds it, will convince at the very least the vast majority of men that God does exist, God does care; they will turn to Him then in understanding and willing allegiance.

A SON IS GIVEN

A Christmas
Discourse

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder." (Isa. 9. 6).

Long centuries before Jesus was born, and Christmas became a Christian festival, the peoples of Bible lands—Assyria, Babylonia, Canaan—made the end of December a time of celebration and rejoicing. It marked the change of shortening days and the turning of the sun to climb higher in the heavens; it gave promise of ripening crops and the joys of harvest. The ancient Babylonians used to drag their Yule logs into their homes on what corresponds to our Christmas Eve and consume them by fire; the following morning they decked with gifts the Tree of Life which they pretended in symbol had grown from the ashes of the dead log—the prototype of our "Christmas tree"—thus, said they, would life come out of death, in due time, by the favour of the gods.

Where did they get the tradition from, tradition so strangely true to fact? Was there some lingering memory of the true faith once held and taught by their common father Noah, their racial ancestors Shem, Ham and Japheth, the patriarchs of their families like Peleg and Heber? It would almost seem so! For it is true that out of the ashes of death will come new life; that after the destruction of the dead wood of this world there will arise a Tree of Life whose fruit shall be for food to mankind and whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations, rich gifts indeed for the sons of men, in that greatest of all Christmas festivals when the Kingdom of light and life has succeeded upon the ending of this world of darkness and death.

Isaiah had something of this in mind when he saw the vision of the Great Light. Like so many of the prophets' revelations, he viewed this representation of things to come against the background of his own day. There is a temptation to read the thrilling passage "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," as though it were a completely disjointed piece of revelation sandwiched unthinkingly into a passage dealing with the local troubles of Israel in the prophet's own day having nothing to do with the subject of the Kingdom. That is not so; chapters 7 to 12 of Isaiah's prophecy comprise one complete and harmonious presentation of Millennial truth in which the vision of the Everlasting Father finds its proper place. And in order to understand the full harmony that exists between these wonderful chapters we must endeavour to

put ourselves in the prophet's place and look at them through his eyes.

The story starts with Isaiah's seventh chapter. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel the "ten-tribe" kingdom, have joined together to attack Judah, the "two-tribe" kingdom of which Ahaz was the apostate king. They have besieged Jerusalem, but the Lord has not yet suffered them to take it. The people of Judah are nevertheless greatly afraid, for they have long since abandoned their faith in God and they know not where to turn for help.

This is Isaiah's opportunity. At the bidding of the Lord he goes forth to meet Ahaz and give him an assurance that the Lord is going to defend Jerusalem—for his own Name's sake; certainly not on account of any piety or faith on the part of the wicked king. But Ahaz does not believe; he does not want to believe. "If ye will not believe," says Isaiah, "surely ye shall not be established". Therefore a second word came to Ahaz. "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God," commands Isaiah. But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I prove the Lord". His rebellion is deliberate and calculated; it cannot be excused. Therefore the message of condemnation, already given to the ten-tribe kingdom. A young woman shall bear a son, and call his name Immanuel. That son is the sign; before that child has grown to youthful maturity, Assyria shall have desolated Samaria and ravaged Judah. Ten-tribes, and some from among the two-tribes, shall have gone into captivity for their sins. The seventh and eighth chapters trace the sad history of that terrible time of disaster which culminated in the complete triumph of the invading Assyrian hosts; the people, said Isaiah, would finally look into the earth, "and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness".

Now these were not just empty words, spoken by the prophet after the manner of a gramophone record. Isaiah, inspired as he was by the Holy Spirit, was seeing these things, future though they were, and he described what he saw. His prophetic vision showed him the grim Assyrian warriors marching through the land, and fleeing multitudes pressing on brokenly before them. He saw the deeds of violence, the slaughter of helpless captives, the brutal treatment of women and children, the burning villages, the desolated vineyards and pastures, the clear Judean skies clouded and darkened by drifting smoke. As he gazed upon

that dread scene his prophetic vision sharpened, and in the spirit of his mind he was carried over nigh on three thousand years of time, to see the events which this Assyrian invasion in the days of *Ahaz and Hezekiah* pictured. He saw the last great onslaught of the forces of darkness, the hosts which we call the armies of Gog and Magog, descending upon God's ancient people at the end of this age. Isaiah still beheld Assyrian soldiers, he still identified the people and the villages and the scenery of the land he knew, but with that mysterious certainty that is sometimes our own experience in dreams he knew that he was looking now at a scene representing the end of this Age and the time of the greatest deliverance of all; and as he looked, straining to see into the murky blackness which all but shrouded the vagueness of the moving figures, men, women and children writhing under the terror that had come upon them, he saw something else, something which caused him to look up and break into the tremendous declaration that commences at verse 2 of chapter 9.

"The people that walk in darkness," he cried in exultation, *"have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."*

Away there on the horizon, beyond the tops of the eastern mountains, above the darkness of the present terror, the glorious radiance of coming day was racing up the sky. The time of light, the time of life, was come, and the darkness would soon be overpast. The Lord was coming as it were from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran, his glory covering the heavens, and his brightness as the light of day, as the sun. Isaiah saw the Assyrian soldiers cower and flee before that terrible radiance, the arrows of Heaven's artillery raining upon them, and all their armies put to flight. The Lord had risen up to the defence and deliverance of his people, and from behind the hills there came into sight the rising of the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings. And the people, so lately bound in darkness and in the shadow of death, rejoiced in this great appearance which had delivered them from the kingdom of darkness and brought them forth into the kingdom of light. That is what Isaiah saw, and for the moment all thought of his countrymen's present troubles and dangers was forgotten, the while his eyes drank in their full of those resplendent glories symbolising earth's Millennial day.

This is the Christmas vision indeed, the turning of the old, darksome, dying year into the new, lightening, living age of light and life for all men. Here is at hand the time of promise and of gifts unto men, the prospect of harvest and all the joys

that come with harvest, the toil of ploughing and harrowing but a memory. Here in very truth is the day for which Isaiah so long had looked, and concerning which he was yet to preach and teach persistently and consistently through many dark years. But for the present the vision was leading him onward into a glory of revelation.

"Thou hast multiplied the nation; thou hast increased the joy." So the Margolis version has it, and Rotherham confirms with *"Thou hast increased the exultation; thou hast made great the joy."* (The "not" in verse 3 of the A.V. is an incorrect rendering). *"They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil."* Here is a picture of mankind, freed at last from the fear of evil things and evil men, from death and all that death implies, "multiplied" upon the fair Millennial earth, destined to be the home of resurrected hosts. Isaiah sees here the beginning of the Millennial kingdom; perhaps he saw, or thought he saw, the promised multiplication of his own nation, Abraham's seed, "as the sands by the seashore" but it is just as correct to apply his prophetic outburst to the greater increase of all men, the entire human family, in that day. He had just seen the great light burst upon a world of evil and put the darkness to flight; now he sees the consequent increase of men and the increase of their joy. "It shall be said in that day, 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."

Why do they thus rejoice? The next verse supplies the answer. *"For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian."* The rout of the Midianites in the days of Gideon was one of Israel's greatest victories. The brave three hundred, having nothing but lights concealed in earthen pitchers, by that means and that alone defeated the enemy host. Did the Holy Spirit suggest that defeat of Midian to Isaiah with set intent? Is it not true that this coming greater defeat of the powers of greater evil at the end of this Age is going to be because another "three hundred" will have had their inner light revealed by the breaking of their earthen pitchers? *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!"* (Matt. 13. 43).

"For every boot stamped with fierceness, and every cloak rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." Thus runs the Margolis rendering, and other translators agree with the thought, not easily discernible in the Authorised Version, that the rejoicing is on account of the

implements of warfare, the armour and clothing of the soldiery, and the grim relics of war, being all consumed in the fire. "He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." War is no more; the time of peace has come, and the devouring fire has consumed all the institutions of unrighteousness.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder." Was it that Isaiah heard, eight hundred years before it floated over Judea's quiet fields, the angel's song of Bethlehem? Did the Holy Spirit in some wonderful manner convey to his attentive mind those strains that later fell upon the ears of the shepherds? It reads almost like a song. "Unto us a child is born . . . unto us a son is given . . ." Mysterious, sweet cadences, rising and falling on the calmness that has succeeded the vision of slaughter. "Unto us a child is born . . . a child is born!" That surely must be the fulfilment of Divine promise, the birth of earth's new King, come to rule in righteousness. "Unto us a son is given!" The truest son of Israel that Israel would ever know, a prophet like unto Moses, a king like unto David, a priest like unto—Melchisedek; yes, a priest upon his throne. "A child is born! . . . a son is given!" So the music must have gone on as Isaiah listened. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord . . . Unto us a child is born . . . a son is given . . . and the government shall be upon his shoulder!"

The heavenly song fades away—perhaps the vision passes from his sight also, but the inspiration of the Spirit is strong upon Isaiah and he opens his mouth, only partially comprehending the significance of his words, yet knowing that they have to do with that coming Day for which he looks.

"His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor." The comma ought not to be there. The expression is a combined one. The word for "wonderful" possesses the meaning of exceptionally singular or unique, something as it were beyond the understanding of mere man. When Manoah asked his celestial guest his name, and the angel told him it was "secret" the same word is used (Jud. 12. 18). The word "counsellor" is one that is used of royalty's closest confidants and advisers (as King David's counsellor in 2 Sam. 13. 12). Our coming King is, then, in the first place, the Wonderful Counsellor. Of whom is He the confidant? Surely of his Father and our Father, Who will do nothing without revealing his purposes to the beloved Son in whom his plans are centred and by whom they are executed. In the visions of Revelation one like unto a slain Lamb

takes the sealed book from the hand of the Deity upon the Throne and reveals what is therein written. We do not know, we cannot visualise, the intimacy of fellowship and oneness of understanding that must exist between the Father and the Son, giving such depth of meaning to Jesus' own words, during his earthly life, "I and my Father are one". Surely He indeed is the One who "was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8. 30). Yea, indeed, his name is "Wonderful Counsellor".

But it is also "the mighty God". Not *El Elyon*—"The Most High". Not "*El Shaddai*"—"The Almighty". Not "*Jehovah*"—"The Eternal One". The Hebrew is "*Gibbor El*". *Gibbor* is the word for giantlike, powerful, mighty, and the giants and mighty men of the Old Testament are "gibborim" (the plural form of *gibbor*). But *El* itself means "mighty one". The plural form, *elohim*, refers to God himself or to the heathen gods, or to angelic or supernatural beings, or even to mighty men, as in Psa. 82. 7 ("I have said, ye are gods, and all of you children of the Most High) so this name "the mighty God" really means "the mightiest mighty one". Is not that a fitting name for the One to whom is committed all power in heaven and earth? Is not that a fitting name for the One to whom every knee in heaven as well as on earth, is to bow, and every tongue, angelic and earthly, confess? "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." There is a wonderful passage in the Apocryphal "*Gospel of Nicodemus*" in which the risen Lord is pictured as storming the gates of hell and rescuing its hopeless inhabitants. "When the prince of hell heard" (that Jesus was coming) "he said" (to Satan) "I adjure thee by the powers which belong to thee and me that thou bring him not to me. For when I heard of the power of his word, I trembled for fear, and all my impious company were disturbed . . . And while Satan and the prince of hell were discoursing thus to each other, on a sudden there was a voice as of thunder and the rushing of winds, saying, . . . Lift up your gates, O ye princes: and be ye lifted up, ye gates of hell, and the King of Glory will enter in . . . And the mighty Lord appeared in the form of a man, and enlightened those places which had ever before been in darkness; and broke asunder the fetters which before could not be broken; and with his invincible power visited those who sat in the deep darkness by iniquity, and the shadow of death by sin." This is assuredly our Mighty One, to whom has been given all power in heaven and in earth, and will exercise that power to overcome death and all evil and establish the

reign of everlasting righteousness.

What then of his third title—the *Everlasting Father*? Does He here usurp the prerogative of the One upon the Throne of Creation, the God and Father of us all? We know at the outset that such a thing can never be. At the close of the Millennial Age, when Christ the King will have subdued evil and vanquished death, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power that opposes his benevolent and life-giving sway (I Cor. 15. 24), when mankind are, at long length, reconciled to God, and in full perfection of life will have entered upon their eternal inheritance, “*then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*” (I Cor. 15. 28). The thought in this title is that given by Rotherham; the “*Father of Futurity*” or the Father of the Coming Age. It is Jesus who has redeemed and purchased the entire human race by means of his own death on the cross; it is Jesus who receives them back to life in the Millennial Age soon to begin, and becomes their Mediator—the Mediator between God and man during the remaining period of man’s insufficiency. It is Jesus who gives them life; who by means of his priestly and kingly work will so influence the hearts and minds of men that all in whom is any possibility of reclamation will eventually repent, and be converted, and come to Jesus, the Lord of life, that they might have life. He will be the world’s great Life-giver, the world’s Father, during that age. He is the Father of the Coming Age and the life that men will receive they will receive at his hands. As it is in Adam that men die, so it is in Christ that men will be made alive. (I Cor. 15. 22).

In so many ways He will be a father to redeemed humanity. “*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*” sings Isaiah “*and gently lead those that are with young.*” There will be such infinite patience and understanding in that day. No longer will there be the hard, unyielding iron of the law, demanding its “pound of flesh”, its demands against the sinners. There will be instead the wise, loving, albeit firm discipline of the understanding parent, and a growing up into true maturity, “who-soever will”, under that paternal rule. The wilful sinner, if he will not repent, must remain a sinner still, but at the end he finds himself shut out of the Holy City, for he has rejected life, and without life he cannot enter (Rev. 21. 27). But he that overcometh will be presented at the end before the Father Himself and experience the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.

The Prince of Peace! There is no mistaking the meaning of that name! It brings to the mind at

once all that is fondest in the dreams of men, in the hopes and beliefs of those who to-day are the Lord’s disciples. “Peace on earth; goodwill to men.” So many have given up hope that it will come; but we know differently. “*In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*” (Psa. 72. 7-8). “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” (Psa. 85. 10-11). “And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isa. 32. 18).

Not only is He the Prince of that peace which is to be man’s inward possession, peace of heart, of mind, of soul, that peace with God which is the result of justification in his sight (“Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace with God*” Rom. 5. 1), that peace which comes with the realisation of human perfection and possession of everlasting life. He is also the Prince of that outward peace which will be characteristic of human society in that blessed day. The same passage in Isa. 32 tells of that. “My people shall dwell in a *peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places*” (vs. 18). What a contrast to this present day of distress and trouble, strife and tumult! “*They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.*” (Micah 4. 4). In every picture of the future day that we have, this thought of peace is prominent and predominant. “*I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like a flowing stream.*”

This is our King! This is earth’s King, disesteemed as yet by those who will, one day, many of them and most of them, become his devoted and adoring subjects. “*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice even for ever.*” Daniel in vision saw this same Son of Man come near before the Ancient of Days, and saw him given dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion, said Daniel, is to be an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7. 14). They all saw something of this, all the prophets of old, and they all said something about it, gave some vivid description of its characteristics, some life-like pen-picture for the instruction and encouragement of those who followed them. They were quite sure about it. “*The*

zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" cries Isaiah as the glowing words come to an end. He must needs go on to see and to talk of darker themes, but he had seen the vision of the Son that should be given and he knew that the word of God and the power of God stood pledged to bring this thing to pass. "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh

it bring forth and bud . . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

"For unto us . . . a child is born . . . unto us . . . a son is given . . . and the government shall be upon his shoulder!"

Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

WASTED YEARS

*An ancient story with
a modern application*

"And the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine . . . and the thin ears swallowed up the seven rank and full ears." (Gen. 41. 4-7.)

Away back there, when the world was young, a mighty Pharaoh of Egypt had a dream, so much out of the ordinary that his wise men and magicians were quite unable to interpret it. The spirit of disappointment was settling upon the royal Court when one of Pharaoh's responsible servants bethought himself of a similar experience that had come to him some while before. He had been in prison with another offending servant when to both of them came startling dreams. With them in the prison was another young man, a Hebrew, and this young Hebrew offered an interpretation of these dreams which came true. The forgetful courtier called all this to mind now as the royal attendants became more and more perturbed, and at last told it to Pharaoh. The young Hebrew was sent for and appeared in the presence of the royal dreamer.

Pharaoh told Joseph the outstanding particulars of his night-visions, for he had dreamed twice, and there seemed the same purport behind both dreams. First of all, seven fat kine had come up out of Egypt's famous river, followed by seven lean kine which ate up the fat ones, but were not improved in appearance thereby. Falling asleep again, the King saw seven fat, well-laden ears of corn come up on one stalk, and then seven thin ears, blasted by the east wind, spring up after them and devour them. The understanding of the dream came quick and clear to Joseph, for the Lord God was with him, and in all this working out His Providences. From Joseph's lips Pharaoh heard an outline of things which were to follow hard on the heels of the dream. Seven plentiful years of harvest, followed by seven lean years of

famine which would consume all the abundance of the prosperous years! Let Pharaoh prepare during the years of plenty for the years of hardship to follow. Such was the interpretation of the dreams, and such the advice the clear-visioned young Hebrew gave his royal auditor. Even here in a strange land, caged within the walls of a prison, the God of his fathers was with him, and was opening for him, not only the prison doors, but the door to a great opportunity.

There are many lessons which could be drawn from this short piece of Bible history, did time and space permit, but for the time being we wish to ponder a little on the fat and lean kine, and the good and parched corn. This dream of the Egyptian monarch may contain a parable for us to-day—and perhaps a warning also.

By the goodness of God, those who have known the way of the Lord for a considerable time, perhaps had the advantage of having come to him in youth or early manhood or womanhood, and into whose hearts has come the "joy of the Lord which is your strength", can testify to the fact that they thus experienced a time of vigorous growth and active extension of knowledge and understanding of the way of the Lord, which has persisted through the years. Even though the call may have been heard, and answered, much later in life, it still remains true that the commencement of the way was marked by this entry into a broadened field of understanding of what life can hold. And if, added to this, the believer was guided into a full appreciation of the inherent goodness of God and his fixed intention to save all of mankind who can possibly be saved, and to intervene by his great power in earth's affairs when men seem destined to ruin the world and themselves irretrievably, then he had double cause for thanksgiving. Many there have been who have thus had come

into their lives a veritable abundance of spiritual things—things new and old, from the treasury of the Master. To understand that Jesus gave himself a Ransom for All, to be testified in due time, and thereafter opened a High Calling for all who would follow him, through death to immortal life, was sufficient to fill their hearts and minds with joy and gladness, and their hands with willing service. A new song was put into their mouths, and a new fervent and deep love was born in their hearts, for our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a freshness, a thrill, a beauty about it all, as the sweet story of his love flooded their souls, and awakened every tuneful chord within them to sing his praise. The fervent expectation of the coming Kingdom of Christ when all that are in their graves shall come forth to the final stage of their Day of Grace and find the opportunity of eternal life open before them, dispelled as in a moment the old nightmare of a stern and vengeful God. And those to-day who share this knowledge of God and faith in his redemptive Plan are counted in with such, for we who now serve Christ have at some past time made our own start in the Christian way and have shared in these early joys. And out of the acceptance of all this came the desire to co-operate with, and serve, such a loving God and Father. It was then we gave him our hearts in full consecration—our very selves—that his will might be done in us, and we stepped out, in faith, into the Way that leadeth unto Life. We accepted the assurance of his Word that our consecration was verily a burial “into his death”, a “being planted together with him” really and truly a “suffering with him”. There came a new power into our lives, the power that wrought his resurrection and exaltation, to help us to wage successful warfare upon the meannesses and pettinesses of our little lives, to transform and change them into miniatures of his great life and to bring all our thoughts into captivity to the Spirit of Christ within us, to garrison and to keep our hearts in peace and quietness before the

Lord. They were the years of the fat kine, and the good ears!—the years of abundance and plenty, the years when we had to extend our barns and storehouses to enable us to hold all that the Lord our God was giving us, the years of busy husbandry, when the services of hand and heart yielded great harvests as the “wheaten” grains were gathered.

But where are we to-day? Has the scorching east wind blown upon us and caused the later years to consume all the benefits and fulness of the earlier years? Is the truth of those days no longer to us the truth of to-day? Have the joys and delights of the New Song vanished from our hearts and lips? And have we grown old and lean and withered, as the lean years have eaten up our store of love and grace and ready response to God? Is our love cold?—have the lean years eaten that up too? And the readiness to serve the Lord and the brethren—have the lean years quenched this too? Happy indeed are we, if the lean years have not touched us, nor the east wind scorched our souls—yea rather, let us say, happy are we if the good and the plenteous years have not ceased, and we are still enjoying the great abundance, and our years are still of the fat kine and the good ears! They need not be years of leanness, for the same Lord is still our provider and source of supply.

How sad it will be, for all the benefits of the seven years of great abundance to be wasted and swallowed up in these other years of famine and poverty and wretchedness! Wasted years! After years of such abundance! Now to be shrivelled, and parched and wasted—no joy—no service—no fellowship—nothing to show out of all we have received—oh, the tragedy of it all, to have received the grace of the Lord “in vain”, to have had the transforming influence of those days, but to no purpose!

May God keep our hearts humbly before him so that our “years of plenty” shall reach right on unto the years of immortal fulness.

We who come to the feet of Him to learn stand aghast at the limitless expanse of the sea of Divine Truth, and in our littleness feel inspired at once to build ourselves a little enclosure where the revelation of Truth can be kept within bounds and the waters be calm and still; and in our inexperience we discern not and care not that those imprisoned waters cannot but be muddied with some effects of human tradition and misconceptions inherited from the past.

Gone from us

(Known to some of our longest readers)

—:—

BRO. L. RENTON (*Bristol*)

BRO. T. C. UNDERWOOD (*Bristol*)

BRO. P. E. THOMSON (*U.S.A.*)

—:—

“Till the day break, and the shadows flee away”

ESAU THE EARTHLY-MINDED

Known in Biblical history as the man who sold his Divine birthright for a mess of pottage, Esau has never enjoyed what in these modern days is called a "good press". His earthly-mindedness and casual indifference to the things of God, compared with the reverence and faith of his twin brother Jacob, and the fact that his descendants, grown into a nation, became inveterate enemies of Israel and eventually subject to Divine condemnation, has created a prejudice against Esau, persisting through all generations, which perhaps has failed to give due weight to what may be at least some redeeming features in his character.

The story really goes back to the time immediately before his birth, for it was then that his mother Rebekah was given an intimation from God as to His purpose with the soon-to-be-born twins. Both were to be the fathers of nations, but the first-born was to be subservient to the second-born. Since Rebekah and her husband Isaac knew that the Divine promise of the coming "seed" that was to bless all the families of the earth was involved in the imminent birth of these two, they must have immediately realised that in his own inscrutable wisdom the Lord had already decreed that the promise should be fulfilled in the second-born. At this point, as St. Paul observes in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the children having not yet been born and so having done neither good or evil, the Lord's selection could not have been on the basis of manifested fitness for his calling. And yet in the outcome it is seen that God decreed rightly, for Jacob, the younger, had that within him which made him a believing and faithful follower of the Lord whereas Esau, despite certain likeable characteristics, remained to the end of his days the perfect example of the man who has not the smallest spark of religious feeling or reverence in his make-up. As a man of the world he lived, and as he lived, so he died. Who knows but that God, with insight seeing deeper than man, already perceived which of these two developing infants had that mixture of qualities derived from the paternal line of Abraham and the maternal one of Nahor which would best be fitted for the Divine calling which must come to one of them. That, at any rate, might be a more logical explanation than a capricious and arbitrary selection having no rhyme nor reason.

The lads grew up together and their differing characters and temperaments soon became mani-

fest. Jacob, we are told in Gen. 25.27, was "a plain man, dwelling in tents," where the word rendered "plain" really means sincere, upright, whole, in a strictly moral sense. His life was spent with flocks and herds and his home the pastoral encampment of the tribe, like his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham. Like them, in that condition he learned of the things of God and the special responsibility his family line held in the developing purpose of God. Esau, on the other hand, was "a skilful hunter, a man of the field". Not for him the patient day-by-day routine of cattle rearing and care; for him the wide open spaces and the distant mountains, where he could range and hunt to his heart's content. And so the two grew to manhood.

At some time in these early years occurred the incident which is the most well-known element in the story of Esau. Coming in one day weary and hungry from hunting, he found Jacob sitting down to a meal of savoury red beans ("pottage" in the A.V.) and impulsively asked that he might share it. The same thing had probably happened more than once before, but this time there was a difference. Jacob, for all his uprightness, was an astute man and a bit of a schemer, and he had evidently been thinking about the position which would arise when their father went the way of all flesh. His mother had told him—and probably Esau also—that he was to be the heir of the Abrahamic promise but how much notice would Esau take of that when the time came if he then decided he would like to assume the obligation after all? And suppose that Isaac, with his known partiality for Esau, should confer his patriarchal blessing at the end upon his elder son instead of his younger, despite what he knew of the Divine edict? So Jacob determined to strengthen his position by obtaining from his brother a formal renunciation of any rights he might possess in the matter. He proposed that in return for the immediate satisfaction of his hunger Esau should cede to him his birthright as principal heir to Isaac. It was a disproportionate and altogether absurd exchange for so small an immediate favour, but Esau's reaction was typical of the man. "I am going to die anyway" he said "and what profit shall this birthright be to me?" The honour of being a progenitor of the nation that would in future times be the custodian of the Divine oracles, and an instrument for the blessing of all peoples of earth, meant nothing to Esau. "I shall be dead by then, and what good will it be to me in that case" was his

sentiment. There was no appeal to Esau in the idea of serving God or being used by God for the happiness of others; he lived *only for himself*. Neither did he seem to be unduly concerned about his position as heir to Isaac's estate; he evidently did not fancy the life of a cattle raiser and was much happier on his hunting forays. So he quite willingly and quite carelessly relinquished all his claims as chief heir to his younger brother, content in the thought that when the time came he would get the usual younger brother's share instead and Jacob would have all the responsibilities and all the obligations. Jacob, careful as ever, got him to swear to his word, which Esau with his usual affability was quite ready to do; the bargain was struck and Esau sat down to enjoy his dinner.

The first intimation of the coming rift in the family appeared when they were both forty years of age. Esau married. That in itself was not unusual and was probably beginning to be expected. His father Isaac had married at forty and was now a hundred years of age; probably he was hoping to see some grandsons before his time came and have that assurance that the Divine purpose through his family was not going to be frustrated. What was unusual was that Esau flouted the family custom of marrying only within the Semitic clan of Terah, a measure intended to maintain racial purity in God's sight, and chose instead to take to himself two women of the Hittites; Judith, the daughter of Beeri and Adah or Bashemath the daughter of Elon. The Hittites were a powerful Indo-Aryan nation in the north and many of them were settled in Canaan and on friendly terms with the people of Abraham—but, they were not of Terah, not even of Shem, not Semitic at all. They were of Japhet and from Abraham's and Isaac's point of view unfit for alliance with the people of the Lord. There is not much doubt that Isaac remonstrated with his eldest son at this betrayal of the family principle but equally no doubt that Esau quite casually dismissed his father's objections as of no material consequence and proceeded with his plans. The Genesis account merely remarks briefly (ch. 26.35) that the situation was "a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah".

One is tempted to wonder if Isaac was to some extent blameworthy. The narrative declares that "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob". They both knew that God had ordained that Jacob should be the heir of promise to carry on the family obligation to God but it does look as though Isaac had a special regard for Esau, influenced by the material advantage of good living afforded by his son's hunting exploits, and maybe had "spoiled" him somewhat in his upbringing so that Esau failed

to grow up "in the nurture and fear of the Lord" as did Jacob at the hands of his mother. Esau may have been conscious of no loss, but Isaac may have experienced a feeling of dashed hopes when he had to stand by helplessly and see his beloved eldest son deliberately cut himself off from the people of the Lord by his alliance with these two women of the land.

Seventeen years later came the crisis which jolted Esau out of his easy-going placidity and disrupted the family. Isaac was beginning to feel his age—he was now a hundred and seventeen years old and nearly blind—and he felt the time had come to confer his patriarchal blessing upon his heir so that there could be no dispute after his death. Unaccountably his choice fell upon Esau; he knew full well that Jacob was the Divinely appointed heir but again his predilection for his eldest son led him to ignore the fact. Esau was bidden to take his huntsman's gear, go out into the wilderness and bring back choice venison wherewith to serve his father at a formal feast, during which Isaac would confer his blessing. Had Esau been a man of strict integrity he would have told his father about the bargain he had made with Jacob seventeen years before and that Jacob was the one upon whom the blessing should be conferred, but he did not. He may very well have forgotten the incident or not considered it a serious matter; at any rate he went off to find his venison.

The other side of the story is well known, how that Rebekah overheard the conversation, and determined to frustrate her husband's purpose. She may have justified her conduct to herself by reflecting that she was ensuring that the Lord's intention was carried out, not realising that He needs no shady actions by his devotees to assist the accomplishment of his purposes. At any rate Jacob, following her instructions, impersonated his brother before the blind Isaac, bringing to the feast goat's flesh from the flock, and so received the blessing intended for Esau.

Esau returned from his hunting, prepared his feast, and took it to his father, to the latter's consternation when he realised how he had been tricked. There seems to have been a real bond of affection between these two; Esau's distress in the narrative clearly is not on account of the loss of material things but of the fact that the blessing intended for him had been given to another. "He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, my father". Sadly came the reply "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing" to which Esau responded bitterly "he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and now he hath taken away my bless-

ing" and then comes a heartfelt plea "*Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?*" Heavily upon his soul fell the words "*I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants. . . . and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?*" Desperately, hoping against hope, Esau pleaded "*Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me, also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept*". So Isaac gave him a secondary blessing; he should live by the sword, but he should receive of the richness of the earth and one day should be freed from the dominion of his brother. And Esau went out from his father's presence bitter and resentful.

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for this man at this time. His nature, admittedly earthly and having no feeling after God, was relatively simple and trusting, and he had been outwitted by a smarter man. It is not likely that any prospect of winning Esau to a better feeling of reverence for God that may have existed was improved by this conduct on the part of the brother who did profess faith in God. His normal attitude of good-humoured tolerance changed to one of angry animosity and as he stormed off to his hunting he vowed that so soon as his father was dead he would have his revenge and kill his brother. He made no secret of his intentions—he was not the sort to do so—and the news got round to his mother. Jacob was hustled off to his mother's brother at Padan-Aram four hundred miles to the north until the trouble blew over, but once there he in turn was out-smarted by an even wiler man and it was forty years before he got home again. The Divine law of retribution is very well exemplified in the life of Jacob, but that is another story.

One of the consequences of this incident was Esau's third marriage. Isaac had urged Jacob to find himself a wife from among his cousins at Padan-Aram, of the posterity of Nahor, brother of Abraham, again to preserve the purity of blood of those in the line of the "seed of promise". Esau, learning of this injunction, and painfully conscious of the disapproval his own marriages to the two Hittite women had earned, decided to do something to make amends, or at any rate to please his father. He took, as a third wife, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, son of Abraham and half-brother to Isaac. This gave him at least one wife of the chosen family but whether this earned him any approval from his father is not recorded. It seems more likely that from now on Isaac had reconciled himself to the obvious fact that his elder son would never be the "heir of promise". It may be of interest to remark that Ishmael must have been at least a century old when this daughter was born, just as Abraham was at the birth of Isaac, and Jacob at the birth of Benjamin.

Now sixty years of age, Esau had three wives and a growing family of children to support. It is evident that something more than prowess with bow and arrow was going to be needed and from allusions pertaining to later dates in his life it is clear that he began to settle down to a certain amount of stock-raising and farming although his free-ranging hunting habits with companions of like mind continued and there could be some suspicion of banditry on a small scale. There is not much doubt that he was an opportunist and snatched a living where he could. At some time during the forty years that Jacob was serving Laban away in Padan-Aram Esau formed an alliance with the tribe of Seir the Horite (known to archaeologists nowadays as the Hurrians, a people occupying various parts of the Middle East in very early days) and began to extend his business interests into the land of Seir, south-east of Canaan, and afterwards known as Edom. Probably to aid the furtherance of those same business interests, he now contracted marriage No. 4, to Aholibamah daughter of Anah the Horite (Hurrian) and great-grand-daughter of Seir the founder of the tribe. Since the Hurrians were also an Indo-Aryan race like the Hittites it would seem that Esau's sudden passion for marriage within the clan which led him to take Ishmael's daughter had as quickly evaporated; he was by now probably completely independent of his father's establishment, and with a rapidly growing and prosperous one of his own not interested in any question of inheritance or birthright. His interests and connections were now much more closely intertwined with the family of Seir than they were with those of Abraham; the lure of the things of this world had drawn him completely away from the worship and the people of God.

During the years of Jacob's absence Esau seems to have maintained his home and family and farm-lands in Canaan, probably not far from his father's territory, but himself to have spent a great deal of time in the land of Seir (Edom) a hundred miles away, to which he was becoming more and more attracted. The ancient trade route from Arabia to the north passed through this land so that he might well have been involved in profitable trading activities; copper mining was carried on in the south of the land and he may have had a hand in this also. From Gen. 36.6 it is apparent that by the time of Jacob's return he had become a wealthy and influential man; the fact that he had four hundred horsemen at his beck and call in Seir is an indication of that.

Thus passed forty years, years that were filled with activity, years of growth and increase. Esau now had five sons and probably as many daughters; his possessions might have equalled or

even exceeded those of his father Isaac, and the old disputes with his brother Jacob of so long ago were probably quite forgotten. Then one day there appeared at his dwelling in Seir a party of messengers from Jacob.

How Jacob knew that his brother was now living in Seir does not emerge in the Genesis account. Since Esau did not go there until after Jacob's journey to Padan-Aram it is clear that there must have been some communication with the old home in Canaan during the intervening time and that Jacob knew in at least a general way what was going on. The newcomers brought a message from Jacob that he was on his way home from Padan-Aram with great possessions *"and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in thy sight"*. This was very conciliatory language coming from the man who by virtue of the birthright occupied the senior position in the family; it is evident from the narrative that Jacob was in a state of apprehension as to Esau's attitude to him. He still remembered the other's threat of forty years before. His apprehension was considerably increased when the messengers returned with the alarming news that Esau himself was on the way to meet him accompanied by four hundred men. *"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed"*; he betook himself immediately to God in prayer for deliverance, and arising from prayer, added an additional insurance by sending in advance of his company a handsome present of some six hundred head of assorted cattle and sheep wherewith to mollify the feared avenger.

He need not have worried. The Esau who met him was the old Esau, bluff, matter-of-fact, and carefree. The matters of the birthright and the filched blessing might never have happened. This was his long-absent brother Jacob and he was glad to see him. *"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept"*; Esau with genuine emotion. Jacob also with not a little relief. It was going to be all right after all. Then Esau saw Jacob's four wives and their score or so of children and asked "who are these with thee?" *"The children which God hath graciously given thy servant"* was the reply and they came forward to present themselves. This did not hold his interest for very long and he turned to another subject. *"What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?"*; Jacob, feeling himself now on surer ground, apprised him that those were a present *"to find grace in the sight of my lord"*. It is here that the latent generosity of Esau's character is revealed in the written word. He wanted no present. *"I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast to thyself"*. It is a warm expression, warm with deeper sincerity than anything else that was said at that memorable

meeting. Esau was glad to see his brother; he bore no ill-will for the past, and he was quite satisfied with their relative positions and wanted nothing that was Jacob's. It is true that Jacob demurred and pressed for his acceptance of the present, and at last Esau consented and took the cattle, but the impression given by the narrative is that he was not greatly concerned either way and accepted only for the sake of peace and quietness.

"So Esau returned that day on his way into Seir" and the life he had carved out for himself, a life without God but one with which he was perfectly satisfied, and Jacob went on into Canaan and his destiny, a destiny that was to involve the creation of the nation of Israel, custodian of the Divine revelation to men, a people for God's purpose; transcendently greater, the coming of the man Christ Jesus the Light of the world. About such things Esau knew nothing and cared nothing. He closed down all his interests and activities in Canaan—with Jacob now settled in the land the place was getting over-crowded and the land was not capable of supporting both their establishments—and took his family and servants and the whole of his property to his lands in Seir, becoming the dominant figure in that country, so much so that its name was changed to Edom, the generic name of the tribe and later nation which had its origin in Esau.

He appears once more in the story and then vanishes. Isaac died twenty years later *"being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him"*. In the record of the last respects to their father the historian has recognised that Esau was the eldest son and took precedence; so his name comes first. The last glimpse we have of the brothers together is one of amity.

Of Esau's death there is no mention. He was a hundred and twenty years old at the death of his father. A normal life span at the time could be anything up to a hundred and fifty. Jacob died in Egypt at a hundred and forty-seven. The last we see of Esau is still in Seir. Ten years later Jacob and his household went down into Egypt and when the nation of Israel which sprang from him came back several centuries later the sons of Esau had themselves grown into a nation, the Edomites who were the enemies of Israel for more than a thousand years thereafter. There was no enmity in Esau at the last. Despite his irreligiousness, his complete indifference to heavenly things and his disregard of the Divine calling centred upon his family line, he did at least in his easy-going generosity exhibit the Christian virtue of returning good for evil when he made that spontaneous response to Jacob's proffered peace-offering: *"I have enough, my brother. Keep that thou hast to thyself."*

DAY OF REST

*A two-part essay
on Sabbath and Sunday*

Part 2. The Lord's Day in the New Testament

The first Jewish converts to Christianity—the Apostolic Church—were scrupulous sabbath keepers. The New Testament shows that if they erred at all it was on the side of extremism in this respect, and several times they are counselled not to regard the keeping of new moons and sabbaths as ends in themselves, but only as means of grace. To this observance of the seventh day, however, the early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, speedily added the special observance of another—the first.

It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. So great an impression was made upon the minds of the first believers by that great happening, the event which changed their lives, that from the beginning they developed the custom of setting aside the first day of the week for assembly together, the breaking of bread or the sharing of a common meal, preaching, prayer and worship. This was quite a different thing from the Jewish sabbath, and was not intended to supplant that institution. It was additional, to commemorate something of an entirely different nature. Traces of this custom are to be found in Acts 20. 7, telling of Paul's visit to Troas, where the first day of the week was evidently the usual meeting day, and in 1 Cor. 16. 2. For the first three centuries both days were kept by the Christian church, the seventh as a sabbath rest, and the first for assembly and worship. Doubtless, those Christians whose lives were spent in agricultural pursuits and in the country found the ideal more easy of attainment than those who laboured in the cities in one or another aspect of the then industrial system; but the consistent stand made by these early believers for their "first day" of assembly and worship had its reward when the Emperor Constantine by an Imperial Edict in A.D. 321 made the observance of Sunday, and the cessation of business and trade on that day, obligatory upon all dwellers in cities and towns. We literally owe our Sunday to Constantine!

Shortly afterwards, A.D. 366, the Council of Laodicea formally released all Christians from any obligation to observe the Jewish sabbath—the seventh day. Quite naturally, therefore, the first day of the week became the day of rest and cessation from work, the day of prayer and worship, and of assembling together with those "of like precious faith."

Who can doubt that the secret of much of the

power inherent in the early Church, enabling them to "go forth conquering, and to conquer," resided in this sincere and faithful allegiance to the principles underlying the Fourth Commandment? That day spent in communion with God and with each other; that simple ritual of sharing with one's fellows; that pouring out of the heart and soul in an ecstasy of praise and worship before the Throne of the Most High, must surely have inspired them with new courage and fresh strength, and enabled them to withstand with serene confidence the ragings of the pagan power using its cruellest artifices to force from them a denial of their faith. As with Israel, so with the Christian Church, her best days and her happiest days were those during which the sabbath was observed, and when the blessed day fell into disuse and disrepute the virtue went out of communal spiritual life.

The Catholic Church during the Middle Ages maintained this early insistence upon the cessation of business and labour upon Sunday, exhorting to worship and religious devotion, and holding the day as set apart, in addition, to rest and recreation. This latter aspect was not prominent before, but a little reflection will show that innocent recreation is but the logical extension of rest and relaxation. It has been a great tragedy that the original recreation endorsed by the Church has developed into organised amusement, which is quite a different thing, leading to the evils of what is called the "Continental Sunday". It was probably at least partly in reaction to this that the Puritans during the time of Cromwell (sixteenth century) forced the observance of Sunday into the narrow grooves for which it has become proverbial. Every form of recreation was forbidden: Sunday was made to be a day of religious devotion without exception, and severe penalties were laid upon those who contravened the law. This bigoted intolerance was repeated a century or so later in America where the first colonists, seeking to escape from the religious tyranny of the Mother Country, became just as intolerant themselves. In both lands Sunday observance was quite as circumscribed with ritual and ordinance as was the sabbath in Judea at the time of the First Advent.

The history of this Age, then, depicts three phases in the keeping of the sabbath. The early Church maintained the Divine principle of rest and worship inviolate, gradually transferring the seventh day rest to the first day, until by the end

of the fourth century Sunday was firmly established. For the next twelve hundred years the Catholic Church insisted upon the weekly day of rest and recreation, this being followed in the English-speaking countries—not elsewhere—by a Puritan phase in which all the evils of Rabbinic sabbath legislation were repeated. A reaction was bound to come, and the Industrial Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the consequent growth of big towns and cities, and, later, the increase in travel and amusement facilities gave that reaction its chance. Men and women, herded together in factories and workshops, oft-times compelled by the new commercialism to spend long days on monotonous or irksome tasks, hailed the weekly break as a means of indulging in diversions denied them during the week. Declining religious faith—and, within the past century, the spread of Darwinism and Rationalism—coupled with the virtual end of the “hell-fire” bogey, cast down the last barriers, and people who had never been given any conception of Sunday other than that of a rather gloomy period of religious devotion turned right about and made it their weekly day of amusement and entertainment.

Commercial interests have been quick to exploit this reaction. Each year witnesses an increase in the number of men and women who must labour on Sunday to provide their fellows, not with necessities, but with luxuries and entertainment. Church congregations dwindle whilst cinema queues lengthen. Not a little of the nervous strain of modern times, and the evils attendant thereon, must be attributed to the frantic rush for amusement and diversion, the excessive travel and holiday-making, so characteristic of our Sundays today. Men do not realise that in their failure to observe the Divine rule of a periodic slowing down of the tempo of daily life, a short breathing space wherein the physical frame can recover its vitality and the mind be refreshed by its dwelling on things higher than of this earth, they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

So the desecration of the sabbath goes on. Gone, in the towns; fast going, in the countryside, are those quiet, peaceful days when the factories and mills were silent, the shops closed, and the people “walked to the House of God in company”. The present generation is largely oblivious to any special significance attached to the day. They know nothing of its past history; they know only that it is the day when they may cast aside the responsibilities and obligations of the week and expend their energy in every form of diversion the day can be made to hold. The sign of Noah is fulfilled in the land. “They knew not, until the Flood came, and took them all away.”

One aspect of the Christian witness to-day, therefore, is a showing forth, by example and precept, of the Divine Will regarding the observance of the day. At a time when the gospel of humanism is preached in active opposition to the gospel of Christ there is need for practical demonstration that the ways of God, which were made for the benefit of man, are eminently practicable, and in the long run the only ways which will ensure to man the full and free development of the wondrous possibilities latent in his nature.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words—I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.” (Isa. 58. 13-14).

Profound truth is enshrined in those words of Isaiah! Conscientious and reverent observance of Nature’s weekly rest day results in physical and mental wellbeing of an order which cannot be attained in any other way. The believer who spends his Sunday thus will find that he takes up his normal routine on Monday morning feeling, as the common saying has it, “on top of the world”. This modern expression is the literal counterpart of the Hebrew idiom which is translated “to ride on the high places of the earth”, and the thought which Isaiah tried to express was precisely that which is conveyed by our everyday allusion. It may be fitting, therefore, to suggest a few of the considerations that determine happy and satisfactory sabbath-keeping.

There are three foundation principles which may be taken into consideration. Sunday is, firstly, a day of *rest*; secondly, a day of *service*, and thirdly, a day of *worship*. Rest, service, worship; these are the essential characteristics of the day which God has ordained for human wellbeing.

It will be noticed how aptly this compares with the Divine commission originally given to man. That also could be summed up in three words—Labour, Service, Worship. *Labour*, to make use of the earth’s resources and products for the sustenance and enrichment of human life; *service* in the brotherhood of man, a state of society in which every man is his brother’s keeper; *worship*, expressed in the whole-hearted allegiance of every man to God the Father of all, Who has created us to have dominion over this material creation. That ideal will be fully realised when the Divine Plan is complete and evil has been driven from the hearts of men. In that fair land which Isaiah saw in vision, when sorrow and sighing will have fled away, the threefold commission will be fully

observed. Men will labour, serve and worship God six days in the week, and on the seventh they will hold holy convocation to Him in Sabbaths more glorious than anything the world has ever, as yet, experienced.

The Sunday rest enjoined upon Christians is not merely an arbitrary cessation of labour, an enforced inactivity in a world which was made for activity. The essential characteristic about Sunday, is, rather, that there should be a cessation of the daily routine involved in gaining a living. In Israel's day the gathering of manna was suspended during the seventh day. The equivalent of that to-day is the abandonment of the daily struggle to live, and a resting upon that which has been gained during the six days. It is often argued that such a course is not practicable under conditions of life to-day. Public services must be maintained; water, electricity, transport, must be provided. Such arguments are often put forward by those who have personal interests militating against the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. There can be no doubt that in a Christian state of society a much higher degree of cessation could be obtained than does exist. The cancellation of unnecessary activities, including those forms of daily labour not essential to the life of the community, such as closing of shops and places of amusement, would effect a vast change in the amount of labour which "must be done" on Sunday.

Many years ago Lord Macaulay told the British Parliament "*We are not poorer in England, but richer, because we have, through many ages, rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost; while industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrows, while the Exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machinery, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labour on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed corporal vigour*". Unhappily the picture drawn by the noble lord is not true of England to-day.

Now how should this time, if thus redeemed from the workaday world, be utilised? Not in sloth and inactivity, for that is quite out of accord with the Divine way. True, the haste and stress of weekdays can be absent and all actions performed with a leisureliness that is rarely possible on any other day, yet activity of some sort there ought to be. Such activity divides itself naturally into three aspects.

First comes that recuperation which is a neces-

sary component of the weekly rest. As a general principle it may be concluded that any form of activity which is so dissimilar from the normal weekday occupation of the particular individual concerned as to constitute mental and physical relaxation, and to be recuperative in its effect, can be legitimately regarded as a factor making for "sabbath rest". William Wilberforce, the man who did more than any other to abolish slavery, once declared that man's power of mental endurance could only be conserved by this proper treatment of the Sabbath. He had seen men of mighty intellect whose keen minds had failed them prematurely, and he was satisfied that in every such case the cause was neglect of this Divine law. It is good, surely, to give serious thought to this aspect of the subject, and with clear knowledge of all its implications, to include in every Sunday as it comes, that variety of rest, relaxation, recuperation—physical or mental, or both—which is necessary and desirable in the particular case. In this, as in so many things, the needs of individuals will vary, and no man may judge his brother. Sufficient is it if we use our sanctified judgment to do what seems to us to be the acceptable will of God.

The second aspect of "restful activity" is well summed up in the term "good works". Our Lord performed works of healing on the sabbath as on any day; the care with which it is pointed out in several instances that the day concerned was the sabbath seems to indicate that especial attention was desired to be directed to this fact. We can manifest the same desire to assist suffering humanity and carry out such works of mercy as are within our powers. Thus Sunday becomes peculiarly a day in which we may find time to render services to those in need or in distress, to visit the sick, to set hands to works of kindness. In ways which will present themselves in their variety to the sincere Christian it is possible to devote part of the day of rest to the service of one's fellows, freely giving even as we have freely received.

Last, but by no means least, comes the supreme purpose of the day—corporate worship. It is true that those whose lives are completely and utterly devoted to the Divine service endeavour to maintain the attitude of personal worship and communion with their Heavenly Father throughout all the hours of every day. Nevertheless this privileged condition is largely individual; there is a virtue and power in corporate worship, the joining together with one's fellows in audible praise and united prayer, that is very helpful to the full development of Christian character. Whenever the possibility exists, therefore, there should be an "*assembling of yourselves together*" and an ascending before God of praise, prayer and

thought in company together.

The radio service is no substitute for corporate worship. For the aged, infirm and isolated unable to reach a place of worship, the radio service is a boon; but no Christian who has the opportunity to meet and worship with others of like faith is justified in choosing the comfort of the home and the armchair instead. Perhaps those who indulge themselves in this manner do not stop to reflect

that it is a sign of disrespect to the Almighty and betokens a lack of reverence for Him.

Rest—Service—Worship. Let these be the ideals we set before us in our endeavour to discern and do our Father's will, and then in our doing we shall be richly blessed. By these things shall we derive, week by week, spiritual strength to serve in good stead when the dark and evil days come down. (conclusion)

Contraverting the Evolution of man from animals Note on the Creation of Man

"My substance was not hid from thee" says the Psalmist in Psa. 139, 14-16—"when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, the days they should be fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." That is a very striking passage throwing light on the creation of man. The Evolution theory declares that the human child in the process of its development before birth passes through all the evolutionary stages of its animal ancestors; the Word of God says that God planned the structure of man's body before any part of that body came into existence. There are similarities between the physical frames of men and animals; that is only to be expected since both live under the same outward conditions and have much the same physical needs; but this by no means demands that the one is descended from the other, and the Psalm above quoted states very definitely that God planned man as a special creation. There are two interesting statements by notable scientists of a past generation which are well worth repeating in this connection. Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892), a British naturalist, superintendent of the Natural History Dept. of the British Museum, a fellow of nearly every learned Society in Britain and America and recognised as one of the authorities in this branch of learning, said "the recognition of an ideal exemplar for the vertebrated animals (animals having spines or "backbones") proves that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed before man appeared. For the Divine mind that planned the archetype (first pattern) also foreknew all its modifications. The archetypal idea was manifested in the flesh under divers modifications upon this planet long prior to the birth of those animal species that actually exemplify it." In other words, the fact that the animal creation exhibits a constantly ascending scale leading up to and culminating in man, the crown and glory of earthly creation, indicates that the knowledge of such a being

as man must have existed in the mind of the Creator when the first animals were brought into being, long before man was introduced upon earth. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), an eminent Swiss naturalist and professor at Harvard University, U.S.A., and author of many books on Natural History, said in his "Principles of Zoology" (1848) "there is a manifest progress in the succession of beings on the surface of the earth. This progress consists in an increasing similarity to the existing fauna, and among the vertebrates (animals) especially in their increasing resemblance to man. But this connection is not the consequence of a direct lineage between the faunas (living creatures) of different ages. There is nothing like parental descent connecting them. The fishes of the Palæozoic Age are in no respect the ancestors of the reptiles of the Secondary Age, nor does man descend from the mammals which preceded him in the Tertiary Age. The link by which they are connected is of a higher and immaterial nature, and their connection is to be sought in the view of the Creator Himself, Whose aim in forming the earth, in allowing it to undergo the successive changes which geology has pointed out, and in creating successively all the different types of animals which have passed away, was to introduce man upon the surface of our globe. Man is the end towards which all the animal creation has tended from the first appearance of the first Palæozoic fishes")

Thus the same phenomena which has been explained by Evolutionists as an evidence of the descent of man from the lower animals was noticed by scientists years before the Evolution theory was promulgated in the "Origin of Species", published in 1859, and was realised to be evidence of the Creator's orderly methods in creation, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear". God commenced with very humble forms of life and went on with creatures of ever greater complexity and increasing similarity to man until at last man himself appeared, the last and final work of God's hands.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The inauguration of the Christian Church at Pentecost and its progress during the next few decades was accompanied by manifestations of Divine power giving ability to the Apostles and others to perform works of healing and miracles, speak with strange tongues, and in other ways give evidence of their possession of supernatural powers. These operations of the Holy Spirit on the minds and lives of these early Christians are usually referred to as the "gifts of the Spirit" and it is commonly understood that the purpose of their conferment was so to inspire and vivify the first ambassadors of Christ that they might discharge their commission in a manner impossible without such help. Despite the disciples' association with Jesus and all they had learned from him, they were still "ignorant and unlearned men" (Acts 4.13), unfitted by nature and background to speak and teach in the convincing manner needed to spread the Christian gospel over the Roman world. Jesus had already told them they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them after his ascension, that they would be his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1.8). The bestowal of the "gifts of the Spirit" was the fulfilment of that promise.

It is perhaps natural that the more outwardly spectacular "gifts"—miracles, healing, tongues—should come first to mind when the subject is mentioned, but in fact there were others of a more intellectual nature, of greater importance, which had their place. The complete list of these "gifts" is given only in 1 Cor. 12. 4-11. That their purpose was to act as an essential aid to the missionary work of Apostles and others is made plain in Heb. 2.4 which speaks of "*so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also hearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.*"

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the waiting believers in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost was marked by the bestowal of these gifts. They found themselves miraculously possessed of the power to speak in languages not their own "as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2.4). They proceeded immediately to use this power to preach Christ to the multitudes visiting Jerusalem for the feast from all parts of the known world, and the hearers expressed their amazement. "*Are not all these which speak Galileans? How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were*

born? . . . We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God". Not only so, but miracles of healing, of demon exorcism, and so on, followed, together with a clear-sighted understanding of the Divine Plan and the ability to expound it such that the ecclesiastical rulers of the day " *marvelled . . . and could say nothing against it.*" Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Jesus that the coming of the Holy Spirit would convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jno. 15. 7-11); the power of the Father behind the apostles rendered them adequate to their task and invincible.

The "gifts" as listed in 1 Cor. 12 are nine in number. They are, in order of appearance, the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; faith; gifts of healing; working of miracles; prophecy; discerning of spirits; kinds of tongues; interpretation of tongues. It would appear that Paul listed them in the order of their relative importance. Qualities of the mind and intellect came first, healing and miracles afterwards and tongues last of all. In 1 Cor. 12 these conferred attributes are called "manifestations" of the Spirit, and this may be a more accurate description of these special powers than "gifts".

The "word of wisdom" was the first and most important of the "gifts". In the ordinary way wisdom comes with experience; this is true in the things of God as with mundane matters. But these men had no experience and the work to be done could not wait for the years of painstaking effort which is normally the prelude to the acquiring of that experience by the Christian. The Holy Spirit supplied the deficiency. Jesus had already promised that. "*I will give you a mouth and wisdom*" He had said "*which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist*" (Luke 21.15). The narratives of Acts 4 and 5 are examples of the fulfilment of that promise. The Sanhedrin, trying Stephen, "*were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake*" (Acts 6.10).

The "word of knowledge" comes next. The acquirement of knowledge is a work of time; it cannot be accumulated in an instant. These early believers had a sound knowledge of the Old Testament, the "Law and the prophets" but that needed supplementing by an equally sound understanding of the Divine Plan as it was now developing in this new Christian era. The conviction with which the Apostles preached "Jesus and the resurrection" attests the fact of a supernatural infusion of knowledge. In after times Paul constantly invoked this

same gift upon his own converts, that the Roman believers might be "filled with all knowledge" the Corinthians "enriched in all utterance and knowledge", the Philippians "abound more and more in knowledge" (Rom. 15.14; 1 Cor. 1.5; Phil. 1.9). Later on, as they began to learn the truths of the faith in study and discussion they had no further need of the gift, but for the present it was vital.

Faith; the third gift. One might wonder in what way faith can be a gift; it is so personal an attribute, derived from one's own experience of God in Christ. But these early believers had not had that experience. Faith in the God of Israel, faith in Jesus Christ whom they knew and had seen risen from the dead, but no foundation yet for faith in this new phenomenon, this insight into spiritual things conferred by the Spirit, so different from all that they knew of the work of the Spirit of God in Old Testament days. They needed time to become accustomed to this new power in their lives, to be sure that it was truly and altogether of God, and there was not time. Later on the writer to the Hebrews was to define faith as the conviction of things unseen but at this moment of time that conviction was still immature—until the inflowing energy of the Spirit possessed their minds and gave them assurance—faith. Their faith in the risen Jesus was complete and unshaken, but that was on the basis of experience and things known. Now they faced the unknown future. They had enthusiasm for their mission; what they needed was faith that it would be accomplished and the Spirit gave them that faith to sustain them until they could develop their own.

From gifts for the mind Paul passes to gifts for the hand. Power to heal the sick, cast out demons, give sight to the blind, even raise the dead, all as Jesus had done; this was theirs. The object was to demonstrate in the sight of all men that they were indeed the accredited associates of that Jesus who had done these things in life and, now risen from the dead, continued to do them through his followers. The Book of Acts records some instances where this healing power was exerted by Peter, Philip and Paul; doubtless many more cases at the hands of other apostles and disciples remain unrecorded. But this was all for the evangelising and the benefit of the unbeliever; when Trophimus lay sick at Miletus and Epaphroditus at Rome no miracles of healing were performed upon them and Timothy's chronic infirmities were alleviated only by the medical advice of the day. The gift was not for personal use, not even for Paul's own "thorn in the flesh".

Closely associated with this gift was the parallel one of the working of miracles—better understood as "mighty works", which is the meaning of the Greek word—examples of Divine power exerted

through Apostles and others in unusual or unheard-of ways. Intended to constitute a continuation of the mighty works done by Jesus, the narratives are singularly reticent as to detail. The raising of Dorcas by Peter and the incidents of Elymas and the Pythoness slavegirl (Acts 9. 36-43; 13.6-17; 16. 16-18) are about the only ones recorded with four or five instances where Paul, Philip, and others are stated to have "wrought signs and wonders." The restraint shown by the New Testament in respect to such miracles stands in sharp contrast to other extant Early Church writings in which cases of miracles or alleged miracles appear in profusion. The logical conclusion is that from the Scriptural point of view this particular gift of the Spirit was intended to establish connection between the ministry of Jesus and that of his Apostles in the eyes of the world, but no more, and logically would cease when that purpose had been achieved.

The "gift of prophecy" was that of public expounding of the faith as distinct from the work of the evangelists. The evangelist preached Christ to the unconverted; the "prophet" explained the doctrinal and dispensational features of the faith to the converted. The work of the prophet was thus entirely within the Church. In the list of Divine appointments in Eph. 4.11 the prophet comes next in importance to the apostles and superior to the evangelist. The necessity for such a "gift" at the time is obvious; none of the necessarily immature believers, apart from the Apostles, had yet gained by reading and study and discussion that detailed understanding which was necessary to fulfil the office of expositor, yet the necessity was pressing. Hence, for the time then subsisting, chosen men received that knowledge by power of the Holy Spirit and retained it until in the lapse of years they had themselves become sufficiently mature in Christ to need it no longer. Judas, Silas, Agabus, and the four daughters of Philip are named as some upon whom this gift was bestowed and most of the Christian communities appear to have included prophets in their midst.

"Discernment of spirits" is not likely to have anything to do with the celestial creation, whether good angels or evil angels. It is more likely to have been the faculty of quick and accurate discernment of men's minds, their sincerity or insincerity, in matters concerning their conversion or profession of faith. Paul at Lystra perceived that the lame man "had faith to be healed" (Acts 14.9); Peter in the cases of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Simon the Sorcerer, manifested this power of discerning the inward thoughts and condition of mind. When John exhorted his readers to "try" (test, examine, scrutinise) the spirits, whether they be of God (1 Jno. 4.1) he may have been

thinking of this particular gift.

The "gift of tongues" is mentioned three times in the Book of Acts and again in 1 Cor. 12 and 14. In each of the Acts instances it is clear that the expression indicates the instantly bestowed ability to speak a variety of foreign languages. This is evident from the account of the Day of Pentecost, when the Apostles found themselves addressing the multitudes of pilgrims from overseas lands in their own languages. There is no doubt about this. "*How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born we hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*". There was an imperative necessity for this miraculous gift. The Apostles were Galileans; their native tongue was Aramaic, the language of the peasantry and fishermen of Galilee. In the cities and by the upper classes generally, Greek was usual although in the main the people were bi-lingual. It is unlikely that any of the Apostles, while understanding and reading Greek, could converse fluently in that language or at least sufficiently so to speak publicly. Here at Jerusalem they were faced with people from places as far apart as Italy and Iraq, Roman Asia and Arabia, speaking at least twenty and probably more mutually incomprehensible tongues. It was the Divine intention that the message to be preached this day should be carried at once to all these lands by the returning pilgrims; that this intention was accomplished is evidenced by the almost immediate appearance of the Christian message in so many countries remote from Judea long before any Apostolic missionaries visited them. The facts of history demand that this message was indeed so preached at that Feast of Pentecost; the only way in which it could have been done was by the miraculous impartation of ability to speak such languages. It has often been debated whether the speakers understood the words they were saying or were merely vehicles of the Spirit having no consciousness of the meaning of the sounds they uttered, but there is no reason to add mystery to plain statement. An ordinary man becomes multi-lingual by studying and practising languages for a term perhaps of years; these men became multi-lingual in a moment of time, for the rest of their lives remaining able to understand and talk in those languages whenever the need arose. Although the majority of the listeners in Jerusalem at that time were Jews of the Dispersion, they would mostly only understand and speak the language of their native land; comparatively few would understand Aramaic even as many Jews returning to Israel today are quite ignorant of Hebrew.

This miracle was repeated twice, once at the conversion of Cornelius and his household, the

first Gentiles to be accepted into the faith (Acts 10.46) and again some fifteen years later upon the occasion of Paul's contact with the John the Baptist community at Ephesus, which led to the establishment of the Ephesus Church and the vigorous evangelisation of Roman Asia spear-headed by that Church (Acts 19.6). It is evident however that the gift was conferred upon others at other times—it was definitely possessed in the church at Corinth, but the extent and nature of the gift apart from the three historical instances in Acts can only be inferred from Paul's remarks in 1 Cor. 14.

From the sentiments and admonitions of this chapter it would seem that the church at Corinth had been guilty of misuse of the gifts in their midst, or at least of placing undue stress upon those of lesser importance. In the main the Apostle seems concerned with correcting their attitude towards this particular gift, the gift of tongues. It should be noted that he is discussing the use of the gifts only in the church meeting, not in outside evangelism, and so naturally starts off by saying that prophecy, public expounding of the faith, is more important than tongues—the reason being, as he says later on in vs. 22, that "*tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them that believe.*" Whilst he does not forbid or disparage the use of tongues in the church meetings he does stress that unless someone is present who can "interpret"—translate—the exercise is a waste of time. So, he says in vs. 2, "*he that speaketh in a tongue*" (in the meeting) "*speaketh not unto men but unto God, for no man listens*" ("understandeth" here should be rendered hears or listens). Obviously in a meeting where all habitually spoke Greek an extempore address delivered in, say, Arabian, would attract no listeners; only God would understand it. That is Paul's meaning. Such a man only edifies himself (vs. 4) but the one who "prophesies"—expounds the faith—edifies the church. The whole of the chapter stresses this principle, that the gift of tongues should only be exercised in church meetings if one is available to translate what is said; Paul himself, master of more languages than any of them, would rather speak five words in a tongue his hearers' understood than ten thousand in one they did not.

Some reference might be made at this point to the impression prevalent among many that the "tongues" consisted, not of spoken languages, but of unintelligible, even incoherent and frenzied, utterances having no real significance to the hearers but a very real significance between the speaker and the Lord. The assumption here is that the one possessing this gift is transported into a

condition of ecstasy in which he utters intensely, passionately, emotionally, sounds bearing no relation to the laws of ordinary language but in the power of which the believer feels himself in tune with his Lord and speaking the very language of heaven. It is easy to see how the hearers, if in sympathy with him, would react, and perhaps the whole congregation be swept up in a wave of *emotional feeling which might be interpreted by them as a profound religious experience*. The almost invariable use of the term "unknown tongues" in the relevant passages has contributed to this idea, but in fact the word "unknown" was added by the A.V. translators in all cases and does not appear at all in the original text. The extent to which such an ecstatic outpouring of meaningless emotions could be made to impress non-believers as a "sign" of the truth of Christianity would be problematical in the First Century, and even more so today, and in any case is open to one very serious objection. In that day this kind of behaviour was the hallmark of the priestesses and sometimes the priests of the pagan religions, and of the ministrants at the "oracles" who professed to foretell future events; it was also characteristic of demon obsession. The "damsel possessed with a spirit of Python" whom Paul cured at Philippi (Acts 16) would have habitually acted thus. It cannot be accepted that the reasoned and reasonable gospel of Jesus Christ had to be commended to the unconverted by practices reminiscent of an idol temple. It is true that there is scope in Christian worship for the expression of the emotions in varied ways often to the spiritual benefit of the participants; a great deal depends upon the cultural background or the racial origin of the believers concerned, but this is derived from the national temperament and is in no sense a gift of the Spirit. The gift of tongues in the First Century was given to facilitate the rapid propagation of the Gospel throughout all nations and that was achieved, not by reproducing pagan ecstasies with which most people were already familiar anyway, but by making it possible for the first Galilean missionaries to speak to all people in their native tongues.

The final gift, the interpretation of tongues, was supplementary to this one. The word means translation. The function of the interpreter appears from 1 Cor. 14 to have been chiefly in the church meetings and fits in well with Paul's insistence that although the real place for the gift of tongues was in evangelising the foreign unconverted, there was good in using the gift at church meetings provided someone was available to translate what was said back into the "home" language for the benefit of the hearers. The whole chapter makes plain Paul's own feeling that whilst he did not

disparage the use of "tongues" in the meetings of the church for worship and instruction, he did not feel it was to be specially commended.

To what extent did these gifts persist after the death of the Apostles and their contemporaries? This is a much debated point but when the purpose for which the gifts were bestowed is understood it should be clear that they would vanish when that purpose had been achieved. By the early part of the 2nd century Christian communities had been established in every part of the Roman world, and the written word—the Gospels and Epistles which now form our New Testament—was being circulated. The orderly development of Christian thought, experience and service could and did proceed without these special aids. The miraculous gifts of the Spirit were replaced by the guidance of the Spirit; the attainment of maturity in Christ is to be effected by the written word, the Scriptures, and the instruction of human instruments — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—raised up by the Lord for the purpose, as declared by Paul in Eph. 4. 11-15. These are set for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the Church of Christ, he says. Writing to Timothy, he advised him to study the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, effective for doctrine and instruction in righteousness, and all that the Christian life demands (2 Tim. 3. 16-17). The whole purpose for which this present Age is set aside is the development in knowledge and experience of a body of consecrated believers, the Church of Christ, to be the Divine agents for the reconciliation to God of "whosoever will" among mankind in the next. The qualifications for such honoured position can only be attained by means of a life of gradual growth into the Divine likeness and an ever deepening understanding of the Divine Plan and Divine laws gained by continual consideration of, and meditation upon, the sacred Scriptures. There is therefore no reason to expect that any kind of miraculous power, intellectual or physical, is to be expected to aid the Christian's progress towards the "prize of the High Calling" (Phil. 3.14). Neither should we expect the manifestation of the outwardly spectacular 'gifts' to bring the unconverted into the fold. The 20th century is not as was the First Century; there is now no need, as there was then, to present the credentials of the newly emergent Christian faith to a world that had never heard of it; we now have two thousand years of credentials with all the sayings and writings of godly men of all ages supplementing the Book which has gone to the world in its millions. Nevertheless it is claimed by many sincere Christians that the "gifts", especially those of miracles and tongues, have persisted

throughout the Age and to the present day. This belief is based largely upon traditions of miracles at various times in church history which in most cases are gravely suspect. Most of the "Early Fathers" were emphatic that the "gifts" diminished after the death of the Apostles and had vanished by the middle of the 2nd century; a few such as Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) and Irenæus (A.D. 178) allege that miracles did continue but without giving specific examples. The narratives of later centuries are unlike the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles, often puerile in the extreme, such as Bishop Germanus in A.D. 429 restoring a blind girl's sight by applying relics of the saints to her eyes, Augustine of Britain in A.D. 603 healing a blind man as proof that his own method of calculating the date of Easter was the correct one in God's sight, and St. Benedict in the 6th Century miraculously making whole his house-keeper's broken flour sieve because he wanted his dinner. That God can exert his mighty power to heal the sick or raise the dead, at any time in

history including our own day, is undisputed; the real question is whether the miraculous cures so often reported by zealous men of God are due to Divine interposition, to auto-suggestion, to the influence of mind over matter—a subject which is now receiving a great deal of attention from scientific investigators — or to other unknown influences. And an important factor in the answer to this question is that the mighty works and acts of healing by Jesus and his disciples were intended to foreshadow the work of the Millennial Age, the time of Christ's kingdom on earth, when "*the eyes of the blind shall be opened . . . and the lame man leap as an hart*" (Isa. 35). The coming Age, not this one, is the Age of miracles. The walk of the Church in this Age is by faith, not by sight, and the evidences of Divine acceptance are those which are discerned only by the Spirit-guided mind. In that fact, perhaps, resides the best reason for the gifts of the Spirit ceasing, as St. Paul in I Cor. 13 said they would cease, back there in the days of the Apostles.

YAHWEH — THE SACRED NAME

3. THE MEMORIALS OF THE NAME

Subsequent to the Revelation of the Holy Name (Exod. 3-6) the most pious souls in Israel instituted Memorials of that Name, in connection with some crisis of their personal or national experiences. Some word, descriptive of the locality or circumstance, was attached to the Name, and bore its testimony to the fulfilment of the Promise enshrined in the Name. On these occasions "He who becometh" did become what a tempted and tried people needed him to become, and received from him the help and succour for which the occasion called. To commemorate this display of Divine assistance, compound names were coined, so that they might tell later generations how He who bore 'the Name' had helped them in their need. Thus Moses on one occasion raised the Memorial Name of "*Yahweh Ropheka*"—'Yahweh thy Healer'; on another occasion Moses built an altar in remembrance of a victory, and called it "*Yahweh Nissi*"—'Yahweh, my Banner,' (Exod. 1-17). In later times Gideon built an altar, and called it "*Yahweh Shalom*"—'Yahweh gave peace,' because after seeing the Angel of Yahweh face to face, he was spared from death. (Jud. 6-21-24). Still later, Israel's God was called "*Yahweh Zebaoth*"—Yahweh of hosts (2 Sam. 7-26,27). And God himself on one occasion gave them the compound name "*Yahweh Makaddishken*" — 'Yahweh doth sanctify you' (Lev. 20-8). In that sweetest pastoral

song of all time David calls God '*Yahweh Ra'ah*'—'Yahweh my Shepherd' (Psa. 23.1). Looking forward far down the stream of time Jeremiah sees Israel and Judah cleansed from all defilement and sin and made worthy to bear the name of their God. He calls them '*Yahweh Tsidkenu*'—Yahweh's Righteousness. (Jer. 23-6; 33-16). Ezekiel also, describing a future apportionment of the Holy Land, and of a city in its midst, declares its name '*Yahweh Shammah*'—'Yahweh is there' (Ezek. 48-35).

In all these circumstances some wonderful manifestation of Divine care is called to mind, and kept on record for later generations to see how God of 'the Ineffable Name' had become what his people needed him to become, and had brought them through to the higher and better state of victory over self and sin. Most of these occur in late Jewish history, but there is one notable instance, where the 'Name' is compounded, which pre-dates the scene at 'the Bush' when Moses was commissioned to become Israel's deliverer and leader. This occasion arose when a heavy-hearted but faithful old man had taken his long-awaited son up a mountain side, and had laid him on an altar of sacrifice. The old father's faith was tested right up to the point where the knife was raised to strike the fatal blow. When the crucial moment had demonstrated that, in intent, the deed was

done, the hand was arrested and the blow stayed. The lad was lifted from the altar and unbound, while the Angel of God directed where a substitutionary sacrifice would be found.

Can anyone wonder that that faithful old father, and his restored son, should call that sacred spot 'Yahweh Yireh'—'Yahweh will see and provide'? Would they not remember all their days how near to the brink of sacrifice they stood, and yet how, betimes, the Angel interposed, and provided a lamb to die in Isaac's place? To all ages will the remembrance stand of a faithful father, and a submissive son, and a providential God. Abraham's test was severe—as grievous as mortal man could bear—but in that epochal hour, God saw what was in the grand old man, and became to him all that that patriarchal soul needed him to be. To every zeal-warm soul in Israel, or in the Church, 'Yahweh Yireh' is the token of an eye which sees, and of an arm that provides.

Israel had journeyed but three days from the Red Sea (Exod. 15-22) when their murmurings began. Coming to Marah, they found the waters bitter there. "What shall we drink?" they asked. Moses cried unto God, and God showed him a tree, which, cast into the waters, made them sweet. To commemorate the healing of the waters God set himself before them as 'Yahweh Ropheka'—'Yahweh that healeth thee'—'Yahweh thy Healer'. Behind this was a lesson of deeper import, for there "God made for them a statute and an ordinance"—". . . if thou wilt do what is right in My sight . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians" (see Deut. 28-27). The healing of the waters was a symbol of the healing of the nation—as a community and as individuals. Israel needed pure refreshing drink, and God gave it to them. He became to them what they needed him to become.—'Yahweh Ropheka'—'Yahweh, their Healer.' The Psalmist caught up this refrain and sang "*Bless Yahweh, O my soul, . . . and forget not all his benefits. Who . . . healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction . . .*" (Psa. 103-2. 4). Thus the holy Name stood for a symbol of health and deliverance, softened and tempered by the goodness of God.

Israel had left the Red Sea borders but a few weeks when another trouble befell the wandering people. Encamped at Rephidim (Ezek. 17-8. 15) at which place God had provided water from the flinty rock, the hosts of Amalek fell upon and would have destroyed them, but for Yahweh's intervention. Israel was an untrained, undisciplined host, handicapped by the presence of women and children. Thus they could have become an easy prey to Amalek's warriors. But while the men of Israel fought, Moses played his

part by holding up his arms. While his arms were up Israel prevailed; when his arms were down Amalek prevailed. On perceiving this Aaron and Hur "stayed up his hands", standing one on each side of Moses. This unusual procedure shows Divine supervision of the event, and when "Joshua discomfited Amalek" the victory was the gift of Yahweh. Moses built an altar and called it "Yahweh Nissi"—'Yahweh my Banner.' Israel had been in danger, and God became unto her what she needed him to be—'a deliverer in war'. Yet in that deliverance God required them to co-operate—the men-folk to fight, and Moses to intercede. This was intended to teach them a two-fold lesson—first, confidence in themselves; second, confidence in their God. God made up for them that which they lacked in themselves.

When the people of Israel were setting forth from Egypt, they went forth as "the hosts of Yahweh" (Exod. 12:41). In course of time, the two nouns in this phrase became transposed. It would be an easy change from 'the hosts of Yahweh' to 'Yahweh of Hosts'—This change of emphasis had taken place well before the period of the Judges ended, for before Samuel's birth, his pious mother had prayed to the 'Lord of Hosts' to take away her reproach and give her a son (1 Sam. 1: 3.18) whom she would dedicate to Yahweh throughout his days. This transposition of nouns would have come about when Israel found Yahweh fighting her numerous foes, and giving her the victory—Yahweh thus becoming the advance guard of the 'host.' From this time on, in Israel, because Israel was so often at war, this Name 'Yahweh Sabaoth'—Yahweh of hosts—was frequently employed by both Prophet and Psalmist. David celebrates in song the return in triumph of the glorious King (Psa. 24)—and admonishes the gates and doors of the great city to be opened and uplifted to admit his victorious train. "Who is this King of Glory" he asks. He then makes answer "Yahweh, strong and mighty, Yahweh, mighty in battle . . . Yahweh of Hosts, He is the King of Glory." Throughout the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some of the minor prophets this 'Name' is in constant use, always with the same import. Israel and Judah were frequently at war with neighbours, and to the saintly minds in Israel "the God of Israel was Yahweh of Hosts" all the time, no matter how the fortunes of war fell out.

A deep and wonderful field of study lies in these three words, revealing the strange doings of Israel's God as He stepped along the highways of history, sometimes assisting, sometimes chastising the hosts who had gathered to his Name. But all the time the meaning of that Name ran true—'I will be what I will be' in every circumstance. 'I

will bless you, when faithful, I will chastise you when faithless,' was always the tenor of his attitude to the wayward sons of those stiff-necked fathers, to whom his Name was first made both pledge and promise.

Space will not permit much to be said about the prophetic foreviews of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, on this occasion. When Israel and Judah are gathered home again, cleansed from all their sin, and living only for their God, that once stubborn people will be a wonder in the earth before the eyes of all nations. "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely and this is the Name wherewith she shall be called, 'Yahweh Tsidkenu' 'Yahweh's Righteousness.' (Jer. 33-16). And this city and people shall have a glorious king who will bear this illustrious Name "And in his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, 'Yahweh Tsidkenu'—Yahweh's Righteousness or Yahweh our Righteousness" (Jer. 23-6). Now at long last Yahweh, the nation's king, and the nation itself are all at one, and the 'Holy Name' is on them all. "*Yahweh Elohim*" the God of Israel, by his goodness and long-suffering has won the affection of the wayward sons of Israel, and they are now worthy to be his people. "He has become to them all that He wanted to become." "He who becomes" has, in ways, strange and wonderful, become their God.

And so, in that last final 'City of Peace' 'Yahweh is there.' (Ezekiel 48-35).

Just one word more, as we turn back to Israel's

shepherd King. "Yahweh my Shepherd," sings David. Memories of his own youthful days would fill the mind of the sweet Singer of Israel, as he gave utterance to this delightful phrase. Lion and bear had fought to rob him of his charges, but at risk to himself he had been their defence. He had sought out the luscious grass and quietly flowing waters for his flock, and stood guardian while they fed. He had been to them what they needed him to be,—provider, defender and healer. The pious mind of the shepherd boy, now king in Israel, catches at the larger thought, and sees himself (with all his people) as the sheep of Yahweh's pasture. A gracious bountiful keeper of his flock was Israel's God—'Yahweh Ra'ah—Yahweh my Shepherd! In other words David had embraced the promise 'at the Bush', and adapted it to the shepherd life, and had drawn sweet comfort for himself (and for millions since) because 'He who becometh' had become a Shepherd to his flock. David had taken the promise "I will be what I will be" and had inserted the words "as a shepherd" within them, and made them to read "He will be, as a Shepherd, what He will be."

To-day that promise stands sure. "I will be all you need me to be"—protector, provider, healer, God and Father. Oh, wonderful Name! and wonderful privileges vouchsafed by that Name! "*Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be THY NAME,*" yea, hallowed and esteemed by every child who knows its worth. May God help us to hallow his Name to-day and forever.

The End.

Note on the Sundial of Ahaz

"So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down" (Isa. 38.8).

The story of the sun's shadow going backward on the "sundial of Ahaz" in the days of Hezekiah is well known and the most likely explanation—that the phenomenon was caused by the emergence of the Shekinah light from the Temple, "brighter than the sun at noon-day", has already been published in these columns. An alternative possibility was suggested a century ago by one Benjamin Scott, F.R.A.S. in the words "The going back of the shadow on the dial has repeatedly been noticed, even in the present (19th) century. It is dependent, not on astronomical, but on meteorological causes. The shadow is not invariably dependent upon the position of the sun, but upon the brightest point of light in the sky. If when the sun nears the western horizon a dark impenetrable cloud covers that orb, the shadow will be cast by the bright silver lining of the cloud, which may be near the zenith, and the shadow will repeat

nearly a quarter of the circle. In the present (19th) century an instance is recorded by the Canon of Metz Cathedral. In the case under consideration, the object was the satisfaction of Hezekiah that the promise made to him was from God. The prophet is accordingly directed to foretell, as a sign, a natural phenomenon which was about to occur".

It might be remarked though that this natural phenomenon is, from its very nature, likely to be of comparatively frequent occurrence and so would hardly be likely to constitute much of a "sign" to the observers; also the cause of the phenomenon would easily be discernible by anyone and there would be nothing very remarkable about it. Something quite out of the usual was required, a happening only explainable as an instance of Divine intervention; the sudden shining of the Shekinah from the Temple, its brilliance temporarily eclipsing the sun and blotting out the shadow on the "steps of Ahaz", would well explain the occurrence.

