

W. J. Siekman



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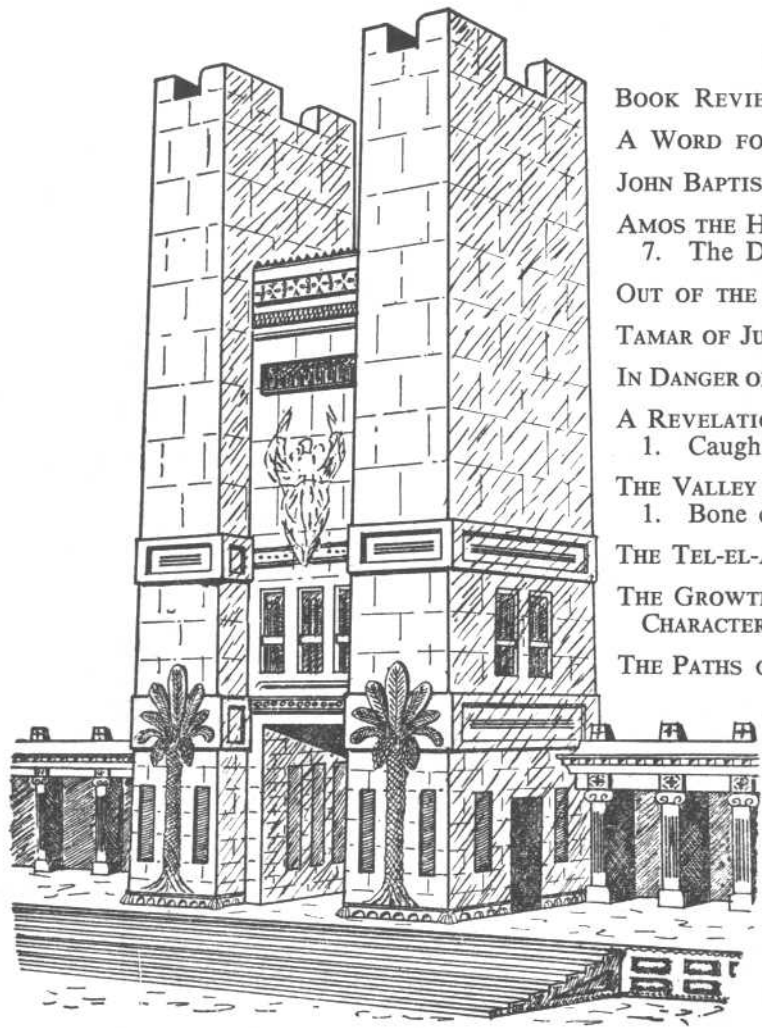
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Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

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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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BOOK REVIEWS

"The Ministry of the Word". (Ed. Geoffrey Cuming) Cloth 311ps. Bible Reading Fellowship 1979, Cloth £5.95 Paperback £2.85.

Described as a "handbook to the 1978 Lectionary" this volume consists of short comments on each of the lessons read at C of E communion service. A team of thirty scholars and ministers have co-operated to produce the comments and as might be expected there is quite a wide range of viewpoint. Since the lessons for each Sunday comprise three readings, from O.T., N.T. Gospels and N.T. Epistles respectively, the format of the work renders it suitable for a book of devotional readings, particularly adapted to the outlook of churchgoers. In general the bias is in favour of the modern scholarship and this rather inhibits the force of some "end-of-the-age" O.T. passages, as for example where the vision of Daniel 7 is credited to our Lord's ascension rather than to his Second Advent. A rather bizarre suggestion in re Matt. 11.11 is that Jesus himself is the "least in the Kingdom of Heaven"; logically one would say that John, dying before Jesus, could not have been a member of Christ's Church, which began at Pentecost, and was thus less than the least in that Church. Many of the comments reveal deep insight into Christian theology—the identity of the O.T. "Wisdom of God" with the N.T. pre-existent Logos or Word of God, made flesh and appearing as Jesus, is one such. One of the various pithy sayings which impresses is "prayer is no substitute for obedience". Essentially a book for quiet armchair reading.

"Considering the Nephilim in pre-history". (C. W. Eddleston) 82ps. Published by the author at 31 Cattle St., Great Harwood, Blackburn, Lancs. 1979. Paperback £1.25 (Obtainable only direct from author.)

The identity and nature of the progeny of the "Sons of God" and "daughters of men" of Gen. 6 has intrigued many and given rise to a variety of opinions. (Readers of this journal will recall the extended treatise on this subject which appeared in 1977—copies are still available.) Rev. Eddleston has compiled an exhaustive array of data from the fields of theology, anthropology, geology, genetics and other sciences to support his view that the various types of primitive "man" known to anthropologists, mainly sub-human by the evidence of fossil relics, are the remains of the "nephilim"—the Hebrew word denoting this unnatural progeny. A great deal of information has been gathered together from many sources (an index would have been useful) and presented in a manner which is suggestive rather than didactic. The format and literary style is suited to the student rather than the general reader. There are several line illustrations; it is difficult in some cases to

see how they relate to the text and some of them could have been omitted without detriment to the work as a whole.

"New English Bible Companion to the New Testament". (A. E. Harvey) 850ps. Cambridge University Press 1979. Cloth £15, Paperback £6.95.

Best classed as a commentary on the N.E.B. version of the New Testament this substantial book talks about its subject in a very readable and understandable manner. A book even of 850 pages cannot be expected adequately to cover every one of the incidents and themes of the N.T. and one disappointment is the fact that some quite interesting and even important passages or texts are passed over without comment. There is however much to appreciate in the presentation; the cry of desolation from the Cross is rightly associated with Psalm 22 and the comments on the introductory passage of John's Gospel are particularly illuminating. The suggested explanation of "the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" is enlightening. In the Gospels and Acts there is a regrettable tendency, all too common to-day, to explain incidents in the narratives as taken, or at least coloured, from other sources rather than accept them as true history; the story of the scales which fell from Paul's eyes is said to be possibly suggested by the similar story in the apochryphal Book of Tobit; the venue of Paul's discourse before the Athenians, Areopagus, (Mars Hill) was imagined by Luke as being the most appropriate place, and so on. It might well be suggested that the Bible was prepared and preserved under the supervision of the Holy Spirit for the valid instruction of all God's people of all times, and if no reliance is to be placed on the veracity of the claimed historical narratives it becomes little more than any book written by ordinary men. The text is well illustrated by a goodly number of line maps which give the reader a clear impression of the journeyings of N.T. characters.

Gone from us

— ❁ —

- ✓ Bro. W. F. Fox (Yeovil)
- ✓ Sis. I. Lowen (London)
- ✓ Sis. G. Naylor (London)
- ✓ Bro. W. E. Smith (Bedford)

— ❁ —

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

v = num. H. list

A WORD FOR THE YEAR

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine". (1 Tim. 4.13).

The admonitions and instructions written by the Apostle Paul while in prison in Rome to his son-in-the-faith Timothy have always been considered of the highest importance to Christian ministers and pastors and teachers. The skilful blending of the pastoral with the didactic, of Christian conduct with Christian doctrine, sets a pattern which we should all seek carefully to follow. Unfortunately, we are, none of us, so well balanced in mind on these things as was the Apostle Paul and we tend to fall more or less heavily on either the "devotional" or the "doctrinal" side of the fence. Happy are we if we can combine the two into a fully balanced and spiritually profitable ministry. So much depends on those to whom it falls to guide the minds and lives of the believers. The office of a pastor or an elder is a supremely important one and it is no wonder that St. Paul declares, "If a man desires the office of an elder, he desireth a good work". An elder then "must be blameless..." and so on (1 Tim. 3. 1).

The pity of it is that so many who lay supreme stress upon the doctrinal aspects of the Divine Word and the importance of an accurate intellectual understanding of the philosophy of the Plan of Redemption are themselves such poor advertisements for the efficacy of the things which they believe, and which so dogmatically they claim, that a goodly number of the flock are repelled and driven over to the purely devotional side, to their own loss and damage to the cause which we all serve. If it is true—and it is true—that "my people perish for lack of knowledge" then we cannot afford to ignore those things in the Word which are generally classed as doctrine. But unless we can hold each other's divergent conclusions in such matters in proper respect and so arrange our affairs that we can both make proper progress in our own personal understanding of doctrine and at the same time preserve the essential "unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace", which is the hall-mark and evidence of our Divine sonship, then neither doctrine nor devotion will do us any good at all. The attitude that is manifested all too often by the more bigoted of the Christian fellowship reminds irresistibly of St. Paul's words, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*". (Gal. 5. 15).

Perhaps we can learn a lesson along this line from Moses, in Israel's opinion the greatest man who ever lived or ever would live. With all his tenacity and strength of character, all his knowledge ("learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and in the lore of God besides), all his walking and talking with God, one whom the Lord "knew face to face", he was so intrinsically modest and humble that he was known as "the meekest man in all the earth". Does that fact persuade us that knowledge of doctrine, of the Divine mysteries, essential as it is in one who is called to be a Christian minister, is effectual only when it is combined with, and subject to, sincere humility and an abiding submission to the wisdom of God? So too, St. Paul himself, who more than any of the Apostles has defined and expounded the doctrines of the Christian faith, described himself as "less than the least of all saints", "not meet to be called an apostle". (Eph. 3. 8; 1 Cor. 15. 9).

The Book of Proverbs was not preserved and included in the Bible without purpose. Perhaps part of that purpose was for the instruction of those whose minds are exercised along these lines. There is a long exhortation to seek Divine wisdom in the early part of the Book which is familiar to most. "*Incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God*" (Pro. 2. 2-5). The "wisdom" chapters of the Book of Proverbs—and, too, their counterparts in the "*Book of Wisdom*" in the Apocrypha—are well worth reading and re-reading, studying and taking to heart, for these are the things by which we must live and do our duty before God.

It has been said that Christian belief is a lake in which elephants can swim as well as antelopes drink. Whether elephants can in fact swim is a matter outside the present writer's zoological knowledge, but he can certainly testify to the truth of the simile. After all, the God who designed both elephants and antelopes is capable of making some disciples with a considerable capacity for doctrine and others with much less, and yet each able to make his or her calling and election sure by means of that which they do have the capacity to assimilate. We do not have to think that those who attain entrance to the heavenly Kingdom must all attain to the same

degree of knowledge even although they do have to attain the mark of perfect love. At the same time, just as it is obvious that an elephant which persisted in drinking no more water than would satisfy an antelope would soon cease to count for anything in this world, so one who has the capacity and ability and desire for an extensive understanding of the intellectual and doctrinal features of the Divine Plan must of necessity pursue that aspect of the Christian life to the full extent of his powers. Of such come those who stand as lights to the Church in the onward progress of understanding and enlightenment. It is to the clear-sightedness and intellectual insight of such that the Church owes the periodic advances in the Truth, the coming of new light on the Word of God, which have marked certain significant points in the history of the Age. It may be no exaggeration to say that the devotional leaders

preserve the faith and steadfastness of the Church against the wearing down processes of daily life, whilst the doctrinal leaders beckon on to new heights of understanding which in turn gives new grounds for hope and expectation. All are members one of another and we shall find at the end that the processes of both head and heart will have played their part in bringing us to the glory land.

And, coming back to those elephants and antelopes, we have to remember that in the Millennial visions of Isaiah the peaceable animals pass into the earthly paradise unchanged; the lions and tigers only at the cost of discarding their carnivorous appetites and making their peace with the creatures upon whom they once preyed. Which brings us again to St. Paul's words above quoted about people who bite and devour one another.

JOHN BAPTIST AND THE LOCUSTS

The remark in Matt. 3.4 and Mark 1.6 to the effect that John the Baptist existed in the wilderness on a diet of locusts and wild honey has given rise to a long-standing controversy as to whether the insect or the vegetable product of that name was intended. The argument for the vegetable product is that the carob or locust tree was plentiful in the area, and its long sweet fleshy pods, full of tiny chocolate coloured seeds, was used as food by the very poor when nothing better was to be had. A carob tree in the Jerusalem forest at the present time is reputed to be more than two thousand years old and still bears masses of fruit. These trees were abundant in the Judean wilderness where John conducted his ministry. The "husks which the swine did eat" in the Parable of the Prodigal Son were carob pods or "locusts" (Luke 15.16).

On the other hand it is a fact that the Greek word for "locust" in Matt. 3.4 and Mark 1.6 is that for the insect of that name (*akris*). It is the case though that the name of the carob tree (*keras*), modern botanic name *ceratonia siliqua*, is very similar and the possibility of some confusion in early transcriptions cannot be ruled out. And there are considerable difficulties in accepting the insect locust as comprising John's diet. It is certainly true that these insects were used for food—in the dietary laws of Moses they were specifically mentioned as allowable—but their preparation for food involved first boiling in salted water, then drying in the sun, removing

the heads, legs and wings, pressing into cakes, and storing for use. When required for a meal the cakes had to be boiled in butter or oil. It is most unlikely that John would have had facilities for all this in the wilderness. In any case it was only in early summer that living locusts were available for this purpose, and even then only once in three or four years, so that the likelihood of John having the opportunity of using them for food is remote. He started his ministry in May and was imprisoned by Herod before the end of the year.

All things considered, it seems more reasonable to suppose that John sustained himself by the vegetable locust—which produces several crops a year—than by the insect of that name.

A related point in another field in this connection is that these tiny carob seeds were in mediæval times used by jewellers and silversmiths for measuring the weight of jewels. A silversmith's "dram" was equal to the weight of sixteen carob seeds. European craftsmanship in precious metals and jewels was derived from the Arabic peoples of the Middle East, and the seeds used as weights were known by their Arabic name of *Qirat*. This word became transliterated into English as *carat*, to this day the measure by which the weight of diamonds is denoted. The modern diamond dealer therefore employs a term directly derived from the food which formed the staple diet of John the Baptist.

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

7. The Doom of Kings

Amos 6. 1-14

The military powers, the social and commercial structure, and the religious organisation, have in turn felt the lash of the prophet's tongue; now it is the turn of the rulers, the kings and courtiers. Chapter 6 enshrines his invective against them and by the time he has finished they can have no doubt as to their position in the eyes of the Lord. It is noteworthy that both kings, of Judah as well as of Israel, are included in the condemnation and the sentence, even although Judah was to endure as a nation for nearly two hundred years after Israel had been carried into captivity and the northern kingdom brought to an end. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that in the time of Amos and for a considerable time thereafter there were still some redeeming features in Judah; at least three good kings, Hezekiah, Uzziah and Josiah, were to come to the throne of Judah and exert some influence for good, whilst in the case of Israel the rot had already gone too far and there was no hope whatever of reform. There is in this a clear view of the forbearance and patience of God; while there is any possibility whatever that the straying one will repent and return, the Lord will, like the father in the story of the prodigal son, come out to meet him halfway and receive him with joy, all the past forgotten. This is the guarantee that no man can be eternally lost until he has knowingly and wilfully, in the face of full light and knowledge, and no hindering influence, rejected the Divine offer of life, deliberately turning away from the Giver and Sustainer of all life. In a typical sense, in the context of history, this is what the northern kingdom had done. God in his wisdom saw that the nation was incorrigible. They would not repent without the supreme lesson and tragedy, and so, reluctantly and with deep concern of heart, we may be sure, He lifted his restraining hand and allowed the Assyrians to come and take them all away.

"Woe to the wealthy in Zion, and those who trust in the mountains of Samaria, ye great men who are the heads of the people, who present yourselves in state before the house of Israel" (ch. 6.1).

Adroitly does Amos link in one common condemnation the king of Judah, ruling at Jerusalem, and the king of the ten tribes, ruling at Samaria, and yet both standing before what God still regards as one people, the twelve-tribe nation of Israel. Zion here is a synonym for Jerusalem; the palace of the kings, situated on Mount Zion,

means Jerusalem in its royal aspect just as Mount Moriah, on which stood the Temple, indicated its religious aspect. Amos proclaims woe to both lines of kings, for both stand guilty in the sight of God.

Now Amos invites them to look at some of the surrounding nations who had already fallen victims to the Assyrian menace and consider whether they themselves are any better and more powerful than they. *"Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great. Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are ye any better than them; is your territory any larger than theirs?"* (ch. 6.2). Only during the last few years has the land of Calneh been positively identified; it is named in Assyrian inscriptions as Kullania, a powerful State to the north of Syria on the west bank of the Euphrates. Hamath has long been known to be an equally important State adjacent to, and to the west of Kullania. Both these countries were subject to Assyria in the days of Amos and the Philistines were intermittently so. (Incidentally this Calneh is not the same as that of Gen. 10.10, which was the Sumerian city-state of Nippur, south-east of Babylon.) Thus the Lord warned Israel of the folly of thinking they could successfully defend themselves against the invaders when more powerful surrounding nations had failed to do so.

The prophet now delivers the message he has for these errant kings and their equally errant nobles and court attendants, all the nobility and rulers of the two lands, *"Ye deem far away the evil day"* he accuses *"and haste to establish violence. Ye who loll on inlaid ivory couches and sprawl on your divans, feasting on choice lambs and fatted calves. Ye who pluck the strings of the lute, composing airs like David himself, lapping wine by the bowlful, anointing yourselves with the choicest of ointments, but feel no pain at the afflictions of Joseph. Now therefore, you shall be first in the procession of exiles. That will be the end of your lounging and revelry"* (ch. 6. 3-7). A vivid picture of the luxurious opulence of the kings of Judah and Israel, coupled with their complete indifference to their subjects' welfare, is given by Jeremiah in his 22nd chapter in which he castigates Zedekiah, the last king of the monarchy, in very similar terms to that of Amos. Forced labour without pay for the people was the means by which he built his palaces, and in them he reclined in comfort and splendour, surrounded by his friends and atten-

dants, utterly heedless to the warnings given by the prophet as to the inevitable result of his godless course. It is a striking fact that the last three kings to reign in Jerusalem, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, did so throughout their reigns under the continuous shadow of the Babylonian invasions and constant military presence, and yet remained heedless of the threat, living their lives in luxurious self-indulgence and sublime confidence that all would be well and no enemy would come near them. They put all their trust in the various political arrangements and treaties they had made with the Egyptians and the Babylonians, blind to the obvious fact that all these were as scraps of paper to be torn up when the interests of one or the other of the opposing powers decided thus to act. The analogy with the political situation of the present day is exact; the same disregard of the obvious is characteristic of many of today's politicians, and the same results will assuredly follow. The Lord will allow this just as he did in the days of Amos and, later on, Zedekiah, for this complete breakdown of the, then, Israel polity and now, world polity, is an essential preliminary to the establishment of the Messianic rule upon earth which is going to restore peace and security, and bring in the elimination of evil and the institution of everlasting righteousness. The Lord allows matters to take their logical course, the while maintaining his overall control of the situation that his ultimate purpose might eventually be achieved. So He says here to Amos "The Lord God has sworn by himself; I loathe the arrogance of Jacob" (Israel) "I loathe his palaces. Therefore the city and all in it I will abandon to their fate" (ch.6.8). So ended the kingly dynasty which had ruled in Jerusalem for nearly four centuries, commencing with King David, the "man after God's own heart", and his son Solomon, to whom the Lord had declared that his dynasty would remain for ever ruling on the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem IF his successors on that throne remained loyal to God and the Covenant. But, said the Lord "if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes . . . then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them, and this house" (the Temple) "which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight" (1 Kin. 9.6-7). And this is what happened at the end.

Yet the original purpose and promise of God, that of the seed of David Messiah should come to rule the world, is fulfilled by the workings of Divine Providence. The royal line of David through Solomon became extinct in Jehoiachin, who died in Babylon childless. But of the humb-

ler line of Nathan, son of David, came one who in the days of the Captivity became the legal although not natural son of Jehoiachin by virtue of the Levirate marriage law enunciated by Moses, and from him came both Joseph and Mary through two lines of descent, the one royal and the other non-royal. So in both the natural and the legal spheres Jesus was the promised seed of David having the right on both counts to assume power as King in Jerusalem. But all that is far remote from the message of Amos at this point; it is not until he comes to the end of his prophecy that his vision embraces that distant future when Israel is at last restored to her own land, never again to be plucked up. Before that time can be shown to the people of his own day he has more to say concerning the judgment that must come.

There is now a strange little interlude and one rather difficult to understand—at least until it is viewed against the background of the actual Assyrian invasion of the city. "And it shall come to pass that if there be ten men left in one house, that they shall die. And a man's kinsman with the embalmer shall take him up to carry his body out of the house for burial and shall call to someone in a corner of the house 'Is there any body left' and he shall answer 'No', He will add 'Be silent—for we did not remember the name of the Lord'. For the Lord will command, and every great house shall be smitten into splinters and every little house into chips" (ch. 6.9-11).

The picture is that of the wholesale slaughter and looting which inevitably accompanied the capture and sacking of a city. Ten men in one house, all slain and their bodies left lying where they met their deaths. One lone survivor, crouching in a corner, unnoticed by the invaders. When the assailants have gone and all is quiet again the kinsmen of the slain come to collect their bodies for burial. The question to the lone survivor is "are there any more?" to which he answers "No; they are all dead and only I am left". And he also adds another word "Be silent—for we did not remember the name of the Lord". Ferrar Fenton is the translator who renders this phrase thus rather than "we may not mention the name of the Lord" but his rendering makes good sense. The shock of the invasion and its consequences has jolted one man into realisation of the reason this tragic calamity has come upon them. "This has happened to us because we did not remember the name of the Lord". Just the beginning of what afterwards, in the distress of re-settlement in a strange land, would become a wider spread of repentance and a restoration of loyalty to God. For that is what did happen. Israel, re-settled in the Assyrian provinces, the "Lost Ten Tribes",

who?
Joseph
Solomon
Lukes
4:23
31
Sp. also
Matt. 11
6, 16

and Judah in Babylon, "the Captivity" did recover their lost faith and worship, and that faith and worship was maintained through their generations wherever the Israel nation found itself. Among the Ten Tribes it did die out after four or five centuries and they became largely merged with the native peoples; with Judah it blossomed into the national fervour of the Restoration under Cyrus, when Jerusalem and the Temple were rebuilt, and prospered also among the Jews who remained in Babylon and Persia until at least the Middle Ages of this era. History shows that the lesson was salutary. They never relapsed into idolatry again. Throughout all future centuries and to the present, to whatever extent this people retained and practised religious faith, it was always centred upon one God, the One who formed them into a nation at Sinai under Moses, and whose fixed intention is that they will yet become an instrument in his hand for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

And now it seems as though Amos has wearied himself with the force of his long-continued denunciation of Israel's sins. His voice drops to a lower key; his vital force seems to have diminished. It appears that after all he has said and all the appeals he has directed to his faithless countrymen he has at last realised there is not going to be any response. "Can horses gallop up a precipice?" he asks "Can the sea be ploughed with oxen?" (ch. 6.12). Impetuous and strong as a thorough-bred horse, Amos had attempted to scale the precipice of bigotry and enmity and opposition mounted against him by the apostate priesthood—and failed. Zealous and patient as the ploughman with his team of oxen, he had endeavoured to stir up the hearts of the masses, the common people, like the wild sea for multitude—and failed. After all that he had put into his warnings and his appeals, the ones to whom he had been sent made no response. Sadly, he realised that they had no intention of making a response. And the reason? "For you have turned into venom the process of law, and justice itself into poison" (ch.6.12). There was no longer any respect for truth and righteousness in the nation, and all his words had fallen on deaf ears. There remained but to utter his final word on the situ-

ation before closing this, the second section of his prophecy. "Ye rejoice in that which is of no power and say, have we not won power by our own strength. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, saith the Lord God, and they shall afflict you from the entry of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness." (ch. 6.13-14).

Bitingly, Amos tells them that in rejecting the power of God which could be theirs for deliverance and protection if only they would believe, they now are claiming that they have a source of power arising from their own strength. "We have no need of God" say they, "we have a source of strength of our own which is sufficient for all our needs". That claimed source of power, says the prophet bitterly, is in fact illusory for there is no power there. They have put their trust in that which has no reality or substance. Their confidence is in a thing of nought, that has no strength to defend or deliver. And that, says the Lord, they will speedily find out, for He is about to send against them the greatly feared Assyrians, who will ravage the land and denude it of its inhabitants all the way from Hamath on Israel's extreme northern border to the river in the Sinai wilderness, the Wady-el-Arish, which marked Judah's extreme southern border. The entire length and breadth of the land would be desolated and there would be no escape.

At this point Amos concludes the second stanza of his prophecy. The first, comprising chapters 1 and 2, described the Divine judgments soon to fall upon the six surrounding nations and, in brief summary, upon Israel and Judah. The second stanza, extending over chapters 3 to 6, amplifies the judgment upon Israel and Judah and divides it into those to fall upon the four divisions of the national society, the military, the social and commercial, the ecclesiastical and the royal. After this comes the third stanza in which Amos, no longer the prophet of condemnation and woe, recounts a series of visions in which he traces the future history of Israel until the nation, purified at last, attains its destiny in the new polity of earth to be established at the Second Advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To be continued.

A ship's compass points true to the magnetic pole, but there are certain influences in the environment of the ship that may upset the compass, so there are smaller instruments made to deal with them. These local forces do no harm if they all pull in the direction of the pole. So, if the influence which we exert on each other is

towards our Lord we shall draw each other up to him. We must centre our minds on things above and in due time we shall appear with him in glory. We have a fellowship that is nearer, dearer, truer and closer than a brother, our fellowship is with the Father and his Son. Can we wish for anything better?

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

Our Daily Bread (Matt. 7. 11)

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

Superscription on the Cross

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

A Reminiscence of Nahum

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

"Nineveh of old is as a pool of water; yet shall they flee away," cries Nahum (Nahum 2.8). A rather obscure expression; just what does it mean? A passage in Wigram's "Cradle of Mankind" supplies the answer. Standing on the heights just outside Elkosh, he looked down across the level plain towards ruined Nineveh, 40 miles away. "It was a weird and striking effect that we witnessed from it next morning. The clouds lay low and horizontal above the plain beneath us; and many of them seemed to have sunk on to the ground, and looked exactly like lakes under the level rays of the rising sun. As his orb rose higher they lifted, and dispersed into wreaths of vapour." So must Nahum, seeing the same phenomenon thousands of years ago, seen in that effect a picture of the doom of the great city of wickedness.

The Half Was Never Told

Strabo the Greek geographer, of our Lord's day, offers an interesting sidelight on the culture of the Sabaeans, the people of the land from which the Queen of Sheba came to see the magnificence of Solomon. Strabo says of them "By the trade in aromatics they have become the richest of all the tribes, and possess a great quantity of wrought articles in gold and silver, as couches, tripods, basins, drinking vessels, to which we must add the costly magnificence of their houses; for the doors, walls and roofs are variegated with inlaid ivory, gold, silver and precious stones." If this was the luxury to which the Queen of Sheba was accustomed in her own land, how much greater must have been that of King Solomon, for she said of his treasure "The half was not told me." (1 Kin. 10.7). And it was the possession of these treasures of earth that turned his heart away from the Lord.

Chapter and Verse

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

TAMAR OF JUDAH

The story recorded in Gen. 38, relating an apparently unsavoury incident in the life of Judah, son of Jacob, is usually glossed over or passed over and tacitly ignored. Past ages viewed it with horror; it is probably regarded to-day by most readers with distaste. Rarely is it asked why the narrative appears at all in the Bible, and probably few stop to reflect that since the overruling control of the Holy Spirit has seen fit to provide for its inclusion, there must be a justifiable reason. The chapter has nothing to do with what goes before in Genesis; it has no connection with what comes after. It stands entirely by itself, but the fact that it is there must denote a purpose. And a closer look at what is written reveals that it has a definite bearing upon the lineage and fleshly ancestry of Christ.

The account revolves around Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. The latter is usually considered to be guilty of discreditable conduct but a clear knowledge of what might be called the background shows that Judah was the one to blame and that, despite appearance, Tamar acted with perfect propriety and as a true daughter of Israel. This is not the only instance in Biblical history where a cursory reading without taking into consideration the motives underlying the actions of the characters can lead to false impressions.

Jacob had returned to his native Canaan from Padan-Aram, the home of his father-in-law Laban, with his family. They had not been there many years before Judah, his fourth son of Leah, now in his thirties, separated himself from the family business and started up his own establishment thirty miles away among the Canaanites. Not surprisingly, he married a Canaanite woman by whom he had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. At what must have been a very early age he married off Er to a local woman named Tamar. The marriage did not last long, for in a manner not detailed in the narrative—it was not relevant to the story—Er “was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord slew him”. This can mean that Er, half-Canaanite in parentage, was guilty of some gross unrighteousness or led a grossly dissolute life, and in consequence, or in connection therewith, met his death. That was enough for the chronicler to say that the Lord slew him. The death of Judah’s eldest son, through whom the family line would normally be carried on, involved the question of succession to his property and his rights as Judah’s heir, and

at this point the question of the Levirate law came to the front.

The Levirate law—the word is from the Latin *levir*, meaning brother-in-law—was the arrangement embodied in the Mosaic Law by Moses (Deut. 25.5-10) but going back to remote antiquity before Moses, which was intended to perpetuate the family name and preserve family rights of inheritance in the case of a man who died without male issue. The solution was simple. The dead man’s brother, or failing him, the nearest male relative, must take the widow in marriage and the first son born to that marriage would take the dead man’s name and be accounted his legal son and heir, inheriting the dead man’s estate and carrying on the family line. The foremost example of the operation of this law in Israel is recorded in the Book of Ruth, where the widowed and childless Ruth is thus taken by her dead husband’s kinsman Boaz, after a nearer kinsman had refused to do his duty, thus making her an ancestress of Jesus of Nazareth. In this case, Judah, faced with the same position, married Tamar to his second son Onan. It seems that Onan resented the obligation thrust upon him, and determined that, marriage or no marriage, he would not become the father of a son who then would not be counted as his. Perhaps he had designs himself on the possessions of his deceased brother and did not relish the possible appearance of a legal heir. At any rate he took steps to ensure that there would be no son while Tamar remained his wife. “*And the thing which he did displeased the Lord; wherefore the Lord slew him also*”. Here again, in some way or other Onan also met an untimely death and the chronicler again associated the two events and saw in this the hand of the Lord. And of course the fact that almost certainly the two deaths were due to what we would call natural causes does not forbid the feeling that the guiding hand of God was preparing the way for the execution of a purpose which the unbelief or sin of man was for the moment obstructing.

Judah was now faced with a dilemma. According to the Levirate law his youngest and only surviving son, Shelah, should now marry Tamar in the hope that thus heirs to both Er and Onan might be born. But Judah was apprehensive that Shelah might then share the fate of his brothers. He was perhaps superstitious; was there some kind of curse on this woman which spelt death to any man who married her? At any rate he

made an excuse. He told Tamar to return to her father's house for the present until Shelah was old enough to be married. There was probably justification for the excuse; in order to fit all these incidents in the thirty-three years between Jacob's return from Padan-Aram and the whole family's descent into Egypt it is not possible that Shelah could have been more than sixteen at this time. Tamar assented to the request and went back to her father.

Several years passed and Shelah attained marriageable age—about eighteen or nineteen in that day and society. Judah made no move to fulfil the obligation. Tamar realised that he had no intention of making a move. It was obvious that he intended her to stay out of the family circle and in due time he would find a wife for Shelah who, to his way of thinking, might produce the grandson he needed to carry on the family line without the risk of another and final tragedy if Tamar was again involved. One might have thought that Tamar, who must still have been a young woman—her widowhood could not have lasted for more than five or six years—would have accepted the situation and found herself another husband. But no; her subsequent action shows that she was determined to bear a child who would be the legitimate heir to carry on the line of Judah. When one remembers that less than twenty years later Jacob, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, foretold that the promised Messiah would one day come of the line of Judah, there begins to emerge the outline of a Divine purpose working in this rather involved family tangle which would ensure the clearing of the way for the fulfilment of that promise.

How much of all this was already known to either Judah or Tamar is not apparent. The words of Jacob on his deathbed (Gen. 49) constitutes the first recorded intimation that the Messiah was to come through Judah. It is a tolerable certainty however that this was in Jacob's mind long before his death; he is not likely to have deferred making up his mind on so important a matter until the last minute. And in this he must have had the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Reuben was his eldest son but he forfeited the birthright by the grievous wrong he committed against his father as narrated in Gen. 35:22. The next two, Simeon and Levi, were rejected on account of their violent and fierce nature and the wrong they did their father in the matter of their sister Dinah (Gen. 34). Judah was the fourth and of him Jacob spoke approvingly. It might well be therefore that Judah was already cognisant of the fact that his was the chosen line and this might account for his anxiety throughout this series of episodes to be sure of acquiring

an heir to continue the line.

But he had made one grievous mistake. The chosen line was to be pure Hebrew without admixture of other races. Abraham, the first source, had insisted that Isaac marry a Hebrew woman—in his case from the family of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Jacob in his turn also married into the same family. Judah therefore was pure Hebrew, but he married a Canaanite and his three sons therefore were hybrids — mixed Hebrew and Canaanite. In the providence of God the line was not continued through them. Perhaps Tamar also knew something of this, and this account for her subsequent action. Tamar is a Hebrew and not a Canaanite name, and it is tolerably certain therefore, that Tamar was a Hebrew—a descendant of one of Abraham's numerous sons by Keturah or his concubines, or of the parallel family of Nahor. It might then well be that Tamar perceived what Judah had not realised, that the only way in which the line of Judah could be continued into succeeding generations in a manner pleasing to the Lord was through Judah himself. His Canaanite wife had now died and there would be no more half-breed sons from that quarter.

Seen in this light, Tamar acted in a perfectly proper manner. Under the Levirate law, if Shelah was not to play the husband's part towards her, then it was the duty of the next relative to do so. That next relative was Judah himself. Tamar therefore was perfectly entitled to require that he assumed the obligation, just as Ruth did to Boaz after the unnamed "nearer kinsman" had declined to do so. She must have realised, however, that Judah, although now a widower had no more intention of marrying her than he had of allowing his son to do so. What had to be done had therefore to be done by subterfuge.

Judah was due to visit one of his outlying farms to superintend the annual sheep-shearing, which was usually made an occasion for feasting and revelry. Tamar attired and disguised herself as a prostitute and waited, veiled, by the wayside for him to pass. Judah, not recognising her, turned aside and accompanied with her, leaving as pledge of payment his personal seal, the cord by which it was suspended, and his staff ("signet, bracelets and staff" in the A.V.). The seal, of course, was an absolute proof of identity; it was used to mark objects as the personal property of the owner. Arriving home after the feast, Judah sent his friend Hiram to redeem his pledges, but by then Tamar had gone back to her own home and resumed her normal attire and no one could give any information about the woman he sought. Judah let the matter go by default and probably very speedily forgot all about it.

Three months later news came that Tamar was with child and Judah immediately hailed this as a heaven-sent opportunity to rid himself of her altogether. He demanded that she be brought to the place of judgment and condemned. As the widow of his sons she was still legally a member of his household and he still had certain spheres of authority over her. Brought before her judges, Tamar produced the missing pledges. "By the man, whose these are, am I with child". Judah, conscience-stricken, declared "She hath been more righteous than I, because I gave her not to Shelah my son". Belatedly, but honestly, he admitted that she had done the right thing, both by the law and custom of the time, and in recognition of the declared purpose of God.

In giving herself willingly to a man old enough to be her father Tamar must have been animated by some high purpose. Had she not done what she did, the line of Judah might there and then have become extinct and the high hopes of Jacob, that the tribe of Judah should be the royal tribe, giving kings to Israel and eventually leading to Israel's Messiah, have been frustrated.

There is no indication that Shelah was any better morally than his brothers; the fear of Judah that if he married Tamar he might well share their fate would seem to point the same way. It might well be that this Tamar, whose sole place in the Scriptures is to fill what at first sight seems to be a rather reprehensible role, was in fact a woman of faith who became the means of preserving the racial purity of the Messianic line at a time when it was being jeopardised by the heedless self-indulgence of one man.

The sons of Tamar were Pharez and Zarah. Pharez is named in all the Biblical genealogies as the son of Judah. The intervening generation, that of Er and Onan and Shelah, is omitted so far as the line of descent to Christ is concerned and they are noted only as being other sons of Judah. It is evident from the narrative that Judah took Tamar back into his house, although not as his wife. There she probably spent the rest of her life bringing up the son Judah needed to fulfil his position as progenitor of the famous tribe which in later days became the royal tribe of Israel.

IN DANGER OF GEHENNA

*A comment on
Jesus' teachings*

The following comment on Matt. 5. 22 "Who-soever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire", is taken from the writings of Dr. Samuel Cox, a Baptist minister of the late nineteenth century, editor of the "Expositor" and author of several thought-provoking books.

* * *

The word "Gehenna" is used eleven times by our Lord, and once by his brother James. No other of the Apostles, or Apostolic men, uses it even once, mainly, no doubt, because they wrote to Gentile churches, to whom this Jewish word, this illustration taken from the vicinity of Jerusalem, would have been strange and perplexing.

The first instance in which it is employed is St. Matthew 5. 22. Christ is comparing his laws, the laws of the kingdom of heaven, with the laws given of old time by Moses. Moses had said "Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment". "But", continues Christ, "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a mere expletive of disgust and contempt, like the odious expletives which we may hear any day in our own streets)

shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire". The general sense of the passage is that, whereas Moses condemned murder, Christ condemns the angry passions in which murder takes its rise. Even an angry emotion was henceforth to be regarded as incipient murder; and if that angry emotion found vent in angry and malicious words, words which smote and wounded a neighbour's heart, it was to be held a still heavier crime, worthy of a still severer punishment. This, confessedly, is the general sense of our Lord's saying; but He casts his thought in a technical and figurative form which needs a little explanation.

In every Jewish city there were courts of justice which had the power of life and death; but, though they could condemn criminals to death by the sword, they had no authority to inflict that death by stoning which was the most ignominious punishment known to the Hebrew code. Only the Sanhedrin, the supreme council at Jerusalem, could inflict that penalty. But the Sanhedrin, besides condemning a man to be stoned, could also ordain that, after death, his body should be cast into the valley of Hinnom, to become the prey of the worm or the fire. *We* hold it a bitter disgrace to be denied Christian burial; but for a Jew to be

denied burial in the family sepulchre, and thus not to be "gathered to his fathers", was far more shameful and terrible. Of these national customs and feelings our Lord avails himself in the passage before us. He affirms that whoso is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of, shall put himself in the power of, those local courts of justice which sat in every city, wielding the power of life and death. He affirms that whoso vents his spleen in the expletive "Raca" shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin, the metropolitan court, or "council", which alone might condemn men to be stoned. And He also affirms that whoso vents his anger in the word "Fool" shall be liable to be condemned after death to the "Gehenna of fire" i.e., to the valley of Hinnom, in which the fires were always at work on the refuse of the city.

This is the form in which the Lord Jesus cast that law of his kingdom which forbids causeless anger, and the contemptuous or malicious words in which it finds expression. But consider, first, how the word "hell" introduces a false tone and scale into the law of Christ. Here are three sins and three punishments. The three sins are anger, the anger that says Raca, and the anger that says Fool—a somewhat harsher and more contemptuous word, at least in Hebrew ears. And the three punishments are that of the local court, that of the metropolitan court, and that of hell-fire! Now between the three sins there is a gradual descent, each is a little worse than the one which goes before it. But who does not feel that in the three punishments, instead of a correspondingly gradual descent, there is, in the last interval, a sudden plunge so vast, so profound, as to be out of all keeping. The disproportion strikes one in two ways. It is incredible that to call a man a Fool should be so much worse a crime than to call him Raca that, whereas for the one offence men are to be brought before a court of justice, for the other they are to be damned to an everlasting torment. And it is equally incredible that any man should be doomed to all the horrors of hell if, in a moment of angry impulse, he let the word Fool, or any other word, slip from his lips. On the other hand, if for "hell-fire" we read "Gehenna of fire", and understand that, while the first punishment is that which a local court may inflict—death, and the second that which

only the metropolitan court can inflict—death by stoning, the third to be cast out, unburied, into the accursed valley of Hinnom, we at least restore something like scale and proportion to the sentence, though the punishments still look, if not far too heavy, far too material and external for the sins.

And, indeed, if any man really studies these words, he soon finds it quite impossible to take them in their literal sense. In *that* sense they are not true. No Jew, no Christian was ever brought before a local court of justice, and condemned to be beheaded simply for indulging in an angry thought or feeling. No Jew, no Christian was ever called before the Sanhedrin, and condemned to be stoned to death simply for calling his brother Raca. No Jew, no Christian was ever put to a shameful death, and then denied decent burial, simply for calling his brother Fool. And no man who reads these words with the understanding can for a moment suppose that Christ meant these sins of anger to be brought before courts of justice, and to be visited with punishments so disproportioned and inappropriate. The most savage judge who ever disgraced the bench would not have doomed men to death for an angry feeling that was never uttered in word or action, nor to a death in the last degree shameful for uttering an angry word. And would *Christ*, the Lover and Redeemer of men? Does that sound like the "sweet reasonableness of Christ"? If not, you may be sure that He who taught all things in parables is uttering a parable here. There is no thought of hell in his mind; there is no thought even of literal courts of justice. He is simply teaching an Oriental people, in the Oriental forms with which they were familiar, that every sin, however inward, will receive its due recompense of reward; that the heart is the fountain from which all sin flows; that in God's sight the murderous wish, scheme, bent, is murder; and that every utterance of it, whether in word or deed, since it deepens and confirms it, will entail a still severer punishment. "Be angry, and you will suffer for it; let your anger mount to utterance, and you will suffer the more; every new access and expression of evil passion will plunge you still deeper in sin and misery". *This* is what Christ meant; *this* is the law of anger as interpreted by him.

When Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller of the 13th century, travelled to China, he passed through India where, he says, the people are all black and depict God and the saints as black and the Devil as white. Just a different point of view!

The great secret which keeps the heart of the consecrated child at rest is to realise that a full surrender of his heart to God, links him to both the centre and the circumference of Heaven and Earth, and to the Almighty Energy which maintains and sustains them.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

*St. Paul's vision
of the future*

1. Caught up into Paradise

The lessons of Divine Providence are difficult to learn and hard to understand. Especially is this so when they form part of developments and changes in the Divine Plan—while those changes are under way, and the over-ruled experience is still incomplete. Many even of the smaller over-rulings of Providence are difficult to comprehend, until some previously unseen climax is reached. For instance, Paul would not easily understand why he was forbidden of the Holy Spirit to take an easterly course when he desired to preach the Word in Asia, until, having turned west and proceeding to the Aegean Sea, the call from Macedonia for help reached his inner ear (Acts 16. 6-9). Nor would Philip, as he journeyed, comprehend why he had been sent to a desert rendezvous. Only when he heard the Ethiopian reading Isaiah's prophecy aloud would the purpose of his journey appear. Nor did Peter, spite of the vision three times sent, understand why he had been directed to a Gentile home, till he saw the tokens of the Holy Spirit light upon its residents. In all these instances the conclusion of the episode explained and illuminated the course employed.

But there are major Providences in the Divine Plan where the climax is delayed, not for a few days or weeks, but for a whole Age. When these mighty changes are introduced, perplexing problems are created for the servant of the Lord. When human institutions previously considered permanent are about to pass away, Divine providence needs to pass through into human consciousness further information about the changing features of the Plan, and human limitations may easily impede the inflow of the new light. The finite mind has its bounds, and much time and experience may be needed before the Infinite can penetrate and teach the scope and nature of the change.

In the reminiscences which Paul narrates in 2 Cor. 12, a hard and painful lesson had been set by the Divine control, and Paul needed time to learn and understand. A time of change in the Divine Plan was under way. Not only were the institutions of an Age about to pass, but a people hitherto outside the pale of Divine recognition was about to be brought near. Not only was it a time of crisis for Paul's kin, it was also a crisis for himself. To prepare Paul for the part he was called to play, an experience of intense illumination was bestowed which, while it gave him moments of rare ecstasy, brought in its train years of conflict and suffering. It made him

realise keener than heretofore that love for God's sovereign Will must run deeper than love for fellowman.

Let Paul outline the story of this controlling providence in his own words, and then we will try to elucidate its purposes: *"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago . . . caught up to the third heaven . . . I knew such a man . . . how that he was caught up to Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter . . . And lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh—the messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee"* (2 Cor. 12. 2-9).

In these few sentences Paul relates an experience which till his day had not been granted to any man. None of the farsighted prophets of Israel had been carried so far along the stream of time as this man of whom Paul speaks. Not even Isaiah of the golden tongue, when speaking of a new heaven and a new earth, ever really saw in vision the sights of that perfect Day. Apart from several Divine assertions, such as "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with my glory", prophecy stops short of that perfect Day. It describes the constructive glory of the "perfecting day"—of "times of restitution"—but never of the eternal day beyond. It was reserved for this honoured man (and of course that man was Paul himself: see v.7) to be carried forward beyond the farthest bounds of prophetic understanding to see glorious things and hear unusual words such as had not been revealed theretofore. Paul was borne forward to that final state where God will be "all in all", and reign supreme for ever.

This third heaven is not one of altitude—one of a series of heavens existing simultaneously, built upwards into the celestial heights. It is one of time rotation—the third and last in a sequence of such heavens. Of these Peter speaks in 2 Pet. 3. 5-12. It is a new order of governmental control in which righteousness will dwell, without sin or evil. Paradise is not some place where disembodied spirits gather after their release from human flesh and there enjoy the supposed delights or endure the restless wanderings of the land of shades. The term comes from a Persian word signifying a park, and is frequently used to describe the luxurious grounds surrounding

some Oriental prince's palace-home. In the Scriptures it stands for the "garden of God", as it were a great enclosure in which God will erect his great House, and into which He will bring his great united family. "*In my Father's house are many mansions*"—places of abode for undefiled angels and men. Over every gradation of rank and authority Jesus will be supreme, into whom all principalities and powers will be built up. Paradise, into whose eternal blessedness the Lord, in the dark day of his death, promised right of entry to the dying thief because of his penitence, will be the stately home of every beautiful human soul and every radiant celestial spirit dwelling together, each in its native sphere, with beauty and plenty everywhere, as one united family, obedient and submissive to almighty God, whose joy and pleasure it will be to own himself Father to so worthy a family.

It was to this enchanted scene that Paul was carried along the stream of time. There in the highest flight of ecstasy he saw and heard Creation at rest in God. All sin and impurity was gone, all pain and death removed and life in its fulness reigned. This was "God's own Garden" created and tended by his own right hand, for his own delight, his household's happiness. It was Edenic bliss on a universal scale.

It is not easy to say with exact precision just when Paul had this unique experience. Some uncertainty abounds, because a portion of his life is lost to view after he was compelled to leave Jerusalem for his native Tarsus, some three years subsequent to his conversion on the Damascus Way (Compare Acts 9. 30 and 22. 17-21 with 11. 25-26). We know but little about these years, but we do know why his seclusion there was terminated.

This letter to the Corinthians is believed by competent authorities to have been penned about the year 57 A.D. If that is so, fourteen years measured backwards would reach to the year 43 A.D. Can we say where Paul was working at this time? We can! The year 43 found him at Antioch. There is a fixed chronological point at this stage of the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. It is found in chapter 11. 27-28. The year of universal famine predicted by the prophet Agabus to the Church occurred in the year 44 A.D. This date is fully established upon Roman historical evidence, and is accepted by all critical authorities. In that year Paul had been at Antioch for a year (Acts 11. 25-26). He had removed to Antioch at the solicitation of Barnabas, because a great work was taking place with which Barnabas and his fellow-ministers were unable to cope. Gentile converts were crowding into that Church, and the pastoral care was prov-

ing too exacting for the elders and deacons there. From various evidences we know that Paul had not been inactive prior to the invitation of Barnabas reaching him. Churches existed in Cilicia—the upland country behind Tarsus—which none but Paul could have established. He had laboured mainly in Jewish synagogues, and had been punished several times for preaching the "offence of the Cross". This we know from the catalogue of his sufferings recorded in 2 Cor. 11. 24-27. The invitation of Barnabas constituted a call to the Gentile field. Already the Master had told him he was a chosen vessel to carry his name to the Gentiles—now the hour was come! In what attitude would Paul meet his call? How would he respond to the new leadings of Providence, as the Jewish nation was turning aside and the Gentiles being accepted in their stead? Age-long privileges were being withdrawn, and new privileges coming in. For several years he had laboured independently in a small secluded field, where opportunity was circumscribed—now he was being called to a larger field, which, for these new developments, was set outside Palestine and Jerusalem. The evangelisation of the Gentile world was about to begin in earnest and Paul was the chosen instrument for the task. Great issues were at stake. For himself it was to mean much travail and suffering—suffering of far greater intensity than had befallen him in the earlier days of Cilicia. For his Jewish kinsmen it betokened the end of their exclusive privilege. Gentiles were to be accepted on equal terms with believing Jews as brethren in the Lord. This, to a Jew, was a revolution on a colossal scale, overturning the institutions and sanctions of ancient days. In the new field of ministry Paul had to make these drastic changes known not only to a people outside the pale, eager to come in, but to a bigot nation within, desiring to keep the others out.

By conversation with Barnabas, he would have learned that certain brethren scattered from Jerusalem, had dared to go much farther than the brethren of the mother-church and had spoken to the Gentiles in Antioch of the "way of the Lord". These Gentiles had believed, and had received the tokens of Divine approval. In this bestowal of the grace of God, these open-hearted brethren discerned the leadings of the Lord, and set themselves to work in full accordance therewith.

Do we wonder then if, at this vital crisis of his life, Paul besought the Lord for guidance and instruction how to proceed? Can we marvel if, before he lent his influence to this new development in the Gentile sphere, he went aside into some secret place to ask sincerely if the things

transpiring at Antioch were really ordained of God, and if so, what such things could indicate?

Under these circumstances can we be surprised that Jesus took this chosen vessel further into his confidence and made known to him what the end of it all would be? Already Paul's understanding would carry him as far forward as the prophets' eyes had seen into future days, but it left the picture incomplete. Already Paul had come to know that the Messiah of Israel was the Saviour of the world, but the prophetic horizons were indistinct and ill-defined. Something more was needed to fill out and illuminate the background of this universal work. Need we then wonder if it was at this stage of the developments of those momentous days that the watching Saviour blessed his praying servant's eyes with that larger vision of Paradise, that distant consummation in which all these changes and developments would terminate? Though there were yet many steps and stages ere that consummation would be reached, it is not difficult to understand how great an incentive would be given to this special messenger for the new impending task, if the curtain could be raised for a little while and he could be assured with certainty what the end of the redemptive and restorative scheme was intended to be.

A remarkable experience it must have been! Caught up and carried forward from present scenes of sin and woe to the unsullied bliss of that perfect Day, and given to see the whole creation at rest in God — no longer Gentile divided from Jew; no longer those "near" or "afar"; no longer sin or death, or hatred or prejudice, but a perfect family in which every perfect one bent willing knee to the well-beloved Son who by his death had made the purpose of his Father possible. By this glimpse into Paradise the

need of his valiant heart was met, and thus this man, this one man in the whole wide earth, was fortified and strengthened for the colossal task to which he had been called.

At this point of time, when called to quit Cilicia for the larger field at Antioch, the Lord graciously took his chosen vessel deeper into his confidence, and made known to him an outline of the consummation of the Plan. But that revelation was for himself alone; it was "unlawful" for him to pass the "words" along. What he saw and what he heard was for the comfort and assurance of his own loyal heart. They could not be told in their fulness to other men, though here and there, in written words directed to his children in the faith at Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus, faint glimmerings of the great light, at times, break through.

Revelation had reached its farthest point in these confidential secrets locked in the chosen servant's heart, and stands forth a token of the supreme love our heavenly Master bore toward the brand he had plucked from the fire. But for this confidence there was a price to be paid. This unique experience had its fragrance, like the rose, but it also had its thorn. The confidence must be made complete, not only on the side of the enlarged understanding, but also in the suffering which would make the consummation possible.

We thank God to-day for this special servant of the Lord. Next to that which we owe the Lord himself, we owe to this intrepid soul more than to any other man. His fervent pen, guided by the Spirit of the Lord, has brought wealth untold into every believer's heart—the gold and rubies of Divine Truth—and made them rich unto eternal life.

(To be continued)

Raleigh's foresight

"When all order, discipline and Church government shall be left to newness of opinion, and men's fancies, soon after, as many kinds of religion will spring up as there are parish churches within England; every contentious and ignorant person clothing his fancy with the Spirit of God, and his imagination with the gift of revelation; insomuch that when the Truth, which is but one, shall appear to the simple multitude

no less variable than contrary to itself, the faith of men will die away by degrees, and all religion be held in scorn and contempt."

That extract is from Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World" written in Queen Elizabeth's time—or more probably during the reign of James I—some three hundred and fifty years ago. His prophecy has come sadly true in our day and generation. "*When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?*"

Of intercourse we have enough, perhaps too much. Of communion, how very little. So little of Christ's offering is comprehended, that when believers meet they have scarcely anything of Him to share.

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

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

*A study of prophecy
passing into history*

1. Bone coming to Bone

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

* * *

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a symbol-picture of Israel's regathering at the Time of the End. It is an important passage, not because it goes into detail concerning the events of that time—it does not—but because it establishes the basic principle behind the order of events. Putting it crudely, the vision, rightly understood, tells the student not to expect everything at once nor anything too soon or before its time. Perhaps the parable of the growing grain recorded by St. Mark "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4.28) is as good an illustration of the truth behind this vision of Ezekiel as any; at any rate there is an almost perfect correspondence although the allusion is to a totally different matter.

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

seemed then that Israel would never rise again. Somewhere about this time, it must have been, Ezekiel saw this vision of the valley of dry bones and by inspiration of the Spirit interpreted it aright as depicting Israel's future restoration. As such it was a message of hope to captive Israel; it bade them look forward to a time when, as a people, they would have learned the lesson all mankind have yet to learn, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14.34) and so would be received back into the full enjoyment of their Divine commission to be a light to the nations and declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49. 6). It is also a message to those Christians who live at the Time of the End, the time when Christ's Kingdom is about to supersede the kingdoms of men and occupy all the earth in all its glory, for the essential factor in that Kingdom is the presence upon earth of a dedicated "holy nation" composed, at least predominantly, of the natural sons of Abraham, conscious at last of their momentous destiny. It is this holy nation upon earth, in close association with the glorified Church of Christ in heaven, which is to be the instrument in God's hand for the final act in the drama of sin and redemption, the conversion of "whosoever will" among all the nations, with Satan bound that he deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20.2).

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

The prophet found himself set down in a valley—more properly, a wide, flat plain—the ground of which was covered with bones, the disjointed, scattered relics of what had once been

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

"... He said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, . . . say to the wind . . . come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army . . ." (Ezek. 37. 4-10).

There are three stages in the vision and these correspond to three clearly marked stages in the process of Israel's regathering. First there was a noise, and a shaking, the bones coming together, bone to bone, forming themselves as it were into

complete skeletons, bereft of flesh but undeniably basic frameworks upon which bodies of flesh might afterwards conceivably be built. Next comes the growth of sinews, flesh and skin; the bony frameworks taking on more and more the frames of men, muscles encircling and rippling round the bare skeletons, flesh filling up the hollows, skin spreading and covering the still forms so that now the valley was filled with recumbent bodies, true men, but without life. The vital spark which alone could transform that valley of the dead into a living multitude was still missing. Then the third and final stage: the Spirit of God sweeping down from the heavens like a mighty wind, breathing into the nostrils of those lifeless bodies, filling the lungs, opening the eyes, flexing the arms; and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army, fitted and ready for the commission and work God was to lay upon them.

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

Bone coming to bone! The first outward evidence of the coming re-constitution of the nation of Israel! For nearly two thousand years this people had been wanderers and sojourners in the earth, having no land they could call their own, yet obstinately refusing to be assimilated into the nations among whom they dwelt. The Nineteenth Century Jew was still as clearly a Jew as his compatriot of the First Century, and just as passionately desirous of regaining his lost homeland. "Next year in Jerusalem" was always the prayer at the annual feasts and religious observances; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning" the heart-felt cry of the exile. And the Nineteenth Century closed without any real prospect of the age-old hope being anywhere near fulfilment, even though the rise of political Zionism in 1878 under Theodore Herzl had at least kindled a fervour that was beginning to translate hope into action. Nine years later, in 1887, Dr. Grattan Guinness in "Light for the Last Days" had concluded from his study of Biblical prophetic considerations that the year 1917, thirty years future, would prove to be a most momentous year in the outworking of the Divine purpose with respect to the closing events of this Age and the opening of the next, the

Millennial Age. And in 1917 General Allenby entered Jerusalem at the head of British troops: Turkish rule gave way to British in the Middle East and the following year saw the celebrated "Balfour Declaration" which pledged British support for a Jewish home in Palestine—the first step to the recreation of the nation of Israel. In 1922 Britain received the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, and from then until 1936 immigration proceeded at an increasing rate as Jews from all parts of the world began to turn their faces Zionward.

Here, surely, from 1917 onward, bone began coming to bone. There was as yet no flesh; the land of Palestine, administered by Britain under the Mandate, was not a Jewish state and in fact Jews, Arabs and Turks had equal rights in it. The country was as much under the domination of the Gentiles as it had been before; the only difference was that the occupying power was a great deal more friendly towards the sons of Jacob than had been the previous rulers; the administration was more just and progressive and the country could begin to develop. Jewish enterprises began to be set up and to flourish; Jewish settlements and villages and towns began to spring up. Jews, oppressed and persecuted in other countries, began to migrate towards their ancient land. It was not long before Christian students began to point to the old prophecies and see in current events their fulfilment. *"I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth"* cried Isaiah (Isa. 43. 5. 6). *"I will gather them out of all countries. . . and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely"* said Jeremiah (Jer. 32. 37) and then again *"I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame . . . a great company shall return thither"* (31.8). Perhaps one of the most widely quoted, especially at times of intense persecution, was the eloquent passage in Jer. 16. 14-16 *"It shall then be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."* So the long banished exiles began to dream of a future day when they could dwell as citizens in their own land as of right.

There was little recognition of the hand of God in all this. A minority there was, as there is in every community and every age, which returned to the land in pious belief that God

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

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

That was the position in the year 1948, when

at last Britain unilaterally relinquished the Mandate granted twenty-six years earlier by a now defunct League of Nations, moved out of Palestine, and the Arabs moved in. The world waited with detached interest to see the apparently defenceless Jews pushed into the sea, and the politicians began to alter the colours on their maps. The newspaper reporters sharpened their pencils and their editors sketched out the outlines of their editorial comments sympathising with the vanquished and congratulating the victors. Many Jews, Christians too, altogether but an insignificant minority in the world of men, but believers in the purpose and promise of God,

bowed their hearts and minds in prayer that his avowed purpose might stand . . .

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

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

(To be continued)

THE TEL-EL-AMARNA TABLETS

*The Voice of
Archaeology*

In 1887 an old Egyptian peasant woman was working in the fields of Tel-el-Amarna, two hundred miles south of Cairo, when she turned up some inscribed clay tablets that lay buried in the soil. The first ones were disposed of to local antique dealers for a few coins, but it was not long before the scholarly world became aware of the importance of the discovery and systematic excavations began at Tel-el-Amarna. The old woman had unwittingly brought to light the official records of the Egyptian government of the time when Joshua was leading Israel into the Promised Land, and the tablets included letters from the kings and governors of the Canaanitish cities appealing to Egypt for help against the invading Israelites.

The archaeologists were chiefly interested because this discovery afforded them an opportunity of reading the actual official government correspondence which passed between the kings of Babylon, Assyria, Mesopotamia and Syria on the one hand and Egypt on the other, during the reigns of two Pharaohs, Amenhetep III, who reigned while Israel was in the wilderness and for a few years after they entered Canaan, and Amenhetep IV (Akhnaten, the renowned "pacifist" Pharaoh) who reigned while they were subduing the Canaanites and dividing the land. The student of Scripture finds his interest in the latter fact, that this "Tel-el-Amarna correspondence", as it is called, gives the story of Israel's entry into the Promised Land under Joshua from the standpoint of the other parties, the Canaanites. Canaan was, at that time, an Egyptian province. When Moses looked from the top of Mount Pisgah and viewed the land that stretched from Dan to Beer-sheba, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, the goodly land that God had

promised to give his people, he looked upon a land that had for many centuries given political allegiance to the Pharaohs. Egyptian governors resided in many of its cities. Canaanite kings in others paid regular tribute. When Jordan was "driven back", and the hosts of Israel surrounded Jericho, it was an Egyptian garrison town that they stormed and destroyed. In harmony with this, much of this "Tel-el-Amarna correspondence" consists of letters from various notabilities telling Pharaoh of the progress of the invading Israelites, and imploring his help for their defence, a help that never came. Egypt was beset with other enemies at that time and Pharaoh preferred to let his possessions in Canaan slip out of his grasp rather than risk sending soldiers for their defence.

That is the scholars' view. There is also the possibility that Amenhetep III remembered only too well the disasters that had come upon his country only forty years previously when his grandfather had said to Moses "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go". Perhaps Pharaoh considered it politic to turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of his apprehensive subjects in Canaan. The God of Israel had already shown that He was not a God to be trifled with. *That* may conceivably explain why so many letters now lie in more than one of the world's museums—some in the British Museum in London—from Zimrida of Lachish, and Yapakhi of Gaza, and above all from Abdi-Khiba of Jerusalem, pleading for the help that was never to come.

One letter reports the destruction of Hazor; the Book of Joshua, chap. 11, vs. 10-14, tells of the same event from the Israelites' standpoint. In another the name of Joshua appears; it is strongly presumed that the great leader of the

hosts of Israel is referred to in that letter. The fall of Zelah (Josh. 18. 28) is the burden of another letter; time and time again there occur these references to incidents which are recorded in the Book of Joshua, a wonderful independent testimony to the veracity of that wonderful book.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets is the correspondence from Abdi-Khiba, King of Jerusalem. Many times, in writing to Pharaoh, he mentions the fact that he did not hold his office by virtue of Pharaoh's permission, like the other kings around him, but by decree of the Most High. Neither by his father or his mother, nor by Pharaoh, but by the Most High, he is priest and king of Jerusalem. The mind goes back to Melchisedek, who, six centuries previously, held office in this same city as Priest and King of the Most High God, having neither father nor mother, but abiding a priest continually. Discoveries made in 1929 at Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast have shown that at the time of the Exodus the worship of the "Most High God" prevailed extensively in Canaan; it might well be that Abdi Khiba was the last of a long line of priest-kings of which Melchisedek may have been the first, or at least an early representative.

Joshua 10 relates how the children of Israel captured and killed Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. The likeness of the name Adonizedek (Lord of righteousness) to Melchi-zedek (King of righteousness) is worth noting in passing; if Adoni-zedek of the Book of Joshua and Abdi-Khiba of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets were not one and the same person the former must have succeeded upon the death of the latter and then in turn been slain. It is more likely perhaps that they were one and the same, and that the frantic appeals recorded on those little clay tablets now safely reposing in glass cases came to an abrupt end when the forces of Joshua overtook the five royal fugitives and put an end to the life of Jerusalem's last Priest-King.

Here are a few extracts from some of Abdi-Khiba's letters to Pharaoh. They show to what extremity of fear the native Canaanites were reduced when Joshua was laying waste their land.

"To the king my lord; thus speaks Abdi-Khiba thy servant . . . The country of the king is being destroyed, all of it. Hostilities are being carried on against me as far as the mountains of Seir and the city of Gath-Carmel" (See Josh. 25. 10 and 55). "The Hebrews are capturing the fortresses of the king. Not a single governor remains among them to the king my lord; all have perished. Behold, Turbaza has fallen in the great gate of the city of Zelah" (See Josh. 18. 28) . . . "If no troops come this year, all the countries of the king my lord will be utterly destroyed . . . No provinces remain unto the king; the Hebrews have wasted all the provinces of the king."

These letters also illustrate the origin of the name of Jerusalem. That the word means "city of peace" is well known. Frequently in the Tel-el-Amarna letters it is referred to as the city of the god Salim—and Salim was the Babylonian god of peace. The city at that time had both a strong fortress and a temple. Nothing is mentioned in the Scriptures regarding the temple; it would of course have been a temple to the "Most High God" but the Israelites probably viewed it as an idolatrous building and made short work of it so soon as they had the opportunity. It was many years later that they really occupied Jerusalem; in the meantime it was held by the Jebusites for a while and in Josh. 18. 16 and 28 it is called Jebusi. Perhaps the saddest feature of Tel-el-Amarna letters is the revelation they make that the noble worship of the "Most High God" in Abraham's time, when Melchisedek was Priest and King, a "priest upon his throne", had degenerated in the time of Joshua to an idolatrous faith which retained nothing of its former glory but the name. Abraham paid tithes to the first "Priest of the Most High God"; Joshua slew the last.

Little Points in a Big Programme

- (1) A little more love for everybody.
- (2) A little closer cleaving to God's Word as my guide.
- (3) A little wider open purse in helping to support God's cause.
- (4) A little softer heart towards sufferers around me.
- (5) A little more readiness to see the viewpoint of others.
- (6) A little more freedom from the poison of prejudice and ignorance.
- (7) A little better remembering of the Lord's Day (every day) as a day of spiritual privileges.
- (8) A little more time spent in prayer and meditation in the Scriptures.
- (9) A little more obedience to the commands of the Lord in his Word.
- (10) A little sweeter heart towards those who antagonise me. (*Selected*)

THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

(From Watch Tower Magazine—Page 1113)

There is a philosophy in the growth and development of Christian character, as truly as in the growth and development of vegetation. The more thoroughly we acquaint ourselves with the natural processes, the better we shall understand how to cultivate and to secure the spiritual end—maturity and luxuriant fruitfulness. The farmer who puts into practice only what he has learned by accident, in a haphazard way, and is goaded to effort only by sheer necessity, must not expect the fruitful fields and abundant harvests of the enterprising farmer who has made a study of the business and has brought knowledge, carefully gleaned, together with enterprise and energy, to his assistance in the work.

Here is a fruit tree. If one, knowing nothing about cultivation, simply plants the tree and lets it alone, its strength, instead of producing fruit, will go towards making wood and leaves. Worms and decay may attack its roots, insects may blight its scanty fruitage; if it continues to stand, it will only be a useless, fruitless lumberer of the ground, an advertisement of the farmer's negligence and worthy only of having the axe laid to its root. Had it been pruned and trimmed and kept free from insects, under the blessing of God's air and rain and sunshine, it would have been a fruitful, creditable tree, for the laws of Nature are true and faithful in all their operations.

None the less rigid are the operations of moral law in the growth and development of moral character. Under proper conditions and with proper, diligent cultivation, the character will grow and develop according to fixed laws, and will become beautiful and fruitful in blessings to self and others. Lacking the necessary cultivation, even under favourable natural conditions, it will be deformed, worthless and fruitless.

When we presented ourselves to God, acceptable through the merit of our Redeemer, we received the "spirit of adoption" as sons of God. From that time the facilities and dispositions of our mortal bodies were reckoned as our new being, now under the direction and control of the Spirit of God. The faithfulness with which we cultivate our new nature, by weeding out old habits of thoughts and action, supplanting them with new virtues, trained to activity in the Divine service, will prove our worthiness or unworthiness at the resurrection.

The Apostle affirms (Rom. 8.11) that if we have the Spirit of God in us, it will quicken our

mortal bodies, make them alive towards God, active in growing into his likeness and fruitful in Christian graces and activities. He adds, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his", and "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8.9,14). It is, our business, therefore, to grow, to cultivate in ourselves those dispositions which are worthy of us as sons of God, called to be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ".

The Apostle Peter tells us how to proceed in the matter of cultivating Christian character, intimating that we cannot do it all in a day, nor in a few days, but that it will be a gradual, daily life-work, a process of addition—adding virtue to virtue and grace to grace, day by day and hour by hour. He says, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue (fortitude); and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance (self-control); and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity (love)". Then he concludes "If ye do these things ye shall never ^{fall} fail" (2 Pet. 1. 5, 7, 10).

This is a strong assurance—that if we do these things we are sure to stand approved of God. We do well, therefore, to consider them with special care. Here are eight elements which must go toward making up the Christian character. Look at them again. They are:

1. Faith.
2. Virtue (fortitude).
3. Knowledge.
4. Temperance (self-control).
5. Patience.
6. Godliness.
7. Brotherly kindness.
8. Charity (love).

Now for a little self-examination. Let each ask himself: (1) Have I the faith to which the Apostle here refers; not faith in everything or every person, but faith in God—in his Plan of redemption through the sacrifice of Christ, and in all his rich promises built upon that sure foundation? Do I trust him implicitly? Is a "Thus saith the Lord" the end of all controversy, the solution of all doubts and the restful assurance to every perplexity?

(2) Am I endeavouring to lead a virtuous life? This, to the child of God, implies much more than merely abstaining from evil. It implies living truthfully. It is fortitude, strength of character in righteousness. It implies the cultivation of integrity in our dealings, both with God and fellowmen, a scrupulous honesty, justice and truth. The Psalmist clearly defines it thus, saying, "*He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not* (who will not violate a contract found to be unfavourable to himself). *He that putteth not out his money to usury (taking unjust advantage of the necessity of others), nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved*" (Psa. 15.2.5). Such is a virtuous man, a man of fortified or strong character. How we need to invoke Divine assistance here; how critically to judge ourselves!

(3) Am I endeavouring day by day to gain a more thorough and complete knowledge of God, of the Plan, revealed in his Word, and of the special features, now in operation, that I may cooperate with him in its execution; and of His Will concerning me in the particular relationships and conditions in which I now stand—irrespective of my own will and disposition in any matter? Neglect of this Divinely appointed means of knowledge is equivalent to setting up our own imperfect standard of righteousness and ignoring the Divine standard. It is, therefore, important that we give all diligence to the study of the Divine Oracle, that we may be fortified in faith and works accordingly.

(4) Am I temperate, moderate, exercising self-control in all things—in eating, in drinking, in home arrangements, in conduct, in thoughts, in words, in deeds? Do I realise that self-control is one of the most important elements of good character? "*He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city*" is the counsel of the Wise Man; many a victorious general has yet to learn to conquer and control himself. Self-control has to do with all our sentiments, thoughts, tastes, appetites, labours, pleasures, sorrows and hopes. Its cultivation, therefore, means a high order of character-development. Self-control, accompanied by faith, fortitude, knowledge from on high, implies increased zeal and activity in Divine things, and increased moderation in earthly things. In judgment, in conduct, in the regulation of temporal affairs, "*let your moderation (temperance, self-control) be known unto all*

men" (Phil. 4.5). Let them see by our thoughtful and considerate demeanour, in every affair of life, that we honour our profession.

(5) Am I patient under trial and discipline, keeping my feelings under the control of enlightened reason, letting patience have its perfect work in cultivating the character, however severely the plough and the harrow may break up the sub-soil of the heart, submitting to discipline in every case. Am I submitting cheerfully under the mighty hand of God, in his work, of preparing me for a place in his Kingdom soon to be established?

(6) Am I carefully observing and endeavouring to pattern my character and course of action after the Divine model? If a parent, or in any position of authority, am I using that authority as God uses his — not for selfish purposes, to make a boast of it, or in any way to oppress or trample upon the God-given individual rights of those under such authority, but for their blessing and advantage even to the extent of self-denial with patience, dignity, grace, and not with boastful imperiousness, which is the attitude of tyrants?

If a son, or one under authority to any extent, do I consider the example of loving obedience furnished us in the example of our Lord? His delight was to do the Father's Will at any cost to himself. As a man, under the kingdoms, authorities, of this world, and as a youth, under the authority of earthly parents, He was loyal and faithful (Matt. 22.21. Luke 2.51), yet all of this earthly authority was exercised by his personal inferiors, even though they were his legal superiors. How beautifully we shall be able to grace and fill whatever station we occupy in life, if we carefully study and copy godliness, whether we be princes or peasants, masters or servants!

(7) Does brotherly-kindness characterise all my actions? Does it cause me to make due allowance for the inherited weaknesses and circumstantial misfortunes of others? Does brotherly-kindness deal patiently and helpfully so far as wisdom, with a view to the correction of those faults, may dictate, even at the expense of self-interest, if necessary and prudent?

If, as I look myself squarely in the face, I recognise deformity of character, do I thankfully accept a brother's proffered aid and bear reproach, determining that by the grace of God I will overcome such dispositions, and prove myself a help rather than a hindrance to others; that I will no longer foster my old dispositions, but will plunge into activity in the service of God with those who should have my co-operation in service, instead of being a burden to them?

(8) Have I charity (love unfeigned) for the

unrighteous and unlovely, as well as for the good and beautiful—a love which is ever ready to manifest itself in wise and helpful activity for saint and sinner; a love which pities, helps, comforts, cheers and blesses all within its reach; which longs for the grand opportunities and power and glory of the incoming Age, chiefly for its privileges of scattering universal blessing; and which, in harmony with that sentiment, utilises every present opportunity wisely and in harmony with the Divine Plan for the accomplishment of the same end—thus manifesting and cultivating the disposition which must be found in every member of that glorious company which will constitute the King's Cabinet in the incoming Age? If this disposition is not begun, cultivated and developed here, we shall not be considered worthy of that office there.

Just as in a well-kept orchard pruning, trimming and cultivation are necessary to accomplish the desired end of fruitfulness, so must we be watchful and take necessary precautions to prevent blight and decay of character, and to guard against the intrusion of evil powers and influences calculated to sap the spiritual life. By re-

sisting the Devil he will flee from us; by patient continuance in well-doing an increasing measure of development will result. "If these things be in you and abound," says the Apostle Peter "they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Truth is for such: "Light is sown in righteousness", and they are sure to get it. They will not walk in darkness. "If any man will ^{to} do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine" ¹ (John 7.17). "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

"Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things", if you diligently cultivate this disposition, "ye shall never fall". Being justified by faith in Christ for your redemption and sanctification (setting apart from the world and devotion to the service of God) by the Truth, your final selection to that position of glory, honour and immortality, to which you are called, shall be sure. For "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

THE PATHS OF MERCY AND TRUTH

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant". (Psa. 25. 10).

It is extremely sweet doctrine to be assured that every step of the consecrated life is under the control of our loving Father in heaven. At all times it is comforting to be reminded that "All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose," but it is especially helpful to have this assurance repeated frequently in seasons of trial and difficulty. Most of the children of God are such leaking vessels, that the sweetness of the morning's promise is apt to be forgotten before tired eyelids close for the night's repose. And for that reason every consecrated child of God needs the frequent reminder that every phase of his life is under the supervision of an eye that never sleeps; that all the way he is kept in the hollow of a hand that never grows weary. It is not that we want to forget that sublime fact—it is not that we find any pleasure in the slips of memory which afflict our advancing years. But because the summers and winters steal by with increasing speed (or so it seems) and because modern life is so full of responsibilities of so many kinds, the things that belong to the higher life seem at times to be crowded into a very small corner of our

day, even if they are not fully crowded out for a time. But no true child of the Father in heaven is ever averse to being reminded again and again of that loving Father's care. He will find it soothing to his heart, after a worrying day, to be told again that he is one of the sheep of his pasture; that the Lord is his Shepherd and that whether his pathway lies through the green pastures or the valley of shadows, the Lord is with him to keep and protect him all the way. When, during the day, the tender spirit of the "New Creature" has been wounded by the instability or harshness of some poor son of Adam, how good it is to be told of a Friend who standeth closer than any brother, to whisper a word of comfort to our aching heart. It is the perfect end to any day to be able to listen to the gentle assurance of tongue or pen that no act or word need have cost us our Father's smile. Not that the day's page would not show blot or smudge (for indeed, no day is entirely free from shortcoming or failure) but because by the grace of God, so many of his paths are paths of mercy. Long ago, the Father of Mercies made provision for our need. He sent down from heaven a Saviour, who, by his death, can save his people from their sins. Himself without sin, yet in his compassionate love for men,

became himself the bearer of their sins. He gave himself, the "*just for the unjust that he might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18). He reconciled us by his death; He now lives to save us by his living, loving care (Rom. 5.10). The path of mercy, from our first feeble Christian days, till now, is hedged about by his precious blood. It is a scarlet trail, for precious blood made possible our first faltering step in Grace, and precious blood has made safe our every further step.

From those first feeble feelings after God, when escaping from the darkness of sin, till now we know our God (and also are known of him) the blood upon the lintel has been the constant pledge of our security and safety. No day has passed but that we have drawn upon the store of compassionate mercy—yet our constant claims have not impoverished the store, nor exhausted its supply. New every morning, and fresh with each evening's shades have been these resources of grace, for that precious blood was of compensating worth for every man, and for all time, and so, because Divine Law was satisfied, Divine Grace has been free to come to our relief, abundantly—yea, more than that, we have received super-abundantly of his Grace. Thus, many paths in our lives which the Lord has directed have had their commencement in his Mercy, while all along the way, the shady bowers and quiet resting places have been fragrant with his Grace. Let us thank our gracious God for his goodness.

But along with Grace He gave us knowledge; along with mercy He gave us truth! "*The paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*" First those simple elementary truths which told us of our need for a Saviour to free us from our sins, and to release us from Father Adam's condemnation. The truth about God's own love was wonderful—it cost him his dear Son. The greatness of his Gift was the measure of his Love. That truth was sweet to our famished hearts. It was the first satisfying Truth we had ever learned. No collegiate course ever imparted Truth so satisfying and refreshing. Nor has any instruction from any other source in later days, brought such abiding joy. To the end of our earthly days, nay, let us say for all eternity, the remembrance of that blessed fact that God loved the world so much that He gave his Son to die, will never lose its soul-reviving power.

But redeeming Love was but the prelude to Paternal Love. We learned another transcendent Truth that He who redeemed us at such infinite cost desired to have us as his sons and daughters.

He called us to follow in the footsteps of his First-born Son, that we might enter the innermost circle of his family, and be the Father's eternal delight. Our gracious God caused his beloved Son to become unto us a channel of Wisdom, Justification, Sanctification, and ultimate Redemption. And in order that all these steps of Grace might be realised in us, and experienced by us, He gave us Truth accordant with each step. He taught us not only to learn the Truth, but also how to profit by that Truth. Knowledge thus acquired, then rightly applied, became in us "Wisdom". Knowledge that the Victim died *for* sin (and that means, among other things, for *my* sin; for *our* sins) led us humbly to seek our acquittal at God's hands, so that henceforth there should be no condemnation laid to our charge.

Knowledge that God desired the submission of our lives, so that we should no longer serve sin, but live solely unto him, brought us to the point where He could invest us with his Holiness, and set us apart to his Will and Purpose. What a wonderful school God keeps! What an excellent syllabus He has arranged! How incomparable is the education He provides! He educates his pupils for Eternity, for Omniscience! He trains them for Kingship for the highest Throne! He dedicates them for a Priesthood—to succour untold millions "who are out of the way!" He moulds them to be replicas of himself, to be channels of his great Love, of infinite Mercy and tender Compassion.

This is all so wonderful, but—(is there a "but" in this overflow of grace?); yes indeed,—this glorious accomplishment is contingent upon the keeping of "his covenant and testimonies".

God requires as the condition of his oversight in our lives, first, a covenant of sacrifice—a vow intelligently and solemnly sworn — and then obedience to his Sovereign Will throughout our days. Disobedience would dam the refreshing streams of mercy and grace. Forwardness and headiness would blight the fruitage of his Truth. His word would cease to satisfy, and soul hunger, such as no plenty on earth could gratify, would set in. But if his children keep his Covenant, and observe his testimonies, then "*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature*" can interfere or block one single path of the Lord's mercy and truth in their lives.

Do we know that this is true? Then happy indeed are we!

W. J. Sherman



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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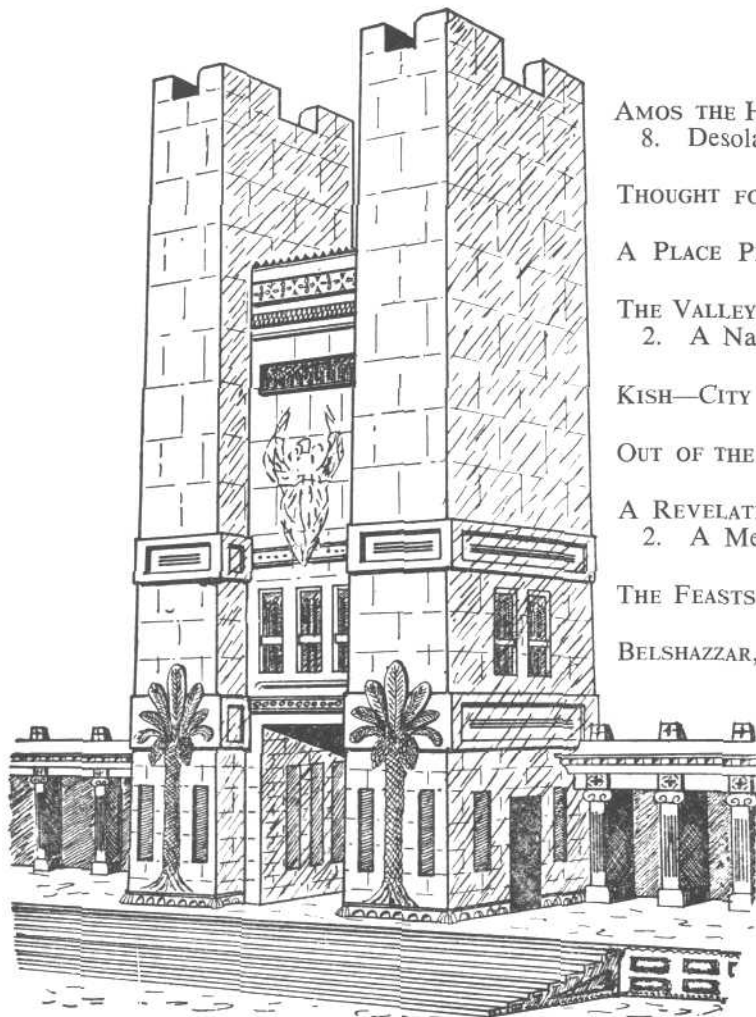
Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

Published March 1st

Next issue May 1st

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

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

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NOTICES

Concerning renewals

With the time again here for sending out readers' renewal notices, it is appropriate to express appreciation of the many spontaneous donations received from readers throughout the year which make the continued publication of the "Monthly" possible. Unlike the majority of Christian periodicals, which impose a fixed subscription or retail price, and derive a considerable part of their revenue from advertisements, there is no other source of income for the "Monthly" apart from such donations. It is found that although the journal is sent to interested readers whether or not they send a donation, in practice very few send nothing at all. Some gifts range from 50p. or one dollar to £2 or so, which does not cover the cost of production and postage, but others are for larger sums, £5 or £10 or 20 dollars, or more; while the one balances the other it is possible to continue publication. Again, therefore, very sincere appreciation to all who thus contribute.

It is necessary to say that with constantly rising costs of production and postage, care has to be exercised that copies are not wasted upon erst-while readers who have either died, moved or are no longer interested. To this end it is vitally necessary that the annual renewal slip, when it appears inserted inside the journal, is returned promptly. If a gift has already been sent during the preceding six months or so, no renewal slip is inserted, and the reader may rest assured that continuance for the next twelve months has been arranged.

One important point. Not infrequently a reader writes in on behalf of a group, perhaps four or five, who each have their individual copy sent to their own address. When renewing, will such readers please remember to give ALL the names and addresses of those for whom they are renewing; it is not possible otherwise to know that others are involved and to renew their readership accordingly.

* * *

The Memorial

Those readers who hold a Memorial Service on the anniversary of the Last Supper are advised that the date this year is Sunday, March 30.

* * *

Coming Conventions

Yeovil. Sunday, May 4, at Westfield Schools, Yeovil. Programmes and information from Mr. P. Chislett, 108 St. Michaels Ave., Yeovil, Somerset.

Yeovil. Saturday to Tuesday, August 23-26, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil. Programmes and information from Mrs. P. Stracy, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset. Limited accommodation at nearby guest houses is available; please advise needs as early as possible.

* * *

Back Numbers of B.S.M.

New readers may be interested to know that back numbers of this journal for recent years back to 1972 are available to those who have not seen those issues. No specific charge is made for these beyond asking for postage, although gifts toward the cost of the copies will always be appreciated. Please state which years are required, and for overseas allow about two months for sea postal transit.

The postal costs at present are as follows: —

No. of Years required	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U.K. Pence	31	62	93	121	121	121	147	147
USA, Canada,								
Australia Dollars	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3

* * *

New "Dawn" address

The "Dawn" have advised us of new arrangements for their representation in this country. As from 1st January, 1980, a committee of two, F. Binns of Chesham and R. E. Robinson of Hitchin, are responsible for all "Dawn" activities including subscriptions to the "Dawn" and associated literature distribution. All communications and requests should be sent to the new address, The Dawn, 26 Rands Meadow, Holwell, Hitchin, Herts., SG5 3SH.

Gone from us

— ❄ —

Bro. A. Boyce (*Dewsbury*)Bro. A. Mant (*Guildford*)

— ❄ —

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

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

8. Desolation of Israel

Amos 7. 1-17

With the close of the sixth chapter Amos had very nearly completed his mission to the northern kingdom of Israel, the Ten Tribes. The first section of his prophecy, recorded in the first two chapters, foretold the Lord's judgments soon to come upon the six surrounding nations because of their treatment of Israel. From that the prophet passed, in chaps. 3 to 6, to a denunciation of Israel's own idolatrous and godless position and the Divine judgment which must inevitably come upon them in consequence. His discourses, four in number, were addressed respectively to the political and military powers in the nation, the commercial and social world, the apostate priesthood, and the kings and nobility. All four sections of the nation felt the lash of his tongue, and to all four he foretold imminent destruction at the hands of the Assyrians unless they repented and returned to God in sincere and whole-hearted allegiance. But they did not repent; the national life went on as before with little heed given to this Judean prophet who had come into their midst, and whose figure, standing in the court of their idolatrous temple at Bethel, had become so familiar as to attract little notice. Almost certainly a few, more thoughtful than their fellows, would have heeded his message and made some attempt to mend their ways, but in the main Amos' burning words had fallen upon deaf ears. So it came about that he found himself being led by the Spirit to stand once more in the temple court and deliver his last and parting message to the people of the Ten Tribes.

Chapter 7 opens a new section in the Book of Amos. The prophet is now no longer merely a preacher of right and wrong, reproving the people and their rulers for their shortcomings and telling them, against the background of the contemporary political situation, the Assyrian menace, what must be the inevitable result of their sinful course. That aspect of his mission is now finished and done with. The people have not repented. The judgment must now come. In chapter 7 Amos becomes a prophet in a different sense, one who by inspiration of the Holy Spirit foretells events which are yet future but will shortly and surely come to pass. True to the Spirit of Biblical prophecy, he casts that foreview in the form of symbolic pictures, vivid metaphors which meant little to those who heard them at the time, but so apt as to come back to the memory when the events actually happened, and so convince those passing through these events that there had

indeed been a true prophet among them and the words he had spoken were truly from God.

A new mode of address marks the change. The previous discourses of reproof and exhortation were each prefaced by "*Hear this word . . .*". Now in this chapter these final declarations open with "*Thus hath the Lord shewed unto me*". The time for preaching repentance is past; now he is declaring what the Lord will certainly do. Amos is now describing what in a very few years more became history.

The first nine verses of the chapter tell of three distinct visions which had been vouchsafed the prophet. First of all he beheld a plague of locusts ravaging the land at the time of the summer harvest when the people would normally need all they could gather for their winter subsistence. Stricken with sorrow at the sight and knowing that if the plague be not lifted the people were doomed to starvation, Amos cried out "*O Lord God, have mercy, I beseech thee. How can Jacob recover—he has so little?*". And the Lord relented and removed the scourge. "*This shall not be, saith the Lord*" (ch. 7.1-3).

Next came a more disturbing vision. "*Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me*" says the prophet "*Behold, the Lord called for judgment by fire, and it devoured the depths, and devoured a portion of the land*". Again the prophet made his plea: "*O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee. How can Jacob recover—he has so little?*" And again the Lord relented. "*This also shall not be, saith the Lord God*" and the devouring fire was checked in its onward course (vs. 4-6).

Lastly came a scene having a terrible finality. The Lord was standing alongside a wall which had been well and truly built by means of a plumbline, and the Lord had a plumbline in his hand. The implication is that upon testing the wall it had been found to have become defective and must be demolished. "*Amos, what seest thou?*" asked the Lord. Dejectedly the prophet replied "*A plumbline*". He knew what it meant. He knew that Israel no longer measured up to the integrity and righteousness of the Covenant and he knew what the penalty had to be. This time he did not plead for mercy for Israel. He waited in silence instead to hear the words of doom he knew must come.

"*Behold*" said the Lord "*I will set my plumbline in the midst of my people Israel. I will not pass over their transgressions any more. The hill-top sanctuaries of the nation shall be desolated,*

and the temples shall be laid waste. And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (ch. 7.7-9). This was to be the end. Twice had there been a partial judgment and each time the Lord had lifted it before the nation had been destroyed. The third time was final and the kingdom of the Ten Tribes was to come to its end.

All this came to pass within thirty years. Only after the event had materialised could the symbol be interpreted. The downfall of the Ten-Tribe kingdom was brought about by three separate invasions of the Assyrians over that period, and those three invasions are pictured by these three prophetic visions. Here is a case which, when applied to the facts of history, proves that the Lord does "reveal his secrets to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3.7 Dan. 2.19 Isa. 22.14). The coming event, not yet taken place, was known to the mind of God, and by means of metaphor He imparted that knowledge to Amos that he might set the seal upon his warnings to Israel.

Chapter 3 verses 11-15 relate to this same sequence of events and what is to be said now will be to some extent a repetition of what was said then. There is a difference. Chapter 3 was a warning of what would happen if Israel did not repent. Israel did not repent; chapter 7 is now a statement in symbol of what assuredly is going to happen. Chapter 3 could be averted, just as Jonah's warning to the Ninevites only a few decades earlier was averted (Jon. 3.10). Chapter 7 could by no means be averted. The fiat had gone forth.

Ten years later, when Menahem was king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser invaded the land with his Assyrian troops, demanding tribute in token of submission and allegiance. These were the locusts of the first vision of chapter 7. They commenced ravaging Israel like locusts consuming the crops, but before the situation became completely hopeless Menahem gathered together a thousand talents of silver by forced levies from all the wealthy men of his kingdom and with this bought off the conqueror. So the Assyrian departed, and Israel was reprieved for a short space. Verse 2 indicates that Divine intervention came "when they" (the locusts) "had made an end of eating the grass of the land" which might easily be interpreted that when the Assyrians had extracted the maximum of wealth possible from the hapless Israelites they raised the invasion and went home.

This was only a respite. Five years later the Assyrian king was back again, and this time he meant more serious business. In the second vision Amos saw a devouring fire which struck at the subterranean streams of water and the cultivated land and consumed, not the whole, but a part.

Again the judgment was lifted before the land was entirely consumed. In the reality, Tiglath-Pileser annexed to Assyria the entire northern half of Israel's territory, including the tribal territories of Asher, Napthali, Zebulun, Manasseh and Issachar (it is this which is referred to in Isa. 9.1) leaving Pekah, who was now king of Israel, with only about half of the Ten-Tribe kingdom. Many of the inhabitants of the conquered territory were taken into captivity in Assyria. Thus was fulfilled the vision of the devouring fire which threatened the entire land but in the end, as says verse 4, only "did eat up a part", as in the A.V., and more lucidly "devoured a portion of the land". Again the Lord intervened and removed the Assyrian before he had accomplished his full purpose.

Thirteen uneasy years passed. Israel was free from invasion, for Tiglath-Pileser was now occupied with rebellion in other parts of his empire and found himself dealing with a new emerging and formidable enemy, Merodach-Baladan of Babylon (who appears in the Bible in connection with Hezekiah, Isa. 39). It might well have been that Hoshea, the last king of the Ten Tribes, deluded himself into thinking that the menace was lifted and that what was left of the nation would be able to preserve its freedom and continue in the old ways. But if so, he reckoned without God. The third vision had yet to be fulfilled. That vision shewed the Lord standing by the wall of Israel with his plumbline and the decree had gone forth to demolish what was left. (The word for "wall," here used almost invariably refers to the defending wall of a city or town and it is tempting to think that there is a subtle allusion here to the walls of the city of Samaria, capital of Israel, which were demolished at this time after a three years' siege.) At the end of the thirteen years, the old warrior Tiglath-Pileser having just died, his successor Shalmaneser V invaded Israel for what was to be the last time.

True to the prophecy, the high walls of Samaria were broken down and the city destroyed. The apostate worship of Israel with its decadent priesthood came to an end. Hoshea was imprisoned by the Assyrian monarch and all who were left in the land carried into captivity to end their lives in the mountain country of present-day Kurdistan, the land of Israel being re-peopled by immigrants brought by the Assyrians from other parts of the empire. (These were the people later known as the Samaritans.)

This was the Captivity of the Ten Tribes. They never came back. In later days their whereabouts became a matter of enquiry and speculation and developed into the saga of the "Lost Ten Tribes", around which many and varied theories have

been woven. The alleged wanderings of the "Lost Ten Tribes" have been traced all over the world and their descendants identified with many sections of the human race. In actual fact they probably never left the wilds of Kurdistan. They most likely became slowly integrated with the native population, already a mixture of Assyrian, Mede, Aramean and Urartian, although even so late as the Middle Ages the Israelite strain in all this area was very strong. The modern Kurd, especially as regards his fighting qualities, bears a very strong resemblance to the ancient Israelite. It is true that full-blooded Jews have spread into every part of the world but these are for the larger part descendants of those taken into captivity from the southern kingdom by the Babylonians at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, or who had voluntarily emigrated southwards during those troublous times and, more particularly, after the Jewish State was re-established in the days of Cyrus of Persia. So far as the northern kingdom to whom Amos preached was concerned, they dropped out of history at this point.

Yet there must be a remnant, for the avowed purpose of God is that in the fulness of time the twelve tribes will be re-united and re-established in the land. The full expression of this intention is to be found in Ezek. 37.15-28; in this passage the ultimate welding of the separated kingdoms into one entity is clearly denoted. It follows therefore that the Lord knows where to find his ancient people and will one day bring them together.

* * . *

Amaziah the High Priest of the nation had had enough. He had obviously become increasingly restive under the scourge of the prophet's words. Now he intervened and Amos records his intervention in what amounts to a scrap of history inserted into the prophecy. "*Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land*" (ch. 7. 10-11). The High Priest was guilty of some duplicity here, for what Amos had said was that God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword (ch. 7.9), which was quite a different thing. In point of fact, Jeroboam II died peacefully in his bed, quite an unusual end for a king of the northern kingdom. Amos' expression "the house of Jeroboam" was probably an allusion to the northern kingdom's first king, Jeroboam I. In a poetic sense, although not literally true, the whole kingship of Israel to the end

of the nation was described as the "house" of its first king. That which Jeroboam I had founded when the ten tribes seceded in the days of Rehoboam son of Solomon was now to be destroyed by the sword of Assyria.

It does not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of his High Priest's complaint. He seems to have been quite indifferent to any effect the prophet's mission may have had on his people. So Amaziah took the initiative himself. "*O thou seer*" he said to Amos "*Go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there earn thy living and prophesy. But prophesy not any more at Bethel, for it is the royal shrine and the national temple*" (ch. 7.12-13). It almost looks as if Amos was in the way of influencing an appreciable proportion of the people and the High Priest, sensing competition, wanted him out of the way. He was not of Israel; he was of Judah, and the best thing he could do was return to his own land and do his preaching there.

One can imagine Amos taking a cool, searching look at this man who was determined to retain his own influence and possessions in the community and would allow nothing to stand in his way. More than any other man Amaziah represented and supported the apostate worship of Israel. He had no Divine authority to exercise the functions of priesthood. The true High Priest of the nation at this time was Azariah, of the line of Aaron, the legitimate holder of the title, administering his sacred office in the Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. This Amaziah was an upstart, an impostor, conducting a false worship to a heathen God in a temple which stood in flagrant defiance of the basic principle that Jerusalem must be the seat of Israel's worship. So Amos, knowing all this, and realising that the end of this idolatrous system of worship had come, felt the Spirit's inspiration upon him to utter one last prediction, a personal one concerning Amaziah himself, the judgment soon to come upon him for his unbelief and apostasy. He told Amaziah that his wife would become the property of the invading soldiery and subjected to the most degrading form of slavery, his sons and daughters slain by the sword, his land and possessions divided among others, and he himself taken as a captive to the (to any Israelite) unclean land of Assyria, and there he would die. "*And Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land*" (ch. 7.17).

No more is known of Amaziah. As one of the leading men in Israel he would most certainly have been taken into Assyria and there subjected to the barbarous treatment the Assyrians invariably meted out to their defeated enemies. These words uttered, it would seem that Amos did as

he was bidden and turned his steps southward, shaking the dust of the temple courts at Bethel off his feet and returning to Judah. The remainder of his prophecy is consistent with the conclusion that he delivered it, not at Bethel to a "Ten Tribe" audience, but in Judah to the people of the "Two Tribes". And from this point his

prophecy takes on more and more of the "latter day" undertones which leads him at the last to his celebrated prediction of the ultimate restoration of all Israel to Divine favour and their final cleansing and preparation for their Millennial mission as God's evangelist to all nations.

To be continued

Thought for the Month

"Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done" (Ezra 7.23).

Coming from a heathen monarch, Artaxerxes of Persia, in the 4th century B.C., that is a rather remarkable statement. The king rendered his own devotions to Ahura-Mazda the deity of the Persians, nevertheless he recognised the God of Israel in matters with which Israel was concerned and he directed that those entrusted with such matters should be diligent in dealing with them. He was not content with merely giving permission for the re-organisation of the Jewish State, not even with issuing an instruction to his local provincial governors to furnish the Jews with the necessities they would require from the king's stores. All concerned were to be diligent in executing his instructions because they were also the command of the God of heaven. And any dissidents were to be dealt with summarily; it appears that Ezra had the power to inflict death, banishment, confiscation or imprisonment upon the refractory. It seems this unusually zealous king, in his passion for the progress of God's work, was saying to his subjects, "You are going to serve your God and like it... or else!"

Ignoring that tailpiece, the exhortation itself is a "must" for every Christian. There can be no half-heartedness in the service of Christ. There was a First century Church at Laodicea whose members were like the spa waters of their own city, sometimes hot and sometimes cold, and the Lord would have none of it. "I would thou wert

hot or cold"—either one or the other. Then He would know where He stood. Because they were neither He rejected them. It is so fatally easy to delude ourselves into thinking that providing we give mental assent to our acceptance of Jesus as Saviour, attend meetings, fraternise with his people, that is all He requires. As if that is any good at all to him when there is a world to be saved and salvation can only come when instruction has been given and conversion effected, and He has ordained that instructors and evangelists shall be prepared and trained here and now for that work of the future when He returns in glory for the establishment of his earthly Kingdom. When the Lord called his first disciples He bade them leave everything and follow him. He asks nothing less now. When Isaiah saw the vision of God Most High and heard him enquiring for a messenger to execute a commission the young prophet came forward with the spontaneous response "Here am I... send me". The result of that was forty years' incessant and diligent labour for his Lord in the power of an understanding of the future perhaps greater than that of any other Hebrew prophet. So now, the Lord asks our unconditional consecration to his service and that all our life be spent in diligent devotion to that service. So, and only so, shall we be fitted for our greater work in the world beyond this when our present lesson time is ended. As the Wise King of Israel once said (Prov. 12.24) "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute".

It would appear that the celebrated St. Augustine, generally acclaimed as the most noteworthy theologian of the Christian Church with the exception of St. Paul, was himself a believer in probation and repentance after death. In his famous work "De Civitate Dei" ("The City of God") he says, (Book 21 chap. 14), talking of Hell, in which he was a convinced believer, as were most of his time "But all shall not come

into these eternal pains. For some shall be pardoned in the world to come that are not pardoned in this, and acquitted there and not here from entering into pains eternal." He did not go on to say what must be realised is imperative, that such pardon, at whatever time, can only be in consequence of loyal acceptance of Christ and full harmony with God.

A PLACE PREPARED

*Foreview of
destiny*

"Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, and believe in me. In my Father's house are many dwellings. If it were otherwise I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you to dwell in. And if I go and prepare a place for you I shall come again and receive you to myself, that where I am you may also be." (John 14.1-3).

Of all the words of comfort Jesus uttered to his perplexed disciples on the evening before his death, these rank the highest. Highest, not only on account of the immediate occasion, but also because of the inestimable assurance they have given to Christ's followers in every generation from that day to this. He was leaving them, but leaving them for a purpose, and when that purpose had been achieved He would come back. He was going to make ready a new, a celestial, home for them in which they would dwell in eternal association with him, and when it was ready He would return and take them to that new home and that would be the consummation of all their hopes. This was to be the living hope which would sustain them, and all who followed them in after days, until his promised return became reality.

There is some good solid Christian doctrine in these few simple words. First of all, and by implication rather than direct statement, there is the fundamental difference between the ultimate salvation of those who are members of Christ's Church and those who are not. This promise was given to, and intended for, only those who are Christ's, as those few disciples were his, those who in this present life have become justified through faith in him and reconciled to God, and on that basis have dedicated their lives to him, to be associated with him in all that He stands for now and all that He will do in the future. These, and these alone, constitute the "Body of Christ", the Church, "whose names are written in heaven", the "saints" (sanctified ones) who will reign with Christ as shepherds, teachers, evangelists, over the nations during the Millennial Age of world conversion (Rev. 20.4; 1 Cor. 6.2). These enter the eternal state at the promised coming again of our Lord, and in this differ from all others of the human race, past, present or future, who in their turn will enter the eternal state at the end of man's final probationary experience at the close of the Millennium. And the world into which those latter will enter at that time is not the world into which these who are

Christ's now will have already entered, the "place for you" of his promise. Whatever the Father's design for the reconciled and perfected world of mankind when they have attained his ideal, it will be part and parcel of whatever plan He has for the expansion of life throughout the whole creation; the position of the Church will be above and beyond all this, in a sphere which, because it is the centre of our Lord's governance of all things that are and will be, must lie on a plane higher than all other created things.

The second consideration is that there is here implied some definite action, some creative activity, so to speak, on the part of our Lord during the time intervening between his First and Second Advents. We have not to think of him as seated idly upon some great celestial throne at the right hand of the Father until the day dawns that He must come to earth to "judge the quick and the dead" as the old Creed has it. He is doing something, preparing a place which did not formerly exist, that it might be a fitting environment for his Church when the time comes for him to take them to himself. "*By him were all things created*", "*All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made*" (Col. 1.16; John 1.3); this denotes a continuance of creative energy and the bringing into existence of a sphere of active and continuing life which was not there before.

Thirdly, the verity of his promise to return to earth, the long awaited and much discussed Second Advent, is substantiated. Christ definitely declared that He would come again, a coming that is to be a real coming, a coming in person, unlike his presence with his followers throughout the Age by the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. He made it as plain as He could on one occasion. "*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father*" (John 16.28) to which He now adds, "*If I go away, I will come again*". To the disciples standing on the Mount of Olives at the Ascension came the same positive assurance: "*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*" (Acts 1.11).

So Jesus exhorted his disciples not to let themselves be overtaken by trouble or sorrow at the unexpected turn of events which was about to transpire, to culminate in the death of their Master and the wreck of all their hopes. The word means to be anxious or distressed, or to be

in perplexity and doubt of mind. The same word is used by Jesus (when in Gethsemane) He said "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say" (John 12.27), and in a different setting when Matthew says of Herod at the visit of the three Magi "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matt. 2.3). They were not to be perplexed or doubtful or despondent at the things which now must happen; they already had belief and faith in God, now they were to have belief and faith in their Master. Oftimes He had chided them for their lack of faith; now He exhorted them to summon all the faith they could to their assistance and keep in their hearts his promise that He would come again.

Perhaps He intended to give them a stimulus to faith by telling them something of the world to which He was shortly going and which they themselves would see one day. Nowhere else in the sayings of Jesus is there so clear a picture of the celestial world as is here recorded in John's gospel. Up to this time the disciples could have had only the haziest of ideas about the realm from which our Lord had come and to which He was now about to return. As with all Jews of their day and age, their hopes for the future were centred upon an earthly kingdom over which Messiah would reign forever and they with him. They pictured the Gentile nations as giving submission to the triumphant Jew, and to the extent that they shared the prophetic fervour of the prophet Isaiah they saw Israel as a light to the nations, declaring the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. But that is as far as their thinking went; the conception of a spiritual world of life and activity was too much for their immature minds to grasp. And now Jesus was telling them that in his Father's house there were many dwellings and somewhere among those dwellings He was going to prepare a special place for them. It may be that this expression "my Father's house"—his dwelling-place—took some of their minds back to the 104th Psalm, which pictures God as inhabiting the wide expanse of the skies, stretching out the heavens like a curtain, and spreading them like a tent in which to dwell (Isa. 40.22). The word "mansions" of the A. V. comes from the Latin, and refers to government hostels which existed at regular intervals on all the Roman roads throughout the empire. No matter how far the traveller might journey, or how wild and forbidding the country through which he was journeying, there was always the hostel where he could stop at the end of the day, obtain food and shelter and a change of horses for the next day's journeying. My Father's house is like that, said Jesus. There are many places in his creation where life can flourish and God be

served. This earth is not the only object of the Divine plans; the destiny of those simple fishermen and peasants was to lie in realms of unimaginable splendour far distant from this mundane earth which at the present was the only world they knew. Far up there beyond the arch of the heavens, beyond the light of the sun, away where the high and lofty One inhabits eternity (Isa. 57.15), there the Lord was going to prepare a place for them—and for all his faithful who come after them, even unto the end of the Age. To prepare a place; the word *topon* means a place marked off or destined for a particular purpose, as in Rev. 12.6 where the symbolic mother of the "man-child" fled into the wilderness where God had "prepared a place" for her. Our Lord was going away to make ready the future sphere of life and activity in which his followers were to spend their never-ending resurrection lives.

There is a hint of creative power here. The Old Testament contains a celebrated passage in which Christ in his pre-human state, referred to as the Wisdom of God, personified, tells of his work at the time of the creation of this terrestrial universe "The Lord God acquired me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was anointed from the beginning, before the earth was . . . when he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he established a sphere upon the face of the abyss . . . then I was with him as a sure workman . . . rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8.22-31). If this passage is allied with John 1 and Col. 1 in which all things that are made are said to have been made by Christ it stands out clearly that He is and always will be the agent of the Father in all creative work. There emerges a picture of creation continuously proceeding, and the events described in chap. 1 of Genesis, which tell of the creation of the earth and of man upon it, constitute just one episode in a master Plan of unimaginable magnitude. Now Jesus tells us that He is about to embark upon another work of creation, a new world, a new and hitherto unknown order of things, which is to be the particular home of those who have proved their faithfulness to him in this life and are consequently exalted to high office with him for the work of the eternal future. From this home as a centre these will go forth to, and return from, their duties and activities in every part of Divine creation where they are needed. Their first work will be the evangelising of the remainder of the human race here on this earth; that is to be their privilege and responsibility during the thousand years of the Millennium immediately following the Second Coming.

That achievement will be crowned by the entering of all humanity—as many as can then be reached and persuaded by the appeal of the Gospel — into the eternal state. Sin banished, death unknown, all things on earth made new and all mankind ushered into an eternity of complete and undisturbed happiness; this will be the result of the work of Christ and his Church during that period. This is what St. Paul meant when he said that the saints shall judge the world. After that—who knows? The Scripture offers no clue. It can only be taken as a certainty that life in eternity is not going to be a life of idleness or a kind of static existence in which nothing happens or is done. Activity, achievement, continuing increase in knowledge and experience must certainly be the lot of every member of Christ's Church in that "place" He has gone to "prepare" for us, and with that confidence we must, for the present, be content

The prelude to all this is the Second Advent. Having prepared the place, said Jesus, He would come back to take his faithful to himself and away to the home that He has made. This coming is a real coming and not a metaphorical one. One system of theology claims that Christ's promise of his coming again was fulfilled in the judgment which came upon the Jews in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed their city and nationality. That great event, final judgment and end of the world as it was for the Jews, by no means meets the Scripture presentation of all that the Second Coming implies. Neither is it the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to come to them and be with them until the end of the Age (John 14. 18 Matt. 28.20). That promise related to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the abiding presence of Christ with his Church by the medium of the Holy Spirit. The Second coming includes much more than judgment on the Jews and spiritual guidance for the Church. It involves the close of the calling to become members of Christ's Church and the resurrection of that Church complete to be associated in eternity with Christ the Head. It involves the dissolution of the present world order and its supersession by the beneficent world-wide rule of righteousness under Christ as King and supreme. It involves the resurrection of the dead and the final stage of human probation, for dead and living alike, during the whole period of world evangelisation which is commonly called the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ over the earth. Says St. Paul in I Cor. 15 "*He must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death . . . then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the*

Father . . . that God may be all in all". The Second Advent includes all of these events and processes and extends over the entire period—a thousand years—necessary to their accomplishment.

But Jesus was not talking about all these various aspects of his coming when He was conversing with his disciples on this occasion. One aspect only was in his mind, one that concerned them the more closely. "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also.*" Not at this moment was there to be an exhaustive discourse upon the various facets of the Divine Plan and how they converged and focussed upon the fact of the Second Advent. The disciples were grieved and saddened at the imminent departure of their Master and the abrupt severance of the fellowship and relationship which had grown up between them. What they wanted at this moment was comfort for their sorrow, assurance that their Master would be able to commune with them from the other side, and a real hope for the future consummation when they would be together with him again. All this Jesus gave them in these brief words. John must have remembered them very intensely in much later years when he penned the inspiring words "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*" (I John 3.2). No conception of the nature of that future world, the place that Jesus will have prepared; no idea of the form of that celestial body which St. Paul in I Cor. 15 indicates is as real as this terrestrial body, but different. We cannot yet know what we shall be, but we have this assurance, we shall be like him, and with that we can be well content. In his ecstatic vision of the union of Christ and his Church John said "*the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*" (Rev. 19.7). Poetic language, yes, but how expressive. That promised union between the Lord and his faithful ones which He guaranteed by the words "I am coming again and will receive you to myself" was wrought by John those many years later into this thrilling picture of a celestial marriage. The Bridegroom has come to earth to claim his Bride and take her back with him to be presented before his Father. The new home is ready, and the host of heaven raise their voices in acclamation "*as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders*" (Rev. 19.6). Did ever earthly pair receive such tumultuous welcome? This is the exaltation of the Church, the climax to all her earthly experiences, the introduction to her future home and future work. This is where the outworking

Plan of God takes a tremendous step forward, the kingdoms of this world becoming the "Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11.15) and the message of the Gospel go out to all men with a power and effect it has never known before. This is when the Lord Christ and his Church, the "Spirit and the Bride" send out their call and challenge for conversion and loyalty and allegiance to all mankind, saying

"Come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22.17). All these things are involved in that quiet utterance of Jesus the night before his crucifixion. Spoken to the twelve, intended for all who at any day or time have named the name of Christ, and who trust in the verity of his promise that when He has prepared that heavenly home He will come again and receive us to himself.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

A study of prophecy passing into history

2. A Nation Born in a Day

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

* * *

"And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them" (Ezek. 37.8).

This is the second stage in Ezekiel's vision. At first he had seen the heterogeneous collection of disjointed bones lying in the plain coming together and joining themselves together to form complete skeletons—lifeless, unmoving, but skeletons nevertheless. Now he saw the skeletons growing and changing into bodies; sinews, flesh and skin appearing as if from nowhere and clothing those bones so that now the plain appeared full of recumbent bodies — still, and without movement, but in every respect complete and perfect, needing only the spirit of life from God to vivify and animate them and set them on their feet, a living and mighty host.

A very fair analogy can be drawn here between the vision as recorded and the actual development of Ezekiel's people into a nation in the latter days. If, as outlined in the first part of this treatise, the coming together of bone to bone could be held to picture the slow assembling of the framework of the Jewish State and people during the period between 1897, when Theodore Herzl set in motion the forces which have resulted in the present situation, and 1948, when the Israeli State was formally proclaimed and began its independent existence, then quite logically the years since 1948, when the nation has been steadily gathering strength and solidity,

could well be pictured by the sinews, the flesh and the skin covering those bones. That which was a bare skeleton in 1948 is now in fair process of becoming a well-rounded out body.

At the establishment of the State in 1948 there were 650,000 Jews in Palestine, and with the departure of the Mandatory Power they were left with a land that was virtually bankrupt, without government, without organisation and without resources. Almost every function of modern civilised national administration came to an end and by all the rules the land should have relapsed overnight into anarchy, a ready prey to the invaders who waited eagerly around its frontiers. Today, little more than thirty years later, there are more than 3,000,000 Jewish inhabitants living and reasonably prospering under a well-planned and well-run Administration which has won the admiration and envy of other nations and is already extending its influence and assistance to other emerging nations in Asia and Africa. Israel may have been a skeleton in 1948; it is most certainly not so to-day.

First of all, the sinews cover the bones. Money has often been called the sinews of war; in this case money became the sinews of peace. Not only money, but men, immigrants, poured into Israel from the very first day of the new regime. The restriction imposed by Britain in 1936 in a desperate attempt at Arab appeasement vanished overnight; the doors were thrown open to all who would, of the sons of Jacob, to return. And return they did, from every place under heaven, creating an immediate problem which all but wrecked the struggling embryo nation. Money came too; many Jews, particularly in America, who for various reasons were not prepared to join in the rush for the land, made their contribution in cash or in financial assistance so that the nation could begin to put itself upon a commercial basis. The bones could not boast of flesh at first, but they certainly began to acquire some sinews, something to give the muscular power

which they would need so much later on. As the facilities became available so industries began to re-open or to develop. Stagnated or derelict farms began to be cultivated. Struggling communities unable for years to do more than produce enough to keep themselves alive began to organise and increase production so that they could contribute a share to the nation's export business, essential if the nation was to survive at all in this modern competitive and commercially minded world. Men came searching for new outlets of business and production, like the Australian who remembered the sulphur nuggets he found during his war service in Palestine, came back and explored, and started a prosperous sulphur mining industry. Imaginative schemes were drawn up for exploiting the country's incipient resources, such as the gigantic water pipeline running two hundred miles or so from the headwaters of the Jordan in the far north to the parched deserts of the Negev in the south, bringing the blessings of irrigation and abundant water to the farming communities struggling to make the wilderness blossom as the rose. That pipe-line was a sinew indeed! So the sinews appeared on the bones as the strength and resources, the industries and trades, began to grow and become established.

After the sinews in Ezekiel's vision came the flesh, clothing the bare bones with a semblance of shape and form. So, after the basis of the new nation's economy had been assured by the provision of men, and of money, and of farm implements, and of factories, and of ships, and of all the means which a nation must have if it is to grow and prosper, came the fruit of these things. Crops, herds, manufactures, raw materials gathered from the land itself, minerals, oil, fertilisers, all these began to appear in increasing measure both for the enrichment of the national life and for export further to enhance the national stability.

So, at a certain point, the skin began to cover the body, sign of a completion and rounding out of this second stage in the revival of the dry bones. Social and commercial organisation, the establishment of stable financial and political institutions, all that makes for a sound national economy; in short, an orderly and firmly seated Government administering the affairs of a virile and thriving community conscious of its own potentialities and determined to maintain its own separate identity in a world at the same time friendly and hostile according to circumstances. Here was the skin, the medium which held the fabric of the nation together, binding the elements of the body together and enabling it to

present a united and homogeneous front to the world.

It cannot be said that this second stage is anything like complete at the present time. Israel is a secular State; there is no question of reliance completely and utterly upon the power of God for their national prosperity and safety. So there is no question yet of the breath of life from God blowing upon them to vivify those rapidly developing bodies. The sinews and the flesh and the skin are still in process of clothing the dry bones, and not until that process is seen to be complete can the third and final stage be expected. Just to look at things from the strictly natural point of view, it is obvious that the polity of Israel is still upon a very insecure footing. Economically they are only just beginning to become truly self-supporting; politically there are internal strifes and conflicts and externally the ever-present menace of the Arab world, planning and preparing for the day of decision. Religiously, even although honour is paid to the Bible in the highest circles and religious thought and observance probably stands at a higher level than any European or American country, it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be likened to the Holy Nation which will at the end experience the most spectacular of every Divine deliverance which the world has ever witnessed. We must expect the present process yet to continue until the nation has measurably fulfilled the glowing predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah "*They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and the herd . . .*" (Jer. 31.12). "*. . . the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land*" (Ezek. 38.12). "*Thy waste and thy desolate places and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away*" (Isa. 49.19). "*The seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things*" (Zech. 8.12). Some of these Scriptures draw attention to a problem which is even now facing Israel, the limited area of land available for the rapidly increasing population. The present territory of Israel amounts to no more than about 9,000 square miles; the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession, the land which is to become the Holy Land of the Messianic Age and which is to be possessed by the Holy Nation before the work of that Age begins, amounts to many times that area. Somehow or other, before

the final onslaught of the forces of evil upon the serene and confident Holy Nation at the full end of the Age, a great accession of territory to the nation has to take place. How that will come about is not at present clear, but that it must be so is necessitated by the Divine promise and purpose. It is not yet true that the holy city of Jerusalem is delivered from the power of the Gentiles. The 1967 war did certainly bring the whole of the city under Israeli control, but it is still too early to say whether this is going to be permanent. When Jesus said (Luke 21.24) that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled, He was undoubtedly referring to Gentile power over Israel as a whole, and at the present time Israel is still dependent upon a great deal of Gentile help and protection. Not until the new nation is standing completely independent of outside support can it be truly said that the treading down by the Gentiles has ceased. The site of the Temple on Mount Moriah, the holiest place in the world to the believing Jew, is still occupied by the Moslem shrine, equally holy to all true Moslems, known as the Dome of the Rock. This is a question which has yet to be settled and perhaps will not be settled until there are far more peaceable relations between the two peoples than is the case at present. These and many similar problems have to be solved and Israel enter much more fully than is the case at present into possession of the Land of Promise before it can be said that the clothing of the dry bones with sinews, flesh and skin has been completed and the time has come for the Divine Spirit to in-breathe new life into that nation that it may live and stand upon its feet, an exceeding great army.

The promise to Abraham envisaged a land of

Israel stretching from Sinai to the Euphrates but any development which brings such an extension of territory into view must pre-suppose the peaceful solution of what is euphemistically termed the "Arab problem" and the establishment of friendly relations between Israeli and Arab. That such an outcome is not outside the realm of practical possibility is demonstrated by the recent peace treaty concluded between Egypt and Israel. One has to remember that the Divine promise to Abraham was not confined to Israel only; God also declared that He had plans for Ishmael, progenitor of the bulk of the Arabs, that he also would become a great people. Somehow, therefore, it may yet be found that a perhaps quite unexpected turn of events will bring the Arab world into the sphere of Divine purpose at the end of the Age. Here is ample scope for watching with keen interest the day-by-day developments in that land and perceiving how the Divine purpose is moving steadily toward its fore-ordained climax.

At some future time, then, how far in the future we do not at this time see, the bones will have been completely clothed and the Spirit waiting to come upon the nation. What is the great event which so turns Israel's heart that the Spirit can enter in? That is the next question to answer. The Spirit cannot come unless the people are ready; God cannot deliver unless the people believe and trust; that is fundamental in all his dealings. So before the last great onslaught, when God rises up as He did in the day of battle to deliver his people from their enemies, the people must have been converted. By what power or influence will that great change have been effected? The breathing of the wind of God upon those slain depends upon that!

(To be concluded)

"Be glad, thou thirsty desert: let the wilderness exult, and flower as the lily. And the desert places of Jordan shall blossom and rejoice; the glory of Libanus has been given to it, and the honour of Carmel, and my people shall see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of God.

"Be strong, ye relaxed hands and palsied knees. Comfort one another, ye faint-hearted; be strong, fear not; behold, our God renders judgment, and He will render it; He will come and save us. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the stammerers shall speak plainly; for water has burst forth in the desert, and a channel of water in a thirsty land. And the dry land shall become pools, and a fountain of water shall be poured in to the

thirsty land; there shall there be a joy of birds, ready habitations and marshes. There shall be there a pure way, and it shall be called a holy way; and there shall not pass by there any unclean person, neither shall there be there an unclean way; but the dispersed shall walk on it, and they shall not go astray. And there shall be no lion there, neither shall any evil beast go up upon it, nor at all be found there; but the redeemed and gathered on the Lord's behalf shall walk in it, and shall return, and come to Sion with joy, and everlasting joy shall be over their head; for on their head shall be praise and exultation, and joy shall take possession of them; sorrow and pain, and groaning have fled away."

(Septuagint translation of Isa. 35.)

KISH—CITY OF THE ANCIENTS

*The Voice of
Archaeology*

The first eleven chapters of Genesis, covering about one-half of the entire span of human history down to the present, are tantalising in their brevity. So little is revealed of all that was done during that long span of nearly four thousand years. The only historic events related are those of the Flood and the Tower of Babel. Even so, Genesis is the only existing written record of those days, for the earliest records available outside the Bible go back only about five centuries before Abraham; everything before that is blank. There are traditions and legends, but these are vague and visionary, unlike the forthright statements of Genesis, and are of little help. Only the spade of the archæologist, digging up the remains of long-buried ancient cities, can tell us anything about the people who lived and died during the thousand years or so immediately following the Flood, but sometimes such discoveries do throw a little light on the Bible story.

Such is the case with the ancient city of Kish, six miles east of Babylon. Kish disappeared from history nearly three thousand years ago, known only by references in later written tablets. It lay concealed under the ground until the early years of this century, when it was excavated by Assyriologists L. C. Watelin and Stephen Langdon over a series of years between 1925 and 1934. They found the remains of buildings, palaces and temples going back to an earlier date than any other known Sumerian city. It would appear, so far as present knowledge goes, that Kish is—or was—the oldest city in the world.

The interest to the Bible student in this is that Kish was so near to Babylon—only six miles—which in Genesis is indicated as being the first place where men settled after the Flood, the site of the celebrated Tower of Babel. On the testimony of records and traditions, Kish was in existence when history begins, accepted as being the site of the beginning of Sumerian civilisation, and the first civilised community to appear upon earth, Babylon as a city came later, but that there was a settlement of some sort where Babylon later stood, and the famous Tower, at a extremely early date, is certain. Several authorities state that Babylon was originally a holy place built as a dwelling-place for the gods. The original Sumerian name meant “the place of life” and at a later time “the gate of the gods”; this latter is also the meaning of the still later Semitic name “*Bab-ilu*” which became the Hebrew “Babel”. One is led to wonder if in fact the expression in

Gen. 11 “let us build a city and a tower” refers to the Tower around which Babylon was built later, and Kish the city near by which may have housed the workers and devotees associated with the Tower. The Scripture says they “left off to build the city” but says nothing about the Tower. In point of fact the Tower was completed, and a few centuries later a magnificent Temple to Marduk the god of Babylon erected adjacent; both buildings stood until the coming of the Greek empire under Alexander a few centuries before Christ.

This association of Kish with Babylon is supported by the fact that Kish, the earliest of all the city-states of the Sumerians, was the political head of them all for a greater length of time than any of the other cities. What is known as the “Sumerian King List”—a historical record of early times compiled in the 17th century B.C.—declares that after the Flood “rulership descended from Heaven” and that Kish was the first city thus to rule the land. This must have been after the passing of several centuries; it would take such time for the sons of Noah to increase in numbers sufficiently to form communities capable of building such cities. But the reference to rulership having descended from heaven is interesting. Two of the earliest kings bore names with significant meanings; “Palakinatim” signified “reign of righteousness” and “Nangishlishma” meant “may God listen with pleasure”. Another significant factor is that all the relics of those very ancient times that have been discovered refer only to one god, An, the God of Heaven. None of the other gods figuring so prominently in later inscriptions are mentioned. Does this point to a time when polytheism had not as yet developed, and these descendants of Noah were still worshipping the God of their great ancestor? Warlike instruments and weapons are likewise absent from the remains, as though the earliest days of Kish were set at a time when men had not yet begun to quarrel and fight between themselves.

A number of skeletons of men who lived at the time have been brought to England for expert examination and are now in Oxford University Museum. They are found to be of mainly Hamitic and Semitic race, with an admixture of a third. It is already known that the sons of Japhet left the Euphrates valley at an early date but the Sumerians and Semites remained and intermingled as time went on.

The city was large—about five miles long by one wide, on the evidence of the remains. The houses were built along straight streets and had good sanitary drains and water supply. Their only metal was copper, of which they made carpenters' tools, saws and chisels, household utensils, and mirrors. For transport they had horses and chariots; some of the wooden wheels have survived, and are the oldest pieces of wood ever discovered. They were agriculturalists and shepherds, but not warriors. In craftsmanship they were superb. Langdon has said that their skill in the fabrication of copper statuettes and ornaments was never equalled in later ages. The rituals which attended their burial reveal that they believed in a future life. That too must have come from Noah, an indication that mankind from the first must have had some kind of revelation from God to the effect that death is not the end; the harm that had been done in Eden would one day be undone.

They had writing. Kish was founded at least three or four centuries before the invention of the cuneiform script in which most of the Babylonian and Sumerian tablets known to scholars are written; prior to that time there was a pictographic script of which only a few examples have been found. This was apparently preceded by picture writing of which no examples have been found, probably written on some paper-like vegetable substance or wood material. The Sumerian word for writing tablets, which in the historic period were of baked clay, has a determinative prefix which indicates a wood or plant material, not true of clay. It looks as though the original name was carried over when the normal writing material was changed. There is therefore this amount of evidence that the immediate descendants of Noah were familiar with writing and had convenient writing materials at their service; there is no reason to doubt that the early stories of Genesis existed in written form at a time little if any later than the Flood itself. It has often been remarked by students that the Bible story of the Flood bears all the marks of an eye-witness account that has been written down for permanent record.

Something like three or four centuries after its founding, Kish suffered a major disaster. A colossal flood completely destroyed the city and its surroundings, and drowned most of its inhabitants. Langdon discovered the eighteen inch

thick layer of clay marking this occurrence at the same time that C. L. Woolley found his eight foot similar layer at Ur and both discoveries were hailed at the time as evidence of Noah's Flood. Later and more sober investigation has shown that this was a mistake; these floods, caused by abnormal quantities of water carried down by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, came much later in the historical sequence. As a rough estimate, it is probable that this Kish flood occurred more or less during the lifetimes of the patriarchs Sala and Eber four or five generations after Noah. It was a long time before Kish recovered—probably several generations. Says Langdon *"This flood definitely marked the end of an era. It covered uniformly and for a long time all that remained of the civilisation of Kish. This flood layer marks a complete separation between the types which we have now left behind, the industries of the potter, founder, sculptor, and the types of industries which will be found about it."* The physical remains show this; the evidence of a highly sophisticated civilisation below the "flood layer" is replaced by a considerably less cultured one above, and in some respects Kish never recovered its former grandeur. In a few more centuries its political power waned and by the time that Abraham was a young man at Ur it came to its end and was no more.

The principal value of the Kish discoveries is that its history comes just about midway between the Flood and Abraham, and throws a little light upon the achievements of men at that time. Here, at least, in the very shadow of the great Tower which later ages looked upon as the symbol of man's defiance of God, there was a community which apparently still held to his worship even though in later centuries they did accept the "gods many and lords many" which became the deities of all nations except Israel. It is a fascinating speculation that Eber, Abraham's ancestor, from whom the Hebrews took their name, may himself have been resident in this city in its earlier days; there is more than a possibility that the first few chapters of Genesis in their present form were the work of Eber and in that case those chapters may well have appeared in the picture script of those days. At any rate there is some ground for thinking that, even at that time, God had not left himself without witness, preserving the seed of the faith until six hundred years later Abraham came upon the scene to establish it on a sure foundation for ever.

"Great havoc is said to have been occasioned in Eden when man's first sinful parents knew that they were naked, but almost greater havoc seems to have been occasioned right through

history through the devil drawing the attention of the righteous to the fact that they were clothed with righteousness.

Rev. Paul Gliddon.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

*A collection of
interesting items*

Shine forth

"They that be wise" said the revealing angel to Daniel "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament"—the sun (Dan. 12.3). It is of some interest to note that a small Babylonian clay tablet recovered from the ruins of Nippur—the Calneh of Gen. 10—expresses exactly the same sentiment. "Whoever distinguishes himself at University shall shine as the day." The tablet dates back to the time of Abraham; the angel declared the same thing to Daniel. Our Lord told his disciples that they, the righteous who embrace the heavenly wisdom, that which cometh from above, at the end of this age "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13. 43).

* * *

"That He might fill all things" (Eph. 4: 10)

There is a world of meaning in the Apostle's words here. The Greek is *plerose ta panta* "fill the all-things"—i.e., the universe. *Plerose* means to fill by diffusing a thing throughout, as by filling a room with smoke, for instance, and, also to furnish abundantly, as by filling the sky with stars or furnishing a garden with plants. It is derived from a word which has the significance of filling a vessel or a hollow place. Consider the aptness of the word. Christ, after his ascension, is to fill the universe, but not with stars, for that has been done already. What more appropriate than that He shall furnish it with living beings all in harmony with God and living to his praise. The universe as we see it through our telescopes is but the empty framework of that which shall be when the work of Christ as regards this earth is finished and in company with his glorified Church He commences his eternal work of "filling the all-things".

* * *

On Jonah

In December of 1946, fishermen in the Indian Ocean, thirty miles out from Bombay, captured a twenty-foot tiger shark in the stomach of which they discovered the complete skeleton of a man and some clothing. This occurrence illustrates the story of Jonah and is of interest as indicating the possibility of a man being swallowed whole by a large fish.

The Riper Years

*A little more tired at the close of day
A little less anxious to have our own way.
A little less care for gain or gold:
A little more zest for the days of old.
A broader view and a saner mind;
A little more love for all mankind.
A little more love for the friends of youth
A little more zeal for established truth.
A little more charity in our views,
A little less thirst for the latest news.
A little more leisure to sit and dream
A little more real the things unseen.* P.H.

* * *

"I have found a Ransom"

Elihu's discourse to the friends of Job includes a reference to the redemptive work of Christ so remarkable for so early an age that many commentators refuse to interpret the words according to their plain meaning. It is only when the knowledge of the Divine Plan reveals the literal truth of Elihu's statement that as a result of this "ransom" the flesh of man shall be fresher than a child's and he shall return to the days of his youth, that the beauty of this passage is fully appreciated. "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him and saith "Deliver him from going down into the pit. I have found a ransom" (Job 33.24). The word translated "deliver" means "to buy back for a price", having much the same meaning as "anti-lutron" in the New Testament; and the word "ransom" has the significance of "atonement". Thus in those far-off days when the world was young we have a plain statement of earthly restitution to be effected as a result of the giving of a "Ransom for All."

* * *

W. B. Pope on Probation

William Burt Pope, 1822-1903, was a Methodist theologian and minister of considerable repute, sometimes claimed to be the greatest of Methodist theologians. On the question of human destiny he had this to say:

"The fixed and unalterable state of man is always associated with the Day of Judgment and not with the day of death. We must not prejudge these issues or interfere with the full work of probation".

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

*St. Paul's vision
of the future*

2. A Messenger of Satan

So extensive and magnificent were the visions of Paradise accorded by the Lord to Paul, that it was found necessary to throw some make-weight into the scales against him to restore balance in his life. Paul still had the limitations of a man, with humanity's sensibilities to environment, hence an experience so sublime could easily have upset the reactions of both heart and mind. He could have become so over-sensitive to future things that he might overlook the things on this present dark old earth. An experience so rare could have thrown even this massive mind entirely out of gear (as similar experiences have thrown others), causing him to lapse into a vision-seeking recluse, too ecstatically-minded for his Master's earthly work, desiring only to see "the distant scene" again and yet again. His position was replete with risk and dangers, and lest he should be exalted (elated) above measure, there was given unto him "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him" and bring afresh to his memory every day that he was still resident in this present evil world. This was bitter consequence indeed to an experience so sublime, but Divine Wisdom saw that it had to be, if this chosen vessel was to remain of service to his purposes.

What then was this make-weight thrown into the scales to weight Paul back to earth? Of what did this thorn in the flesh consist?

Paul does not himself explain what this corrective was, unless, of course, we allow his simple statement to stand for what it is. There is no other direct reference in his letters to this thing, nor does any other writer of Apostolic days explain what it was. The Second century had dawned before the first reference—still extant—was made, by writers of the early Church, to Paul's afflicting thorn, and even then they do not explain what it was. Since those days (and more particularly in the last two centuries), expositors have suggested almost every ailment to which the human mind and body is susceptible. Some of these expositors, citing Paul's angry flash before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23. 1-5) have sought to prove that Paul's thorn was an affliction of the mind—a domineering impatient asperity that could not brook opposition or diversity of understanding on any point—an attitude at once dictatorial and easily provoked to retaliation. Catholic commentators think the thorn was a real weakness of the flesh—a weakness open to suggestions of

impurity and unchastity, and that Paul had to fight hard to maintain his celibate estate. Many others maintain that the evidences indicate a weakness of the eyes—some form of ocular affection which caused him intense discomfort and pain. From Paul's own words in Gal. 4. 14-15 an assumption is drawn that Paul's eyes were diseased and that the Galatian brethren had been so solicitous for his welfare and his ministry that they would willingly have given him (if they could) their own unaffected eyes. Again they point to Paul's later words (Gal. 6. 11) "... see with what large letters I have written unto you *with mine own hand*". They take the phrase to indicate that at this point Paul took up the pen from his secretary's hand, and wrote these few sentences in unusually large characters. The fact also that he had to have recourse to the help of some other secretarial hand in preparing his epistles is taken to indicate defective sight. It is assumed that the blinding glare of the Heavenly Presence on the Damascus way so injured the cellular tissues of his eyes, that, though scales fell away therefrom after three days (Acts 9. 9 and 18) they had been injured beyond recovery. Be that as it may, it is also a fact that there was enough intensity of expression in those eyes to match the stern reproof administered to Elymas the sorcerer at a later date (Acts 13. 8-11). "*Paul fastened his eyes upon him and said . . .*" Here were words of rapier sharpness and to drive them home a "look" not less intense!

Now it should be discerned that no affliction commencing prior to his vision-experience can be accepted as this "thorn in the flesh". Some seven or nine years had elapsed from the date of his arrest and apprehension on the Damascus way to the time when the visions and revelations were received. If that thorn was a fiery dictatorial attitude, then it began not from the Damascus incident, but from the later date. And if it was defective sight it cannot be dated from his first contact with the risen Lord, but only from the occasion of the heavenly vision. Paul's words are quite explicit on that point. "*Lest I should be exalted above measure there was given me a thorn in the flesh . . .*" He was under no illusion about cause and effect. He understood quite clearly why the thorn had come. He realised, in some ways, that Satan had been given greater opportunity to impinge upon his person and invade his life, because he had received such signal honour from his Lord.

Paul may have had weak eyes, which caused him acute agony and which could have dated from the "blinding flash" of the glory of the Lord, but even if this were so, it could not be his thorn. His ophthalmic trouble may even have predated his contact with the Lord, and earned for him the cruel taunt of his enemies when they stigmatised him as "the blear-eyed Jew". Be it as it may, it could not be his thorn unless it first invaded his life somewhere at the onset of those "fourteen years". What then was the "thorn?"

Is it really expecting too much to ask that Paul's own statement be allowed to stand? *"Lest I should be exalted above measure there was given me . . . a messenger of Satan to buffet me."* That is what Paul says! How prone we are to take that statement as a metaphor, and throw all the emphasis on the "thorn". Is it difficult to conceive the thought that Satan would desire to cancel out the favour imparted by the Lord, and seek by intensified enmity to nullify the incentive produced in Paul's heart by the visions of Paradise. And if, subject to Divine sanction, Satan used an agent to probe Paul's very soul through and through as with a lacerating thorn or stake—driving it in, and turning it round to tear, to wound and to infect his deepest sensibilities, would that be an experience foreign to God's saints?

When Paul said "but Satan hindered me" (1 Thess. 2. 18), it was no figment of imagination, nor just a figure of speech. It was a real experience in his life. Satan was apparently given leave to intrude into Paul's life more than theretofore, because the Lord had taken Paul into his confidence and made him, as it were, his other self! More than any other man, for a very special work, Paul was Jesus' representative among men and as such, the target of increased Satanic malice.

If we take the "messenger" as the reality, and the "thorn" as the metaphor, we can still find in the thorn enough evidence to show what it meant in suffering to Paul. Several versions call it a "thorn", others describe it as a "splinter", still others depict it as a "stake". The Greek word *skolops* is used as equivalent for them all—but the last usage betokens a far more grievous affliction than the other two. A thorn or splinter could be an irritant and a cause of considerable pain, but the impalement by the stake is a more serious thing. When we consider Paul's avidity for suffering (Phil. 3. 10) we can scarcely think he would plead for the removal of a mere irritant—a thorn, or splinter in the flesh—but if it were a stake driven through his very flesh (as it were) transfixing him to the earth in a public place, that were indeed enough to pray about!

It stood for Satanic effort to wound and injure, to confine and circumscribe, to expose and calumniate as a vile criminal unfit for human society. And to see this done an angel from the Satanic court was deputed to attend Paul, day and night, and hold him up to odium everywhere, and frustrate his activities by every means within the limits of the Divine permission.

Did then this special opposition of Satanic malice begin only from the occasion of his call to Antioch? (Acts. 11. 26). Did not Satan persecute him prior to this? No doubt he did, but it was not with the relentless vigour of the later day. When he was driven from Jerusalem on his first visit following his surrender to the Lord, he went to live and work in his native land, Cilicia. But there he was out of the way. He had been driven into an out-lying corner of the field, and there his mighty influence was circumscribed. His light, while neither hidden nor extinguished, was reflected over but a tiny unknown portion of the world, and thus, to the Satanic view, his influence among men had been largely neutralised.

But when his Master called him to the front again and placed him as the organising leader of all evangelistic work in the Gentile sphere, Satan and his evil host could not ignore what had been done. They realised thereby that battle had been joined; that their Heavenly Opponent had called, equipped and placed his ablest lieutenant in the field, and that now it was to be war to the death, and to the end. The Heavenly Leader knew what the end was destined to be; but more than that, He had caused his lieutenant also to know what the "end" would be, and Satan was also to be made to know what the end would be.

To win men from the power of darkness to the power of light, from the dominion of Satan to the allegiance of Christ, was more than Satanic dignity could allow. It must, at all costs, be opposed. Every man and every thing must be conscripted for the fight. The withering scorn of the cultured Greek; the fiery passion of the out-back mob; the malignant hatred of the rejected Jew, must be recruited to meet this new challenge to his universal domain. Everywhere and every day the ranks must be assembled, infuriated, and made ready for the assault at what place soever Paul raised the standard of the Cross. Every element of life and society was enlisted to meet, to hinder, to oppose and if occasion serve, to slay the banner-bearer of the Lord.

Everywhere the stake must be given another turn, another thrust, another wrench to daunt, if that could be, by its excruciating pain, the little "chosen vessel" upon whom so great a por-

tion of the fight for righteousness had come to rest. No wonder that he sought the presence of his Lord to ask for some relief, as, from place to place he went forward on his journeyings. Perils of nature were everywhere in those rude times. Wind and storm and flood opposed, and at times, like his beloved Lord, he had no place to lay his weary head. Perils of robber chiefs, infesting the lone mountain pass; perils of fickle countrymen who could change like an April day, perils from his kinsmen in the flesh who would neither hear him nor forgive, and worst of all, perils from false brethren within the Church, who spat venom on his name. Leal-hearted friends were few, and the distance between them far; enemies were numerous and were found at every turn. And everywhere, to take advantage of every circumstance, the messenger of Satan accompanied him to augment every hostile thought and word and act. Need we wonder then that the new situation as he stepped forward to the front, took him somewhat unawares, and that at first he failed to understand the situation aright! Once, and twice, and thrice he asked the Lord to withdraw the permission accorded to the Satanic messenger. And thrice the Lord refused

—refused with great tenderness and affection for his suffering friend. "Yes, I know Paul what it means, but, remember, my grace is enough for all thy need."

Very well then, says Paul, if the continuance of this angelic buffeting conduces to the best interests of my Lord, and of his separating work, "*most gladly will I glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, (each thing a new twist of the stake) for when I am weak then am I strong*" (*dunamis*—dynamite).

What words can elucidate such fidelity as this. It seems in-human and irrational. It is not un-human! It is humanity at its best, because it is at rest in God! It is not irrational; but intensely reasonable, because the creature is returning to the Creator what is the Creator's due. But it is wonderful and the story is hard to tell in words. Only with the heart can such stories be told, and only with the heart can they be understood. More than that we have no need to say.

(To be continued)

Life and the Living Word

*"I know in whom I have believed".
"Jesus my Lord! I know his name
His name is all my trust
Nor will He put my soul to shame
Or let my soul be lost."*

The Scriptures are more than history or a set of rules and advice for good living. Christian faith is based upon a person. Jesus is the foundation of belief, the pattern and giver of Life. When He was rebuked by the Jews for having healed a sick man on the Sabbath day, they were abiding by the rules. Nothing was to be done on that day, according to the strict letter of the law. This dispute was an opportunity to show them that the living Word was greater than the written word. So far it had served as a revelation of God's will in the standard of conduct set by the law. Now Jesus told them to "*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; they are they which testify of Me, and ye will not come to Me that ye might have life*" (John 5.39).

The emphasis is on life and the giver of life. Belief in a set of doctrines soon becomes lip-

service, ritual and formality. The written, spoken word, constantly repeated, becomes a mere party cry, the badge of sectarianism. The living word gives life. It was Paul who recognised this when he declared his creed. Not what, but "whom I have believed". He served Jesus. His hope for the future was committed into his hands. He followed Jesus. He imitated Jesus in his own life of service. The weakness of formal religion is that it serves creeds, sects, systems, visible leaders. It prefers the seen to the unseen; works, show, numbers, success. Man is not saved by works but by faith. Life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. It cannot be earned. It must be accepted as a free gift. All creeds are vain if Jesus is not the Son of God, a Saviour, triumphant over death. If Christ be not risen all faith is vain.

All Scripture is a line leading up to Jesus. He stands at the pinnacle of history and to him all men must look for life, for there is no other source. "*There is no other name given under heaven among men, by which we must be saved.*" Jesus is the sun and centre of all purpose. Without him nothing is and without him we are nothing and can do nothing. It is before him every knee shall bow.

THE FEASTS OF THE RESTORATION

That period of time which elapsed between the return from Babylon to rebuild the Temple in the first year of Cyrus and the completion of the reforming work of Nehemiah a century later is known as the Restoration. The beginning of this period saw a mixed company of fifty thousand enthusiasts cross the desert and settle in Judea and lay the foundations of the new Jewish State. The end of the period saw that State established and organised, resolute in its adherence to the laws of God and confident in its avowed mission to be the elect nation which should receive the Messiah and under his rulership extend the dominion of righteousness over all the earth. The fact that even during that one century the greater part of the time had been characterised by indifference to their Divine calling and slothfulness with respect to their mission did not seem to have occurred to them. They looked more at the highlights of their experience when the voices of their prophets or the exhortations of their rulers spurred them on to positive action, and they were able to exercise somewhat of their lost faith in embarking upon the work of God and giving praise at the outcome.

These occasional outbursts of active zeal for the accomplishment of the purpose for which they had come into the land were marked by celebratory feasts, convocations of the people at which God was praised and offered fervent protestations of faith and loyalty. Three such feasts are recorded. The first was a great observance of the Feast of Tabernacles on the occasion of their entering the land. At this time there was praise and thanksgiving to God for his mercy and manifested power in the deliverance from Babylon. The Feast of Tabernacles was originally a commemoration of the escape from Egypt and the sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai, and was therefore appropriate at this, the second great deliverance in the history of Israel. The second, twenty-two years later, was to dedicate the completed Temple and celebrate the first Passover which could have been observed with the full ritual since Solomon's Temple had been destroyed seventy years previously. The third, another Feast of Tabernacles, seventy years later still, was when Nehemiah the reformer had swept the land clean of its association with the pagan nations round about and solemnly pledged the people to a renewal of the original covenant made by the hand of Moses at Sinai. In a very real sense the nation at that moment repudiated the misdeeds and

faithlessness of their fathers from the entry into the land under Joshua to their forcible expulsion from the land under Nebuchadnezzar, nearly a thousand years of Israel's history, and pledged themselves to start again. The fact that not so very long afterwards, when Nehemiah and the prophets had gone the way of all flesh, they relapsed into indifference and godlessness again does not militate against their sincerity at this moment. And in any case there was never a time after this when there was not at least a remnant in each generation keeping alive the ideal and the promise, maintaining faith in the eventual coming of Messiah and watching constantly for his appearing.

So the fifty thousand left Babylon with all their possessions in, probably, December of the year 538 B.C., arriving in Judea during the following April. They came with joy and gladness, with music and singing, for the time of servitude was ended and they were now entered into freedom, a liberty in which they would always serve the Lord their God in their own land and nothing would ever go wrong again. And in all their rejoicing they quite forgot the solemn warning of the long since dead prophet Isaiah, who foreseeing this day spoke of this same gladness but coupled with it an injunction. "*Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing. Go ye out of the midst of Babylon; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord's house*" (Isa. 52. 11-12). They were always to remember that they were the custodians of the sacred vessels of God, emblematic of his truth and his service, and they were to keep themselves clean and uncontaminated with the practices and worship of the people of the land. In later days they forgot both of these injunctions and suffered accordingly.

So it is with the instructed Christian of to-day. There is a very real sense in which he comes out of Babylon when in his Christian course he finds it necessary to separate from an environment which contains that which defiles or misrepresents the character and purpose of God. He comes out bearing the sacred vessels of Divine truth, perhaps a clearer and purer understanding of the truths of the faith, perhaps an enhanced realisation of his relationship to his Lord and dedication to his service. Isaiah's warning comes down the centuries; having thus become free, remain unspotted from the world, undefiled

from the errors of knowledge and understanding and conduct formerly held. It is so fatally easy, as the years go by, to relapse into the former state without realising the fact. "*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). It is always true that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

But in those early days there was no flaw in the devotion and singlemindedness of these warriors for God. They spent about three months getting settled in their chosen homes, building or rebuilding their houses, settling their families, accommodating their flocks and herds, and getting their land under cultivation. Then in the seventh month, September/October of 537 B.C., they gathered as one man to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles according to the ritual (Ezra 3. 1-7).

They had no Temple, no Altar on which to sacrifice, no Most Holy into which the High Priest could take the blood of the Sin Offering and so make reconciliation for the sins of the people. There were only the ruins of Solomon's magnificent Temple, lying as they had been left by the Babylonians fifty years previously. There could be no Day of Atonement ceremonies, no presentation of an offering for sin to God, for the place where Atonement could be made was no longer there. But there was one thing they could do; they could offer sincere thanksgiving to God for the blessings they did have, the blessings of freedom to live their lives in their own land and to build anew the Temple where these sacrifices could be offered and the Covenant renewed. So Joshua the High Priest, of the line of Aaron, a High Priest who had never yet been able to execute the duties of his sacred office, and Zerubbabel, of the royal line, the legal king of Israel who had never yet been able—and never would be—to reign as king, only to act as the Persian appointed governor of Israel responsible to Cyrus King of Persia, stood up and built an altar on which burnt offerings could be offered. It is almost certain that they built that altar on the very spot in the ruined Temple where Solomon's great altar of sacrifice once stood, and by doing so demonstrated their faith that one day soon that Temple would rise anew.

So they offered their burnt offerings, symbols of thanksgiving and devotion and loyalty. As the smoke of the sacrifices ascended up into the still air towards God they looked up in faith and hope that at last God would redeem his promise to restore the sovereignty of the nation and give them freedom from the Gentile yoke of Persia. From that they went on into the seven day ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles, (Deut. 16. 13-15)

which told them to rejoice in the produce of the land and the labour of their hands which had been blessed to them of the Lord, and to render him due thanks for his munificence. But there was as yet no produce of the land and no results of labour; they had only been in the land three months. It is evident that their observance of this feast at this time was not a thanksgiving for blessings already received, but for blessings to come. They gathered together to express their faith in the coming fulfilment of Divine promise. God would be as good as his word.

Here is a lesson for the present. It is very possible to defer acknowledgment for the Lord's bounties until they have actually been received, something like waiting for the Christmas present to be delivered before expressing any interest in or friendship for the donor. How much better to express our feelings toward him before the loaves and fishes are distributed, to render thankfulness and loyalty and love not because He has given, but because we know that in his goodness He will give. The Psalmist bids us praise the Lord because "*it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves*" and we owe everything to him.

Two years later the foundation of the new Temple was laid. It had taken that time to assemble the materials — cedar wood from Lebanon, stone from the Judean quarries, gold and silver purchased by the contributions of the people. But in the Spring of 535 B.C. the work was started. Priests and Levites with trumpets and cymbals joined the singers in praising the Lord "*because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. And all the people shouted with a great shout. . . . but many of the Priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first Temple . . . wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy*" (Ezra 3. 11-12). Those old men, recalling the glories of Solomon's Temple as it stood in the days of their childhood, wept because of the desolation they had seen throughout their lives, and could not bring themselves to share the bright vision of the enthusiastic youngsters who now were looking forward to the glories of the new. A very human failing, and so understandable. Who amongst those who have grown old and grey in the faith who does not look back with nostalgia to the labours and triumphs and glories of the early days, failing to enter into the youthful enthusiasm of those who never knew those days but must in their turn go through the same sequence of illusion and disillusion, of expectation and disappointment, of an initial optimism which will surely be dimmed by the experience of later years? Surely our Lord looks down and understands, and allows the later sad-

nesses as well as the earlier joyfulness to play their part in the forming of that character which renders the sincere disciple ready for the Divine purposes at the last.

Sadly, the enthusiasm waned, the shouts of joy faded into silence. The work of Temple building languished. The enemies of Israel, the hated Samaritans, plotted to hinder the work. Ezra 4 tells the story, Finally the work ceased altogether. Sixteen years later the unfinished foundations were all that remained of the hopes and expectations of the beginning. Cyrus the benefactor of the Jews was long since dead, killed in battle in the East. Two successive kings of Persia had hindered and finally stopped the work (Ezra 4.24). The people had accepted the position and turned to their own interests, planting and building, farming and trading. The House of God lay desolate.

Then, in the second year of Darius King of Persia, prophets arose again in Israel. Two young men, Haggai and Zechariah, came to the front and re-awakened the nation's lost enthusiasm. Heedless of the possible wrath of the king, they set about the work with renewed vigour. It was not long before the Samaritans were complaining again, but this time the reaction was different. Darius investigated the Jews' claim that they were acting under mandate given by Cyrus, found that their assertion was correct, and promptly authorised the resumption of the work, threatening the Samaritans with dire penalties if they continued their opposition. The totally unexpected had happened; they had challenged the lion, and behold, it was only a lamb!

After four years assiduous labours, the Temple was finished and dedicated.

They could not have done it without faith. Faith in the leadership and the protective power of God. That celebrated chapter in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, extols the power of faith. We, brethren, says the writer of that Epistle in chapter 10, have access to the Father by a new and living way, through Christ, but in order to avail ourselves of it we must draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith (Heb. 10. 20). And to demonstrate the spiritual power resident in faith he occupies the whole of the 11th chapter with examples, taken from old time, of the mighty works done by men of God in the power of their faith. He might well have included the faith of Joshua, and Zerubbabel, and Haggai, and Zechariah, which brought about the building and the dedication of that Temple; this must have been one of the examples concerning which he says, "*the time would fail me to tell*" (Heb. 11.32). There were so many of them. And here is the lesson for the Christian. These men with-

stood opposition and obstruction and discouragement, and triumphed because of a fixed and inflexible faith that God was with them. Wherefore, he says in chapter 12, seeing we also are encircled by so great a company of witnesses, let us in our turn cast away the things which hinder, and run with patience in the course that is before us. "*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood*" he says "*striving against sin*". You have not yet come to the greatest of your testings; as life goes on the proving of your faith becomes increasingly severe and crucial, and all to the end that at the last you will be revealed pure gold, having no flaw, fit for the Master's future work. "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" said James (4.7). That is what those believing sons of Israel did in that day of the Temple's building, and in so doing set an example for all who should afterwards follow in their steps.

The time now was the beginning of the first month of the year, the time of Passover. What more natural than that they should organise and conduct a Passover feast that would stay long in their memories, a Passover that would go down in history. It was in the spirit of this great awakening of faith and zeal that they kept this Passover—perhaps one of the most memorable that Israel had ever known. It was memorable because it made so deep an impression upon the minds of all who participated. It made that impression because it meant so much more to them than did an ordinary Passover. The usual year-by-year celebration reminded them in a perfunctory sort of way of their ancestors' deliverance from Egypt, but it had grown to be a custom having some historical interest but that did not touch daily life very closely. This Passover was different. It denoted something more than their nation's deliverance from Egypt. It denoted something more than their own more recent deliverance from Babylon. It denoted each one's individual deliverance from the bonds of apathy and indifference which had wellnigh cost them the loss of their favoured standing before God. It marked their entrance into a new life, a life in which God and his holiness was to be placed first and become the centre around which all of life's actions and activities were to circle. The glowing words of Zechariah had taken firm root in their hearts, and they could not wait for the then far distant Millennial Age to realise their fulfilment, even although the real application of those words is to that Age. They must apply them to themselves at once, and they did. "*In that day*" he had said "*shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.*" Everything in life,

whether normally finding its place in secular or sacred use, is to be holy to God. "Whatsoever ye do" said the inspired Apostle at a later date "do all to the glory of God." So that Passover became a time of renewed dedication of life, consecration of heart, to the service of the Lord of Hosts.

There was a final Feast of the Restoration, but that was not to be until seventy long years had elapsed and faith had dwindled and died once more. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, king of Persia, Nehemiah the king's cup-bearer obtained leave of absence to visit Jerusalem on a reforming mission. He found the Temple deserted, the people sadly contaminated by alliances and association with the Samaritans and other peoples of the land, and Jerusalem itself still far from being the city of God's holiness. The old heroes of the early days, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah, were dead. Later governors had not concerned themselves about the spiritual welfare of the people; the present High Priest, Eliashib, grandson of Joshua, was disloyal to his commission and no fit leader in the things of God. Nehemiah's reforming methods were not like those of Haggai and Zechariah. He was a secular ruler, appointed governor of the province by the king of Persia, and he used his political authority to the full in reorganising Judea into a theocratic State. The principles of his work dominated Judean policy for many centuries afterward. With characteristic vigour he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and expelled the aliens. The people seem to have accepted his reforms with relief and approval; perhaps those seventy years' slow decline from the high principles and whole-hearted dedication to God of Zerubbabel's generation was leading to the realisation that all was not well with Jewry and a return to the ancient faith was more than overdue. At any rate, following this thorough cleansing of the nation, there was once again a great Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8) at which the original Covenant made with Moses at Sinai was reaffirmed and re-adopted; all the leaders of the people solemnly signed a declaration that they and the people would abide by it. "And there was very great gladness".

So the story ends, in those eventful eight to tenth chapters of Nehemiah. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" he said to them. How true that is! The joy that comes from a full and

sincere consecration of heart and life to the Lord, a clear and definite separation from the interests and distractions of earth, the "people of the land", and a firm, unyielding resistance to every opposing and seductive influence, of the enemies of our faith, this joy it is that will give us the strength to overcome. Like Elijah, who partook of the heaven-provided sustenance in his time of extremity, and in the strength of that meat went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God, we, reaching out to take to ourselves every spiritual provision that is made for our needs and maintaining faith, zeal and determination, will remain unshaken by all those things wherewith the earth to-day is being shaken. We shall perceive, at the last, the fruits of our faith in the coming to earth of that heavenly Jerusalem under the beneficent rule of which death is to cease and all sorrow and sighing is to flee away.

There is a great lesson for us in all of this, great doctrinal truth that we must take to ourselves. It is that cleansing must precede consecration, faith and zeal precede entrance into Divine favour and a place in Divine purposes. Not for nothing did the Apostles exhort the generation that witnessed Pentecost to repent and be converted so that times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3.19). There is a great work of Temple building going on during this Age but God cannot use any in this work except they first be cleansed from contact with the people of the land, separated completely to his service, and then be animated by that spirit of faith and belief, zeal and enthusiasm, which alone can make them mighty through God in the doing of his work. The powers of evil may threaten and forbid; it is the spirit that trusts in the over-abounding power of God Most High, that will defy the forces of unrighteousness and lay hands to God's work, in full confidence that He will defend and prosper, that is triumphant at last. Once let us be fully persuaded, as Israel was persuaded by Haggai and Zechariah, that God's righteousness must assuredly prevail at the end and all the forces of evil be vanquished and flee away, and the battle, so far as we are concerned, is won. We shall stand and see the Temple completed, and know that in that Sanctuary the Lord of all will find a dwelling-place and a place of meeting with all nations.

It was the custom of Christians in the early centuries to stand whilst prayer was being made, the one who was offering prayer doing so with arms extended as if in blessing. Engravings in the Catacombs at Rome depict this usage in repeated

instances and this in turn explains the words of 1 Tim. 2.8, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

BELSHAZZAR, LAST KING OF BABYLON

The story of the writing on the wall that heralded the fall of Babylon is well-known to most Bible readers, and in fact has passed into a proverb—"the writing on the wall" is an expression used in every-day speech. The man who occupies the centre of the stage in the story was the last to exercise royal power in the history of the Babylonian empire — Belshazzar the king. This ruler takes his place with Sennacherib the Assyrian as one of the two who publicly defied God, and met retribution.

Until a little over a century ago, the name of Belshazzar was unknown outside Bible history. None of the old classical historians mention him; the only ancient writers who do are Josephus and Jerome, both using the Greek form of his name, Balthasar, clearly taking their information from the Bible. On this account 19th century critics of the Book of Daniel dismissed the account in Dan. 5 as fiction. "*Belshazzar—history knows no such king!*" wrote one scholar of the early 19th century. Then in 1854 the Assyriologist Sir Henry Rawlinson set out to decipher some tablets discovered in the ruins of Ur of the Chaldees and found they were authentic records of the fall of Babylon, made at the time by order of Cyrus the Persian, who captured the city. These records contained the name of Belshazzar and made it clear that at the time of the fall of the city he was ruling as regent in the place of his father, who was absent in distant parts. So the Book of Daniel was proved to be correct in this respect and the critics' opinions unjustified.

The Bible account in Dan. 5 and the tablets confirm each other and the latter explain several allusions in the former. Published and made available to scholars and students over the period 1882-1929, some five hundred different tablets in number, they afford a very clear picture of the last days of Babylon.

Belshazzar was the eldest son of Nabonidus the last true king of Babylon. Nabonidus reigned for seventeen years but during the final ten years was mainly absent from Babylon with his forces, building a new city and fortress at Tema, four hundred miles away in the heart of Arabia. He appointed his son, the Crown Prince, to reign as regent; this is why Daniel refers to Belshazzar as king. Daniel never mentions Nabonidus and there is probably a reason for this. Nabonidus was not of the blood royal. He was the son of a Babylonian nobleman and had married Nitocris the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. By devious

means he had eliminated other contenders for the throne and some seven years after the great king's death had secured it for himself. Daniel, loyal to his old master and friend Nebuchadnezzar, probably refused to recognise this upstart's right to the throne, but did so recognise that of Belshazzar through his mother Nitocris.

Two allusions in Dan. 5 are illuminated by this fact. Belshazzar promised Daniel that if he could interpret the meaning of the mystic writing he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. His father the king was first, he himself second, and so Daniel could only be third. The other is that the queen of vs. 10, who came in to advise Belshazzar and was able to tell him about Daniel and his services in the days of Nebuchadnezzar was obviously his mother, Nitocris the queen-mother. Some forty years earlier she would have known Daniel well when he was her father's Chief Minister. (The allusions in this narrative to Belshazzar being the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar should be read "grandson". The Bible makes no distinction between sons and grandsons, the same word serving for both; see Gen. 29.5 and I Kin. 19.6 for similar examples, Laban said to be son of Nahor and Jehu son of Nimshi whereas both were in reality grandsons.)

From the many tablets which have been found—including commercial documents signed by Belshazzar himself—he would appear to have been a shrewd business man, a good administrator of government, a capable military leader and a great devotee of the Babylonian gods. He is also indicated as being very much a "man about town" and given to high living. It is in this latter capacity that he is presented in the 5th chapter of Daniel.

"*Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords. and drank wine before the thousand.*" This was hardly the time for a feast. Cyrus the Persian had been ravaging the adjacent lands for something like six or seven years, adding to his territories, and was at this moment at Opis, only some sixty miles from Babylon, advancing swiftly. The troops of Gubaru, the Persian General, were even now encircling the city while the feast proceeded. Nabonidus was out in the field somewhere with his army, leaving Belshazzar to defend the city. Heedless of the threat and oblivious to the danger of his position, the young prince caroused with his companions and his womenfolk. Growing more reckless as the wine flowed, he gave orders that the sacred

vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Solomon's Temple half a century previously and placed in the idol Temple of Marduk in Babylon should be brought to the palace and used by the guests. This, even for Babylonians, was sacrilege and in his right mind even Belshazzar would have hesitated to do such a thing. The cups and goblets brought, they were filled and used to do honour to the gods of Babylon. In that moment there appeared the form of a man's hand writing on the wall and the revelry abruptly ceased.

"Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin"! "Numbered, numbered, weighed and divided"! To the assembled company the words conveyed no meaning, but the mystery of the occurrence filled them with foreboding and terror. (*A full account of Belshazzar's feast appeared in the issue of this journal for Sept./Oct. 1972 in which the circumstance is treated at greater length. Ed.*) Daniel, called to the scene at the instigation of Queen Nitocris, his knowledge of the Divine programme involving the superseding of the political power of Babylon by that of Persia, interpreted the mystery. "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians".

The Persians were already within the gates. According to some of the classical historians they found the entire city given over to revelry and

the gates unguarded. Xenophon—who is not a very reliable historian—says that Gubaru made his way to the palace and "slew the impious king", without mentioning names. This is confirmation of the Bible account so far as it goes, for Nabonidus is known to have survived and been appointed governor of the Persian province of Carmania by Cyrus after the fall of Babylon. None of the tablets so far discovered say how or when Belshazzar met his death but none of them mention his name after the fall of the city. Nothing therefore impugns the accuracy of the Scripture account.

The picture in Daniel 5 is that of a capable and active man who because of a fatal weakness for dissolute living failed his country at a crucial moment and lost the empire his forebears had built up. Unwittingly he became an instrument in the hands of God. It was decreed that Babylon should fall, and Isaiah nearly two centuries earlier had foretold the name of the man—Cyrus—who would overthrow it. Now that the time had come, by the providence of the Most High the destiny of the doomed empire was in the hands of a man of straw, too weak to withstand the resolute conqueror who came against him. And the very name of the instrument dropped out of history, preserved only in the writings of one who, in that festal hall, had pronounced God's judgment upon him.

Renewed Strength

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isa. 40. 31 RSV).

Life, we find soon enough in our Christian experience, is a fierce battle even for those who have a strong faith. Great are the problems that beset us in our homes, business and even in our relationship with other believers. How to react to family pressures, or unfair competition of our every day world of business and occupation, is our need. We often tend to let the grasp on our faith slip a bit, as if it were a hindrance to our everyday walk. But it need not be so, for our heavenly Father has promised to give us the needed strength to meet each need for that day. Even the Apostle Paul learned that lesson with a "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness". So many of the Lord's people who have been in the way for many years have found the touch of his hand to give strength and give courage for the daily war-

fare. How often have the weary found his hand grasping ours and lifting us up just when we thought all was hopeless. Again He speaks: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. . . . He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength" (Isa. 40. 28, 29. RSV).

To those who have learned to trust him, the Eternal One is a never failing source of strength in every time of need. They find his strength sufficient in each time of need, whether it be sickness, bereavement, poverty or loneliness.

Let us be determined to trust him and walk the ways of his appointment. Today, we find "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will not we fear". Tomorrow, "When the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5. 4 RSV).

From "Berean Messenger".



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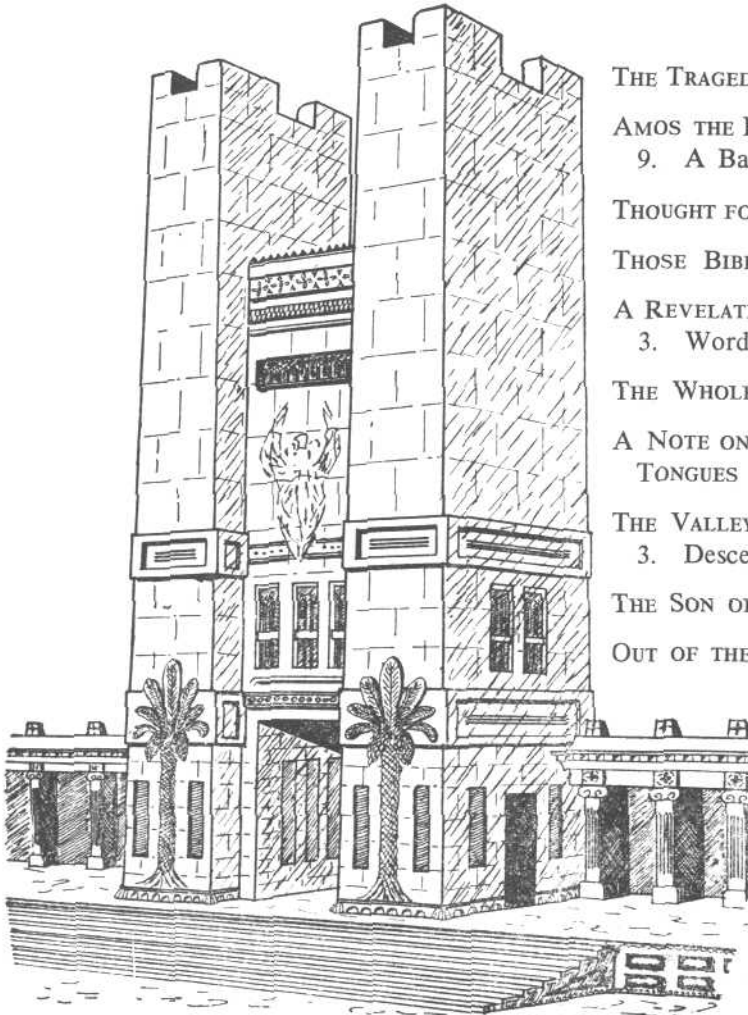
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published May 1st

Next issue July 1st

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

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The Golden Door

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

*"Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to be free;
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed,
 To me;
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

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

NOTICES

Coming Conventions

Yeovil. Sunday, May 4, at Westfield Schools, Yeovil. Programmes and information from Mr. P. Chislett, 108 St. Michaels Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset.

Blaby. Saturday-Sunday, 17-18 May at Blaby Social Centre. Details and programmes from Mr. S. P. Couling, Haythog Farm, Crick, Northants, NN6 7SN.

Chesham. Saturday-Sunday, 7-8 June at the Malt House, Elgiva Lane, Chesham. Details and programmes from Mr. F. Binns, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks., HP5 3ED.

Yeovil. Saturday to Tuesday, August 23-26, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil. Programmes and information from Mrs. P. Stracy, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset. Limited accommodation at nearby guest houses is available; please advise needs as early as possible.

In this issue. Requests have been received for articles dealing with the betrayal of our Lord by Judas, and with the confusion of languages at Babel. Both these subjects were presented in these columns some twenty years ago and they are included again in this issue in the thought that many who were not at that time readers of the "Monthly" will be interested, and those who were will be happy to refresh their memories.

Gone from us

— ❁ —

Sis. - Anderson (Blaby)
 Sis. H. Chapman (Windermere)
 Sis. D. M. Lane (Canterbury)
 Bro. A. Palmer (Banbury, late London)
 Bro. P. L. Read (St. Louis, U.S.A.)
 Bro. T. Waters (Blaby)
 Sis. V. Webb (London)
 Sis. F. Walton (Chorleywood)

— ❁ —

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

THE TRAGEDY OF JUDAS

*Thoughts on the story
of the great betrayal*

The name of Judas is emblazoned on the pages of history as that of the greatest traitor of all time. His crime has been held to be the greatest of all crimes, and old-time theology had no doubt that the fiercest flames of Hell were reserved for the man who sank so low that he betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss.

The common impression is that Judas betrayed his Master for sordid gain—that for the paltry inducement of thirty pieces of silver he was prepared to forswear his allegiance, relinquish his prospective place in the Messianic kingdom, and deliver to certain death One whom he knew to be innocent. That impression comes from a superficial reading of the narrative; a closer examination of the story shows that there was much more involved.

Judas was not a Galilean. Alone of the twelve he was a southerner, a Judean. "Judas Iscariot" is the Greek form of his Hebrew name "Judah of Kerioth" in south-east Judea. As a Judean he probably rather despised his Galilean comrades and perhaps cherished the belief that by birth and breeding he was the one best fitted to be the immediate confidant and lieutenant of the Son of David. In joining the band of disciples he must have been perfectly sincere; we cannot imagine Jesus choosing him otherwise. It was afterwards that he conceived and followed the course of conduct which had such terrible results.

Of the life of Judas as a disciple little is known. On only one occasion does he occupy the central position and in that instance it is to his discredit. When the repentant woman broke her alabaster vase of perfume in the house of Simon (John 12. 1-8) it seems that Judas protested at the apparent waste, suggested that it were better that its value be given to the poor. John declares that he said this because he was a thief and stole what had been contributed to the needs of the disciples. In this connection it should be noted that Mark and Matthew credit the same remark to "his disciples" and to "some" at the feast. (Mk. 14. 3-9; Matt. 26. 6-13). It might well be that several of the disciples were disposed to criticise Mary's action and that Judas merely uttered the thoughts that were in several minds.

But this statement, that Judas was a thief, cannot be dismissed without further examination. Why was he a thief? Why should this man, living in communal fellowship with his fellow-disciples and their Master, purloin any portion of what must at best have been extremely slender finan-

cial resources? They were men whose needs were few and simple; they lived plainly and austere; if the motive was to "get rich" surely he would not continue to waste his time with this band of pilgrims when there were plenty of roads to financial prosperity for a quick-witted man like Judas. Is it possible that Judas, who was the treasurer anyway, was setting aside money, secretly as he thought, to build up a fund to be used for the advancement of the interests of Jesus when the time should come? That hypothesis may seem more feasible after we have turned our attention to the story of the betrayal, and in particular Judas' motive for acting as he did.

Was the motive greed for money? The price paid was "thirty pieces of silver" coins known as the "tetradrachm of Antioch" worth intrinsically about two shillings each, but having regard to the difference in purchasing value of money between the First Century and today, representing a much greater value by our standards. Judas received what would be the equivalent of about £500 or 1000 dollars to us at the present time. It is said that this was the price customary in Israel for the purchase of a slave, and it certainly was the compensation fixed by the Mosaic Law for the death of a slave or servant (Exod. 21.32). Is it likely that if Judas was driven by purely monetary considerations he would have bartered so valuable a "prize" for the traditional price of an ordinary servant? Knowing of the priest's anxiety to secure Jesus, one would have expected Judas to stand out for a considerably higher figure before setting his seal to the arrangement. That his ideas in matters financial were of an exalted nature we know from the incident in Simon's house where he assessed the value of the perfume at three hundred denarii, equivalent to a purchasing power to-day of £2000 or 4000 dollars.

All this talk of theft, trafficking, bargaining, does reveal one fact. Judas was not of the same mental calibre as the others. Although slow of heart to grasp the meaning of Christ's life and death, they were nevertheless men devoted to a purpose, the following of their Master where He would lead them, away from earthly things and toward the world of the spirit. Judas, on the other hand, saw nothing beyond earthly things. He was evidently obsessed with the idea of a purely earthly Messianic kingdom and failed to comprehend anything beyond that. His mind was saturated with the vivid stories of Old Testament history, when the power of God was displayed

against his enemies in spectacular manner; his idea of the Messiah coloured with the popular belief in a mighty King who would relentlessly crush all resistance; his Jewish patriotism stirred as he pictured Israel at the head of affairs and he himself a leading statesman in that kingdom. He must have lived for the day when Jesus would drop the mask of humility and gentleness, and reveal himself as the "King, travelling in the greatness of his strength". (Isa. 63. 1).

For three years Judas had waited for this climax. He endured the hardships of the ministry and the persecution of Pharisees and priests, solacing himself doubtless with the thought that the tables would soon be turned and he would then crush these proud rulers into the dust. Whilst the other disciples were taking in, however imperfectly, the teachings of their Lord, and being prepared for the great change in outlook and understanding which was to come at Pentecost, Judas was wrapped up in his dreams of future power and glory. The others went forward to loftier heights of understanding; Judas stood still.

Nevertheless, he did believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He had seen him work miracles, even to the raising of the dead. He had seen him feed the thousands with food miraculously brought into being. He knew—none better—the powers that Jesus had at his command, and when this fact is realised the impossibility of Judas having intended to sell Jesus into death for the sake of the money is manifest—for he knew that Jesus possessed the power both to avoid arrest and to deliver himself should He be arrested. Judas must have seen that power exercised on occasions when men sought to take Jesus, and could not. We must therefore accept the evident fact that Judas never expected the betrayal to result in the death of his Master.

Picture his state of mind as the months went by. From the beginning of his ministry our Lord had pursued his mission without effective interference by the authorities. When the people of Nazareth tried to throw him over the cliff he passed through them. (Luke 4. 23-30). When the officers tried to arrest him they could not. When He expelled the traders from the Temple none could stop him. Although He certainly had not assumed the privileges of a king in Israel, He had continued his work despite the authorities' attempts to suppress it. When He rode into Jerusalem five days before his crucifixion the heart of Judas must have beat fast—was this, at last, to be the moment of declaration? Was He now to declare war on Rome and lead the jubilant crowds in a great crusade to recover Jewish sovereignty? It is easy to imagine the

eagerness with which Judas watched every action of Jesus at that time!

The moment passed, and the expected declaration was not made. What was even worse to Judas was the fact that Jesus now began to talk of imminent death. Perhaps for the first time, Judas began to be seriously alarmed respecting the materialisation of his hopes.

It might have been then that Judas decided to precipitate the crisis. If Jesus would not assert his kingship voluntarily, his hand must be forced. In ordinary times, knowing his Master's power, he would not have contemplated such a thing, but with Jesus in this strange mood, talking of suffering and death, desperate measures were necessary.

So the temptation came to Judas to contrive the arrest of Jesus now that he was in a frame of mind that would permit arrest, in the belief that, faced with the crisis, Jesus would assert his power to overthrow his adversaries. The standard of rebellion having thus been raised, Jesus would be compelled to continue to the destruction of his enemies and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

It must have been with such thoughts in mind that Judas sought audience with the priests. Several considerations support this conclusion. In the first place it might well be asked why the priests should pay good money to Judas for pointing out a man whom they knew perfectly well already. Secondly, why choose the Passover, a most inconvenient time, when a week or so later Jerusalem would be quieter and the trial could proceed at leisure without the elaborate arrangements which did have to be made to avoid interference with the feast. Thirdly, that strange—perhaps ironical—remark of Judas "When ye have him, hold him fast". The most reasonable explanation of these factors is that the priests, knowing Jesus' power, were by no means sure that they would be able to arrest him at all. They had to rely on Judas to tell them when the psychological moment had come, and when on the evening of the Last Supper he came with his news that now was the time, Jesus was in no mood to resist arrest, they got together a heavily armed band of men and set out to make the attempt.

Wherein lay the necessity of the kiss? It was, of course, a customary greeting between friends, but Judas had been with Jesus only a few hours before. Was there some idea in his mind that by this display of affection Jesus might understand his motive in betraying him, and realise that the purpose behind it was the furthering of the cause of the Kingdom? Did he hope that Jesus would look upon his action as one of mis-directed zeal,

and when all had ended happily, perhaps reprove him mildly for taking the direction of things into his own hands, but grant him nevertheless a high place in that Kingdom which he had thus helped to establish?

So far the scheme had proceeded according to plan. Jesus was in the hands of his enemies, on trial for life, and it remained only for that assertion of his power by means of which He would extricate himself and inaugurate a new era. And it must have been at some time during the long hours of that night and the following morning, when Jesus was being taken back and forth between the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod, that Judas received the terrible shock which unhinged his brain and drove him to suicide in a frenzy of remorse.

Jesus was not going to save himself! Too late, Judas realised that something had gone terribly wrong with his plan, and that Jesus had no intention of using the powers He possessed to escape his enemies. He intended to accept, unresistingly, the sentence they passed upon him. Perhaps, at last, some dim understanding of words so far ignored penetrated the dark recesses of Judas' mind. It might be that he recalled other writings of the prophets, speaking, not of power and glory, but of a despised and rejected One who would be led as a lamb to the slaughter. Demented at the enormity of his crime, he rushed to the priests with his frantic cry "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood*". His pathetic action in returning the money, as though that could undo the fell work of the past few hours, is an index to his state of mind. A vivid contrast between the awful remorse of Judas and the callous disregard of the priests is revealed by their reply "*What is that to us? See thou to that!*"

So he "*cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself*". It may be true, as Origen suggests, that in his fearful stress of mind he may have had some idea of meeting the Lord in the world of the dead and confessing his guilt to him. What is more likely is that in his unreasoning despair he saw no escape from Divine wrath, inevitably to be visited upon the man who had killed the Messiah. Israel had waited long centuries for their promised Deliverer, and now by his own precipitateness he had encompassed Messiah's death and frustrated the purposes of God. How could he expect mercy or forgiveness for so great a sin?

Paradoxical as it may appear, Judas was probably the only one of the twelve who never lost faith that Jesus was the Messiah. The others abandoned their belief temporarily when the crisis came. Judas never lost his, but he failed

because his belief was a purely intellectual one, and never entered the heart. It was built upon the glowing prophecies of the Old Testament and he never saw the light of the new revelation which Jesus manifested.

What is to be the ultimate fate of the betrayer? When Judas' tortured spirit found quietness at last in death inflicted by his own hand, did he go down into the "*blackness of darkness for ever*", or will he yet have opportunity to demonstrate just how sincere was the remorse of that fearful night? St. Peter, in the only reference made to Judas after Pentecost, said "*It is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and his bishopric (oversight, charge) let another take*". (Acts 1.20). Peter was not quoting accurately, and he seems to have been using the text in an illustrative manner rather than claiming the fulfilment of a prophecy. His quotation was taken from Psa. 69. 25 with possibly an added word from Psa. 109.8. Many years ago Andrew Jukes pointed out that the same Psalm is applied by St. Paul in Rom. 11. 9-10 to faithless Israel and by St. Peter in Acts 1.20 to Judas. The Pauline application allows that Israel's casting off is not irrevocable; eventually "*all Israel shall be saved*" (Rom. 11. 26) and logically therefore the Petrine application to Judas need imply no more than the betrayer's loss of his high calling as an Apostle, without any commitment as to his ultimate fate.

There is also the statement in John 17.12 "*Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition.*" This has been interpreted to mean that Judas is irrevocably condemned, but in fact the expression is intended to be taken in relation to the Kingdom glory which Judas had lost. It is not that he was cut off from all hope of life but he was cut off from the Kingdom. The primary meaning behind the word "perdition" is loss, of life or destiny in this connection, and the same Greek root word is used in those instances where Jesus refers to his disciples losing life for his sake and of finding a new heavenly life. Literally, Jesus said that none of his disciples were lost to their High Calling save the "son of loss" or "son of destruction", the one who by his action had shown that he must of necessity lose and be cut off from his prospective place in the spiritual kingdom of our Lord.

There is a more definite word in Matt. 26.24 where Jesus said "*Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born*". Now as those words stand in the A.V. they involve something of an absurdity, for if Judas had never been born, never known conscious existence, it is clear that

nothing could ever have been either good or bad for him. Wilson's "*Diaglott*" suggests an alternative interpretation in his rendering "Good were it for that man if he were not born", i.e. *not born yet*. Better had it been personally for Judas if his birth had been delayed until after the First Advent than for him, born as he was contemporary with Jesus, to have stooped to so vile a deed and earned the censure of every succeeding generation.

Thomas Allen has shown that the Authorised Version has taken an unwarrantable liberty with the Greek grammar in this verse. He says "Beyond all question, the original requires a wholly different rendering. 'Good were it for him,' i.e. *Christ*, 'if that man,' i.e. *Judas*, 'had not been born'. In the opening of the sentence *Christ* is designated by the pronoun *autos*, and *Judas* by the pronoun *ekeinos*." (*Autos* is 'him', 'himself'; *ekeinos* is 'that' *Ed.*) "What our version does, in violation of grammar, is to turn round, and, in the last clause of the same sentence, to invert this order, applying *autos* to *Judas* and *ekeinos* to *Christ*". The literal Greek thus reads "*The Son of Man indeed goes as it has been written of him; alas for that man by whom the Son of Man is delivered up. Good it were for him if that man had not been born*". Remembering that *ouai*, often translated "woe" in the A.V., is an interjection of sorrow meaning "Alas", we can imagine our Lord uttering this word as an expression of grief at the defection of his trusted follower.

The writer of this treatise feels the most probable explanation of the words to be that Jesus was quoting from the Book of Enoch, where this expression occurs relative to the position of sinners standing before the Messiah at his coming in glory. This book, although not in the canonical Hebrew Scriptures, was well known in our Lord's day and there are a number of allusions to it in his sayings recorded in the Gospels. In this instance He may well have been thinking of the Last Judgment described in 1 Enoch 37. 1-6 which runs in part "When the assembly of the righteous shall appear, and sinners shall be judged for their sins, and when the Righteous One shall appear . . . where then will be the dwelling of the sinners, and where the resting-place of those who have denied the Lord of Spirits? *It had been good for them if they had not been born.*" Now if in fact Jesus was using this expression from

the Book of Enoch to describe the position of Judas, the disciples, familiar with that same Book as they certainly were, would immediately take his meaning. Judas, who had expected to be among the "saints" associated with Jesus in judging the world in the day of his Second Advent, the Messianic Kingdom, would instead have to take his place with the unrighteous who are to be the subjects of judgment in that Kingdom. Since Jesus elsewhere makes it clear that He expected that judgment to be a time of trial, with repentance and conversion on the part of at least some, as witness his references to the opportunities for life to be extended to all men under that Kingdom, the verse in question need not be held to place Judas in any more unfavourable position than any other members of Adam's race who come before the Great White Throne to face the eternal issues of righteousness and evil, life and death, in that day.

But this question of the ultimate fate of Judas must be determined, not by the somewhat tortuous exposition of ambiguous texts, but by reference to first principles. It is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture that Jesus gave himself a Ransom for All, that every member of Adam's race may experience the reversal of the Adamic sentence and enjoy a full and fair opportunity under Millennial conditions, with the Devil restrained, to come a full knowledge of the truth of God in Christ and on that basis make his own deliberate choice for Christ or Satan, good or evil. The denial of that opportunity even to one only of men is a denial of an essential feature of the Divine Plan for every man. No matter how heinous the sin of Judas, he must stand before the Great White Throne with all others and hear the terms upon which he can, if he will, achieve reconciliation with God.

It may be—we know not—but it may be, in that day, that there will be a man, rather quiet, rather humbled, bearing visible evidence of a great chastening, whose voice may be more than usually low as he speaks of the life that was his upon earth before. It may be that such a man—we cannot say—will be brought before the Father of all as one who has walked the Highway of Holiness and hears, with full heart, the tender accents of One whom he so ignorantly and treacherously betrayed saying "Father, forgive him; he knew not what he did".

If the life which you have chosen is really worthy of you, it involves self-sacrifice and pain. Shall you flinch and draw back? Shall you ask

for yourself another life? Oh no, not another life, but another self! Ask God to fill you with himself, and then calmly look up and go on.

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

9. A Basket of Summer Fruit

Amos 8. 1-14

At the opening of the 8th chapter Amos is back in his native land—Judah. His mission to the Ten Tribe Kingdom was completed and Amaziah the apostate High Priest of Bethel had ordered him to leave the country. Amos had foretold the imminent downfall of the kingdom and carrying away of the people into captivity, a prediction which was fulfilled thirty years later. Now he must needs tell the people of Judah that the same fate awaited them, although more than a hundred and fifty years were to pass before that prediction was fulfilled, in its turn. But the one was as sure as the other; that hundred and fifty years saw a century of evil kings—Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah. It ended with the stern condemnation of God in those final words to Zedekiah *“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him”* (Ezek. 21.27). It was this, the final dispersion of Judah from the promised land, that Amos now had to declare.

“Thus hath the Lord declared unto me: and behold, a basket of summer fruit” (ch. 8.1).

Here is the same formula that introduced the three symbol-visions of chapter 7, depicting the irrevocable three-stage, captivity-judgment upon the Ten Tribes. Just as irrevocable, now, was the Divine Judgment soon to come upon the Two Tribes. Even though the reigns of the two God-fearing kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, had yet to come, their influence for good failed to survive their deaths and in each case the king had hardly been put in his grave before the people had turned to idolatry again. Only thirteen years after Amos delivered this message to the heedless people of Judah the youthful Isaiah saw his vision of the Lord in his Temple and received his own commission to go out and preach. The Lord at the same time warned him that they would close their eyes and ears to the appeal because they had deliberately set themselves against God and did not wish to be converted. *“Go ye”* the Lord had said to Isaiah *“and tell this people, Ye shall hear indeed but ye shall not understand, and ye shall see indeed but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with*

their ears and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (Isa. 6.9-11 LXX. See also Matt. 13.14-15, Acts 28.26-27). The Lord already knew that the case was hopeless; now the penalty of the Mosaic covenant, laid down seven centuries previously, must most certainly be invoked. So Amos knew, as he had done when he saw the earlier visions relating to the Ten Tribes, that he must now proclaim the doom of Judah.

“Amos, what seest thou?” asked the Lord. The prophet looked again and gave the only possible reply. *“A basket of summer fruit”* he responded. The word indicates the last fruits of the harvest, fruits already verging upon the over-ripe and crying out for gathering. This was the end of the harvest. The fields were to be cleared after this. His Spirit-filled mind already began to perceive the meaning of the vision, and it was with sad heart that he listened to the Lord’s voice confirming his fears. *“The end is come upon my people of Israel. I will not overlook their deeds any more. And the sacred songs of the Temple shall be changed into weeping in that day, saith the Lord God. And the dead shall be flung out without burial and without lamentation”*. (ch. 8. 2-3).

Amos knew what he had to do. He must declare this coming judgment to the people of Judah just as he had already done to the people of Samaria. Their sins were much the same; oppression of the poor, deceit and robbery, gluttony and luxurious indulgence, and above all things neglect of God and true worship. He had got to say all over again much the same things that he had already said. And he must do so in the sure knowledge, as with his fellow-prophet Isaiah who was so soon to follow him, that the people would not hearken and would continue in their ways and would inevitably incur the judgment. For the second time he must stand in the sanctuary and announce the coming of the end.

This time it was not the idolatrous sanctuary at Bethel; it was the Temple of God in Jerusalem. Amos must have taken his stand in the outer court of the magnificent edifice built by Solomon not much more than a couple of centuries previously. There, where king, priests and people alike were gathered and would hear him, the lowly herdsman of Tekoa delivered his last and most significant message.

That message was in two parts, divided by a still further vision, the most momentous of all. Amos probably paid two visits to the Temple, one before and one after that vision. At this moment, though, he was inspired by the vision of the basket of summer fruit and the Lord's words to him in that connection. The end had come for Judah, and the Lord would not relent. More accurately, perhaps, He could not. There was no basis left for finding an excuse for clemency. Not long afterwards the historian of the period wrote of these days *"Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."* (2 Chron. 36. 14-16). It was in the knowledge of that terrible condition of society that Amos went forward to deliver his last message.

The remainder of chapter 8, from vs. 4 to vs. 14, enshrines what he said. It is a recapitulation of the same catalogue of crimes against God which he had already recited to the Ten Tribe people of Bethel. Little can be gained by dwelling on them now. Vss. 4-6 refer to the oppressions of the rich and powerful, swallowing up the needy and buying the poor into slavery, trading dishonestly *"making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit"*. Short weight (the ephah was a measure of capacity) and over-charging, and using false balances to weigh out the goods into the bargain. *"The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob"* thundered the prophet in his excess of indignation *"surely I will never forget any of their works"* (ch. 9.7). A significant expression, that. The term "excellency of Jacob" or perhaps more accurately the "glory of Jacob" can refer to the Promised Land itself as the treasure inherited by the people of Israel: it can denote the mission and office of that people, to be God's witness to the world, and it can be applied to the personal majesty of Israel's God. The same word is rendered "glory" more often in these connections than "excellency". In this verse it would seem to refer to the Divine Person and majesty. In this verse God has sworn by himself, indicative of the fixity of his intention, as in Gen. 22.16 in the incident of Abraham and Isaac *"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing . . . that in blessing I will bless thee"*.

Commenting on this latter text, the writer to the Hebrews says *"Because God could swear by none greater, he swore by himself"* (Heb. 6.13). Here in Amos the Lord swears by himself that He will no longer overlook the transgression of Judah and will exact due retribution.

In a rare flash of inspiration the prophet likens the coming disaster to the desolation of the land by a universal flood. The land will tremble, he says (ch. 8.8) and every one lament; the flood of waters will oversweep the countryside and destroy the works of man just as the Flood of Noah's day brought the "world that was" to an end. In a masterly fashion Amos combines two natural pictures into one that he might lead up to the brighter side of the picture beyond the judgment. This destructive flood of vs. 8 is also likened to the annual inundation of the Nile in Egypt. In Noah's day the universal Flood swept over the land and destroyed the old world because of man's transgression. In Egypt the Nile flood sweeps over the land and obliterates all the landmarks, but when it recedes it leaves behind the rich silt which makes possible the seed-sowing and harvest of a new year. The flood of Amos not only destroys the old corrupt system; it also, like the Nile flood, has in it the promise of a new and better order of things in which rightdoing will take root and prosper. He is going to say more about that in chapter 9.

Now comes the most momentous aspect of this final catastrophe that is to come upon Judah, the withdrawal of the Divine word. Because the warnings of his prophets are consistently ignored, the Lord will withdraw himself from further communication with his people and leave them to their fate. In practice this did not occur until the eleventh hour, for Jeremiah the prophet was constant in his warnings and advice right up to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians; but after that God turned away and his voice was no more heard. Verse 9 depicts that sad situation in symbol. *"It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day"*. Commentators habitually look for a convenient solar eclipse occurring in the time of Amos to fulfil this prediction, and several such have been claimed, but this overlooks the fact that the prediction refers to a time a hundred and fifty years later. In point of fact the allusion is a metaphor and its application and meaning is not hard to discern. This is Israel's sun, the word of God through the prophets, which is to go down prematurely and leave the nation in spiritual darkness. Micah, only a generation afterwards, saw this when he said *"the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over*

them . . . for there is no answer of God" (Micah 3.6-7). The only prophets left will be the false ones, and they will have nothing to say. Jeremiah, referring to Judah at the time of this judgment, said of the nation "*Her sun is gone down while it was yet day . . . and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword of their enemies, saith the Lord*" (Jer. 15.9). This is the meaning of this darkening of the sun in the clear day.

Later on Isaiah was to assure the true-hearted in Israel that this was not to be for ever; Israel's sun is to rise again. "*Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*". . . he cried "*Thy sun shall no more go down . . . for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended*" (Isa. 60.1, 30). This is to be the glorious sequel to follow after all the disciplinary judgments have been inflicted; Isaiah had a great deal to say about this, and it was built upon, and an expansion of, the relatively brief outline of that glorious sequel which Amos gives, at the end, in his 9th chapter.

But the result at the time of the judgment was to be mourning, and lamentation, and sackcloth, for the departed glory of God's ancient people, as is alluded to in verse 10. When the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar came, they destroyed the city and the Temple, laid waste the countryside, and took the people captive to Babylon. Too late, the nation realised the truth of all that the prophets had told them, prophets they had ignored and despised. Mourning, lamentation and sackcloth! "*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*" (Psa. 137. 1). Away in the alien land they began to feel after God but the way back was necessarily hard and slow. They were now subject to an idolatrous people and power. The Temple, the centre of their worship and ritual, was no more. The sacred feasts, for which the Temple was essential, could no longer be observed, at least with the ritual required by the instructions given by Moses. The Day of Atonement ceremonies, which figuratively released the people from sin annually, could not be held. The whole of their religious life and practice was thrown into disarray. "*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*" (Psa. 137.4). All that was foretold by Amos. "*The days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*" (ch. 8.11-12). Eloquent words, and self-explanatory, except perhaps for the somewhat cryptic expression "*from the north to the*

east". Why these particular points of the compass? One would have thought north to south more appropriate. The word for "east" is "sun-rising". Was this another hint of a better time to come after the judgment? The north was always the expression used for the source of Israel's enemies; always they came "from the north" as indeed they did in actual fact. The Babylonians, whose country lay east of Judah, had to circumvent the intervening desert and invade the land from the north. Did this word mean that the famine of the word of God was to endure from the destruction of the nation at the hands of the invaders from the north to Israel's sunrising at the dawn of Millennial day?

A final word against the idolatry which Judah had copied from Samaria, the Ten-Tribe kingdom, and Amos has finished "*They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, The sacred road of Beer-sheba liveth, even they shall fall, and never rise up again*" (vs. 14).

The sin of Samaria was idolatry. They had erected and maintained two centres of heathen worship, one at Bethel in the south of their territory, one at Dan in the extreme north. Another idolatrous shrine was maintained by the Two-Tribe kingdom at Beer-Sheba, at the extreme south of Judah (hence the expression "from Dan to Beer-Sheba" denoting the full length of the Promised Land from north to south). The one at Dan was established in the days of the Judges and one of the descendants of Moses was its first priest (see Jud. 18). That at Bethel was set up by Jeroboam I when the Ten Tribes seceded from the united kingship of David's posterity. The "high place" at Beer-Sheba is first mentioned in the reign of Josiah when in his reforming zeal he destroyed it, but that it had existed from at least the time of Solomon is probable. Now Amos says that reverence rendered to these godless shrines of Dan and Beer-Sheba would be done away and never restored. That prediction also was realised in fact. After the return from the captivity there was no more worship of other gods.

So Amos turned himself about and walked out of the Temple court. He had one more message to declare, one that foretold the dispersion of Israel throughout the world over the long period which Jesus later was to call the Times of the Gentiles. From Nebuchadnezzar to the end of this Age Israel was no more to know national independence, always to be under the Divine interdict. But at the end they would return, the lesson learned, and not be plucked up from their land any more. That is the heartening prospect of the prophet's last word, enshrined in chapter

To be continued

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. 3.8).

Those are strong words; James the Just intended them so. He knew, perhaps better than any of the other believers, what incalculable damage to the Cause of Christ and to the hearts and souls of his disciples is wrought by the undisciplined and unrestrained exercise of the powers of condemnation which we all possess. It is one of the marks of the mature Christian that he has learned to keep his tongue—and his pen—within bounds when approaching the sphere of other men's failings and shortcomings. It is one of the marks of the Christ-guided disciple that his speech is kept from evil, and his lips from speaking guile (Psa. 34.13), and that so far as the erring and the fallen are concerned he is much more solicitous for their strengthening and restoration than their condemnation and punishment. In this our day, as in that of James, there does arise from time to time some impetuous Jehu who thinks that he has been Divinely ordained to cry out the names of the condemned of God and drag their delinquencies into the light of day for the regalement of the faithful. He does not realise that God does not necessarily condemn the ones we may think ought to be condemned; He knows of factors in the case which are hidden from us. There may be an enthusiasm which of itself is commendable, a zeal that of itself is beyond challenge; neither enthusiasm or zeal will be of any avail if unjust recrimination, slander and evil speaking blinds to an appreciation of the spirit of the Christ who came not to condemn but to save.

One of the first things we learn in the school of Christ is that not one of us is in a position to pass judgment upon another fellow-pupil, either in matters of his doctrine or matters of his conduct. It is true that the saints are going to judge the world, in a day yet future, but they have got to become saints first. And those who are so lacking in the spirit of Christ—and sometimes in the elementary principles of decency also—as publicly to decry another in a manner that might cause uncontrollable and irremediable harm will eventually find that the thrones of the redeemed have steps which are too high to be climbed except by those who have attained the full stature of a man in Christ (Eph. 4.13). Amateur theologians who are so ready to denounce, not only the convictions of their theological opponents, but the opponents themselves for holding those convictions, are rivalled only by the untrained

sociologists who with equal gusto condemn all whose code of conduct does not precisely match their own, ranking them with those whom the Apostle Paul calls the "covetous, extortioners, idolators, of this world" (1 Cor. 5.10).

Such do well carefully to consider the story of the woman taken in adultery, recorded in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel. (The fact that this passage is known to be no part of the original Gospel, having been added in or about the 5th or 6th centuries, does not mitigate its value: all evidence goes to show that it is a true record of an incident in Jesus' life). Confronted with the unfortunate woman, Jesus stooped and wrote with his finger on the Temple pavement, ignoring all the eyes that were fastened upon Him. Why did He do that? He already knew what He was going to say! The most reasonable supposition, most in line with the known character of Jesus, is that He did it out of consideration for the unhappy victim before him. Acutely aware of her position, burningly conscious of her recent shame, she stood there in the middle of a crowd of hostile and gaping men, the cynosure of all eyes—except those of Jesus. He did not look at her until all the men had gone. His action diverted attention from her while they pressed for his answer. He rose up and faced the accusers, put his startling command, and then lowered his eyes again until they all, convicted by their own consciences, had one by one left the scene. Only then did He face the trembling woman. "Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee . . . Go, and sin no more." That does not mean that He condoned her sin or overlooked it. There was nothing said about forgiveness, no admonition to "go in peace". The woman's guilt stood and Jesus' words left that matter still unresolved. But He had taken the whole question of her judgment out of the public arraignment which men had engineered and made it a matter between the woman and himself.

We fallible mortals are so apt to pass hasty judgment without knowing all the facts. That is bad enough when the only inspiring motive is zeal for the maintenance of the high standards of the Christian faith; unfortunately, the fact has to be faced that even in the Christian family there are some whose minds have not so far escaped the trammels of carnality that they do not relish the opportunity of a bit of scandal. Such can be a menace and a defilement to the House of God. Many years ago there occurred on a certain day

much head-shaking and whispering among the deacons of a city church, imparting itself quickly enough to the congregation. One of their number had been seen coming through the swing doors of a public-house, and he one of a community to which the use of alcoholic drink was anathema! The worst was feared and the offending deacon was almost as good as unseated when someone dryly asked whether it had occurred to anyone that the individual concerned had in fact been on the premises in question in connection with his employer's business, not to gratify any indulgence!

We are apt to criticise adversely those whose standards and customs differ from our own. No one of us has the right to demand that our personal way of life and code of conduct must be accepted by all and sundry. Such things differ from age to age and in country with country, from generation to generation and even as between young and old. Abraham had three wives,

at least two of them simultaneously, and an unspecified number of concubines; such conduct would not be tolerated in our country and generation but no one thinks of condemning Abraham on that account. He lived his life in full accordance with the customs and the established civil law of his time.

"One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs . . . Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. FOR GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE HIM STAND!" (Rom. 14.2-3).

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

PREJUDICE

Prejudice is pre-judgment. It is forming an opinion without examining the facts; it is hastily accepting a conclusion without investigating the evidence upon which it rests; it is allowing ourselves to be hood-winked and deceived, when the slightest reflection would keep us from such a mistake; it is being satisfied with hearsay, when we should demand the proof; it is rejecting everything at first sight which does not confirm our former convictions or suit our former tastes or agree with our preconceived ideas; it is a revolt against the unpalatable and distasteful; it is a deep-seated reluctance to part with that to which we have been accustomed—a persistent hesitation to accept as true what we have not hitherto believed; a wicked unwillingness to admit that we can be wrong and others right. It favours or condemns upon the slightest pretext; it recoils or embraces as it is moved by caprice. It is not

limited to persons—has to do with places, and creeds, and parties, and systems: hence its influence is extensive, and its evils manifold. Prejudice does not hold opinions: it is held by them. Its views are like plants that grow upon the rocks, that stick fast, though they have no rooting. It looks through jaundiced eyes; it listens with itching ears; it speaks in partial and biased accents. It clings to that which it should relinquish and relinquishes that to which it should cling. When beaten it remains defiant; when disproved and vanquished it is sullen and obstinate. There is nothing too low for its love, or too noble for its hatred; nothing is too sacred for its attacks, or too deserving for its aspersions. It is cruel as it is universal, as unjust as it is relentless, as unforgiving as it is conceited and ill-informed.

(Selected)

PROSPECT

"Will nothing end this state of things? Is creation to go on groaning and travailing forever after this fashion? Thanks be to God, the Second Advent of Christ supplies an answer to these questions. The Lord Jesus Christ has not yet finished his work on behalf of man. He will set up a glorious kingdom, in which the consequences of sin shall have no place at all. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no pain and no disease, in which "the inhabitants shall no more say, I am

sick," (Isa. 33, 24.) It is a kingdom in which there shall be no more partings, no moves, no changes, no good byes. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no more deaths, no funerals, no tears and no mourning worn. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no quarrels, no losses, no disappointments, no wicked children, no bad servants, no faithless friends. Where is the Christian heart that does not long for this state of things to begin?"

Bishop Ryle 1880.

THOSE BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

There is in western Iran, near a village called Behistun, a precipitous cliff about four thousand feet high, on the face of which there is an extensive sculpture of kings and other figures with a lengthy cuneiform inscription in three ancient languages. In earlier times there was much speculation as to its origin but it is now known to have been executed by Darius I, king of Persia 521-486 BC, some twenty years later than the time of the prophet Daniel. In the middle of the Nineteenth century the cliff was scaled and the inscription copied by an Englishman, Henry Rawlinson. Before his time the cuneiform (arrow-shaped) writing of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Sumerians and Persians could not be deciphered; by comparing these three inscriptions it was possible to arrive at an understanding of these languages, and so to read the records left by these ancient peoples. His achievement was therefore a most important one for the science of archæology, and led to better knowledge of the Old Testament. One would think therefore that in this modern age, with its permanent record of books in libraries and the like, there would be no dispute as to the details of such a happening; but no

"*The Stones Cry Out*" published about 1940, designates him Sir Henry Rawlinson and says he climbed the rock in 1833.

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

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

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

"*Thrilling Voices of the Past*," about 1935, plays for safety by making the hero Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Bart., the height of the inscription 500 feet, avoiding the issue of

the date by giving it as during the period of the climber's life, 1810-1895.

"*Stones Crying Out*," an earlier book, rates Henry a Colonel, the date 1857, and the climb accomplished to a height of 500 feet not only by himself but by his troops as well!

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

(For the benefit of those who may now wish to know which of the above statements is correct, it appears that Sir Henry Rawlinson, born in 1810, died 1895, was British Consul at Baghdad 1844, Minister to Persia 1859, Member of Parliament 1865, President Royal Geographical Society 1871. In his earlier days he was in the service of the East India Company and in 1835 was posted at Kermanshah, near Behistun. He first scaled the rock, and copied the Persian inscription only, in 1837. He went again and copied the Median version in 1844 and the Babylonian version in 1847. In this latter year he published his translation of the Persian version copied ten years previously. Some of the additional military titles found in some accounts are probably due to confusion with another Henry Rawlinson, born 1864, died 1925, professional soldier, who held commands in the South African war and the European war of 1914, and in 1920 became Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India.)

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

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

*St. Paul's vision
of the future*

3. Words not lawful to utter

It may seem a strange dispensation of Providence to us that anything once disclosed to his people, by God, should ever need to be sealed up again. We might be more inclined to think that every revelation from on high should be blazoned through the earth with the utmost dispatch. But such is not always the case. We call to mind that after Daniel had received the angelic messenger's full and final disclosure of what was written in the Scripture of Truth (Dan. 10.21) he was told not to enquire for further explanation because the words were closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12.9). After John had heard the message announced by the seven thunders he was commanded not to write what he had heard, but to "seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered" (Rev. 10.4). There are some things which have been "passed over" through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but they are neither to be understood nor promulgated till a later time. It was in line with these instances of restricted disclosure that Paul, in his vision of Paradise, heard words which he was not permitted to repeat in his general evangelistic activity.

It is not difficult to see that the perfect condition of that eternal state of sinless purity could be far too magnificent to be described by human tongue or pen. Even the great gifts of a Milton or Shakespeare would be inadequate to do justice to such a theme. Beyond question it is not within the power of any man to set forth the splendours of God's perfect Creation, especially when we realise that He has devoted consecutive ages of time and his Almighty Power to the performance of the great task. If that were the standpoint of Paul's argument there would be no need to impose a ban on Paul's descriptive powers. If it were "impossible", that in itself would be a sufficiently restrictive ban. But the prohibition that God applied was imposed on a basis of law, not inability. The words spoken in Paradise were not utterable, therefore, because they were beyond man's power to express, but because the competent authority, God himself, had placed their repetition under a ban, and had forbidden their use by Paul in his missionary activities.

The question will arise "Why was Paul not permitted to utter freely all that he had heard? Did God not wish his intelligent creatures to know and understand the nature of the task on which He had been engaged for so many ages of time? Was there something He must needs hide from human view?"

If Paul had been permitted to speak, his utterance would have been in line with much of the Jewish literature of that period. At that very time the leaders of Jewish thought were particularly interested in Apocalyptic lore, and at that stage of Paul's career may have given some attention to what he might have had to say. This type of literature was the only one that the Jewish authorship could produce, because by common consent, no addition could be made to the Law which was full and complete, nor to the prophetic Canon, which since Nehemiah's day had been accounted to be complete. Any further literature produced must therefore be of another kind. All the best specimens of Jewish Apocalyptic writing belong to the period 200 B.C.-100 A.D., and its production was in full swing when Paul was forbidden to describe what he had heard. Had he been permitted to speak, he would have found the very atmosphere into which to launch his revelation with every prospect of attentive reception by the Jewish authorities.

It is interesting to note that those things which were forbidden to Paul were permitted to another pen. While the amount of space devoted by John to the final and eternal state is very small, it is there at the close of his vision-scenes. What was "not allowable" for Paul was permissible for John! Why was that? The reason may not be far to seek. The nation to which Paul was forbidden to speak had ceased to exist when John penned his picture of eternal things. Jerusalem was levelled to the ground; its people scattered to the four corners of the earth. That wayward nation had been banished far and wide, without one further word of comfort or assurance beyond that written in their prophecies. No word of that final Paradise had ever reached their ears, to show them what the end of their sufferings would be. When John was permitted to describe what he had seen, he wrote for another day—a day when the banished wanderers would be gathered home again.

Look again at Paul's literary work and ask, "Did Paul not have anything to say, at any time, about the final things? Does no single glimmer of light respecting that Day of perfect rest filter through his mind as he writes, and travel down to the written page? Is it not of this final state that he has something to say in I Cor. 15.24-28: "Then cometh the End, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all"? Also, is

it not in that final state that with enemies destroyed, every knee in heaven and earth shall bow, and confess to the glory of God that Jesus Christ is worthy to be their Lord (Phil. 2.10, 11)? Must we not place that magnificent climax of the "heading-up of all things in Christ" in that final and eternal state? (Eph. 1. 10 and Col. 1. 20). *Are not these the elements that belong to the third heaven and earth?* Does not the bending of every knee tell of that Day of perfect peace and rest? Is not the assembling together of every living intelligence in heaven and earth under one stewardship identical with the house of many mansions set in its verdant park?

If Paul was forbidden to utter the words he heard in Paradise, why did he make reference to these things in his letters? Did he thereby disregard the ban? Or was the prohibition intended to apply only to his contact with the rebellious Jewish House? The correct reading of the situation seems to be that some of the unutterable words could be told (as in a glass darkly) to the Christian Church, but not one single word could be imparted to the faithless House of Israel, which having spurned and crucified the Lamb of God maintained that same rebellious attitude at a later time when he offered proof of his resurrection from the dead? And thus, because they were not prepared to accept God's sacrifice for sin, *He had no further word of comfort or enlightenment for them, and had no other course open but to let them drift on to the only fate that could follow such a hardening of heart and mind.*

In suggesting this as the right reading of the situation it must be noted that Paul's allusions to the final things are mainly passing references, and not by any means full explanations of those things. There is so much about them which even we, with all our Bible helps, cannot fully understand. When we have done our best and scrutinised every word, *there is still much that we cannot comprehend, and which of necessity must be accepted purely by faith. Only their realisation and fulfilment, in their own due time, will afford the explanation.*

Let it be suggested, and stressed, that these faint glimmerings of truth were not addressed to unconverted Jews. To none save the Christian believer was it given to understand, and it was to strengthen faith and assurance in the ultimate End of all things, that even these in this day of suffering were allowed to hear these deep things of God.

We suggest therefore that the weight of this testimony proves that it was not in God's arrangement to win attention or create interest in the

unbelieving mind by informing them that He purposes at last to bring in the perfect Day. That would be beginning at the wrong place. God's order begins at the Cross of Christ. It is God's purpose to constrain men to an acknowledgment of sin. Men cannot dwell with God while tainted with sin, and Divine Wisdom requires man not only to acknowledge sin, as an un-moral thing, but also to repent, in person, from his sin. God has no place in Paradise for men who harbour unconfessed sin. God sent his Son to die for sin, and make possible for man a way of escape therefrom—not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the taint of sin. Hence, the mind and activity of Paul were confined to this one vital theme. It was the wicket-gate which opened the only way of escape. God did not allow his servant to draw attention to the "final things" and leave unspoken the primal essential things that required of them repentance from sin.

These primal things were exactly what the Jews did not want to hear or accept, hence, God had for them no further word, nor will He have any further word, *till they have heard and heeded the primal things. Only for the believer in Christ had God any further word concerning eternal things. Paradise has not been purposed or prepared for any man refusing to accept Jesus as the Lamb of God. It is not in God's order to put "restitution" or "perfection" before the Cross!*

The Christian Church has received much comfort and help from Paul's rapture in Paradise—but still she must take her promises on trust, *as promises*, and by the exercise of faith. She cannot understand how great the glory is that she will share with her exalted Lord. She sees the consummation of her hopes as in a darkened glass—but it is enough to cheer and sustain her to the end and lead her on till she is received by him, the story of whose love had won her heart, and will have drawn her onwards on her long lone trail with magnetic power.

Paul did not have much to say about "final things". Though his pen was fully able to give expression to as much as any mortal man could grasp, he was not allowed to focus attention too much on the future day. *He was constrained and enabled to place concentrated emphasis on the Cross of Christ as the basis of all redemptive work, and thus defend the Cross against all who would oppose. Also it enabled him to stress the association of the believers with his Lord in his suffering, and to tell them of their conformation to him in consecration and character.*

This restraint made Paul's letters practical and realistic documents, packed with sound advice

throughout, helpful to his readers for the experiences of this present life. It directed all Paul's activities to the work of winning men from sin and establishing them in grace. But at the background of his own ardent mind he had the assur-

ance of that view of Paradise, as the sure token to him of what the end of God's purpose would eventually be, and it kept him faithful unto death.

(To be continued)

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

An exhortation

"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20.27).

A memorable occasion, this, when the Apostle Paul conferred for the last time with the elders of the Church at Ephesus, a church which owed so much to his ministry and perhaps largely on account of that ministry stood pre-eminent among the Christian communities of Roman Asia. The Apostle knew that he was seeing them for the last time; the inward inspiration of the Holy Spirit told him that he would come to the end of the way without visiting Ephesus again. He was not perturbed; his only desire was that he might finish his course with joy (vs. 24) and be remembered for the work he had done among them. So he called them to witness that he had faithfully discharged his mission of declaring unto them what he called "all the counsel of God". He could not but have been aware that his inflexible resolve to go to Jerusalem could very well lead to his death at the hands of his enemies there—as in fact it very nearly did. Only the swift action of the Roman commander Claudius Lysias saved him from the fury of the mob and spared him for a few more years of active service for the Lord he loved. But he did not see Ephesus again; the Lord's words to him at an earlier time "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the nations" was very literally to be fulfilled. He was to find himself at the other end of the Roman world—Italy, Spain, perhaps Gaul and Britain, and sow the seed of the Gospel in those remote parts. It mattered nothing to Paul; his destiny was in the Lord's hands and it was "equal joy to go or stay". He desired only one thing at this moment, that these to whom he had been a pastor and minister should now hold fast the truths he had taught them and in their turn pass the flaming torch to others who would follow. There were generations yet to come who must be instructed in the truths of the faith, for the promised Advent of their Lord was a long way in the distant future and in the meantime there would come in among them "grievous wolves, not sparing the flock" (vs.29). So the preservation

and onward transmission of the whole counsel of God was vitally important.

One might ask, just what is this "counsel of God"? The short answer is that it must cover the whole range of the Christian faith, centred in Christ. That must include the philosophy of the Divine Plan, the fabric of Christian doctrine, on the one hand, and every phase of the Christian life, the devotional aspect, on the other, with due regard to the Church's commission to preach Christ in all the world for a witness. A cursory examination of St. Paul's writings in the New Testament shows that of these three factors, he devoted one quarter of his space to doctrine, one quarter to evangelism, and one half to the Christian life. That may be a clue to the relative importance he attached to each of these three factors. It may also indicate that he felt not one of them could be ignored without serious loss to the Christian's individual progress towards maturity in Christ. The doctrinal arguments of Romans and Galatians are necessary on the one hand just as the spiritual counsel of Ephesians and Thessalonians are on the other.

Writing to his son-in-the-faith Timothy, the Apostle enjoined him to "*take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" (I Tim. 4.15). Of Timothy's fellow-elders in the Ephesian Church Paul had this to say: "*Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*" (I Tim. 5.17). This word "doctrine" means literally "teaching" and does not define merely an intellectual grasp of the basic principles of the Faith and of God's rule and creation, but the presentation of those things in a manner which can be understood and appreciated by the flock. Not all of the Lord's people are gifted with the ability to seek out and discover the deeper implications of the Divine Plan for themselves, but all are able to receive these things into their hearts if one who does understand can explain them.

When Ezra the scribe stood up to read the Book of the Law to the people of Jerusalem after their restoration from Babylonian captivity, a number of his ministers "caused the people to understand the law . . . so they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8. 7-8). So Jesus, talking about much the same thing, referred to scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven who bring forth out of their treasuries things new and old (Matt. 13.52). Doctrinal understanding and exposition is indissolubly linked to sober Christian counsel; it is not mere philosophical speculation nor does it consist of endless arguments and differences over varying views or aspects of the Atonement, the Covenants or what not. The writer to the Hebrews chided some who, for the time they had been in the faith, should have been teachers of others, but instead had need that someone teach them again the first principles of the faith of Christ (Heb. 5. 12). They ought to have been at full age, mature, in Christ, but instead still had need of the milk of the Word, the basic elements of faith and conversion and dedication. He did not dispute their head knowledge of the doctrines, for in the next chapter he acknowledges they had those, and he exhorts them to continue progress by building upon that foundation the things which would give them true spiritual maturity. What that involved is elaborated in Eph. 4. 11-15, in which Paul declares that God has given to the whole Christian society apostles, pastors, evangelists, teachers, each qualified in his own sphere, not necessarily in all, to teach and edify the church as a whole and lead them "in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God" to the fulness of maturity, full growth, in Christ.

One of the wisest men in ancient times, and therefore one who must have understood the doctrinal aspect of God's ways so far as that was then revealed, was Solomon King of Israel. It was Solomon who said "Wisdom is the principal thing . . . with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4.7). But that is qualified by the New Testament. In I Cor. 13 it is laid down that love is the principal thing. Knowledge as such, says Paul, is transitory, for it is eventually superseded by clearer knowledge. The Christian graces of faith, hope and love are of the greatest consequence and of those love is the most important. Love never faileth; it abides forever. But this love is not a mere sickly sentiment; it is not an all-consuming affection for another to the exclusion of all else. It is the quality which was manifested by the Father when He sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3.16). This love is the power which makes for oneness, for unity, among the members of the Body of Christ. "Love one another, as I have loved you" was our Lord's injunction to his disciples (John 15.12). This is the force which binds believers together in one communion and in the power of which they continue in the Christian life and in the service of their Lord. "Be likeminded" says Paul, "having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2.2). This love is the background against which are displayed all the graces of the Christian character. Love is to be manifested in all sincerity, says the Apostle in the twelfth chapter of Romans; on this basis is built all those Christian qualities which are enumerated in that chapter. Some are conducive to the building up of character and the creation of a faith structure which will withstand all the powers of unrighteousness and others have to do with the outward manifestation of our inward faith. And above all things it is our love for the Father and the Son and the truth that is revealed that enables us to stand fast in the evil day and do battle with all the forces of evil. "Stand therefore" he says again, in Eph. 6. 13-18. "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day". Faith and prayer are elements in that armour and it is by faith and prayer that the Christian soldier will eventually win the day. All of these things constitute part of the whole counsel of God whereby we shall gain the victory.

Thirdly there is evangelism. "Go ye into all the world" said Jesus to the little band of disciples who were about to witness his ascension "and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16.15). That commission has never been abrogated. It is still as incumbent as ever it was to witness to the faith that is in us, each one according to ability and opportunity. It is still incumbent upon every group and community in the Christian society to let their light shine and take the message into whatever place and among whatever people that seem to them to have the need. And it is necessary here to preach the true Gospel and to present as accurate a picture of Christ and the appeal of Christ as our own understanding will permit. Some in all sincerity will entreat the unregenerate to "flee from the wrath to come" not realising that acceptance of Christ because of fear of the consequences if the injunction is ignored is no acceptance at all. The Lord does not want, and will not receive, those who come to him on that ground. Neither should the Name of Christ be preached as a kind of magic talisman the profession of which is certain to

ensure salvation irrespective of the degree to which Christ enters into the life and influences it for good. The rich young ruler found that to become a disciple of Christ involved much. It involved sacrifice and self-denial and an entering upon the same kind of life that Jesus himself lived. During the whole span of this present Age God is calling out from among the nations "a people for his Name", a dedicated body of believers in Christ whose lives are completely and altogether devoted to him in the expectation that at life's end they will be joined to Christ with all of like mind to form his Church, in association with whom He will in the next Age execute his ordained work of reconciling the world to God. Evangelism during this Age is for the purpose of finding and gathering those who will be God's instruments for the world-wide evangelism of the next Age. It is then that, to use St. Paul's own phrase, "*the saints shall judge the world*" (I Cor.

6.2). This, so far as the Christian commission of evangelism is concerned, is the "whole counsel of God".

Paul knew all this, and as he took leave of those sorrowing elders, grieved because they were to see him no more in this life, he was comforted in the thought that he had played his part and discharged his commission to the utmost of his ability. Now the torch must fall into younger hands, the destinies of the Church be guided by later converts to the Faith. He had exhorted them, he had warned them, he had comforted them. He could do no more. He left his life's work in the hands of his Master in complete peace and confidence that He would continue it and raise up other hands to administer what he must now relinquish. God grant that we, if and when we find ourselves in similar situation, may have the grace and faith to do the same.

A NOTE ON THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

The story of the Tower of Babel, when the Lord came down to frustrate the project by causing men to speak different languages so that they no longer understood one another, is fairly well known. The generally accepted idea is that the transformation was accomplished by means of a miracle so that the work was abruptly stopped. A careful reading of the account shows that it was not quite like that. "Go to" said the Lord, "Let us go down, and there confound their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence, and they left off to build the city." (Gen. 11.7-8). It will be noticed that there is no indication here of the differentiation of language occurring at the Tower, before the scattering. The Lord divided and scattered them, and the result was the development of divergent languages. That process has continued ever since. As tribes or communities separate from each other and move into new territories, losing all touch with their former friends, new words come into use, new methods of speech, diverse grammatical structures, so that quite soon the speech of men of different tribes becomes mutually unintelligible. Each succeeding generation adds its quota of new and changed terms, and the process continues.

Here is an illustration which demonstrates this fact. Wycliffe translated the Bible into English only five centuries ago but our language has changed so much since then that we, his country-

men, can read his translation only with difficulty and in some places it is almost unintelligible. Here is an example: "*Whether profecies schulen be voidid either langigis schulden ceese*". That is one of the well-known passages of the Bible—"whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease". Here is a sample from Richard Rolles' translation of the fourteenth century: "*Faine and glade genge, mare and lesse, for thou demes folke in euenesse*". Who would think, now, that sentence to be English as it was spoken only five centuries ago, for "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously". (Psa. 67.4)? If Wycliffe and Rolles came back from the dead to-day they, likewise, would have the same difficulty in reading our modern translations.

As illustrating the facility with which new languages can develop, as they must have developed in the early days of Genesis when men began to spread abroad over the face of the earth, it is an interesting fact that in 1893 a wild tribe of some thirty people was discovered in the Wentworth district of New South Wales, Australia, speaking a completely unknown dialect. It was found that this little community had sprung from one aboriginal Australian and a few native women who had gone into hiding in this remote country thirty years previously. The natives with the white men who found this little tribe had considerable difficulty in making them-

selves understood or in understanding the wild men's speech, although they were of the same race. That separation of thirty years and the growing up of a new generation which had never had contact with the world around had sufficed to create what was virtually a new language, understood only by the thirty or so wild people who spoke it.

Another example is that of New Guinea, an island roughly half as large again as Great Britain. The native Papuans who inhabit it are all of one race, but there are about five hundred different languages and dialects. The reason lies in the unusual nature of the country. New Guinea consists almost entirely of steep mountain ranges up to twelve thousand feet interspersed with deep gorges, the whole being covered with dense tropical forest. The natives live in small communities and communication between these is difficult or impossible. Successive generations live their lives and die without contact with even their nearest neighbours. When the first Papuans landed on the island, possibly three thousand years ago, there was only one language; the differentiation has developed since.

The process must have been rapid. If the Bible chronology (according to the Septuagint) is accepted as a fair representation of the truth, then the earliest written tablets made by the descendants of the Tower builders and still extant date back to an era about six centuries after the Flood; there were already different languages then.

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

Ministry of Reconciliation

"My flesh I will give for the life of the world!"

Often do we interpret these words in terms of our Lord's crucifixion and death. But Jesus did also consciously fulfil the prevision of Isaiah: *"He poured out his life unto death."* For three and a half years the life of Jesus was given, in every possible sense, that the world might have more life. *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."*

This is the call of the Church now, and in this Age. Our mission holds something more than a study of Divine philosophy, a growth in the knowledge of Scripture history and prophecy, a waiting for future glory and felicity. It is to give life that others might have life. It is to offer life *now*, as Jesus offered life *then*. True, we cannot heal diseases by a wave of the hand, produce food

This verse is a comment upon the story and was probably added at a later date. The story itself was likely to have been first written soon after the events which it relates, but verse 9 could not have been written more than one or two generations before Abraham, for it was not until then that the city became known as Babel. ("Babylon" is the Greek form of the word, "Babel" is the Hebrew form, and "Bab-ilu" the native form). When the city was first built the name given to it was *Tin-tir-ki*, meaning "the place of life". One can appreciate the significance of such a name if it was in fact bestowed by the sons of Noah when first they settled at this spot, ceasing from their travels, and determined to make themselves a name. Later on the name of the city was changed to *Ka-dimirra*, which in the Sumerian tongue means "The Gate of God". The Semitic equivalent for the same expression is *Bab-ilu* and as the Semites obtained the ascendancy in the city that became its name and has remained the name by which it has always been known. Babylon; Bab-ilu.

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

from stones wherewith to feed the hungry, drive out demons of hate, fear and all evil by verbal command—but, stay—is it true that we cannot do these things? Is there nothing that we can do for a sick or suffering one that will ease their lot and perchance assist them in their recovery; no power at all to relieve some little part of the hardship on those who suffer physical want in this unfriendly world; no word that can be fitly spoken to lift the mind of someone bound in the "bonds of iniquity" to higher and nobler ideals, and thus at least commence to cast out the demons that possess them? If we can do any of these things, in however little degree, we shall be doing, in our own small way, that to which our Lord Jesus devoted a great part of his life. And we are on safe ground when we find that "as He was, so are we, in this world."

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

*A study of prophecy
passing into history*

3. Descent of the Spirit

This is the last instalment of a series written against the background of belief held by many students of the prophetic word to the effect that before the Messianic Age commences there is to be a restored and purified nation of Israel gathered in the Holy Land to play an important part in the evangelistic work of that Age. The vision of the valley of dry bones, seen by the prophet Ezekiel and recorded in his 37th chapter, is a parable of the manner in which that restoration is to take place.

* * *

The fulfilment of the third phase of this vision lies altogether in the future. We do not yet see the descent of the Divine Spirit upon Israel, although that epoch-making event is plainly foretold in Scripture and many of its associated effects minutely described. It is a happening which will be clearly evident to the peoples of earth, one about which there can and will be no mistake. There is no doubt therefore that it has not happened yet, and Israel is still a nation without spirit, a body without breath. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones has been justified by history only about halfway up to the present.

"Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ezek. 37:9-10).

This is one of the most telling passages in the Bible where the analogy between breath and wind and the Holy Spirit is set forth. It is more than an analogy; there is a definite relationship and there is much in the revealed purpose of God which becomes more lucid when the connection between human life, the powers of Nature, and the operation of the Holy Spirit is understood. Here in this vision Ezekiel calls upon the four winds to breathe into this vast army of recreated but inert bodies and instil life into them, that they may live. In verse 14 the reality is expressed as the impartation of the Spirit to the restored nation of Israel. *"Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and*

performed it" (37. 13-14). The same Hebrew word—*ruach*—is used in the Old Testament for "wind", "breath" and "spirit"; the Hebrew language recognises an affinity between the two ideas, that of the life-giving breath which animates a man's physical body and makes him a living being, and the Divine Spirit which is the vehicle of life from God to man. Right at the beginning we have this conception; *"the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 2.7). The whole story of man's creation is built around the central truth that all life comes from God and is continually dependent upon God; it is the withdrawal of God-given life because of sin which brings death, and death is thus the antithesis of life. So here in the vision of Ezekiel the reality is the coming of the Holy Spirit in power upon the newly awakened people of Israel to vivify them and endow them with life that they might take their rightful place in the outworking Divine purpose at the end of the Age.

This coming of the Spirit is with power. That is always the case when the Holy Spirit descends to bestow new life. The verbal form rendered "breathe" in this passage is *naphach*, which is also used for "breathed" in Gen. 2. 7 above quoted. But no gentle, quiet inflow of air is indicated here. The word has the implication of turbulence or irresistible force. Although it is nowhere else used in the sense of breathing, *naphach* is also rendered "I see a *seething* pot" (Jer. 1.13); "out of his nostrils goeth smoke as out of a *seething* pot or cauldron" (Job 41.10); "I have created the smith that *bloweth* the coals in the fire" (Isa. 54.16); "... into the midst of the furnace, to *blow upon* the fire, to melt it" (Ezek. 22.20); "Then the spirit took me up and I heard behind me the voice of a great *rushing*" (Ezek. 3.12). A seething, blowing, rushing, tumultuous blast which forces its way into every nook and cranny and makes its presence known with energy and power; that is the entry of the Spirit when God sets his hand to perform a great and momentous work. So it was on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples and the work of this present Christian Age began. *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"*

(Acts 2.2-4). That is how Ezekiel saw the four winds come together, sweep down from the sky, and breathe life into those slain bodies, that they might live. So it was that they received strength and stood on their feet, an exceeding great army.

The Hebrew prophets were very definite that the Spirit will thus one day come upon Israel and fit them for their destiny. The preceding chapter of Ezekiel's own prophecy, the 36th, is full of it. "*A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new Spirit will I put within you . . . and I will put my spirit within you*" (vs.26-27). Says Isaiah "*I will pour my spirit upon thy seed*" (44. 3) and again "*My spirit that is upon thee . . . shall not depart . . . henceforth and forever*" (59. 21). The magnificent apocalyptic vision which constitutes the subject of the 3rd and 4th chapters of Zechariah culminates in a Divine declaration that the great mountain which is the symbol of evil is to be destroyed by the instrumentality of the Lord's servant — and Israel is part of that servant—"*not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts*" (Zech. 4.6-7). It is by that same power and that same Spirit that the new governors of Israel in the End Time are to pledge themselves and their people to loyalty to that same Lord of Hosts (Zech. 12.5) and it is this that is to make Israel a living force, incapable of harm from her enemies and irresistible in the work she has been Divinely ordained to accomplish—to be a light to the nations and to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49.6). That is purified and consecrated Israel's mission in the Messianic Age, the Age which is to succeed this present one and the commencement of which is signalled by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing intervenes, one obstacle the removal of which is necessary before that people, now gathering strength in what will one day become the Holy Land in truth, can experience the descent of the Spirit upon them. That obstacle is unbelief. Until the people believe, until they repent, until they come to God in faith and loyalty and trust themselves to his power and leadership, the Spirit cannot come. Never yet has an unbeliever been filled with the Spirit. Never yet has one become a member of the Kingdom of Heaven without first putting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light. The bones may have come together, bone to bone, by the power of God; the flesh and the sinews and the skin may have formed around them, but not until there is faith and surrender can the Divine Spirit enter with its lifegiving breath and constitute that assemblage of dead bodies a living and potent force for the evangelis-

ation of the world. So as we look upon prophecy passing into history we can expect to see noteworthy progress in the creation and development of a nation in apparent fulfilment of all the old prophecies relating to Israel, but we cannot expect to see another Pentecost until first there is repentance, surrender, faith and prayer, and a waiting upon God just as was the case with those disciples in the Upper Room two thousand years ago. Until that position is reached the nation is not ready for its destiny and the work of the Messianic Age cannot begin.

What will bring about such a national repentance,—for national it will be. Temporal prosperity is hardly likely to do so; the tendency is usually in the reverse direction. The achieving of security from present threatening enemies, if security can be gained by the normal methods of political and military action, is more likely to breed self-assurance than to increase faith in and reliance upon God. "*Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.*" (Psa. 107.12). Throughout Israel's history, when they apostasised and forsook the Divine covenant they fell into the power of their enemies and went into captivity; so soon as they turned to the Lord in repentance He delivered and restored them. The highlights of Israel's history were the occasions of their deliverance from the Philistines in the days of Samuel, the Moabites in the days of Jehoshaphat, and the Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah (1 Sam. 7, 2 Chron. 20, and 2 Chron. 32) and each time it was because they turned to the Lord in faith and He delivered them. The prophetic Scriptures speak of one final trial of faith which is yet to come upon Israel, when in vision the prophets see all nations gathered against Jerusalem to battle, and God delivers. Zechariah and Ezekiel and Habakkuk and Isaiah are all quite certain about it and give, each in his own characteristic fashion and as guided by the Holy Spirit, his own vivid picture of the event. Perhaps it is in that great crisis that the faith and belief of Israel comes to the surface and God is able to come forth from his place and fight for them, as the prophets say He will come forth and fight, because at last they do cry unto him in their trouble and receive from him in return the spirit of grace and supplication which, to Zechariah at least, marks the turning point in Israel's history. (Zech. 12.10).

When will all this take place? If what is now to be witnessed in the development of Israel is indeed the clothing of the bare bones with flesh, sinew and skin, how soon before the Spirit

descends to finish the work? Not before the full end of the Age, for the conversion and purification of latter day Israel, no less than their deliverance from their enemies, mark the time when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ, that He may reign for ever and ever. There is much in the prophetic Scriptures to fill in the details of that final troublous time when God comes out of his place to intervene in earth's affairs and set up the kingdom of righteousness which has been promised for so long. Every time there is political trouble in the Middle East the

eyes of many Christians are turned in that direction; one day, of course, their watchfulness will be rewarded and the end will come. In the meantime we can only go on looking at the flesh and sinew building upon those bare bones, knowing of a surety that as truly as the dry bones have become whole bodies in our own day and before our own eyes, so will the Spirit sweep down from above at God's set time and cause Israel, the earthly missionary nation of the Messianic Age, to "live and stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." THE END

THE SON OF MAN

A Bible Study

When our Lord asked his disciples (Matt. 16. 13-20) as to whom men said that the Son of Man was, and followed their answer by asking them whom they thought him to be, it was Peter who announced that He, Jesus, was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our Lord was manifestly pleased that the Father had revealed this to Peter, yet after the blessing of Peter which follows, He charges them that they tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ. We might think (and the disciples possibly thought) that this great truth should have been published throughout the land. We read (Luke 3.15) that the people were in expectation and mused in their hearts if John the baptiser were the Christ, or not. Would not the prompt declaration of Jesus as the Christ end all doubts? Why did our Lord charge his disciples not to tell others? Why did He tell them not to tell the transfiguration vision to men till the Son of man be risen from the dead? In this connection it will be noted that only on rare occasions does our Lord own to being the Christ; that He will own to being the Son of God; and that usually He refers to himself as the Son of man. And further, He is never addressed as the Son of man, and the expression is almost exclusive to the gospels. When He was raised from the dead, the disciples proclaim him as the Lord Jesus Christ without any restraint being enjoined on them.

The first explanation that may come to our minds, that He was the Son of man prior to his crucifixion, and the Lord Jesus Christ when exalted, is not convincing when we recall the circumstances in which the titles were used. For they are titles; titles indicative of the particular Divine work in which He is engaged. Upon study we shall find that these titles are never casually used, and it will assist us in the understanding of Scripture by noting which title is used. Of all his titles, the expression, Son of man, sounds, shall we say, the most human—it was the usual one

our Lord used of himself. "Lord" always implies that He is our master and superior, and is one that we may respectfully (and never forgetfully) use of him. "The son of David" reminds us of the true descendant of David who will sit on the throne of Israel as their rightful and eternal king. "Jesus" we are liable to think as being a name to distinguish him from others (and was so used by the Greeks; John 12.21), but when further considered reveals him as the Saviour who effects the salvation which God has purposed. "Christ", the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*, speaks to us of the Anointed (as the word means) and appointed chief instrument of God and head of the church which is his body. We think of the "Son of God" as primarily showing that He derived his life from his heavenly Father, while the "Son of man" reminds us that this son of God became flesh, became a man for the purpose of redeeming man. Of all who have lived on this earth, this Son of man (not son of men) stands revealed as the one above all others. Nothing in the title implies human fatherhood. The titles should not be confused with a similar expression in the O.T.; for example, when the angel enlightening the prophet Ezekiel addresses him "son of man". With the thought in mind that the title speaks to us of the redemptive work of our Lord and the associated work arising from redemption, it will be useful to consider some passages of Scripture where the expression is used, and there will be seen that the title most allied to our Lord's First Advent mission has been used and that to have used any other of his titles would have been out of place.

Take as an example the verse which is regarded by many as the key text of Mark's gospel—ch. 10.45. Our Lord's remarks were prompted by the request of the two disciples to places of honour when He would inherit and sit in his glory, and the displeasure of the ten disciples (vv. 37-41). He

answers that in the purposes of God (in contrast to the practice of human government) and among his disciples, whoever would be the greatest must be the servant of all. They had still to learn the Divine rule that "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted" and it is one of the hardest lessons to learn, with ambition and self-advancement so much praised by men. Only one could be known as the servant of *all*, and He became the servant of all and therefore the chiefest of all by expending his life that all might live. And this is the thought that He adds in v. 45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many". And thus is the title Son of man linked with the thought of redemption. And elsewhere we read that the "Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost", and it is by referring to himself as the Son of man (not as Christ) that our Lord adds point to his teaching about his First Advent mission. Yet when Paul speaks of him in risen glory and refers back to his redemptive work, he says of Christ "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". Thus did the greatest servant become the chief of all, "That at his name every knee should bow". It should be noted that our Lord himself does not use the title Son of man when referring to his work after He was raised from the dead. Prior to his sacrificial death He foretold his death, saying (Matt. 17. 22, 23) "The Son of man shall be betrayed . . . and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again" but when raised, his words are (Luke 24. 26) "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory". Raised to immortal glory in his resurrection the title *Christ* is more appropriate than the title which speaks of his work before his triumph is accomplished. Again, when the Pharisees request a sign they were given one sign, like unto that of Jonas, that the Son of man would be three days in the heart of the earth. Those Pharisees may not have known how such a sign would declare whether He was the Christ or not, but all Christians know why He descended into the lower parts of the earth.

The first usage of this title in the N.T. (Matt. 8.20) shows how among the titles of our Lord the most apt one has been used. He had just cured many of their ills, thus fulfilling the words of Isaiah, and it may be that in the enthusiasm which our Lord wished to avoid a certain scribe said "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest". It is easy to-day to say that the scribe did not know what was involved in following Jesus

when he made the promise, but we will suppose that he meant well, and he is not the only one who has made that promise in the first flush of enthusiasm. But, Jesus' answer to him and to us all is exact—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head". We may think that the scribe would infer that following the Master would mean that he would never have home comforts again in this life and that he must be prepared to endure hardness in the field of service. Providentially there was always the home in Bethany where our Lord could rest; but whereas all lower animals are able to live their lives within their own environment, the Son of man, Who of all men was most entitled to fulness of life on earth, could not rest until He had finished the work given him to do. Early in our Lord's ministry He said, apparently to Nicodemus, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. (John 3.14). We have thus in the O.T. story an illustration of redemption (see Num. 21.5-9). Because of the people rebelling at the discouragements of the journey the Lord God sent fiery serpents among them so that they died of their bites. The people realised their sin and prayed Moses to intercede in prayer for them, and Moses was commanded to prepare a brazen serpent (a copy, we may say, of that which caused their deaths) to which looking they were cured. And if we combine the teaching of John 3. 14, John 12. 32, 33 and 2 Cor. 5. 21 we shall see that the Son of man was likewise lifted up to die for us all, becoming sin for us. As the Son of man He was lifted up so that his own self should bear our sins in his own body on the tree, taking the place of the condemned race as surely as the brazen serpent meant life to those bitten of the fiery serpents. The people who heard our Lord's words of John 12. 32, 33 were quick to say that "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" They connected Messiah with the Son of man, but could not understand that he could die. Had it been said that *Christ* must die they would have argued from the law and the prophets to prove otherwise. And we may well believe that had the Jews believed that He was the very Christ, they would not have compassed his death. Possibly they viewed the matter as did Peter, when he realised that the Son of man was in truth the Christ (Matt. 16) and our Lord charged them not to tell others, and from that time forth spoke of his sufferings, Peter, who cannot believe that Christ must suffer, promptly exclaims "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee".

And Peter would not then comprehend the truth within the rebuke he received from his lack of understanding, but he had learnt fully when he wrote the words of 1 Pet. 2. 21-25.

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

His redemptive work as the Son of man having triumphantly achieved that portion of the Divine Plan, He was raised from the dead. He had given his flesh for the life of the world. But now the title Son of man does not seem so appropriate; yet no title reminiscent of his atonement could ever be outdated. The atonement made at the First Advent will be completed by the work of

the Second Advent, for restitution perfects redemption. Speaking of his Second Advent John says (ch. 5.27) that God hath given him authority to execute judgment BECAUSE He is the Son of man. Who, of all men or angels, is better suited to be man's Judge, than He Who died for them? Who, of all men, would men select were they asked to choose their judge? And God has given assurance of coming judgment in that He hath raised him from the dead. But though He comes to judge, He comes also to give the earth and man their needed rest, for the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath day. The weekly day of rest, the jubilee sabbath, the Millennial sabbath, and the ages of glory and rest were made to suit the needs of man, and He is the appointed Lord of it all.

When our Lord spoke of his Second Coming and Presence He referred to himself as the Son of man, not to suggest that when He came again He would come as a man but to show that the same One who died for man would himself come again. Just as the angels at the ascension (Acts 1.11) said, this same *Jesus* shall come. It would be of great satisfaction to men were they now to believe that the Son of man Who died for them will himself come as their rightful king, but sad to relate the numbers who believe in him are diminishing day by day. We could soon reach the position our Lord implied in his own statement "*Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith (or the faith) on the earth?*" He gave no answer to his own query, but the implied answer suggests darkness over the earth when He, as the Son of man, comes again. In contrast to this dark picture, we know that He finds faith among his true followers when He comes as the Lord Jesus Christ, for He comes to receive them unto himself. It is by noting the use of his titles that we avoid some confusion relative to his Second Coming, and find that verses such as Luke 18.8 and those which tell of his return for his own do not oppose each other. We shall realise therefore that our Lord Jesus Christ comes again first for his own, and following that He is present to rule as earth's King and Judge.

"The tears of Christ were a true token of his perfect Manhood, and they teach us in the clearest terms that He is able to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Manhood knows no sorrow at all that lies outside the compass of the experience of our Immanuel..... His is still the heart that yearns in deepest fellow-feeling with every human heart that bleeds or burns. He is the Friend Who loveth at all times, and the only Helper of whom we ever really stand in need; for He is not only able to save as the Son of God,

but He is also able to feel as the Son of Man. He Who wept at Bethany longs to wipe away all tears from every eye, and He does but wait until the morning breaks and the shadows flee away. At length that day will dawn when He will wake the dead, and at length that hour will come when we shall hear the cry: "*The Master is come! He calleth for thee!*" "*Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"

(Canon Marcus Loane in "*Mary of Bethany*" 1950)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

*A collection of
interesting items*

The Tares

The word "tares" in the parable of the wheat and tares, is a translation of the Greek word *zizanian*. This word does not appear in the writings of any classical Greek writers, and it is supposed that it was a Palestinian local name for the plant that to-day is known in the land as *ziwan*. This plant is definitely poisonous. Travellers have observed that it has the property of causing giddiness and even unconsciousness, and that its effect is insidious and often unnoticed until too late. At least one case is on record where a whole community of people was affected by eating *ziwan* which had not been cleansed out of the wheat that had been used to make their bread. Jesus used an apt simile for his parable!

Parables and Apologues

An *apologue*, (or *apologue*), is a fable or parabolic tale, with a moral truth; animals, trees, etc., are used as characters, and as it progresses towards the end the moral lesson can be deduced. A celebrated apologue is that of the trees called upon to choose a king in Judges 9. The apologue is in verses 8-15 and the moral in verses 55-57 though the whole chapter is a frame-work for the subject.

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

When Joseph Shaved

The brief reference in Gen. 41, 14, to Joseph being shaved upon being taken out of prison and prior to being brought before Pharaoh would not at first convey much to the English reader. There is a world of significance in the words, however. The peoples of Palestine esteemed beard and flowing hair a sign of dignity and manliness; to be shaved was the mark of prisoners and slaves, and was a thing of which to be ashamed. (See II Sam. 10, 4 and Isa. 7, 20). In Egypt, on the other hand, every good class citizen was habitually carefully shaved and hair well trimmed; the profession of the barber was an important one. Joseph therefore was required to be conformed to customary usage before appearing before the Pharaoh, and this passing allusion is a valuable testimony to the authenticity of the record—had the story been a compilation of a much later date as asserted by some critics, an allusion like this would have never appeared.

Alongside God

A. C. Haddon, (died 1941), was known to his scientific colleagues as the "Head Hunter" because of his scientific researches in the Torres Straits (north of Australia). One of his native workers in that primitive part of the world, a Christian, described him as being a man "*close up alongside God*". A simple testimony, but how eloquent! What a witness to the cause of Christ must have been given by this man, who, in the midst of his researches in things to do with the "wisdom of this world" so impressed the simple mind of a Christian native that he came to be regarded as a man "*close up alongside God*". The fruits of Haddon's work are to be seen to-day in our museums, in the shape of skulls and other relics. Those fruits of his life's labours are as dust, doomed to perish; but there is also surely something of more enduring value which, in order that it may bring forth more fruit, in due time, has been preserved "*close up alongside God*".

"I commend my spirit"

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

More than that

It is related that Nansen, the Arctic explorer, having one day bored through the ice, let down his sounding-line into the waters beneath the ice-cap. Down and down it went, but did not touch the bottom. Another line was added, and another, until all the lines in the ship were tied together and let down—but even then they failed to reach the ocean bed. When writing up the records of that day, Nansen wrote, "3,500 fathoms . . . and deeper than that". That is exactly Paul's thought about the Love of God. It is the full measure of man's necessity—and greater than that! How much more none can even know. Words just break down when contemplating a Love like that! When our sounding-lines have reached their utmost depth in the hearts and lives of men, all we can say is—in Nansen's words—"3,500 fathoms, and more than that"!



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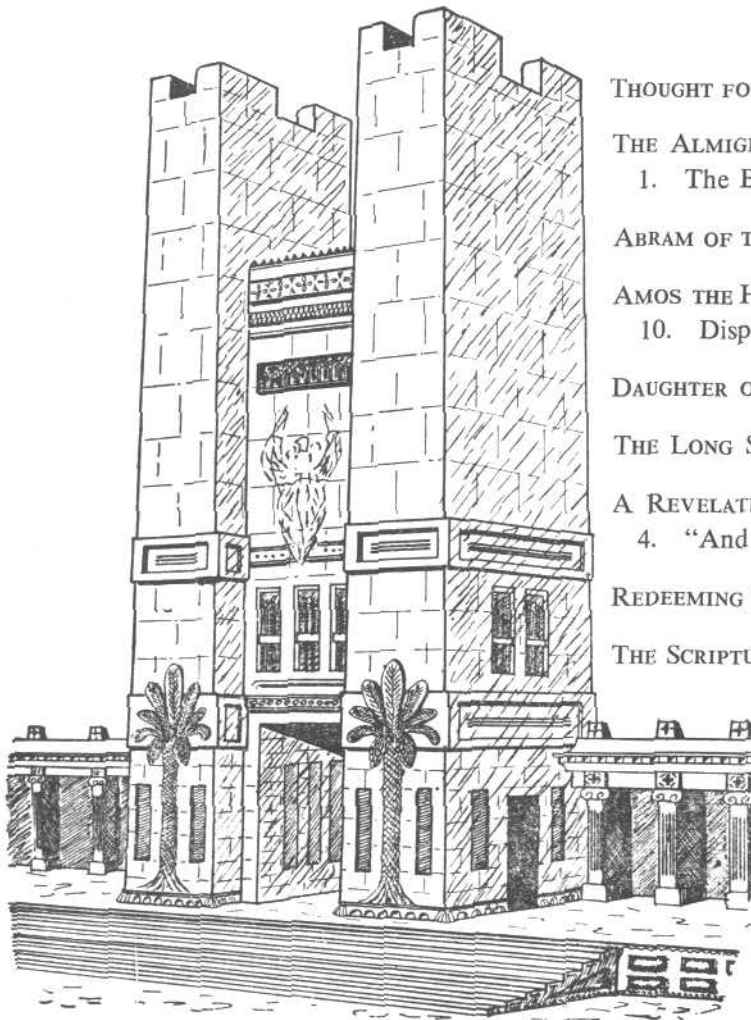
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published July 1st

Next issue September 1st

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

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Thought for the Month

It is sometimes suggested that spiritual progress is best made by discarding all human agents of help and expecting Divine guidance through the reading of the Bible alone. It is a mistaken idea. God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, says Paul to the Ephesians, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to maturity in him. We are exhorted to build up one another in the faith and to esteem the servants of God for their works' sake. From the beginning of the Church God has raised up in its midst some who have special teaching ability for ministry to all. Jesus commended the minister who at his appearing is found giving meat in due season to the household. Christians are members of a body, a unity of which Christ is the Head. Each member of that body, says Paul again (I Cor. 12) has a function to perform for the wellbeing of the body as a whole. If one member fails to play his part the whole body suffers. Conversely we all need to accept graciously from our fellows those contributions which they can make to our own spiritual wellbeing. *"The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the foot, I have no need of you."* The Bible is certainly the authority and basis of our faith but the accumulated knowledge and experience of the past and present in its understanding and exposition is an essential factor in our own Christian growth.

West Wickham Convention Sunday, October 12 at Justin Hall, Beckenham Road, West Wickham. Details and programmes from Mr. D. J. Holliday, 8 Highfield Drive, West Wickham, Kent.

NOTICES

Anonymous. We have been requested by Bro. J. Shepherd of Bradford to acknowledge in these columns the anonymous receipt of two gifts of £20 each from Maidenhead area toward the special fund administered by his committee.

* * *

Yeovil Convention. Saturday to Tuesday, August 23-26, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil. Programmes and information from Mrs. P. Stracy, at 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset. Limited accommodation at nearby guest houses is available; please advise needs as early as possible.

* * *

Back numbers of the "Monthly". Adverting to the notice in the March/April issue it is stated that all sets of the year 1972 are now exhausted. Back numbers can be supplied from 1973 onwards upon receipt of postage as shown in the March/April issue.

* * *

Acknowledgments. With the constantly increasing cost of postage we feel that most of our readers will understand and agree with our decision to raise the limit under which we do not send receipts to £1 or two dollars. Acknowledgments will in future only be sent for sums in excess of these figures. For smaller sums, when the gift is in respect of literature sent, the receipt of the desired items is perhaps a suitable acknowledgment, and when it is for the continuance of the Monthly, the fact that the journal continues to be sent will indicate the same. If, despite this, the Monthly does suddenly cease to arrive, please advise without delay and the matter will be rectified.

Gone from us

— * —

Sis. L. Butterfield (*Ilkley*)
 Bro. A. J. Hill (*Cromer*)
 Bro. J. D. Parker (*Polegate*)
 Sis. R. Pressley (*York*)
 Bro. L. G. Slater (*Windsor*)

— * —

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

THE ALMIGHTY - THE ETERNAL

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

1. The Beginning of Time

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

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

Until God began to create, there was no such thing as space and there was no such thing as time. Space is the medium in which objects exist and time that in which events take place. Space can be defined as the distance between any two objects; until God created objects there was no space. Similarly time can be defined as the duration between any two events; until God caused events to happen there was no such thing as time. The ancient Greeks evidently saw something of this, for Plato writes *"Time and the heavens came into being at the same instant, in order that, if they were ever to dissolve, they might be dissolved together. Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time."* The work of Einstein, in our own day, and of others who have followed him, difficult of comprehension by ordinary people as it is, goes to show that Plato was thinking on right lines. Time and space had a beginning. God, who exists eternally before that beginning, is the Creator of Space and Time. That is exactly what He tells us himself. *"I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he . . ."* or as Fenton translates it *"I only am God. I existed before time itself."* In Isa. 57. 15 He declares himself *"the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity"*; perhaps that expression is the only really satisfactory definition of the existence of God before creation. The writer of the 90th Psalm attempted to convey his own understanding in his own words *"Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God"* (Psa. 90.2) but that is a relatively feeble restatement of the conception given to man through the agency of Moses; *"say*

unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (Exodus 3. 14). So many attempts have been made to express that word, *I AM*, into comprehensible English. The One being, the Ever-living, Eternal, the Self-existing; each conveys part of the meaning but none express it accurately. There is no word in the English language to describe a state of existence which is infinite in duration and scope, independent of all else, omnipresent and omnipotent. Isaiah has to come to our rescue in simple words of one or two syllables. *"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God"* (Isa. 44. 6). *"I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, I, the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour"* (Isa. 43. 10-11). *"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."* (Isa. 46. 9). This expression "I am" or "I am he" recurs again and again to designate the one eternal God who is from infinity to infinity, from the time of no-beginning to that of no-ending, whose power is limitless and all-embracing. The New Testament catches up the theme and repeats it to Christian believers in this present Age *"I am Alpha and Omega"* (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as though we were to say A and Z) *"the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty"* (Rev. 1.8). Present, past and future, God is always there.

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

The beginning of all things is marked by the distinction between God manifest in his Word for the progress of creative activity and God the Eternal, the Omnipotent. *"In the beginning was the Word"* says John at the opening of his Gospel *"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This same was in the beginning with God"* (John 1. 1). The English term "Word" is used to translate the Greek "Logos" which has a two-fold sense, that of speaking and that of thinking or reasoning. Hence it involves the conceptions of thinking, reasoning, meditating, calculating, planning — the mental faculties gener-

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

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

The Book of Proverbs helps here. This is the book which enshrines a great deal of what is called the "Wisdom" literature of Israel. In Old Testament days, an equivalent term to the "Word of God" was the expression "the Wisdom of God". Divine Wisdom was held to be the agent

of all God's work in creation, and "Wisdom" was personified in the same manner as the "Word" in New Testament days and in John's Gospel. Nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs are devoted to the words of the "Wisdom of God", transmitting his counsel to men upon earth. Embedded in these nine chapters there is what amounts almost to an autobiography of the Word of God, a personal explanation or definition of his relationship both to the Father and to the world in which men live. It is as if God knew how difficult it would be for men to understand how the Word, the Son, could be one with the Father yet distinct inasmuch as his relation to man is concerned. So Wisdom, the Word, speaks, saying (in Prov. 8. 22) "*the Lord possessed (acquired) me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up (anointed) from everlasting, before the earth was...*" The word translated "possessed" is *qanah* which means to get, to buy, to purchase, to obtain, and it carries the definite meaning of becoming the possessor of something not previously possessed. Now this is said to have become true at the "beginning" of God's "way"—a word meaning a road or trodden path leading to a definite goal—and this at once brings us into the realm of history, of events, occurring within time. God himself had no beginning; the "beginning of his way" must refer to the point at which He began to put into operation his creative power to cause events to happen in the sequence He had already ordained. The investment of his Wisdom, his Word, with attributes of personality, as implied in this chapter, was evidently prior to any work of creation, for "Wisdom" goes on to say "*When there were no depths, I was brought forth... before the mountains, before the hills, was I brought forth, while as yet he had not made the earth... When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth... then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*" (Prov. 8. 24-30). All this language should be understood as describing the investiture of the Word with personality without doing any violence to that Divine Oneness which Jesus always claimed continually subsisted between himself and his Father, a unity which was in Jesus' mind when He said "*I and my Father are one*". Furthermore, this association of personality with the Word marks the dividing point between the eternity in which God dwelt without creation and the time span during which his creative power brings into existence the creation comprehended in time and space as we understand those terms. Proverbs 8 describes an exercise of the Divine Will resulting in the concentration of God's mind

and plan in respect to all creation in One who could thenceforth stand up and say with full authority "The Lord acquired me at the commencement of his developing purpose before any of his most ancient works; I was anointed to this from eternity". That is more of a paraphrase than a scholarly translation but it conveys the meaning of the passage in modern English idiom related to what is known of the nature of God. Theologians have wrestled with this basic truth of the Christian faith in the effort to make the mystery intelligible but this treatise is neither qualified to pronounce upon their arguments nor satisfied that they really succeed in what they set out to do. Nothing can match for clarity and simplicity the plain Biblical definition "the only begotten Son of God". And the clearest and most satisfactory manner in which we can view God in his manifestation toward us is to visualise One who became the embodiment of the Divine Word back there when God was about to commence creation, was thenceforth the Father's companion and agent for the execution of his work, as a beloved Son, in the fulness of time was found in fashion as a man for the suffering of death, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, Lord of all creation.

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

(Gen. 1. 26-27) but an image by reason of sonship—the only begotten Son of God.

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

(To be continued)

Our Daily Bread

"Jesus warned about taking too much thought for the morrow and we shall understand as, possibly, we may not have done before, why the prayer he taught includes the petition: "Give us to-day to-morrow's bread;" which is now known to be the true meaning of a familiar sentence. The Greek word translated "daily" in our Bibles occurs in both the Matthew and Luke versions of the Lord's prayer, but nowhere else in the N.T., and its precise significance remained uncertain until modern times. The discovery is a real gain, an enrichment of the Prayer. No less than before the sentence is a prayer for our bread, a recognition of the truth that we depend on God for the

supply of our bodily needs. Yet it is also, and perhaps primarily, a prayer for peace of mind, for freedom from worry, made for ourselves and for all who are haunted by the fear of want. Nothing can safeguard us so effectively from being anxious about "the morrow" as the knowledge that enough to meet its needs is already in our hands, and for this reassuring knowledge, with the release it brings from anxiety, our Lord encouraged his hearers to pray in the words "give us to-day to-morrow's bread. (See Matt. 6.11 and Luke 11.3 footnote R.S.V.) It is a prayer as well for the body as the soul of spiritual no less than for material benefit." (selected)

ABRAM OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

Some Lessons from an old story

The story of Abraham's victorious conflict with the four kings of Babylon is one of the strangest and most intriguing in the Bible. Not only does it introduce the mystic figure of Melchisedek, Priest-King of Salem, but it intrigues by reason of its *apparent separateness from the rest of Genesis*. It is a scrap of political history of the times, in which Abraham became involved, but having no apparent connection with his life before or after. We hear no more of Melchisedek, or of the Babylonian kings, or of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. And yet the story has been recorded for a purpose, or it would not be there at all. As one reads the narrative and reflects upon this warlike aspect of Abraham's character, so unlike the picture so consistently presented in the rest of his life story, the reason surely begins to appear. The idea of Abraham as a man of faith is a very familiar one; in this chapter and here alone he is depicted as a man of war, battling for the triumph of right, and that in turn reminds us that we who are the "children of the faithful Abraham" are called, *not only to go through life sustained by a firm and unwavering faith, as did he, but also when occasion demands sally forth to engage in Christian warfare for the defence of the things we hold dear and the driving of God's enemies from His domain*. The fact that the weapons of the Christian warfare are "not carnal" does not by any means belittle the value of the lessons we can draw from this incident where Abraham showed most convincingly that he was by no means a novice in the arts of material warfare.

The climax of the story comes when Abraham, returning from his defeat of the retreating Babylonian kings, bringing with him the recovered captives and their goods, receives the patriarchal blessing of Melchisedek, the Priest-King of the land. *The great truth which stands out so plainly is that Abraham did not receive the Melchisedek blessing because of his faith, but because of his successful warfare*. Melchisedek is a picture of Christ in his glorious Millennial reign just as Aaron pictures his suffering sacrificial life in this Age. Is this story of Genesis 14 intended to illuminate the contrast between the two pictures? Faith, devotion, suffering and sacrifice are all part of the Christian life just as all these things were characteristic of our Lord's life in earth, and all this was pictured by the High Priestly service of Aaron. Abraham experienced all these things in his life also and so that life became a marvellous

allegory of the life of any and every Christian. But warfare is also a characteristic of the Christian life—the Apostle Paul counsels that we take unto ourselves the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand the assaults of the Devil. *We are to resist every encroachment of the world and every enticement that would draw us away from our consecration to God*. We are not only to avoid sin in ourselves; we are to condemn it in others, holding up the standard of God's righteousness and making known the Truth that is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. It is when we have accomplished that task that we can look for the Melchisedek blessing and be called to sit on one of those thrones on which the glorified saints shall sit and reign the thousand years. This story therefore can have much to teach us and we do well to look at it not only from the historical viewpoint—for of course it really did happen—but also, and more intently, as an allegory teaching important truths to us as we, like Abraham, forsake our native land to go to one which God will show us.

Abraham had lived in Canaan some twenty years when these stirring events broke into the even tenor of his life. How long the family lived at Haran before the death of Terah we do not know, but it is probable that the departure from Ur of the Chaldees was thirty or forty years in the past. *That had been a big step, to give up the luxury and refinements of a civilised city and go out "not knowing whither he went" as the writer to the Hebrews puts it*. A fitting picture of consecration! All that the world has to offer, given up and left behind for—what? A visionary promise of a better land that one has never seen, with the certainty of hardship, loss, suffering, in the attaining of that land. Ur of the Chaldees was a busy sea-port and a commercial city; it is more than likely that Abraham was a prosperous merchant or trader of some sort. When he came into Canaan he had to become like everybody else there, a keeper of flocks and herds. It might be that he had never in his life before lived in a tent; henceforth until the day of his death he lived in nothing else.

Another wonderful picture of our consecration, that! Strangers and pilgrims in the earth! Ur to Haran, Haran to Moreh, Moreh to Bethel, Bethel to Egypt, Egypt to Mamre, Mamre to Gerar, Gerar to Hebron; constantly wandering and never possessing in his own right any portion of the land that God had promised him until at

the last he had to buy a piece in which to bury his beloved wife.

But he found God in that country! In leaving Ur of the Chaldees he left behind him for ever the worship of Sin the Moon-god; in Babylon he left behind him for ever the worship of Marduk the false redeemer. In coming to Canaan he found the God of his fathers, the God they had worshipped before they went down to Ur to live with idolators. He found Canaan a land that worshipped the Most High God, and he found Salem, the city of peace, not far from Mamre where he spent most of his life, and Melchisedek who was both king of Salem and Priest of the Most High God. In answering the call to "come out" he had found God, and until the day of his death he dwelt as it were in the presence of God.

So, for that twenty years—and eighty years more, for Abraham lived one hundred years in Canaan altogether — he lived his life and awaited the fulfilment of the promise. To his seed God would give this land; in him and in his seed would all families of the earth be blessed. That was the promise that sustained him as he went quietly about his daily occupations. Though it tarry, it would surely come, it would not really tarry. It was in that calm confidence that Abraham adjusted himself in his surroundings and soon found that he was becoming a prosperous man. His flocks and herds increased and his neighbours began to look on him with respect. Peaceable, likeable folk, these neighbours. Abraham seems to have got on with them very well, probably much better than he had done with the people of Ur. These Amorites of Canaan were themselves descendants of Shem, and they were worshippers of the Most High God. (It was only fifty years ago that that fact was established, but it seems clear now that Abraham must have found the religious views of the Canaanites much in line with his own). It must have been that Abraham anticipated a promise to be given by Jesus two thousand years later and that in giving up father and mother and houses and lands for God's sake he had received even in this life an hundred-fold; and there was still the fulfilment of the promise for the future.

Into this quiet life of peace and prosperity there came the the shattering blow of invasion. "It came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that these made war . . ." (Gen. 14. 1). The story is probably familiar enough. The four Babylonian kings had marched into Canaan to subdue the rebellion of the five cities around the Dead Sea. The insurrection was quickly crushed and the invaders commenced their homeward journey tak-

ing with them the spoil and captives, among whom were Abraham's brother-in-law Lot and his family. Upon hearing the news, Abraham summoned his own private army, three hundred and eighteen strong, pursued the retreating enemy, attacked and defeated them, and returned in triumph with the recovered captives and their property.

It has been thought strange that so small a force as three hundred and eighteen could put to flight the armies of four kings. In fact these kings, and all the kings of antiquity, were little more than petty chieftains and their armies, especially when engaged on distant expeditions such as this, little more than raiding parties. Plenty of inscriptions now exist relating the stories of wars and sieges similar to this one and more or less contemporary with this one in which the numbers of the contending forces are given and they are often measured only in hundreds or at the most a few thousand. When the city-state of Umma laid siege to and captured the city-state of Lagash in the days of Eannatum II, the inscriptions say "the carnage was frightful!"; but there were only six hundred men in the army of Umma! It is reasonable to expect too, that Abraham's men were familiar with the countryside; the Babylonians, a thousand miles from their own home, were not, and just as in the case of Gideon's army some eight centuries later—and in much the same territory — the smaller force assumed the initiative and took the enemy by surprise.

So Abraham returned home in triumph; but even in the day of triumph he still retained his separateness from the world around him. The king of Sodom in gratitude for the deliverance, offered Abraham the whole of the recovered goods, asking only that the liberated captives be restored to him. Abraham's reply is a noble one. "I have lift up mine hand to the Lord, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" he says "that I will not take . . . anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say 'I have made Abraham rich'." It would have been a grievous snare to Abraham had he accepted the other man's offer; he could hardly avoid thereafter being associated in some way or other with the king and people of Sodom. So the king of Sodom went back to his own city with his people and his goods, and Lot and his family went back with him. Abraham was left alone, but in his isolation, he cherished a reward and a treasure of much more lasting value than anything he had relinquished. He had the blessing of Melchisedek.

Now this blessing of Melchisedek was a most important thing. It was the climax to a solemn ceremony in which, for the first time in Bible

history, bread and wine are used in a ceremonial fashion. All the parties concerned were present in the valley of Shaveh, "the king's dale," a locality now quite unknown but probably quite near Jerusalem. Abraham himself, with his band of retainers, flushed with their victory; Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, the Amorite chieftains, and their men, who had apparently gone with Abraham under his leadership and helped in the victory; all these were worshippers of "the Most High God". The king of Sodom was there; the lack of mention of the remaining kings of the five cities leads to the conclusion that they perished in the original battle; see vs. 10. Presiding over all was the venerable figure of Melchisedek himself, the acknowledged overlord of all these chieftains and kings, overlord not only in secular things but also in the things of God, a priest upon his throne.

The bread and wine was evidently partaken of by all the nobilities present as a ritual feast. It was a symbolic acknowledgment that the blessings of life and prosperity come from God above. God had been merciful, and by the hand of his servant defeated the invader who had threatened to deprive them of life and prosperity. Hence the next stage in the ritual was to invoke the Divine blessing on the means of that deliverance. "*Blessed be Abram of the most high God*" i.e. let Abram be blessed of God. "*And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.*" Note how all the glory is given to God.

The final act in the ceremony is equally impressive. Abraham comes forward and in the sight of all the spectators solemnly lays before Melchisedek, as the representative of God, tithes of all the recovered property. God had wrought the deliverance; one tenth of the wealth must be returned to God. That is tantamount to a recognition of Divine sovereignty; in symbol, it is a yielding of life and all that life holds, in dedication and consecration.

That is the picture for us. A day will come when the age-old conflict with evil will have ended so far as the Church is concerned, and the greater Melchisedek comes forth with bread and wine to meet his faithful saints. Just as Abraham stood before the Canaanites and received the

Divine blessing because of his valiant warfare, so will the Church be blessed in the sight of all men. "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.*" Just as Abraham received of the bread and wine at the hands of Melchisedek, so will the glorified Church enter into the joys of the "wedding feast" at the "marriage of the Lamb."

That is not all. There is bread and wine for others also, just as there was for Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, the "people of the land" among whom Abraham sojourned. With the ending of the Gospel Age and the glorification of the Church the forces of evil will have been defeated and driven far away; there has been deliverance for the captives and an opening of the prison for them that are bound. The dawn of the Millennial Age and the establishment of the Kingdom means bread and wine for all men; and it is then that tithes of all are presented to God, the heartfelt consecration of life to God of every right thinking one among all the resurrected hosts whose deliverance has been so much greater than that of those few who came back with Abraham.

This experience must have been a turning point in Abraham's life. Previously he had exercised faith in God and had followed the call; one wonders though, how much he had proved God. Up to now Abraham had always been on the defensive — he had separated himself from the idolatry of Ur and departed out of Egypt as soon as his presence began to become obnoxious to them. Now for the first time he had taken the offensive against the forces of evil, and—perhaps to his own surprise—found that God was with him and endowed him with power to achieve a striking victory. Perhaps there is a lesson for us in that also. We get so used to withdrawing from contact with the world and its wickedness and in our assurance that God will one day rise up to make an end of evil fail to realise that, even so, there is a case for our doing something towards it here and now. If Abraham had never taken the offensive and gone out to smite the army of Chedorlaomer he would never have received the blessing of Melchisedek. There is always the possibility that something very similar may yet prove to be true of us.

Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove

harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

10. Dispersed among all nations

Amos 9. 1-15

The tremendous finale to the prophecy of Amos is presented in the 9th chapter. The whole of all that he has to say in the preceding chapters leads up to this. Here he receives a revelation of the Divine majesty such as he has not experienced before. At the beginning, in the first two chapters, it is "Thus saith the Lord", a plain declaration of judgment soon to come. Following that, in chapters 3 to 6, a note of urgency punctuating his messages, "Hear this word". Next, chapters 7 and 8, his vision clarifies and he says "Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me". But now, in this his final vision and last word to his countrymen, he beholds the Person of God himself. "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar". It was not given to many men to see God. Moses did, in vision; Isaiah did, in vision; Ezekiel did, in vision. Amos is one of four men of whom it is said that they saw God, and his message is the more significant on that account.

"I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said, Smite the capitals of the door that the thresholds may shake, and break their heads, all of them, and I will slay the remainder with the sword. He that fleeth will not get far, and he that escapeth will not get free" (ch. 9.1).

This is the Lord come down to judge in person, taking his stand beside the great altar of burnt-offering—the "Brasen Altar"—in the precincts of the Temple opposite the main doorway into the Sanctuary, the "Holy". In the ordinary way the priests came to that altar with their offerings, and the consuming by fire of those offerings was construed an indication of Divine acceptance—God remained in heaven and accepted the devotion and loyalty of his people. But now there was no devotion and no loyalty and God would no longer brook his peoples' unfaithfulness; He had come down from heaven to take his stand by the desecrated altar and pronounce sentence.

Without much doubt Amos was standing in the Temple court when he saw this vision. Behind the altar he would look upon the two gigantic pillars, surmounted with spreading stone capitals, sixty feet high, which Solomon had set on each side of the doorway when he built this magnificent Temple. Between those pillars and into that Sanctuary only the priests might go, and into the inner shrine only the High Priest, to meet with God. But now God had come out to meet with all Israel; as Amos looked upon the teeming crowds which were always to be found in the outer court, and then at that awe-inspiring Figure

whom only he could see, he knew that he was again to be the agent of the Divine message. He waited in silence to receive his commission.

"Smite the capitals of the door that the thresholds may shake". Amos looked up at those ornate stone carvings sixty feet above his head and shuddered. If those capitols came crashing down in pieces the people below would be crushed to death. That is what the Lord meant. Their heads would be broken, and those who perchance escaped would be overtaken by Divine judgment before they had got very far. This vision was a prophecy picturing the destruction of the Temple and the consequent end of Israel's relationship with God, and their own destruction as a nation. The following verses make clear that here was being foreshadowed in symbol the final overturning of the Jewish polity at the time of Christ's First Advent and the dispersion of the nation among all the peoples of the earth. After all the local captivities and overthrows which Amos had already predicted had come upon them in the more or less imminent future, this was to be the final and the greatest one. Speaking of the same event, Jesus said *"they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"* (Luke 22. 22).

All this came upon Israel forty years after the Crucifixion, when Titus besieged and captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and the city, and expelled the entire population from the country to wander as outcasts and fugitives throughout the earth. It is often said in some Christian circles that the harrowing experiences of the Jewish people through the past two thousand years is in consequence of their rejection and crucifixion of Christ. The real truth is that it was in consequence of their rejection of God and position as his covenant people. God had done everything for them and given them everything, and they threw it back in his face. That which came upon them was the penalty laid down in the original covenant made with them at Sinai (Lev. 26. 27-29). So the Lord says, indicative of the thoroughness of this final judgment *"though they dig into the underworld, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in" (the caves of) "the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the*

bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them" (vss. 2-3). No place will exist in all the earth where they may escape the searching hand of God and the impact of his judgments. Much in this reminds one of the words of the Psalmist (Psa. 139. 7-12) "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in the underworld, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee". There is no possible escape from God.

"And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them, and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good" (vs. 4).

How literally that declaration has been fulfilled! Israel has been under the sword these two thousand years. It is as though God has rejected and forsaken his ancient people and will have no more to do with them. In the words of Jeremiah, spoken then of the earlier but similar exile "Judah went into the misery of exile and endless servitude. Settled among the nations she found no resting place. All her persecutors fell upon her in her sore straits" (Lam. 1.3 NEB). And the despairing ending of that prophet's lamentation is equally fitted to the position of the exiled people in the later day: "thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us" (Lam. 5.22).

But here comes the turning-point. This is where the Lord ceases from his denunciation of his peoples' shortcomings and speaks of their ultimate reconciliation to him and restoration as a sovereign nation in their own land with a promise that never again will they be uprooted. This is where the prophecy of Amos passes into the Millennial Age and he talks of the Lord's intention to use a converted and faithful Israel as agents in his great work of world evangelisation. All the lessons will have been learned; the people will no more go after false gods; the Ages of sin and death will have ended, and Christ will reign as king over a redeemed and restored human society in which there will be every incentive to righteous living and every prospect of eventual reconciliation to God and entry into everlasting life for "whosoever will" (Rev. 22.17 Isa. 55.1).

First of all, and as guarantee of both his will and his power to do these things, God presents, as it were, his credentials. Israel for long had wor-

shipped and trusted in false gods who consistently proved to be no gods, unable to protect or help those who trusted in them. Now God reminds Israel of his own power and omnipotence, preparatory to telling them exactly what He is going to do. The N.E.B. expresses it best. "The Lord, the God of Hosts, at whose touch the earth heaves, and all who dwell on it wither. It surges like the Nile and subsides like the river of Egypt. He builds his terraces up to the heavens and arches his vault over the earth; He summons the waters of the sea, and pours them over the land. The Lord, is his name" (vs. 6)

Israel knew full well his power in metaphorical earthquake and flood. Invading armies had disrupted their land and destroyed their cities more effectively than any literal earthquake. At his touch their homeland had been desolated and its inhabitants withered and diminished. By his decree the overrunning flood of enemy hosts had carried them all away into captivity as by a universal flood of waters, just like the Nile at the time of its annual inundation. Too late, they realised the truth of the warnings they had received, and now that the judgments had been executed they knew that this was the hand of the Lord and an evidence of the power He possessed over against the impotence of their false gods. This was an evidence they could no longer deny. Then He reminds them that He is indeed God Most High—the name by which their ancestor Abraham knew him, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14.22). Conforming to the primitive thought of that day, He tells them that He dwells at the summit of the terraces He has built from earth to heaven, under the arching sky which rests on the extremities of the earth and forms a huge vault over the dwelling-places of men. The ancients built lofty staged towers to mimic the legendary mountain which, they said, was at the centre of the world and whose peak supported the heavens, and there, said they, the gods dwelt, overseeing the affairs of mortal men. I am that God, said the Lord to Israel, and I have all power, and what I say I will do, that will I do.

There is now made known to the more thoughtful of his hearers, those who are most likely to form the ideal Israel that shall inherit the promises about to be made, a most important principle of the Divine purpose. Israel in the days of Sinai accepted the God-given commission of being a priestly nation which eventually should fulfil the promise to Abraham of ministering to, and conveying a blessing to, all the families of the earth. In these later days that undersanding had degenerated into an exclusiveness which maintained that Israel alone, as the chosen of God, was to

receive the blessings of the future; the remaining nations of the world were to be excluded from anything that God had to give. Now the time had come to make plain that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10.34), that in his pure sight all men of all nations stand before him as equals, and that all men of all nations are to have the opportunity of blessings unto eternal life when the time of Christ's reign has come. "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?" demanded the Lord. "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (vs.7). In the days of Amos the Ethiopians or Cushites, dark-skinned natives of Eastern Africa, were about the most remote and least-known people to the Israelites. So far as God was concerned, however, they meant just as much to him as did Israel and were just as much in his purposes. He recognised no fundamental difference. Admittedly He had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and brought them across the wilderness to a new land, the land of Canaan, but so had He done with the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete). It is known that the Philistines were colonists from the island of Crete but there is no intimation anywhere else that the Lord had anything to do with their emigration from their native land. Likewise, He says, he brought the Syrians from Kir. The Syrians are believed to be the descendants of Aram son of Shem, from whom the ancient name of all northern Mesopotamia is derived and the Syrians (Greek name) were actually called in their own tongue Arameans. All that is really known of Kir is that it was in Amos' time a province of the Assyrian empire and that the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser transported the Syrians thither when he conquered their country and took them into captivity (2 Kin. 16.9; Amos 1.5). At a somewhat later date the forces of Kir were allied with those of Elam at the time of the fall of Babylon (Isa. 22.6) from which it has been concluded that Kir was situated in what to-day is called Kurdistan. This may well have been the home of the descendants of Aram in the days after the Flood but here again this text is the only intimation that the Lord had anything to do with the migration of the Arameans into what is still, today, Syria. Perhaps it is more likely though that these are but a few examples of the process alluded to by Moses in Deut. 32.8 when he said "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel," and by Paul in Acts 17.26 "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of

the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation". If these two texts mean anything at all, it must be that the Lord has had a greater hand in the settlement of different nations in specific areas than has generally been supposed; in the present context at any rate it certainly was an intimation to Israel that they were not the only nation in which the Lord was interested. There were others, Gentile nations, usually considered outsiders, whom also the Lord purposed to bless, and the coming day of restoration and blessing was not for Israel only, but for the whole world of man.

And now the Lord is turning more definitely to the faithful "remnant" in Israel who have not "bowed the knee to Baal" nor forsworn their allegiance to the Lord. These are the ones to whom He addresses his promises for the future; these the ones to whom He confides his future intentions. "Behold" He says "the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord" (vs. 8). The significant clause is the last one. That the kingdom was to be destroyed was already known; the many declarations of judgment by Amos had ensured that. But God now declares that a remnant is to be preserved, a seed from which a new Israel may one day spring. Isaiah had this same assurance in his vision of the same thing (Isa. 6. 11-13). A great captivity and a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but the Lord's tithe would be preserved like the sap in a cut-down tree, ready to burst forth into new life when the season is right. So the Lord goes on to explain "I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (vs.9). Here is a familiar picture, the separation of wheat from chaff. The chaff falls through the sieve and is discarded. Every good grain is retained and put to its intended use. So the scattering of Israel among all the nations of earth during this long two thousand years from the First Advent until now has served and is serving the purpose of manifesting those whose hearts are right with God and so will become members of that Holy Nation which in the End Time will stand forth as the champion for God and righteousness in a world which has little time for either, a nation which will receive Christ as King and become the spearhead of that onslaught on the powers of world evil which will result in the full establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

One word of warning, and one that comes strangely at this particular point of the prophecy.

"All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, *The evil shall not overtake nor come near us*" (vs. 10). If the house of Israel has been sifted and only the elect remain in the day of which the prophet is now speaking, and the time of the kingdom has come, who are these "sinners" who now must die by the sword?

It would seem that we are now taken to the critical time at the end of this Age when the faithful "remnant", now constituted a Holy Nation and in full possession of the Holy Land, await that onslaught of the powers of evil which is described in Ezek. 38 and 39, which is to be terminated abruptly by Divine intervention from above, the deliverance of faithful Israel and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth. There is Scriptural ground for concluding that at this crucial time the faith of some will fail and they will separate themselves from the full-of-faith but apparently doomed nation which is relying entirely upon God for deliverance. Zechariah says of this same time and event that the city (Jerusalem) shall be encompassed as in a

net, i.e., besieged, and one portion shall go forth into captivity but the remainder shall be preserved (Zech. 14.1). Since this is the time of deliverance for faithful Israel and of the final defeat of all her enemies it is obvious that these who go forth into captivity must be some who have lost or never had real faith; at the time of trial they defect to what they think will be a place of greater safety. In practice they go back to the outer world of evil forces and are lost. This is the meaning of the verse in Amos. Those who still, even in that day, are classed as unbelievers and think that by allying themselves with the forces of this world rather than the people of God they will escape, will be separated from the Holy Nation just so effectively as if slain by the sword. By trusting themselves to the mercies of men rather than those of God the sword may well be literal as well as metaphorical. From the Divine point of view, though, they are excluded from participation in the great drama now about to begin, the actual transfer of world dominion to our Lord Jesus Christ. *To be concluded.*

A Note on Matthew 2.23

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

The difficulty here is that none of the prophets made such a statement and this has led some to accuse Matthew of not checking his references properly. The suffix-ene is Greek and "Nazarene" would logically mean a native of Nazareth; the orator Tertullus in Acts 24.5 referred to Paul as a "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" although it is doubtful if the name was in general use; more likely a derisive epithet conjured up and used by the hostile priests. The Old Testament word "Nazarite" would be a correct equivalent if Nazareth existed in Old Testament days, but it is never mentioned and it is probable that the village did not come into existence until shortly before the time of Christ. "Nazarite" in the Old Testament is the term employed to designate a class of men who had bound themselves to God in a covenant of consecration—involving abstaining from wine and never allowing their hair to be cut. Samson was a Nazarite; the ritual is to be found in Num. 6. 2-21. The word comes from Hebrew "nazir", meaning to be consecrated; but Jesus certainly was not a Nazarite and this Hebrew word is spelt differently and has no connection at all with the place-name "Nazareth".

What is probably more likely is that Matthew, with his profound knowledge of Old Testament prophecy, was seeing in the fact of Jesus' birth

at Nazareth a covert connection with the prophetic allusions to him as the "Branch". The Hebrew word for a branch or shoot springing out from a living stock is "netser" which in pronunciation is very similar to "nazir". Says Isaiah 11.1, "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots". This Branch is to be the Messiah who will rule the world in righteousness in the days of his kingdom. Jeremiah 23.5 takes up the same strain when he says "the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth". A number of other prophetic allusions are to the same effect.

What Matthew probably had in mind when he made his remarks was the prophecy of Zechariah 6.12 "thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is *The BRANCH*; and he shall grow up out of his place and he shall build the Temple of the Lord". In Zechariah 3. 8-10 it is indicated that this "Branch" is the one who will execute the Millennial conversion of mankind—our Lord. Matthew saw in the name of the village from which Jesus came, Nazareth, an allusion to the fact that God would bring forth the Branch, "netser," in accordance with his eternal purpose. He did not use the relative conjunction "that" in the sense it might be understood in English, i.e. that He was born there specifically in order to fulfil Zechariah's prophecy. Gesenius shows that the relative "hopos," allied

with "*plerothe*," here rendered "*that it might be fulfilled*" critically means "that according to God's purpose it might be brought to pass" or "might be proved by the event". So using the Old Testament phraseology as far as possible, it is as if Matthew had said "He came and dwelt in a

village called Nazareth, that according to God's purpose it might be brought to pass, as was spoken by the prophets, he should bring forth the man whose name is the BRANCH". To say "that he might be called "*netser*" is virtually the same as saying "his name is "*netser*"—the Branch.

DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH

She stood at the water's edge, looking curiously at the papyrus basket entangled amongst the water-plants. Her maids caught up with her and stood, a respectful distance off, awaiting her pleasure.

She looked round and made an imperious gesture. "Bring that to me!"

One of the slave-girls plunged into the water and waded out. She returned, stumbling against the encumbering weed, bearing the basket safely in her arms. She climbed the bank and set her burden down on the grass.

"Open it" commanded her mistress.

A deft movement of the hands and the cover was stripped off, revealing a three-month-old baby, peacefully sleeping. The brilliant Egyptian sun shone straight into its face; it awoke, and set up a cry.

The austere features softened suddenly, and the princess went down upon her knees beside the basket, careless of her garments brushing the dust. Gathering up the child, she stood up, holding it close.

"Beautiful" she said "the most beautiful child I have ever seen. The gods have sent it to me. I shall keep it for my own."

The others crowded round for a closer look as the babe lay cradled in her arms. For a few moments no one spoke.

The infant had quietened and lay peacefully gazing into the rapt face above. The princess looked at it more searchingly. A faint shadow crossed her features.

"This—is one of the Hebrews' children" she said. There was another silence, broken at last by one of the maids.

"O lady, child of the sun. Your father the Pharaoh has commanded that all the Hebrews' children shall be cast into the river and drowned, and none may disobey his decree."

The girl stood erect, head held regally, eyes flashing defiance, the while she clutched the baby fiercely and protectively. "I am the daughter of Pharaoh, and I say the child shall live. He is mine, and I shall tell my father so." Then the proud stance crumpled suddenly and she looked beseechingly at her attendants. "But this child

will need feeding . . ." Her strong mouth puckered and her lips quivered.

The others looked around helplessly. One of them suddenly darted into the thicket of papyrus bulrushes lining the river's edge and came back with a trembling thirteen-year-old Hebrew girl who had been hiding there, talking rapidly to her as they approached. The girl made a low obeisance.

The princess motioned her to rise. "Tell me, where can I find a woman who will nurse this Hebrew child for me?"

Miriam answered, a little breathlessly, "Great lady, I can bring you one here and now, if so be that is your wish."

An imperious wave of the hand: "Go", and Miriam was running hard across the greensward to the Israelite village in the distance.

The minutes ticked by quietly. The hum of insects filled the hot air. A crocodile waddled out of the water to sun himself upon the river-bank, and sensing the presence of humans, waddled back again. The three slave-girls talked between themselves in low tones. The princess remained standing, looking down upon the child, eyes betraying the dawning of a determination which belied her youth and gave promise of a future tenacity of character which nothing would shake. When she lifted her head and saw Miriam returning with a mature-looking woman at her side, she came forward a little, noting with some approval the quiet dignity of this woman.

"Take this child away and nurse it for me for so long as it needs your care. Bring it to the palace each day that I may see it for a while and hold it in my arms. I will see that the officers of Pharaoh do not interfere with you. Protect it from all harm, and I will give you your wages."

Jochebed advanced and bowed low. She took the child into her own arms and turned away, rejoicing inwardly that she held her son again and that he had been saved from the river. With Miriam at her side she trudged back to the village, conscious of an inner realisation that God had preserved her son for some great purpose which as yet could not be discerned.

The princess watched them until they were out

of sight. She turned to her attendants. "Come, let us return to the palace, that I may tell my father what I have done."

* * * *

The story of Pharaoh's daughter, who rescued the child Moses from the river and brought him up as her own son, is one of the most well-known in the Bible. The Scriptures say nothing more about her, and until comparatively recent years it was not possible to say with certainty just who she was. Progress in historical research has now enabled her identity to be established.

Eighty years before the Exodus there was a Pharaoh in Egypt named Thutmose I (The name used to be read Thothmes but Thutmose is the more modern usage.) This Pharaoh had one daughter, Hatshepsut, who grew up to become a vigorous and accomplished woman, and after her father's death ruled Egypt by the force of her own personality to such effect that she is acknowledged the most famous and greatest queen of Egyptian history. The events recorded in Exodus concerning the Oppression, the life of Moses, and the Exodus, fit so closely to the historical dates of this king and his successors as to leave no doubt that Thutmose I was the Pharaoh who ordered the slaying of the Hebrew children and Hatshepsut was the one who adopted Moses. His own inscriptions, still extant, tell how he did the same thing to the Nubians in the land south of Egypt, whom he had conquered, leaving none of their males alive.

Princess Hatshepsut was about twenty-one years of age at the time. Born of a great military leader, descended from a line of military conquerors, she was herself resolute, strong-minded, determined and a born ruler. After her father's death in later years she arrogated to herself the position and privileges of Pharaoh and reigned as Pharaoh for thirty-five years, bringing Egypt to a state of almost unprecedented prosperity and peace. One might well wonder why such a woman should take it upon herself to adopt a child of the despised Hebrew slaves.

The answer might well lie in the realm of her domestic circumstances. It was customary at that time for the son of Pharaoh to marry one of his sisters, this because the royal title descended through the female line. Hatshepsut had no brother, but there was a half-brother, born to Thutmose I by one of his concubines. The princess was married to him, probably at sixteen or less, as was the then practice. Her husband, however, was a weakling and effeminate—he died not many years later—and it may well have been that Hatshepsut, after about five years of marriage, despaired of presenting her ailing husband with an heir who would be of royal blood, and finding

this healthy-looking babe in the river, conceived the idea of passing him off as her own and eventually making him heir apparent to the throne. Josephus says she did in fact put this proposal to her father and he concurred, but Josephus was probably romancing, although he may have had access to sources of information denied us today. But one might well ask what other motive this highly born princess could have had in acting as she did. And if this be the true hypothesis—and it is difficult to construct another fitting the case so well—the temptation that presented itself to Moses as he grew up was a far more crucial one than is generally supposed. He could, upon the death of his reputed mother's husband, become Pharaoh of Egypt, with all the power and glory which that entailed. As the reputed son of Hatshepsut he would possess a royal title to the throne. He could then have removed the burdens of his fellow-countrymen and restored to them the favours they had enjoyed in the days of Joseph.

When Moses was eleven years of age the old Pharaoh, Thutmose I, died, and his son succeeded as Thutmose II. Hatshepsut had already acted as Regent for her father during his last few failing years, and now she took full control and assumed the title of Pharaoh herself, consigning her husband Thutmose II to a minor role. In another seven years he was dead, having in the meantime given his wife a daughter, Nefrura, and, like his father, had a son by one of his own concubines.

By this time Moses was approaching twenty years of age and was rapidly becoming "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in words and deeds" as Stephen said of him at his trial (Acts 7.22). If there is any basis of truth in Josephus' story that Moses achieved distinction by leading an army into Ethiopia and conquering that land this would be the time he did so; more likely though this is another of Josephus' romances, although it is a fact that such an expedition did take place.

Meanwhile a constitutional crisis had arisen. With the death of Hatshepsut's husband a new Pharaoh must succeed. He need not necessarily be descended through the royal female line himself provided he was married either to Hatshepsut or to her daughter Nefrura, both of whom held the right of succession. If the Queen had actually intended to put Moses forward as the rightful Pharaoh this would be the time, either by a nominal marriage to his reputed sister Nefrura, then only three years old, or to Hatshepsut herself—the Pharaohs of this dynasty were not particular about relationships in marriage. In either case Hatshepsut intended to remain the real

ruler, as in fact she did eventually.

At this juncture the priesthood came into the picture, rather hurriedly. They may not have been too sure about their sovereign's ideas and intentions regarding Moses. They may or may not have known that he was a Hebrew but they must have known that he was not the natural son of the queen and her husband or they would have had no option but to acquiesce in whatever action she took. There was a quiet plot hatched and the next that the queen knew about it was that her stepson, born to her husband by his concubine, and now about eight years of age, had been publicly proclaimed Pharaoh Thutmose III.

There was not much Hatshepsut could do about it. She had been tricked into a position where she must marry her stepson and so legitimise his election, although he was so young. It made no practical difference; the queen still ruled and for the next twenty-odd years she carried Egypt to a high degree of prosperity, sending a fleet of trading ships on a noteworthy expedition to a far-distant land and receiving in consequence a vast assortment of tropical trees, plants, animals and native products such as Egypt had never seen before. She also engaged in an extensive building and beautifying of various temples the ruins of which still remain as testimony to her greatness.

During this period there are references to a powerful noble who acted as her adviser and was the architect of the temples she had built, named Senenmut. This man appears to have enjoyed her full confidence and acted as tutor to her daughter Nefrura. He is depicted as having been born of undistinguished parents and occupied a prominent position at court. It is tempting to identify this individual with Moses but present evidence is against it. The tomb of Senenmut is known and it was desecrated by Thutmose III after the death of Hatshepsut. It was common for Egyptian notabilities to prepare tombs for themselves long before their death and there is no real evidence that Senenmut ever occupied it. He disappears from the records at a time corresponding to six years before Moses' flight into Midian. If it should one day turn out that Senenmut and Moses are one and the same, which is questionable, there are ten statues of Moses as an Egyptian noble in existence in the world's museums to-day.

About this time, Thutmose III, now a young man of twenty-three, asserted his rights as Pharaoh against the dominance of Hatshepsut, who was some thirty years his senior. From now on he took an active part in the government. At some time before this there must have occurred the crisis referred to in Heb. 11.24-26 "By faith

Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of the anointed greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". It is impossible to say whether this decision on his part created a rift between himself and the queen which involved his banishment from the royal court, or whether he stayed on in perhaps a less honorable position. The denouement must have been embarrassing for the queen. The insulting remark of the aggressive Israelite in Exod. 2.14 "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" does not sound as if Moses enjoyed any very high status at that time.

After about six years' joint rule with Thutmose III, and just forty years from the birth of Moses, Hatshepsut disappears from history. It is not known whether she died or was murdered by Thutmose III, who was always jealous of her dominance. In his hatred he defaced all her monuments and inscriptions so that the recovery of her history has been more than usually difficult. It is significant though that the time of her death coincides with the flight of Moses to Midian. The Pharaoh who "sought to kill him" was Thutmose III, who would certainly have no liking for this pillar of the former regime. Thutmose in his turn died about eight years before Moses returned from Midian, which is in accord with Exod. 2.23.

There is no reason to believe that the lot of the Israelites was any better under Hatshepsut than it was under her father or her successor. The contemporary Egyptian historian Ineni says of her "all Egypt laboured with bowed head for her" and the implication of the narrative in the first two chapters of Exodus is that the hard labour of Israel endured throughout her reign. The incident of the taskmasters occurred just at the end of her reign although perhaps just after her death and when her successor was getting himself established as sole ruler. It might well be that Moses, probably brought up to believe that he was an Egyptian, and her son, found out the truth and broke with her in order to take the side of his oppressed brethren. Despite the rather romantic flavour of the story of Moses' adoption in Exodus, the cold fact is that Pharaoh's daughter was a masterful and dominant character who ruled Egypt with wisdom and insight but with ruthless firmness for thirty-five years and suffered no one to thwart her will. The God of Israel meant nothing to her; she was an ardent devotee of the gods of Egypt and clung tenaciously to the doctrine that she was born in direct

descent from the gods and Divinely ordained to rule.

God said to her grandson, the Pharaoh of the Exodus *"in very deed for this purpose have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared in all the earth"*

(Exod. 9.16). In just the same way did the Lord raise up this Egyptian princess to afford his chosen instrument for Israel's deliverance that knowledge and skill which was to constitute so essential a part of his training for his destined task.

THE LONG SEARCH

Part 1.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God"

"Here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13.14).

"Seek and you shall find" is much quoted, practical advice by Jesus to the multitudes who came to listen to him. He must have looked upon those multitudes with more than compassion. They may have been in the helpless, lost situation of sheep who had no shepherd but they were intelligent enough to do some seeking on their own behalf. There was a good deal missing from their lives, for lack of which they were discontented, confused and only half alive. They were also in bondage to an oppressive nation, to a system of life which left them with many fears and little freedom. All around them men were seeking for honours, riches, social positions and all that goes with them; good living, fine clothes, the top seats at banquets, the 'much goods stored up in bigger barns'. They liked to be seen as superior people, openly ambitious, having lesser mortals in awe of their personal grandeur, waited upon by slaves who trembled at their master's word, who ran hastily to do his bidding. Such was the unequal state of society that the poor envied the rich and the rich despised the poor.

When Jesus looked upon this system which men had set up, he saw it as a worthless thing, providing the outward trappings, fine houses, soft raiment and easy living for a privileged few for a few short years, but little or none of that Divine quality of love which divides itself into justice, generosity, meekness and all the moral virtues which are the true adornments of men and women, the visible evidence of an inner beauty and grace not subject to the accidents and assaults of time. Jesus opened his ministry preaching the kingdom of heaven. He taught by parable and all his parables were pictures of well-known, easily understood events which illustrated that kingdom. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto". Whatever likeness He chose, his hearers understood that He spoke of earthly things endowed by a heavenly spirit of life which had so far eluded them. He spoke plainly and simply, yet with confidence and authority. Even the prophets had not spoken in such terms of life and abund-

ance. They were average people, wrestling with everyday problems, beset by the fears and doubts, the longings and desires common to man and they heard him gladly.

As a teacher and adviser He did not condemn their desire for more of the good things of life. The earth produced abundance for all and all had a right to a share in its riches. His mission was not to condemn but to give a more abundant life to all who would accept it on his terms, which were in the first place God's terms; the will of the Creator of man, of the heavenly Father for his human family. So the words were spoken and advice given to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and *all these things shall be added unto you*".

Rightness, purity of heart and conduct, honesty, a careful consideration of the rights of others and a wholesome respect for the law and order of Almighty God is the solid foundation of life. This is the rock upon which the whole edifice of life can be successfully built. No storm can uproot or overturn such a life securely anchored to what have sometimes been termed "the eternal verities". Justice and love are the foundation strata of God's kingdom. His throne, his symbol of power, is built upon and into these rock principles and no forces of evil can prevail against them. Devils and men may assault them, ignore them, defy them but they are still there. They will always be there, "the same yesterday, today and forever".

Purity is the essence of this kingdom, the clean and peaceful contrast to the corruptions of the kingdoms of this world. "Be ye holy for I am holy". "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect". Perfection of human conduct is scarcely to be achieved, yet it is to be aimed at, to be sought after, for God can have no dealings with sin. Wherever man abounds sin abounds with all its miserable consequences. It is habitual to jeer at sin, to mock virtue, to deride perfection as an undesirable state. A hypocritical profession produces the scoffer and the cynic. Emotionalism, ritualism, fanaticism, eccentrics and extremists have made observers critical,

doubtful of the wisdom of seeking and pursuing a course contrary to the natural tendency, to get all that can be got, to have a good time while there is time regardless of any present or future consequences. Admittedly there is a good deal to put people off the search for the kingdom of God, yet the ideal remains. The yard-stick of human conduct is the one set and maintained by He who made man. It is a standard which will never be lowered. The whole tenor of the Word of God is seek. "Seek me and your heart shall live". "Seek meekness, seek righteousness O inhabitant of the earth". God, love, light and life are synonymous. The first is the eternal fountain, the remainder the stream pouring out in a sparkling gush of living water to those whose hearts are conditioned to receive it. It is only when God is sought sincerely, wholeheartedly, with deep longing that the flow begins into the living cistern of a mind in tune with his. Perhaps that is why so few find the full and satisfying stream of life. Much searching is half-hearted, easily discouraged. The attractions of the world lure the seeker to what seems fairer territory. A transient bewitchment and the treasure is never found.

To change the metaphor, as Jesus often did, the corn fell by the wayside, or on stony ground, or among thorns, and so was defeated of its ultimate purpose. There is always plenty of room on the narrow way. The crush is on the broad road which does not lead to the kingdom of God. In spite of all the advice, the promises and the assurance, few have had the courage to seek first the kingdom of God. Many have lacked the tenacity to hold on, to endure to the end, to give their all not counting the cost. Most have never desired it, loving best the world as it is, fearing change. Some have paid it lip service, thinking it a good thing for somebody but not for themselves, hoping that if ever it comes to pass it will not be in their time. So the kingdoms of this world are still the kingdoms of darkness, set in these latter days upon a collision course when men in their extremity will at last cry unto the Lord and He will bring them to their desired haven.

That there is a haven, that there is at the heart of mankind a strong desire for something better than the existing conditions seems patent by the constant state of change and struggle, the search for an ideal state of living never yet attained. The human race has always been in a state of flux. Its earliest records reveal man as a wanderer, seeking change or having change thrust upon him. Whether it has been the urge to find "fresh woods and pastures new", to search for treasure beneath the earth's crust, daringly to probe the skies, to sail the seas in search of lost continents or to seek new ideologies, new forms of govern-

ment, man has been forever on the move seeking for something to his advantage. Inquisitive, acquisitive, adventurous or wantonly conquering, the search for new things, fresh ideas, richer territories or the questionable glory of power and triumph, have kept mankind in constant flow across the face of the earth. As immigrants seeking a promised land, as pilgrims seeking a sacred shrine, as homeless, fleeing for shelter before an invading army, or as exiles seeking a way back to a lost paradise, search has been and is the driving force.

The man who sought the pearl of great price and willingly paid its price, the man who sought for buried treasure and sold his all to buy the field where it lay hidden, the woman seeking her lost piece of silver, were no less intent upon a great search than the shepherd who sought his one lost sheep. All these seekers rejoiced in their findings, a gladness of heart they were eager to share. The father rejoicing over his lost son's return, the angels rejoicing over a repentant sinner, were all facets of the same story; the search of man for God and his kingdom and the joy of a mutual possession.

God's ideal of life is not want and misery but peace and plenty. These desirable blessings, the legitimate enjoyment of happiness, are a bonus, a generous supplement to those who seek first things first, who love God above all, who obey the golden rule of "Whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them", who cherish what is good and just, pure and beautiful, as a treasure beyond price. When appearances have seemed black and faithless, somewhere there could be found the thousands who have not bowed the knee to the gods of this world.

Jesus reserved his most scathing condemnation for the lovers of darkness, the deliberate doers of evil, the obstructors of justice, the arrogance and greed which showed no mercy, which exploited human need. His 'Blesseds' were for the poor, the persecuted, the mourners, the peacemakers, the pure and the meek, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

Had half of these noble principles been put into operation by the professedly Christian world over the long centuries since they were first spoken, history would have told a different story with a happier ending. Knowing all things, He who came to seek and to save the lost life and estate of man, knew his gospel of the kingdom would be lost in a maze of misinterpretation, in an overcoat of creeds, patched with old pagan customs. He knew its spirit was too good for this world, that this world would largely reject it as it rejected him, that only a few would truly seek, and of that few even less would remain faithful

unto death.

Life has been defined as a pilgrimage, more especially a Christian pilgrimage toward the city of God. To all have come the weariness of the traveller. Moments of doubt and days of despair have been a common experience. How many have been lost in the wilderness, fallen by the wayside or sunk to the earth in uncaring exhaustion, defeated, overpowered by a heart-breaking sense of futility is something read between the lines. The epitaph of each generation has been—"Here we have no continuing city".

History does not deal with sentiment but with the stark facts of the rise and fall of empires, with the change and decay of passing ages, with the inability of the most daring and determined of men to establish any lasting good, to erect any city which will at last not lie in the dust. The glory of departed kingdoms and the grandeur of their ruins are a silent testimony to the fact that—"Here we have no continuing city".

The archeologist and the excavator turn up the wonders of ancient days, marvelling that such splendours should topple, amazed at the minds which planned and the skill which constructed on such a magnificent scale the streets, the temples and palaces of a fabulous past. Men and women have gone on expensive pilgrimages to view with a mixture of awe and curiosity these cities which once lifted their soaring columns to the heavens in a display of aggressive ostentation but which like Capernaum were brought down to the dust; not only laid level with the earth but sunk beneath it into an obliterating obscurity. Fallen idols, pagan gods fashioned as images of the brute forces which gave life and controlling power to their civilisations, stare back at those who have sought them out of their tombs with a stony look of astonishment that such a thing could have happened to them. The pride and might of cities which knew not God have become subject to the spade, the crowbar and the rope, ignominiously hauled off to become museum pieces in other

cities which may well follow them to disasters which are leaping ahead of knowledge.

Cities in Bible terminology are governments, systems, religions and political, which have established rule over nations. The names of their capitals, the outward expression of their faiths and ideologies have about them a ring of greatness, a fascination even in their ruins which captivated imagination. That such powers have declined, such systems failed, leaving only their skeleton fingers pointing the lesson of change and decay, proves that some element essential to their survival was missing. The prophets have never been popular. Their forecasts must always have been unwelcome, their denunciations bitterly resented. Human nature as at present constituted resents rebuke or interference with its self chosen ways. It becomes touchy about such words as wrong and sin. Yet these are the seeds of destruction which every regime has nourished to its own undoing.

Like so many doctors round a dissecting table historians subject past empires to critical examination, seeking the causes of the maladies which brought them to their end. Whatever their conclusions the disease remains the same, the transgression of Divine and moral laws written into the statute book of human conscience. "Selfishness" says one of these doctors, "is the age-long disolvent of communities". "The great instrument of all these changes" says another, "is the peculiar venom of party, the spirit of ambition, of self-interest, of oppression and treachery. This is the spirit which entirely reverses all the principles which a benevolent Nature has erected within us, all honesty, all equal justice, even the ties of society and natural affections". While such venom does its deadly work, all the dreams the ideals, the hopes, the efforts to establish an eternal city must fade and crumble away by slow decay or with catastrophic suddenness.

To be concluded

Pope Leo on The Bible

"If in these books (the Bible) I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I shall not hesitate to conclude either that the text is faulty, or that the translator has not expressed the meaning of the passage, or that I myself do not understand it." Those words are from the pen of Pope Leo 13th, who died in 1903. Quite irrespective of the source from which they come, they are words of good sense and breathe the right atmosphere of Christian caution in dealing with the Word of God. So many there are who read a passage of Scripture, draw a conclusion, and immediately brand as in error all who view the matter differ-

ently. The Bible is a book to be studied, carefully, reverently, prayerfully, and always with the thought in mind that the best and ablest of men can only glean its secrets in proportion as he is led by the Holy Spirit of God. Though a man live a thousand years twice told, he will never be more than a student of the Word, and will always find new aspects and views of the old truths opening up before his vision. Not one of us will attain to full knowledge until "that which is perfect is come" and if that fact is allowed to rule our minds while we study and pray and fellowship together we shall be blessed indeed in our searching.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

4. "And He said unto me"

*St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12.1—9*

Before Paul came to understand the purpose of the Lord in granting him a fore-view of Paradise, he sought the presence of his Lord to present his plea that the thorn and the messenger of Satan should be withdrawn. Having such wonderful evidence now to unfold he seems to have felt, if it could be told, that his kinsmen in Israel would most surely accept the testimony he would present.

Once and twice he raised his ardent plea, but the Lord made no reply, nor did He mitigate the sufferings arising from the stake. Then in more urgent tones Paul prayed again. This time it drew forth the Lord's reply. How greatly Paul appreciated that reply. How caressingly he seems to write the words "*And He said unto me.*"

If the suggestion made heretofore concerning the Satanic messenger and the nature of the stake be taken as correct we may conceive Paul's prayer to run something like this: Dear Lord and Master, hear my prayer. I come to ask thee to remove this painful stake. I do not shrink from suffering and would gladly go to death for the sake of thy dear Name. But I cannot understand the need for my present sufferings, and ask thee now for some relief. Thou knowest, Lord, the arduous nature of the task thou hast committed to my charge. Thou knowest that my people are hard of heart, and the priests and rulers repudiate thy claims. Thou knowest they oppose and seek to thwart thy work, and drive me from place to place. Nor need I tell thee how they cling tenaciously to the ancient institutions and will not accept the "new." Yet in my heart I feel that if they only knew and understood the glories of that better day which thou hast revealed to me, and of the part therein which they are called to play in preparation therefore, they would not fail to heed what I have to say to them. If I could show them that "the half has never yet been told," that all that the prophets spake, they only spake in part, that the glories that await them are grander far than mortal man has yet conceived, surely they would choose and accept the new and better things, and turn with their whole heart into the Way of God. If I might tell them of that eternal peace and satisfying plenty which then will abound, and of the ever-open access into the Presence of our God, how could they longer refuse to accept thee as their chosen Lord. Wilt thou not permit me to speak freely of what I have come to know? Wilt thou not permit me

to win acceptance from Israel's choicest sons, who wait expectantly for proofs and tokens such as I could now present? Thou knowest, Lord, that I would run with haste over mountain and plain, over land and sea, and teach them in their synagogues and draw them to thy feet. Only speak the word, dear Lord, and I will go with ready heart and willing feet, and as I speak to their waiting hearts, this suffering will cease.

If in the foregoing we have faintly caught the echo of Paul's ardent plea, we may now, with diffidence, construct some semblance of the Lord's reply; a reply couched in words of chiding and reproof, but so tenderly and soothingly expressed: "I have heard your prayer, O Paul, my faithful messenger and friend. Listen now to me, and let me explain to you the meaning of your stake. That glimpse of Paradise I gave you was for the assurance and comfort of your own suffering heart. It was not intended for the nation's ear nor for their ruler's enlightenment to-day. Believe me when I tell you they would not accept your word even as they did not accept mine. It is a 'strange work' which my Father purposes to-day—for He seeks only a 'remnant' from their midst as He sets the unready nation aside. Blindness is about to befall them, because their heart is hard, and my Father purposes to excite these people to jealousy by calling and accepting believers from among a 'no-people' in their stead. I, also, am solicitous concerning Israel and would spare them, but though I have been endowed with all power in heaven and earth I may not use that plenitude of power contrary to my Father's Will. This is the season of sacrificial suffering—sufferings made necessary by the nature of my Father's Plan. My own share in those sufferings is at an end, but it is now your privilege to share with me in those sufferings. I chose you to be my special messenger to bear my Name before this faithless generation, and to suffer for my sake! Would you now have these purposes changed, so that you could win the favour of Israel? Is not my favour alone enough for you? You could not win approval from Israel as they are, this day, and still retain your Father's smile and approbation. My favour can be much more vital to you than all the commendations of Israel! With my approval you can attain your appointed goal, even though the whole world disapprove your course! With my assistance you can overcome Satan's craftiest wiles, and bear all the buffeting his angel can inflict. Even when your own strength gives out,

my power can work unchecked within your heart, and bear you up over every obstacle, and give you victory over every foe,—yea more, when you are at your lowest ebb, my power can attain and manifest its greatest energy. My grace is sufficient for all your need—to help you bear the chafing and restraint, what time your heart is heavy for your people's perversity. You can not love this wayward people more than I have long loved it, yet it must, ere long, be set aside, and overwhelmed with judgment and banishment from this land, but I have shown you what the End will be. In that better day which lies beyond their night of sin and suffering they will come home again to this good land, and to their God—of that you may be well assured! It was to give you full assurance of this consummation that I took you forward through the long, dark years, and blessed your deeper senses with the sights and sounds of that better day. Rest then, content with Me and with my help, and take to yourself the fulness of my grace. When you are sorely buffeted, and your piercing stake wounds you sore, come near to me, and I will bear you through your agony. When your people spurn your voice and drive you out from place to place, I will go along with you to soothe your aching heart. Only trust me to the end, and my grace shall be sufficient for your need, every day, in every way. Be at rest in me, and bear your stake and buffeting for me, and share with me the restrainings of my Father's Sovereign Will."

Perhaps we have been presumptuous in daring to fit words into the Master's lips, but if so, it has been reverently performed as we have sought to show the depth of love the Master bare towards his suffering messenger in that vital hour when He led him forth to the great task of leading the Gentiles into the fold which Israel refused to enter.

What marvellous psychology is here portrayed! And what an amazing partnership is brought into view. The time had come to teach the fervent messenger another phase of the Divine Plan, and in doing so, to cut across his most cherished longings.

The vehement intensity of those longings is recorded in another place, and at a later date. This is what Paul says, "*I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish it were I myself and not my kinsmen in the flesh who was cut off from the Anointed One.*" (Rom. 9. 2, 3). This was no rebellious attitude against the ordainings of God, but a token of the love he bore for Israel. Must someone be cut off from the fellowship in Christ? Then Paul himself would gladly bear the pruning-knife, if Israel, by such means, might retain its tie with Christ.

The Master cut across those longings in such a way that He worked the matter in accordance with his sovereign Will, and won the consent withal of his messenger, even though he was wincing under acute pain the while. The ardent human preferences were gently bent around until they lay in full alignment with the Master's Will, and though the stake that had been driven through his heart still remained a stake, the copious supply of grace out-flowing from the Master's heart was always enough to staunch the bleeding wound, and ease its painful smart.

Daily experience enabled Paul to find the words of Jesus true Continued conquest over his preference enabled Paul to give the words of Jesus another turn. "*Most gladly will I glory in my weakness that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" The grace of Christ became, in this hour of need, the power of Christ. "Approval" in its turn became "Enabling power". The gracious approving smile was a fitting prelude to the grip of the mighty Hand. The weakness of the suffering saint found opportunity for the dynamic energy of the watchful Lord. It linked the servant with his Lord, and made them one in purpose and suffering.

With such a "power" controlling life, in spite of the aching heart, Paul sums the matter up, and writes, "*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake,—for when I am weak, then am I strong.*"

Paul could not forget the experience that brought the Lord so mightily into his life. It was graven on his heart by various things. First, the glimpse of Paradise and his desire to tell his people what he had come to know, next the callous attitude of his kinsmen according to the flesh, who with so much at hand would take so little. And then the driving of the stake (so much more grievous to the messenger than mere soreness or weakness of the eyes) to pin him down to present things, and make him fit companion to Jesus in suffering, and not a man of dreams.

May we use that episode in the Apostle's life as a parable for our own anxious day? Beats there one single heart which throbs for love with humankind that would not spend its days and hours, its voice and pen to have the nations understand the Way of God amid the tangled mazes of to-day? We who have glimpsed that better world—that new Jerusalem yet to come down from God to men—would we not right willingly tell the peoples of this sad old earth what we have come to know? Like Paul himself, we also want to "go" and "speak"—to tell this suffering world of a better day, and turn this warring generation from the rapids and the rocks.

But are we sure that God would have it so? Are we sure this generation would give heed to us though we spake with angel tongue, or trumpet voice? Is the present set-up of circumstances a "stake" for us, driven through our very soul, to make it impossible to speak the word we would? Let us leave that point for another day, and meantime, take to ourselves the balm of our Master's soothing words. As first spoken they were intended for one loyal heart when self-

desire must be made submissive to the over-ruling Will of God. It will be so again, to-day, for any child of God, who, uncertain what this crucial hour requires of him to do, can sink right down at Jesus' feet and "rest" with good contentment in his heart until his way is clear. It is far better to tarry till the "glory-cloud" begins to move, than go forward to any tasks at our own time, and in our own way.

(To be continued)

REDEEMING THE TIME

*A reprint from the
"Forest Gate Bible Monthly"*

We often treat our invaluable time as if it were of little account. Our friends demand it from us and we freely bestow it upon them as though we had an inexhaustible supply. Sometimes, in a restless and idle mood, we find that time drags wearily and aimlessly along; on other occasions, though we may be equally inactive and without purpose, time seems to fly past unheeded. But we cannot waste nor misuse it without serious loss and injury to ourselves. Our life is but a vapour, that appeareth for a while, and then vanishes away (James 4.14). How important, therefore, that we use time well, for the day will come when the true value of the present life will be seen in all its importance.

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

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

exchange for his soul? There is nothing we can afford to barter for this. The Master will commend only that servant who has done his bidding. His other efforts, however well-intentioned, are useless, if he has not carried out the express command of his Lord. Many shall say in that day, "Have we not done many wonderful works in thy name?" and he will answer, "I never knew you". We may be tampering with other people's affairs and neglecting our own. Upon the proper attention to our own business depends our ability to be useful to others, either in religion or any other sphere of life. We can persuade ourselves that we are accomplishing a good work for the Lord and for our fellow brethren when we are really hindering both ourselves and them. We can be burdened with an anxiety to save others, and yet not have yielded ourselves to the Lord's instructions regarding our own salvation.

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

We may find this training monotonous, and perhaps feel how unavailing it all is. It does not gain the applause of others, often not even their recognition. It is a more arduous task and brings us less into the limelight than the man-made

problems of Church government. It is much less conspicuous than engaging in some struggle for the justification or supremacy of a particular cult, or any other such movement of party or sect. But it is actually the most important feature of all our efforts, and it is in this process that we discover the lasting peace and joy which we seek. Let the Lord choose the way, and then let us maintain it at all costs, leaving the results with him. It may lead to disappointment, our efforts may appear fruitless, and defeat may continually dog our steps, but we must remember such are his methods to train us.

Devotion, submission, and patience are the only offerings we can make to God when active and urgent duties are cut off. Yet these are the acceptable gifts without which all other service is valueless. The meek spirit which patiently bears disappointment, irritation, reproach and contra-

dition, is using time in its most profitable sense and making growth in grace much more rapidly than the many who are more actively employed. Neither is the time lost which we are trying to use profitably, when we have accepted and borne with forbearance and gentleness the unwelcome and inevitable intrusion which has interrupted all our well-prepared plans. However important our occupation, however praiseworthy our objective, greater and more praiseworthy is the control we have gained over our own spirit, and much more profitably have we redeemed the time. For the great end and objective of every moment of our fleeting days, though it be but here a little and there a little, precept upon precept, line upon line, is to transform us by the renewing of our minds into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

From "Forest Gate Monthly."

A Note on Luke 11.51

"From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple . . . it shall be required of this generation". (Luke 11.51).

"From the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar". (Matt. 23.35).

Who was this Zacharias? From Matthew's account it might be thought that he was the prophet whose book appears in the Old Testament "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah" (Zech. 1.). There is no indication in the Old Testament of the manner in which this Zechariah met his death. Josephus records the murder of a Zechariah, the son of Baruch (Berechiah) in the Temple at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which of course, was still nearly forty years future when Jesus spoke these words. There was also a Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death in the court of the Temple at the command of King Joash of Judah. (2 Chron. 24. 19-22). This Zechariah, dying cried out "The Lord look upon it, and require it" (i.e. require his blood at the hands of the murderers, and exact retribution). The Second Book of Chronicles is the last book in the Jewish arrangement of the Bible and

therefore this account, which is the last occasion in that book where a righteous man is put to death, becomes the last such account in the Bible, just as that of Abel is the first. It might well be that Jesus was referring to this Zechariah when he spoke the words of the text; the circumstances would make him the most fitting choice for the Lord's purpose. The only difficulty is the reference in Matthew to "the son of Barachias". It has been thought that this is an interpolation by some transcriber anxious to identify the one referred to by our Lord with the famous prophet of the Restoration. The Jews had no detailed tradition of the death of that Zechariah; they had preserved very vividly the recollection of the earlier martyrdom of this one in the days of King Joash, even going so far as to assert that his blood had never ceased to flow but could still be found in the Temple precincts. Jesus would obviously want to take hold of the most forceful example in his denunciation and on the whole it does seem reasonable to conclude that the incident He referred to was in fact the one that is recorded in 2 Chron. 24, and that He meant to take the first and last occasions of the shedding of innocent blood that the Jewish Bible has on record.

Although there must be trying experiences, there is also possible to us a great joy as we realise how we may have partnership with our Lord's sufferings,—broken with him—with the knowledge and anticipation of being raised with him to co-operate in his future work of blessing.

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8. 18). "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2. 11).

THE SCRIPTURES ON HELL

It was long thought—and in some Christian circles is still thought—that God purposes to punish sin by subjecting the sinner to eternal misery and separation from all that is good and righteous and holy. After the few short years spent on earth, often under unfavourable and distressing conditions, and in many cases without any adequate opportunity to come to a true knowledge of the principles of right doing and holiness, the offender is to be condemned, without further opportunity of development or reform, to a hopeless and unthinkable destiny. The advocacy of this teaching has driven some into scepticism and atheism, and is a stigma on the name of God, Who in earlier times is recorded as saying *“I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn ye from your evil ways and live ye; for why will ye die, O ye house of Israel?”* It is not easy to reconcile that sentiment with the vision of a ruthless autocrat who inflicts pain and punishment without end upon men and women who may never have had an adequate opportunity to rise out of their native environment to better things.

It is important to realise that the purpose of God is not merely the selection of a few good folk to go to heaven and the relegation of all the remainder to “conscious misery, eternal in duration” as the old dogma has it. It is rather the creation of a race of beings which through the sufferings and discipline of the world as it now is, and by means of the beneficent reign of Jesus Christ in the “Golden Age” yet to dawn, will come into harmony with the principles of righteousness which are at once the laws of God and the laws of the Universe—of all creation. This harmony with man’s outer environment, and his inward harmony with God, automatically brings Life—life in full perfection, eternal in duration. Conversely, failure willingly to accept this standard and attain this proffered perfection of life implies that the individual remains imperfect, sinful—and the penalty of sin is Death, the anti-thesis of life. When it is seen that cessation of existence is the end of the individual who does not renounce sin after a full opportunity has been given, and that this is a basic law of the creation of God, the conception of Hell as a place of conscious punishment disappears.

It should not be thought that this Hell of fire and brimstone, of devils and lost souls, of torments unspeakable, had its origin in the words of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. The idea is much older. To understand why this teaching became

so prominent a part of Christian theology it is necessary to cast the mind back to the earlier religious faiths which preceded Christianity. The great civilisations which were before Rome—Persia, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Sumeria—had in their religious systems a very definite belief in the existence of malignant gods who had to be propitiated and appeased if hardship in this life was to be avoided. The intense belief in devils and all kinds of supernatural wickedness which characterised these religions made it easy to imagine a region where the spirits of the dead would be entirely at the mercy of such malevolent powers, and hence it was that the devotees of such faiths were wedded to the forms and ceremonies which it was believed would avert this dreaded fate. When the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles began to be formulated into creeds and confessions of faith with a view to regularising the beliefs of Christendom, it was difficult to avoid incorporating these old beliefs as explanatory of Jesus and the Apostles’ words respecting the penalty of sin, partly to make the transition to Christianity easier and partly, it must be recognised, because the priests of that day realised what a potent weapon the fear of Hell could become in their hands.

In marked contrast to these gloomy views of the life after death is the attitude of the Hebrew nation from earlier times. The Old Testament abounds with references to “*sheol*”, the Hebrew word which is used for “Hell” in the Authorised Version, but in no case does it imply a place of torment. The Hebrews had no such idea in their theology. They described death as a sleep, to be followed by an awakening at the “last day” when the promises of God to their fathers would be fulfilled. It is true that in later Judaistic works such as the apocryphal “Book of Enoch” there are passages describing a fiery abode and torments for evil angels and evil men, but these books were written only a few centuries before Christ when some admixture of pagan thought had taken place and when in fact the foundations of the later Christian Hell were being laid. In the Hebrew Scriptures “*sheol*” always denotes the grave or death state, and is described as a condition of unconsciousness, the only release therefrom being by means of a resurrection from the dead. The word occurs sixty-five times in the Old Testament, being translated thirty-one times “Hell”, thirty-one times “Grave” and three times “Pit”. In no case does the nature of its occur-

rence demand anything more than a reference to the state of death, the one instance usually adduced to the contrary, (Psalm 9.17) "*The wicked shall be turned into Hell; all the nations that forget God*" being a reference to the law of creation already referred to, that the only possible end for the wilfully sinful individual is the cessation of his existence.

"Hell" in the New Testament is translated from the Greek "Hades", "Gehenna" and "Tartarus". "Hades" is the equivalent of the Hebrew "*sheol*" and is used in quotations from the Old Testament. It occurs ten times as "hell" and once as "grave". In eight instances it is obvious that the death state is intended. In one case (Rev. 20.14) the statement that Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire implies a time when the power of death and its concomitant, the grave, will be forever broken, and indeed this is the theme of the triumphant exclamation of Paul in 1 Cor. 15.55, "*O death, where is thy sting? O Grave (hades) where is thy victory?*". The remaining instance is of a different order. It occurs in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and for this reason is worthy of a brief examination. The parable is an allegory and its primary moral must obviously have had some meaning for those who first heard it. To consider that Lazarus is received into heaven merely on account of his poverty and Dives into hell for being rich is an absurdity. A more reasonable explanation is that Jesus was giving his hearers, in the manner beloved of the East, a symbolic word-picture of something they already half knew to be true even although its truth was unwelcome to them. The rich man fitly pictured their own nation, recipients of the favours of God and in a particular sense the chosen people of God, as they firmly believed. To them the Gentile nations were as the beggar crouching at the door. But in the course of time this condition of affairs was reversed. The Jews became dispersed among all nations—and to this day have been "in torments". The beggar on the other hand was received into "Abraham's bosom", a Rabbinical expression indicating acceptance and favour with God. True to the story, such special favour as the Jews possessed in having a prior opportunity to receive the person and message of Christ passed to the despised Gentiles shortly afterward. The reference to hell is a metaphor used to indicate the subsequent two thousand years of national distress upon the people of Israel.

Twelve times in the New Testament the word "hell" is translated from the Greek "Gehenna". This is the Greek form of the Hebrew "*Gay-Hinnom*", the name of a deep ravine to the south of Jerusalem where the garbage and refuse of the city was cast and destroyed by the continual fires which were kept burning there. Such refuse as fell on the rock ledges and was not reached by the fire was soon destroyed by worms which quickly multiplied under the Eastern sun. Hence the expression "*to be cast into Gehenna*" was synonymous with utter destruction, and the blazing valley, especially at night, very readily suggested the concept of a "lake of fire". If the words of Jesus are examined with this in mind it can be seen that He used the expression "*Gehenna*" in a metaphorical sense as a symbol of destruction and not of everlasting conscious torment.

The one remaining instance of "hell" in the New Testament is in 2 Peter 2.4 where the writer speaks of the "angels that sinned" being "cast down to hell". The word here is "*tartarus*", a reference to the Greek idea of a prison abyss far below the earth where the Titans, who in Greek mythology rebelled against God, were imprisoned. Jewish thought in the days of the First Advent held that "*tartarus*" was the place where the angels that sinned in the days of the Flood were imprisoned, awaiting their final judgment, and this is the meaning of the reference in Peter's epistle.

In harmony with this view of the nature of the Bible Hell the way is prepared to receive the message preached so definitely by Christ himself: "*The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God . . . and shall come forth*". The reign of Christ the King will be the signal for Hell to open its gates and for all who have slept in death to come forth, in wonderment and bewilderment at first perhaps, but with increasing joy as they learn of the new Kingdom which, with the elimination of sin, disease and death will become the "desire of all nations". In fine language the prophet Hosea (13. 14) expresses the purpose of God and his determination to bring to an end the dominion of sin and death: "*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*" and John in the Book of Revelation adds "*there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, for the former things have passed away*".



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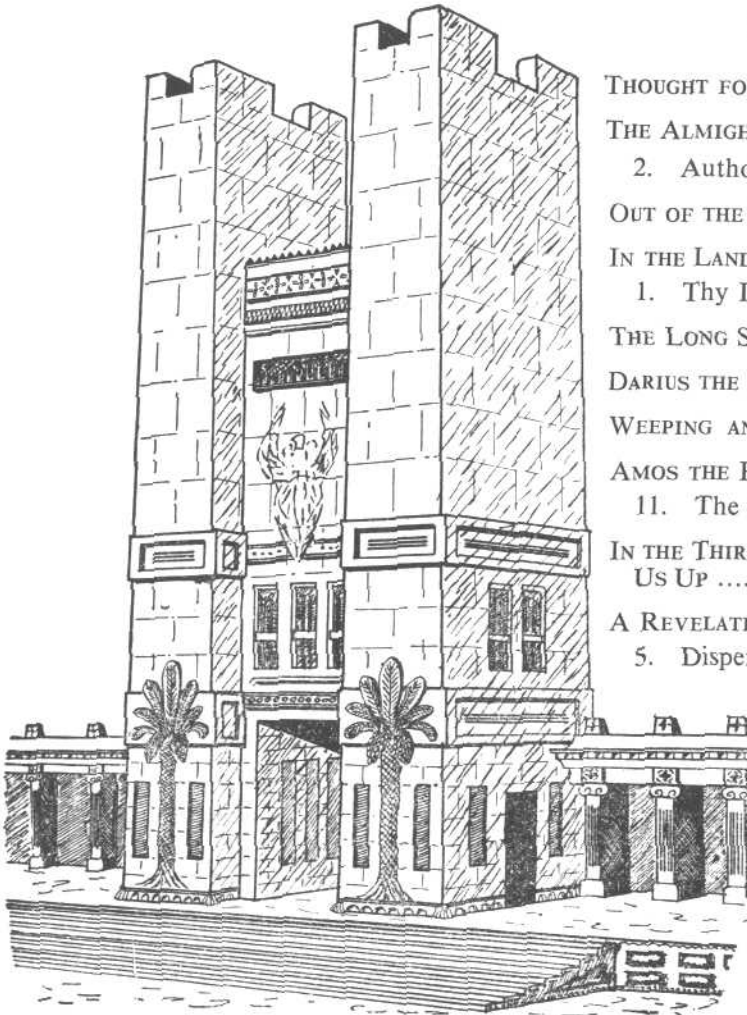
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3.28).

The theology of St. Augustine, which still influences Christian thought and activity after six centuries, requires that Christians engage strenuously in evangelising and converting all nations on the basis that unless this is accomplished here and now, untold millions will perish everlastingly. The same theology required that the Second Advent would occur in about the Fifteenth century and the world must be converted by then, but neither expectation materialised. In sober fact, as many students of the Bible now realise, the Divine Plan is by no means so narrow—nor so short of time for its accomplishment—as was then thought. "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" said Paul to the Athenians (Acts 17.31). That day, the Millennial reign of Christ, is yet future; it will be the mission of all active Christians, by that time gathered together in one in the world beyond the Veil, with Christ as Head, to continue and complete all present evangelical effort with power far exceeding that possessed at present. We do not desist from our proclamation of the Gospel but we should include with that a quietly waiting for the greater work of salvation which the Lord will yet put upon our shoulders in that day when dead as well as living will await our ministrations.

NOTICES

West Wickham Convention, Sunday, October 12 at Justin Hall, Beckenham Road, West Wickham. Programmes and details from Mr. D. J. Holliday, 8 Highfield Drive, West Wickham, Kent.

Stories of the Millennium. "Truth embodied in a tale, may enter in at lowly doors" are words accredited to Tennyson the Nineteenth century poet. It is a truism that some themes can be more effectively presented in story or narrative form than they can by more sober academic treatise. With this thought in view there is presented in this issue the first of a number of such stories depicting aspects of life in the coming Millennial Age when the whole of mankind, present and past, will experience the final stage of their development and preparation for their intended place in God's eternal purpose. The first few of these stories were originally published many years ago and have been available since then in booklet form but this edition is now about to go out of print and it is thought timely to republish these, with others never yet published, for the benefit of to-day's readers. The serial title of the series is "In the Land of Beginning Again".

Gone from us

Sis. M. Addison (Scarborough)
Bro. R. Bullen (Ipswich)
Bro. Colinese (Forest Gate)
Sis. J. Hindmarsh (Rowlands Gill)
Bro. B. McGrath (Aldershot)
Bro. J. F. Thompson (Ulverston)
Bro. F. Tring (West Wickham)

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

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

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

2. Author of Creation

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

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

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

We do not know whether what is usually called the angelic world came into existence prior to

the visible universe or simultaneously with it. We do not know the true nature of the celestial world or of celestial beings, only that it is a real world, with real citizens living nearer to the presence of God than do we upon earth, capable of intelligent loyalty, service and activity in the things of God, and ceaselessly engaged in the occupations and duties for which God has created them. Because the Bible tells us of angels who sinned, and are reserved to judgment, of evil principalities and powers in the heavens, we have to accept the fact that the citizens of that world are capable, like man, of obedience or disobedience, loyalty or disloyalty, to God, and that there are those in that world who now are in a state of rebellion against God. Neither can we pronounce with any certainty upon the relation of that world to our physical universe in terms of space and time. The five human senses, and every type of detecting instrument which the wit of man has devised, are incapable of sensing or detecting anything to do with that world. But because God is the Source of all life and the Author of all creation, in whatever sphere of being that life and that creation is manifested, we can be assured that a time there must have been when the celestial world, with whatever forms of life it holds, came into existence by the creative decree of God, just so surely as did our own material order of things. There are a few allusions in Scripture to that fact. Of the Son it is said that *"by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . ."* (Col. 1. 16). That the creation of what is to us the invisible world, the angelic, antedated the formation of the earth at least is indicated in Job 38. 7 where the sons of God, i.e., the angels, are depicted as "shouting for joy" when God brought this planet into being. But our earth is a comparative newcomer on the scene; the starry heavens existed, substantially as we see them now, long before the Earth was formed. Sometime in that remote past, perhaps at the very beginning of things, the celestial world came into existence, and for the first time living, intelligent beings stood before God and gave praise to him for the blessing of conscious life.

Knowing so little of that celestial creation, unable as we are to visualise the conditions of life in that world, in thinking and speaking of the work of God in creation we can do little more than consider the material universe of which we and our earth constitute a small—an infinite-

simally small—part. When we talk of God as Creator, although we are fully aware that the angelic world is part of his creation also, it is of man and the visible universe that we must speak.

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

God created the first atom!

Now an atom is a very tiny thing. Most people know nowadays that all earthly materials and substances are composed of atoms, clinging together tightly to make up the mass of the material. These atoms are almost inconceivably minute. It would take more than a million of them, placed side by side in a straight line, to equal the thickness of a human hair. The tiniest grain of dust, only just visible to the human eye, can contain more than ten millions of atoms. Yet this earth and all that is on it, and all the stars of the sky, consist entirely of atoms, inconceivable numbers of atoms congregated together. God made them all, made them out of nothing, by the exercise of his own Will, the power of his Holy Spirit. There are only about one hundred different kinds of atoms, but out of the tremendous number of combinations possible with those hundred kinds the whole wide variety of earthly things has been constituted,—land and sea, rocks and minerals, trees and grasses, animals and fish, man himself, all constructed from atoms. God made them all and ordered the fashion atom combines with atom to produce all the different substances we know, and so made possible the bodies we possess and the environment in which we live, and move, and have our being. And away in the vast stretches of empty space, at fantastic distances from this earth, there are mighty starclusters, galaxies as they are called, each containing millions upon millions of giant stars each one of which is bigger by far than our own sun,—which, as stars go, is only a midget,—and every star in every one of those countless galaxies is itself made up of atoms almost without number. Scientists are well accustomed to talking on the radio and otherwise about atoms, their nature and behaviour, but they cannot say where they come from or by what power they are created. Neither their researches nor their instruments can tell them that.

The Bible does do so. In some of those inspired moments when holy men of old were moved by the Holy Spirit to utter words the meaning of which they themselves could only dimly understand, or even not understand at all, there were occasional allusions intended to have significance for us in these latter days, and which, closely

examined, do have meaning. Speaking of his almighty power and wisdom, God says through the prophet Isaiah *"My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned (Heb. stretched out) the heavens; when I call unto them they stand up together."* (Isa. 48. 13). Let the implication of those trenchant words sink in! Here is the creative power of God calling into existence the material substance of which this earth and all the heavenly bodies are composed, preparing the space in which they are to continue their existence and by one word (*"when I call unto them"*) setting the entire assembly in orderly array as we see it glistening above our heads every night. Says Wisdom, the Logos, the only begotten Son *"When he prepared (established) the heavens I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth . . . then I was by him as a sure workman (or architect)";* this is the meaning of the Hebrew:) Prov. 8. 27-31. This momentous passage depicts the speaker as the active agent of God in the work of creation as distinct from the creative force or power whom we call God the Creator and God the Father of all.

Where human intellect fails, the Holy Spirit fills the gap. Speaking under the Spirit's guidance, the prophet Isaiah was able to describe what the wisest of men cannot describe. *"Lift up your eyes on high"* he says in Isa. 40.26 *"and behold who hath created these, (the stars) that bringeth out their host by number. He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."* Here is a marvellous picture; God the Creator "bringing out their host by number" as He creates the atoms, forms them into stars, and sets them to work. "Not one faileth". Never, in all this mighty process, is there a mistake or slip; all goes precisely according to plan. *"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite."* (Psa. 147. 4-5). No one of less than infinite understanding could originate and execute so tremendous a work. No one of less than infinite intellect could so number and give names to the myriads of stars that exist.

It is time now to ask the question "Why did God do all this?" For what reason has the Most High brought into existence this vast creation, so evidently intended to be the abode of continuous life—for the marvellous adaptability of our own planet to the myriads of different forms of life it supports shows unmistakably the Divine intention to multiply life in all its manifestations. The Revelator gives the answer. *"Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are*

and were created". (Rev. 4. 11). The word does not signify pleasure strictly in the modern sense of the word, but rather the idea of purpose or intention. The glowing words of Revelation 21.3 in which God is depicted at the last as making his dwelling with men seem at least to hint that in some wonderful manner which our altogether inadequate comprehension of God forbids our fully understanding, God comes inside his own creation of space and time in much the same way as a man builds a house for himself and then goes inside and lives in it. Some such idea may possibly be intended by the words of Isa. 40. 22. "He . . . sitteth upon the circle of the earth, stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Psalm 104. 2 has much the same idea. God enshrouds himself in light as a garment, stretches out the heavens for a veil and lays the supporting beams of his dwelling-place in the celestial waters, the recesses of far space. God would dwell with man, but he remains invisible to man, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (1 Tim 6. 16). Inconceivably remote, and yet infinitely near. The same Divine Mind that ranges through the vast recesses of space, filling it with great stars, is able to take note of the smallest detail affecting the welfare of his humblest living creature. A sparrow, said Jesus, cannot fall to the ground without the knowledge of the Father (Luke 12. 6). The God of the atom, of the mighty stars, is also the God of the sparrows and is as fully aware of the one as the other. Even the hairs of our heads are numbered, Jesus went on to say. After all, if God can keep track of the untold millions of stars, and knows all their names, then heads and sparrows must be easy to him, for

The Dreamers

"Dreamer; crank; fanatic"; how often have such terms been applied to men and women who have seen in vision the world that can be; yea, shall be, when the beneficent reign of Christ has done its work upon earth. "Christianity—had it for two thousand years. It doesn't work," say some, all regardless of the fact that in all that two thousand years only a few have ever approached near enough to the feet of Jesus to learn of him and find that it does work. "The Sermon on the Mount—very fine, but not practical to-day," say others, as though the sorry mess men have made of their world is "prac-

John 14.2 is rendered by Moffatt and Phillips in question form as follows:—*Moffatt* "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, would I have told you I was going to prepare a place for you?"

there are far less of them to account for. So that as we look out upon the vast universe which our God has made we need not be appalled or afraid of its vastness and our own littleness. Out there, in the light behind the darkness, is our Creator and our Father, intensely conscious of us, our lives' experiences and problems, our loves and fears, our strength and weakness, our successes and failures, and He is most certainly and surely working out his great purpose for those on whom He has bestowed the inestimable gift of conscious, intelligent life.

But how can men, who even as nations are less than the fine dust of the balance before him, how can men with their limited powers of perception come to know the God who inhabits eternity; how attain that communion and fellowship with him which He himself has said is his desire and intention? If no man can look upon his face and live (Exodus 33. 20), if He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, if He is One whom no man hath seen nor can see, how may we ever come to know him? The answer is in five simple words in John's Gospel. "The Word was made flesh". The Word of God, the *Logos*, already the active agent of the Father in the work of creation, already in Old Testament days the means of communication between the Father and all men, now becomes more intimately connected with mankind that He might reveal God to them in even clearer guise. The Word came to earth, and dwelt visibly amongst men, having taken upon himself the nature of man (Heb. 3. 16). And in him men saw the Father.

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

tical". The dreamers of olden time were better informed, and in a fine flight of ecstasy the prophet declared, "Your young men shall see the glorious visions of which your old men dreamed dreams." Let the dreamers go on weaving their visions of the golden future on the solid foundation of God's Word, knowing in the words of one who was himself a dreamer that

*"We take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God, beyond the years you see
Hath wrought the dreams that count with you
as madness
Into the substance of the world to be."*

Phillips "There are many rooms in my Father's house. If there were not should I have told you that I am going away to get a place ready for you?"

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

*A collection of
interesting items*

Practical truth

Thomas Carthew, a missionary in East Africa, was amazingly powerful in his presentation of the truth. One day when he was teaching the Commandments to his congregation, everything went calmly until they reached number eight. "Thou shalt not steal," thundered Carthew. "Thou shalt not steal," repeated the coloured congregation. There was a pause. "Thou shalt not steal—coconuts", announced Carthew. This was an unexpected innovation, and dead silence reigned. "Say it!" demanded the preacher. In hesitating tones came the response, "Thou shalt not steal coconuts". "Now say this: 'Thou shalt not steal—fowls'," and so on through the whole list of petty pilferings, until the subdued congregation felt the power of the applied Word of God as never before.

A Dilemma

There stands in the town of Urfa, in southern Turkey, two stone columns, relics of Roman or Greek days. Local legend has had it for ages that one of these columns is filled with gold and fabulous treasure, ready for the taking. But the other column stops up the hole from which the Flood of Noah's day broke out to devastate the earth. And no one knows which is which. So to this day the treasure remains intact, for no one will run the risk of breaking open the wrong column and letting the Flood loose again on the earth.

The first Christians

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

Bow of Promise

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

Lucifer

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

Earthen vessels

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

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

*Short stories of
the Millennium*

1. Thy Dead shall Live

"I have finished Sheila's awakening robe!"

Absorbed in his painting, he did not reply immediately. As his brush completed the last few deft strokes his eyes left the canvas and looked out across the trim lawn with its borders of gay flowers. His lips framed a question.

"How shall we explain her mother's absence to her?"

His companion had risen and was draping the beautifully embroidered blue robe over her deck chair. It lay there, shimmering in the afternoon sun as though waiting for its destined wearer to slip straight into it.

"I do not know, John. This is a new experience for us, to await the awakening of one whose mother has gone to be with the Lord in the heavens. We ourselves have not been back long enough to know just how her mother will commune with her. But I am sure of one thing."

She picked up a basket of coloured silks and turned to go into the house. "It is written 'He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.' Sheila's happiness will not be complete if she fails to be re-united with her mother. Others whose loved ones have been translated to reign with the Lord Jesus tell us they have talked with them although we have not been able to understand their explanations. Perhaps when Sheila awakens we shall see for ourselves and understand what we now see only as through a glass, darkly. She was twenty-five when she died, John, thin, and wasted by disease. Now she will take up life where she left it, healthy in body and mind, ready to hear the message of the Gospel and make her decision for Jesus."

John followed his sister into the house, carrying his easel and canvas. Two kittens gambolled happily on the lawn. Inside, the two knelt in prayer. The man's deep voice came faintly through the open window.

"O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, look down from thy habitation on high and behold the preparation we have made for one whose friendship was dear to us in days gone by. We believe and art sure that thou canst bring her back, that the young life so soon cut short in all the bloom of youth can be revived and rejoice in this thy wonderful earth, and that with gladness she will come into harmony with the laws of thy righteous kingdom. Bring her back to us, that we may tend her as one of thy little ones, we beseech Thee, in the holy Name of our Master and our King, Jesus."

Two voices united in a softly reverent "Amen".

The kittens had ceased their play and were lying still, as though waiting. The hum of bees and insects took on a lower note, waned and died away altogether. The singing of the birds in the trees faded into quietness. A strange peace seemed to have closed in upon that sheltered garden. The sun slid behind a fleecy cloud, a solitary cricket chirped once, and then all was still

A soft whisper in the tree-tops . . . a gentle breeze sweeping down, stirring the quiet air, billowing through that blue robe lying in the deck chair, giving it almost the appearance of reality, a graceful reality that moved slightly, rhythmically, as though breathing . . . the sun shone out warmly and birds and insects burst out together in triumphant chorus

The girl in the deck chair lay, dreamy eyes half open, puzzled wonderment slowly dawning as she sought to take in the details of the scene before her. She turned her head slightly and followed the course of a butterfly over the flower tops. Her gaze fell upon one slender hand and she raised it hesitatingly, almost as though she expected the movement to be accompanied by pain. The blue sleeve slid back, revealing a delicately moulded arm without flaw or blemish. A little frown of perplexity puckered her forehead and she closed her eyes as memory began to return.

The thin, wasted arm; the white bedclothes; the grave-faced doctor just over there; the tearful face of her mother; the fast-gathering grey-ness coming down before her eyes and blotting out everything from sight; the slow fading of sound into silence, and now, this! She opened her eyes and looked at the golden mass of mimosa blooming where the doctor had been standing only a moment ago.

Realisation came, swift and sudden. "Oh mother, you were right, after all. This is the Kingdom you used to tell me about, and I have been dead and have come back. Mother, where are you?". Her arms were outstretched, beseeching.

A soft voice spoke behind her.

"I am here, Sheila."

There was something in the timbre of that voice which checked the girl's first impulse to turn round toward the speaker. "It is true then? I have come back, fit and well, and never to

suffer again?"

"Never again, my child. The tears are all over now.

"And you? Did you attain... your hope, mother?"

"Yes, dear. It was hard to let you go, but I knew my Lord had you in his safe keeping. And in his own due time He took me also, and brought me into the glorious assembly of the Church of the First-born in Heaven."

"It sounds like old times to hear you talk like that." The girl's eyes were shining. "I want to turn round and see if you are really there, and yet I feel quite content to lay here and listen to your voice. I don't understand it at all; it is all wonderful to me."

"You will come to understand, Sheila. We shall be able to meet and talk with each other often, even although the old relationship has passed away. We have each entered into a greater family, I in heaven and you on earth, and in those families we shall find new companionships and friendships, and spheres of service for the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. And you will learn in time to talk with me even when we are not together, for distance will no longer be a barrier to our communion with each other."

Sheila's eyes were serious. "Your life will be spent in the heavens, and mine on the earth, and yet I can always have you to myself when I want you?"

"That is so, dear."

She sighed happily. "Then there is nothing more I want. I shall try and remember everything you ever told me about the Kingdom and give my life to serve the Lord Jesus and do my best to progress along the—what do you call it?

—the Highway of Holiness, just as fast as ever I can."

The soft voice seemed to be coming from a great distance now. "Remember the words we used to read together, Sheila. 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' You are one of those ransomed, and life, rich, glorious, never-ending life lies before you. Your old childhood's friends, John and Mary, are in the house. Go to them and they will tell you much more about this wonderful world into which you have come. I go now—but I shall come again and come to you often."

Sheila stood up and looked around, quivering with eagerness. A puzzled look came into her eyes, and then a dawning understanding. For a long minute she stood, and then, "Come soon, my dear," she breathed softly.

Thoughtfully she turned again and went into the house.

This is the kind of incident that will be common in the Millennial Age. Christians who have loved and served the Lord Jesus in full consecration of life to his service will experience the change to heavenly conditions of which St. Paul speaks in I Cor. 15, and so "reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20.4). All others of humanity will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom on earth during which the Father makes his final plea for repentance and allegiance. It is to that new world the dead will return, in the resurrection, restored to conscious life by the power of God, in the new bodies which He gives to them "as it hath pleased him."

See Psalms 145:16, Matthew 25:40, Isaiah 33:24, Revelation 21:4, Hebrews 12:22-23, I Corinthians 15:50-53, Psalm 87:5-6, I Corinthians 15:38-40, Isaiah 35:8-10.

The Kingdom Within You

A Christian Church ought to be an exhibition of heaven upon earth—a manifestation of Christ below—a witness for God in the midst of the world, so that the world looking at the Church may be able to say: "This is a specimen of what that which is called the Gospel can do; this is a model of what the Christian teaching can achieve." And so all with whom we come into contact in our intercourse in life will say: "That man does not say much about his Christian beliefs when transacting his business, but there prevails in all that he does an integrity, a single-

ness of eye, a simplicity of purpose, a faithfulness to his engagements, and a superiority to trial, that proves he must have some fountain of peace and comfort and joy that we have not; we will go and hear what he hears, learn the lessons he has learned, and taste, if it be possible, the happiness which we see in his character." Such a one becomes to mankind either the salt that silently keeps a society from corruption, or the light shining on the hilltop that illuminates the earth with a ray of the glory of heaven.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly.)

THE LONG SEARCH

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God"

Part 2.

This is the second half of a two-part treatise centred on the text "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13.14) in which man's quest for the eternal state is dwelt upon. Last month's part spoke of the standards laid down by our Lord for those who would embark upon this pilgrimage.

The writer to the Hebrews had been reviewing the history of his own nation. Abraham their revered father and founder had left the city of his youth to seek one founded upon better principles than that of Ur of the Chaldees, whose towering ziggurat testified to its pagan worship of the moon goddess. "He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He did not find such a city, but died as he had lived, a tent dweller, confessing himself a pilgrim in the earth. His numerous descendants, who became a great nation, fared no better. Through many vicissitudes they gained and lost a city whose name ranks above all other cities as the Holy City, the City of God. Yet over this same city the Son of God wept, foretelling its desolation, "not one stone left upon another". Well might the Hebrew letter-writer conclude on a note of pathos, "Here we have no continuing city". The words are no poetic flight of fancy. Every day death takes its tally. Young and old are carried off the stage, many to be quickly "forgotten as a dream". As with cities so with people. Every mournful procession tells the same story of "no continuing city". Yet such is the tenacity of heart and mind for life under ideal conditions of living, even death cannot defeat hope or effort. Until men are at their wits end they will continue to strive, to seek and build what they think is the ideal state for the multitudes of mankind, only to have it dissolve in utter chaos when all seems secure.

"That great city" which the Revelator saw, clothed in the finest of royal linen and purple, is brought to nothing in one short hour. This city for which the merchants of the earth mourn, whatever its dimensions or its place among men, is no more enduring than any of its predecessors. Before Christ there was no continuing city as one by one the gold, the silver and the brass, which represented the wealth and power of early kingdoms were pushed from the scene, nor has any city or kingdom continued since. The nations of Christendom have neither reformed nor converted the world to his teachings. Their career has been stained and marred by much

that is cruel, oppressive, bigoted, misguided and biased.

Jesus knew that most of his teaching would be lost sight of in the general life of the world. "My kingdom is not of this world." Yet He urged his disciples to seek it, to understand its principles and to practise them in an alien world, as prospective citizens of that city which Abraham sought, whose builder and maker is God. The search for that visionary city has been the longest, the most ardent, the most courageous which the heart and mind of man has ever undertaken, giving to it time and attention, even the whole of life, counting it a light thing to give for such an eternal weight of glory. Although here in the existing order of things "we have no continuing city" the men of faith state with assurance "we seek one to come." The long search has never been abandoned nor will it be until the gates are opened wide and all who will may enter in. Abraham received nothing of the promised land nor did he see one foundation stone of the city he sought. What he did see down the centuries was the coming of one of his race who would take the title "Son of Man" and receive among many other illustrious names that of the "Son of God". "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad" (John 8.56). Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. He taught people to pray for its establishment in the words "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven". He said nothing about man's going to heaven, the dwelling place of God, but of God's rule being done on the earth to its ultimate peace and wellbeing. A kingdom implies a city, and a city implies rule. The rule of the city of God implies a system of law and order to which the cities of this world have long been strangers. That there is such a city John emphatically declared, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21.2).

This is not man going to heaven, a place of holiness and purity of spirit, for which he is obviously not fitted, but God coming to earth, setting up his own city, a government which will wipe away all tears, in that it will remove all causes for tears. This city of God, this new Jerusalem, has been long planned, long in preparing, as its ideals, proportions and solid foundations have been long sought. St. Paul writing to the Galatians identified it as "Jerusalem which is above is free which is the mother of us all".

(Gal. 4.26). This bearer of life to all does not remain above but comes down to function as a city, a form of government different and better than all that has gone before it.

No one reading the history of the past or the newspapers of today could honestly claim that any generation has produced ideal government in which all its citizens are happy, healthy and satisfied. Evils have abounded in every land in every decade. The modern world is beset by problems it cannot solve, by perils which fill it with fear, by dangers and violence which constantly shock by their horrifying consequences, by their deep hatred and savage ferocity.

What frightens most is not the explosive power of bombs kept in store by the nations but the explosive power of human selfishness, the clash of human personalities. "Egoism" says one of the sick world's doctors, "is the intrusion of this cold conceit into public life. It causes more than half the world's mischief. It brings disaster from the angry gods." The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. Professor Einstein concluded "that it was easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man".

In face of the falls and ruins of the past, and the deadly perils of the present which threatens the very existence of the planet and all its occupants, the search for security, for life in a continuing city seems to be fruitless; the advice of Jesus to "seek first the kingdom of heaven" a vain quest. Scientific knowledge and fertility of invention are not enough. Indeed they would seem to be the foes of human peace rather than the guardians of the most precious qualities of life. From every quarter of the globe the agencies of news and information reveal creation groaning under its load of pain, and utter confusion. The terrible image seen by the prophet Daniel bestriding the earth like a gigantic colossus, was intended to portray the civilisations of men deteriorating from the head of gold to the feet of iron and clay upon which the huge systems stand vulnerable and divided. However loudly the demagogues may cry for the universal brotherhood of man, there is no adhesion in the unruly masses. Unstable and tossed about like water, restless like a great sea whose waves rise higher and higher, some crying one thing and some another, the world and its peoples desire a haven, a city of peace. They are as much in need of the kingdom of heaven as those to whom Jesus came preaching its wisdom and justice. The house built upon sand, the clay in the feet of the great image, are pictures of danger to structures which have no solid foundations. The only solid foundation to any life, personal, national or spiritual is that based on the just principles

laid down by God. Abraham knew what he was looking for and he was prepared to wait for the eternal city which John the Divine saw with its gem-studded foundations, its streets of gold and gates of pearl, all vivid symbols of the kind of government to which the nations of the earth will eventually pay tribute.

The four-squaredness of this city of God upon its super foundations is a vision of government without party, without class or caste or creed or colour. It is government for the human race without venom, without partiality, founded upon justice and judgment. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Psalm 89.14). The first requirement of God is justice. Perhaps no quality has been so much abused or allowed to degenerate into weakness as this sterling virtue. "Judgment will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet." These are the very muscles and strength of the action of God's kingdom, his justice to man and his just requirements from man. "To do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God" are the first essentials.

There have been many cheap jibes about the pearly gates, those entries of translucent beauty through which all law-abiding citizens pass into the kingdom of God. They are not gates of death but gates of life. Nor will St. Peter be found standing there inspecting either the persons or the passports of any who wish to walk the street of gold. There is a shining transparency about that city which reflects with more than mirror clarity all who draw near to it, who gaze upon its walls, its streets or its iridescent portals. As none can deceive God who reads the heart, who is no respecter of persons, at those pearly gates none will be able to deceive themselves. The self they will see reflected at the threshold will be their true self, not the one they have fondly imagined themselves to be, nor the one they have projected for others to see, but real being, stripped of all pretences, heart, mind, motives, will, desire, the whole nature fully revealed with varying degrees of astonishment for all who see themselves as they truly are. Jesus was never deceived by the words or outward appearance of the people about him. John says "he knew all men" and needed not that any should tell him anything concerning them for "he knew what was in them". He looked on them and saw through them to the very core and centre of their being. When Paul warned that all must "stand before the judgment seat of Christ" he was not visualising a long judicial inquiry covering a lifetime's deeds. The sum total of words and actions first originating in thought

make everyone what they are. One look is enough for both judge and judged.

Sin cannot stand in his presence. Whatever the form of its uncleanness it must shrink back, appalled before the gaze of purity expressed and symbolised by the jasper walls and the pearly gates which will not admit "the fearful, the faithless, the unclean murderers, fornicators, idol worshippers and all liars" (Rev. 21.8). Unless such become reformed and transformed, separated from their sins, to become the children of God, they will never pass into that kingdom with all its life-giving blessings. It is the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, those who walk humbly with God who will walk in his kingdom, citizens of his eternal city, that abiding one for which Abraham sought. It is the righteous who will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The Holy City, its Founder and its people will be all of a piece, part of the one great pattern of justice, wisdom and love. Man in his present state is described as "crooked and perverse", the blinded victim of evil forces beyond his control. At best human nature is subject to change, to error, doubt, ignorance and partiality, which defeat the best intentions and thwart the finest endeavours. But with God the Father there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning". (James 2.17). He is what he has always been in ages past, what he will always be in ages to come, of one mind and one purpose, not one thing today and another tomorrow. What he has promised he will perform and it is this immutability which is the rock-foundation of the city of which he is the architect; its builder and maker.

This is the strong hope which pulls life's pilgrims on to the end of their search, a long search as man counts time but a brief interlude in eternity in God's reckoning. When "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" and his sovereignty is complete for all time to come, the dark night of death and defeat will fade from memory. When what now appears to the sceptical as fantasy becomes an accomplished fact there will be a new awareness of life and righteousness, a new desire to be in tune with God, to be as it were on the same wave-length, to say "Come let us go

up to the mountain of the Lord, He will teach us his ways. We will walk in his paths" (Micah 4.2-6).

The prophets of God were privileged to write history beforehand. They told of the decline and fall of many nations but they also told of the irresistible purpose of God, going forward regardless of the failures of the race, of the world of men he loved, whose interests he followed, for whom he worked "according to the counsel of his own will" with unswerving decision and unflagging patience. They saw beyond the ruins of transitory kingdoms and fallen cities to a triumphant conquest and the City of God with its rule of justice and peace under which the swords of war will be beaten into ploughshares and pruning hooks of domestic bliss and rural beauty. "For all people will walk everyone in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever".

It must be plain to all that this kingdom will never be established by missionary zeal or by the charitable actions of benevolent philanthropy. Christianity is a shrinking force in a vast ocean of isms which bear no relation to the kingdom of God. Evils increase in strength and kind. Men's pleas are for more soldiers, more weapons, more police, more prisons, more asylums and bigger hospitals. There are few prayers or desires for more of God and goodness in human affairs. Divine interference would be unwelcome in most quarters, especially by those who mock God, who despise virtue. The world is not convertible nor would it, if it had the chance, vote for the rule of the Kingdom. In due time the earth will be taken over by Him whose right it is to rule. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder". Among his many titles, Lord of lords and King of kings, he is also called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9.6-7). Ordered and established in justice and judgment by the irresistible spirit of God it will endure forever.

*Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy clangour
Of wild war-music oe'r the earth shall cease
Love shall tread out the baleful fires of anger
And in their ashes plant the tree of Peace.*

(J. G. Whittier)

THE END

Jesus failed to keep many who followed him. They turned back when his message became increasingly spiritual. Some start in the narrow way full of confidence but the path of sacrifice reveals hardship and the first love cools. They

do not mean to leave him altogether but it is so easy to drift. Relax a little, admit the life of the world, and your spiritual life is heading for shipwreck.

DARIUS THE MEDE

There has always been an element of uncertainty about the identity of the Median king who, according to Daniel, assumed power at the Fall of Babylon and death of Belshazzar. Says Dan. 5.31 "*Darius the Median took the kingdom*" but this name as a king of the Medes is not mentioned by any of the classical historical writers and on this account some have doubted the accuracy of the Book of Daniel. Various suggestions have been made as to whom he might have been, the favourite being Gobryas, commander of the Persian forces which actually captured the city (Cyrus himself being elsewhere at the time) but this ignores the fact that Gobryas could not have taken to himself the powers and prerogatives which in Daniel's narrative were taken by this Darius. Only the reigning king of the Medes and Persians could fill the role indicated in chapter 6 of Daniel.

The issue has been somewhat confused by the fact that Cyrus is generally supposed to have been the king of Media and Persia at this time. In point of fact he was not; he was actually a Persian military leader conducting a very successful rebellion against his lawful king. Media was the dominant element in the joint nation; Cyrus was working to reverse this position and make the Persians dominant. To this end he had already, eleven years before the capture of Babylon, defeated the Median king, Astyages (this is the Greek form of his name; in Babylonian it was Istemugu) and confined him to his own city of Ecbatana. He continued his campaign to bring various Middle Eastern countries under his control and now it was the turn of Babylon.

Although ancient historians such as Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus and Josephus have given their own brief accounts of what happened at the capture of Babylon, the only really lucid and full accounts are those given on the one hand by Daniel in his Book and by Cyrus himself, or by his direction, in a series of cuneiform tablets which were discovered at Ur of the Chaldees in 1854 and deciphered in 1920. Daniel's account is that of an eye-witness on the Babylonian side and he can be trusted to have given an unbiased factual account of what happened. He knew by Divine revelation that the Persian power was destined to supplant the Babylonian and had no reason, even if he so desired, to distort the facts. The Cyrus account, on the other hand, is clearly written with a view

to glorifying Cyrus and his achievement, and belittling and vilifying Nabonidus the father of Belshazzar and all others who opposed him. It is not surprising therefore that the short time during which Darius ruled at Babylon, as recorded by Daniel, is entirely ignored by Cyrus and the impression given that he was the king from the outset. But there are several elements in his account which when carefully examined reveal where Daniel's account fits in.

Following his story of the storming of the city and death of Belshazzar, Daniel says (5.31) "*And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old*". The king of Media at this time was Astyages, who ascended the throne in 585 B.C., forty-six years earlier, so that this note of his age is in keeping. The Septuagint has the same so that there is here an undisputed statement that the king succeeding Belshazzar was certainly not Cyrus, for he was not a Mede; he was a Persian. The sixth chapter of Daniel describes how Darius organised his new domain with Daniel as Chief Minister leading to the plot to have Daniel cast to the lions which backfired on the plotters. The essence of this story is the law which required that when a king of Medo-Persia issued a decree not even he could rescind it. Although Darius realised too late that he had been tricked into condemning his Chief Minister there was nothing he could do about it. Cyrus was not at this time empowered to make such decrees; only Astyages/Darius could do that. Still less could the Persian general Gobryas or any other Persian political notability assume the powers of kingship indicated in Daniel 6.

It is when we come to ch. 6.28 that some light is shed on the subject. After recounting the story of Daniel's deliverance from the lions, the A.V. goes on to say "*so this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian*". Here are the two kings set in succession one to other. But the early Greek versions (known as the Old Septuagint and dating to pre-Christian times) amplifies this to "*And King Darius was added to his race, and Daniel was set over the kingdom of Darius, and Cyrus the Persian received the kingdom*". This implies that Daniel acted as "caretaker" of the government until Cyrus could take over; this must have been founded upon one of the older Hebrew versions which existed before the present standard Hebrew version. It is unlikely though that

Daniel did act in the manner described. What is perhaps a more probable statement of the position is to be found in the apocryphal book "Bel and the Dragon" a historical fiction written probably about two centuries before Christ and deriving its facts from the same Hebrew original. This opens at the same point in history and runs "*And king Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus of Persia received his kingdom. And Daniel conversed with the king and was honoured above all his friends*". This harmonises very well with Dan. 6.28, linking the names of Astyages the last king of Media with Daniel's Darius the Mede, with the additional note that Darius died.

Dan. 9.1 refers to Darius as the son of Ahasuerus. This is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek names Xerxes or Cyaxares. The father of Astyages and king of Media before him was Cyaxares, who joined with the Babylonians to destroy Nineveh and overthrow the Assyrian empire some seventy years previously. This confirms the identification. The name "Darius" was an appellation of royalty common to several Persian kings—in addition to Darius Astyages there were to follow him in later times Darius Hystaspes, Darius Ochus and Darius Arsames.

So much for Daniel's testimony. We come to Cyrus.

There are two principal sets of tablets, known to-day as the Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle, with some lesser ones. They describe in detail the events surrounding the siege and capture of the city and the imposition of Persian authority upon the defeated Babylonians, all from the point of view of the Persians. The people of the city are said to have received the conquerors with a tumultuous welcome, hailing Cyrus as their deliverer from oppression, which is questionable, to say the least. But this detailed narrative of events is as noteworthy for what it does not say as for what it does.

Gobryas and his troops entered the city, meeting no resistance, on 16th Tisri (Sep/Oct) 539 B.C. This must have been the time of Belshazzar's feast and the death of Belshazzar. Cyrus himself arrived seventeen days later. Says the narrative "*Peace was established in the city. Cyrus decreed peace for all in Babylon. Ugbaru (Gobryas) his governor, placed governors in charge of Babylon*". There is no note of his continued stay in the city; before long he was away leading his troops to fresh conquests in Asia where eventually he was killed in battle.

Eight days later Gobryas died. No explanation of his death is given. Perhaps, after all, there was much more resistance than the narrative has pretended and Gobryas succumbed to the effects

of a fatal wound. (A second Ugbaru appeared later and was active politically through several reigns and this has served to confuse the issue.)

The inauguration of Cyrus as king of Babylon did not take place until 4 Nisan (March/April) 538 B.C., nearly six months after the fall of the city. It was a religious requirement with both Babylonians and Persians that a new king attended a solemn ceremony in the temple of the god whereby the kingship was conferred upon him from on high. This was called "taking the hands of Bel" or whichever god was concerned. The narrative records that this ceremony took place in the Temple at Babylon at that date, and that since Cyrus himself was still away fighting, his son Cambyses deputed for him at the ceremony and thereafter acted as regent for his father for the next eight years until his father's death.

Nothing is said in the narrative as to who ruled Babylon during that six months. And why did Cyrus not assume the kingship at once upon the fall of the city?

The short answer is that he could not. While Darius lived he was the legal king of Media. Although under the dominance of Cyrus he could not be displaced without incurring the displeasure and enmity of the powerful nobility of Media who looked averse to a Persian as supreme ruler. And it may be that his new conquest made desirable another piece of diplomatic finesse. Darius was related by blood to the Babylonian royal house and relations between Babylon and Media had always been friendly. Darius' own sister Amytis had been the wife of Nebuchadnezzar and her daughter, Belshazzar's mother, Nitocris, still living, was his niece. He must have been very well known to the Babylonians and probably much more acceptable to them than Cyrus the upstart adventurer.

Suppose then that Cyrus brought his king, Astyages, the Darius of Daniel, with him into Babylon and presented him to the conquered people as their new king? It was recorded that "*his route was lined by cheering crowds waving palm branches and he was hailed as the saviour and liberator of the country*". If that was true it is much more likely that the cheers were for Darius whom they knew rather than Cyrus whom they feared. But the same thing is said so often nowadays of every military leader who pulls off a coup and displaces the former ruler that it might very well have been the same then. In any case Cyrus could go off to his fighting leaving Darius to accustom his new subjects to the change, with, undoubtedly, a few Persian nobles at court to see the king kept to the prescribed lines. This, too, would explain why Darius had

such esteem for Daniel and confidence in him to appoint him as his chief Minister at once; they probably already knew each other quite well. As Nebuchadnezzar's right hand man in past times Daniel must at times have been sent on royal missions to the Median court. Darius would have known even then about Daniel's God.

The fact that Cyrus officially became king in the Spring of 538 indicates that Darius must have died. The intervening six months of his reign would afford ample time for the events narrated in Dan. 6. In this connection an oft-debated point in the "Nabonidus Chronicle" might well be relevant.

A certain part of the Chronicle relates that from 28th Adar (Feb/Mar) to 3rd Nisan (Mar/Apr) of the year 538 there was great mourning throughout Babylon upon account of a notable who had just died. The inscription is mutilated at this point and it is impossible to say with certainty who it was that had died, but the word "king" is clearly discernible. On the 4th Nisan, immediately following this mourning, Cyrus was proclaimed king. The only king to which this could refer was Darius. Belshazzar was already dead; his father Nabonidus, legal king of Babylon, had been captured and sent into exile by Cyrus, and lived for years afterward, and no other kings were concerned. If this means that Darius died after about six months reign Cyrus' almost immediate proclamation as king falls into place and so does the short reign of Darius

exactly as it is portrayed in the Book of Daniel. It is quite in keeping with the boastful character of Cyrus to understand why no mention whatever of the reign of Darius was permitted to appear in his annals. The whole of the glory and credit for the conquest of Babylon was to go to Cyrus so far as posterity was concerned, and Darius allowed to drop out of history, as he did practically do except for the record preserved in the Book of Daniel.

What kind of man was this Darius? Herodotus the Greek historian describes him as a cruel and savage despot who committed unspeakable atrocities against his subjects, but Herodotus got his information from the Persians of a century later and their testimony is suspect. In Daniel 6 he is a typical Eastern king, ruling with absolute power but capable of esteeming Daniel on his merits as an upright man. He was certainly ruthless in his treatment of the conspirators after their duplicity was exposed. He was probably no better and perhaps not much worse than his contemporaries. He lived in a savage age. He was the second of three kings whom Daniel served faithfully and whose high opinion he earned. It was a troubled time of war and commotion, king succeeded king amid intrigue and betrayal, but in it all Daniel stood firm, a pillar of rectitude in the midst of a decadent society, fervent in his faith that soon, very soon, God would deliver his people from this war-wracked country and restore them to their own land.

The Palm and the Cedar

How beautiful is the language of the psalmist? *"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in their old age; they shall be fat and flourish."* (Psa. 92:14)

The palm is indigenous to tropical and other warm climates. It grows to a considerable height and size, and presents a beautiful appearance. Its fruits, dates, are much valued, and are eaten both fresh and preserved, and are also pressed for both syrup and wine. But it is not for its fruit alone that the palm is so valuable. From the boughs, which are yearly lopped off from the lower parts of the stem, are made baskets, bird-cages, ropes, and sacks; from the leaves, mattresses, sandals, etc. It is an evergreen, and lives

to an extreme old age; the wood is durable and much used. How striking an emblem of a good man—he shall flourish like the palm tree. The cedar was considered by the Hebrews as the monarch of the vegetable world, on account of its magnitude, majesty, the number and extent of its boughs, and the durability of its wood, which was so remarkable that some supposed it to be incorruptible. Moreover, everything about the oriental cedar has a strong balsamic odour, and hence the whole forest is so perfumed with fragrance, that a walk through it is delightful. Mount Lebanon was in ancient times covered with forests of cedars, of which, however, few only now remain.

Again we say to the Christian, behold your emblem: *"He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."* J. A. James.

Utter surrender to God's will is both the root and the fruit of peace. *Serenity is harmony with the will of God.* To be content with God's disposition of our lives, that is nothing less than

peace of Christ, Who never waged war with the Father's will, and never uttered a word of doubt or protest. Dr. John MacBeath.

WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH

The double metaphor of being cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, is often thought to denote the irrevocable doom of the eternally lost. There is really no justification for this quite general impression, except perhaps in one specific instance as can be seen by a closer study of the occasions in which the expression is used.

The phrase occurs seven times in the New Testament, six of these being in Matthew's Gospel. The remaining one is in Luke, paralleling one of those in Matthew. Apart from this particular case, the other five in Matthew are all embodied in one or another of our Lord's parables and serve to indicate the situation in which are found those who in each particular parable have come short of God's calling or intentions, or have been adjudged unfit, or in some other way have been rejected from the particular purpose or calling of which the parable is the subject. The expression indicates loss rather than condemnation and its precise implication has to be determined by the teaching and purpose of each parable in which it occurs.

In basic principle the weeping and wailing is indicative of sorrow, disappointment and regret. Gnashing of teeth denotes frustration and enmity. An example of this latter is Acts 7.54, where Stephen's accusers at his trial, stung to the quick by his denunciation of their hypocrisy, "*were cut to the heart and gnashed upon him with their teeth*". In the Old Testament David illustrates the usage; "*the wicked plotteth against the righteous, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth*" (Psa. 37.12). Other examples are Job 16.9, Psa. 35.16; 112.10 and Lam. 2.16, in all cases indicative of enmity against the righteous. It is in this light that the expression should be viewed when the parables in which it occurs are considered.

The first instance comes very early in Jesus' ministry. Confronted with the faith of the Roman centurion whose servant was sick. (Matt. 8.5-13) Jesus imparted what was probably the first intimation of Israel's coming rejection and their replacement by the Christian Church. "*Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*". Luke 13.28 also relates this incident. It is a matter of principle that the un-

believing Jews of our Lord's day, who are here called the "children of the kingdom", are not eternally lost on account of their unbelief; they will be subjects of Christ's Millennial kingdom together with all other of mankind and only then will they come into their final time of decision. The same situation is the subject of our Lord's words to the chief priests and elders in Matt. 21.43 "*The kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation which will bring forth its proper fruits*". The "outer darkness" is the condition of exclusion from this particular Divine calling and the gnashing of teeth the impotent resentment and frustration at finding themselves supplanted by others.

The Parable of the Wedding Garment has a somewhat similar theme. Each guest at the wedding-feast was given a white garment to wear—it is said that this was a custom intended to avoid feelings of embarrassment on the part of the more poorly attired guests—and one man refused to wear the garment. He was forthwith rejected from the feast and the door shut on him. The outer darkness and the gnashing have precisely the same significance as in the earlier case. It is often suggested that this is a parable of the Divine calling of the Church just as the earlier case had to do with the calling of Israel to be God's representatives and witnesses in the world, and that the wedding garment pictures what could be termed the "robe of Christ's righteousness" given to each believer to cover his frailties and weaknesses. The man who refuses the garment is then repudiating Christ and logically is therefore separated and expelled from the Christ company, hence the metaphor of being cast into outer darkness.

Of a similar nature is the Parable of the Talents. (The "talent" here is a coin having a purchasing power in that day for which about a thousand pounds or more would be necessary today.) The king's servants were given varying numbers of talents wherewith to trade while he was away; on his return he required of them an account of their stewardship. One man had done nothing with his; he had not even invested it to gain interest, but buried it for safety in the ground and now handed it back to the king untouched. This is obviously a picture of the Christian life. The man who does nothing with all that the Lord has given him and at the coming of the Lord for his Church at the end of the Age has to admit as much is excluded from the

company of the faithful "whose names are written in heaven". As Matt. 25.30 states, he is cast into outer darkness and suffers the pain and frustration of loss. Whatever his ultimate destiny, he has failed to obtain the "prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3.14) and takes his place with the remainder of mankind in the coming Messianic Age when all will have their full and final opportunity of accepting Christ and obtaining eternal life through him.

The Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servants of Matt. 24.45-51 introduces a slight variant in that the outer darkness is not mentioned. In Matthew's account the evil servant is to be "cut asunder"—an Aramaic expression which means to be cast off, cast out, separated. He was dismissed from the position held in the household and relegated to the company of hypocrites or unbelievers, this last being the word used in the parallel account in Luke 12.36. Matthew, but not Luke, then adds, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". Once again, this expression is to describe the chagrin felt by the unfaithful servant at his dismissal.

Two instances remain, the Parables of the Wheat and Tares, and of the Dragnet. These are unique in that in both cases a furnace of fire is substituted for the outer darkness. There would seem to be a reason for this. In the other four cases individuals are concerned and their fate is exclusion from the calling or privilege they had enjoyed and of which they had proved themselves unworthy. This exclusion or "casting out" is the "outer darkness". In these last two parables the theme is "the kingdom of heaven" and the process by which there is a differentiation between the worthy and the unworthy in the mass, a process which endures throughout the Age and is terminated by the "Harvest of the Age". In both parables the contrast is between the fruitage of the Age, the "wheat" and the "good fish", and the wastage, that which is alien to, and unfit for, the intended purpose, and is therefore cast away. This could be true of God's dealings with the entire race of mankind but the fact that in both cases the climax is said to come "at the end of this Age" which denotes the time of the Second Advent and establishment of the Millennial Kingdom would seem to emphasise an application to the present time. The good seed of the Gospel, sown throughout this present Age, yields its first result in the development and completion of the Church which is to be associated with Christ in the evangelical work of the Millennial Age. It may well be that our Lord, giving these parables to his disciples in private (vs.36) was leading their minds to realise

that at his coming again there must inevitably be a division between those who have proved their worthiness and those who by reason of unbelief or lack of faith or sincerity have failed to do so; and the fate of such as come within the latter category is to be rejected from their High Calling.

In the parables this rejection is said to be accomplished by casting the rejected "into the furnace of fire" which could, hastily, be identified with those metaphorical allusions to the "lake of fire" or "everlasting fire" which symbolise the final passing out of life of the incorrigibly unregenerate at the full end of the Day of Probation. This is incorrect; the reference here is to something quite different.

The word here rendered "furnace" is *kaminos*, only occurring four times in the New Testament, and meaning an oven or kiln for baking pottery or bread. Such ovens in New Testament times were fuelled by any suitable waste product and particularly dried herbage or brushwood (hence our Lord's allusion to the flowers of the field "*which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven*" (Matt. 6.30)). Thus what Jesus said in these parables is that the tares and the bad fish respectively were "cast into the oven" as worthless for their intended purpose, wastage as far as that purpose is concerned. It is to be noted that included in the same metaphor is the fact that after being thus cast into the oven, the "tares" and the "bad fish" give vent, as in the former instances, to "wailing and gnashing of teeth". There is still consciousness and reason enough to express feelings of resentment and the sense of loss. Their enmity and frustration is symbolised, as in the former cases, by the wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Thus seen, this expression, applied to six instances in the New Testament, of which five form the conclusion to parables, pictures the impotent resentment and feeling of frustration of those who, by reason of apostasy, unbelief or rebellion have been excluded from one or another of the Divine purposes in which they might have had part, against the righteous ones who have attained such honours, and against their own condemnation. Such are not necessarily excluded for ever from the wider purposes of God; only from the particular aspect with which the particular parable deals. Only at the end, when God has as it were exhausted all the weapons in his armoury and still been met by a defiant "No!", does He turn sorrowfully away and leave the erring one to his own deliberate choice. Only then is there an outer darkness which is final and irrevocable.

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

11. The Tabernacle of David
Amos 9. 11-15

At last Amos comes through into the light. He stands in the full glory and splendour of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. The judgments of Israel, her captivities and her tribulations, are in the past. She enters now upon her glorious destiny, to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Purified and made perfect by her experiences, she is now the tool in God's hand that He purposed from the beginning.

"In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and will rebuild the ruins of it, and will set up the parts thereof that have been broken down, and will build it up as in the ancient days, in order that the remainder of men, even all the nations, upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me, saith the Lord who does all these things."

This is the Greek Septuagint rendering of vs. 11-12, and it differs materially in one respect from the A.V., which is founded upon a later Hebrew text. This latter has it *"that they"* (Israel) *"may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called"* without anything being said as to the *"earnest seeking me"* of those same Gentiles. The difference is highlighted by the fact that when James, at the Apostolic conference in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, quoted this passage, he did so from the Septuagint, which of course was the version in common use in his day, and so made it the basis of his whole argument respecting the position of the Gentiles in the Divine Plan (Acts 15.13-21).

It is evident that the Septuagint rendering is the correct one. It is in line with the revealed purpose of God both for Israel and for the whole world. It denotes the restoration of a purified and dedicated Israel to the Holy Land at the end of this Age ready for a major part in the proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world of man, who are pictured as then being ready for it. This is the work of the Millennium. The original Hebrew text, prior to the appearance of the Greek Septuagint, evidently read this way. The corrupted text as it now stands in the modern Hebrew text was probably made in the interests of a narrow Jewish nationalism at some time during the early centuries of the Christian era when the idea of Gentiles sharing in the munificence of God could not be tolerated. It was easy to change the Hebrew word *"adam"* for *"man"* into *"edom"* the enemy country; that only involved the alteration of some vowels.

Likewise it was a simple change to read *"yarush"* (possess) instead of *"darash"* (seek). The whole sense of the passage was thereby transformed from the concept of Israel evangelising the nations to that of Israel conquering and lording it over the nations, which is a very different thing.

"In that day" says God *"will I raise up the tabernacle of David"*. This expression, *"in that day"*, when used in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, almost always refers to the ending of this present Age and the duration of the Millennium which follows it. It denotes a period during which the Lord brings this existing world-order to an end and institutes his own reign of righteousness and peace in its place, the thousand-year Messianic administration of Christ under which *"whosoever will"* will be led to the Lord and inherit everlasting life. Isaiah, the golden-tongued prophet of the Millennium, uses the phrase some thirty-eight times of which only about four do not thus apply. Ezekiel uses it five times and Zechariah thirteen times, all referring to the end of the Age or the succeeding Millennium. The prophets look forward with fervent anticipation to the day of Christ's Kingdom on earth and they utter, with fervent longing, the pregnant words *"in that day"*.

The fallen *"tabernacle of David"* is to be raised up, its ruins rebuilt, its former glory, and more, restored. The word *"sukkah"* has two senses in the O.T. It means primarily a booth or a shelter made of tree branches and is used thus in connection with the shelters or dwelling-places constructed by the Israelites for use during the annual seven-day *"Feast of Tabernacles"* in the autumn of the year. That feast was somewhat equivalent to the Christian harvest festival; it was a period of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the successful completion of the year's work and the ingathering of the harvest. The word was also used to denote the ornate structures used to accommodate the king and his retinue when in the field, as in time of war; in such instances it is usually translated *"pavilion"*. The tabernacle of David is his royal pavilion, symbol of his regal position, and by extension, of his dynasty and the kingship of his descendants. But the dynasty of David came to an end with Jehoiachin who was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar and died in Babylon. At that point the tabernacle of David crumbled into ruins, and thus remains until, to use the words of the Lord to Ezekiel, He come whose right it is (Ezek. 21.27).

The tabernacle of David, the royal kingly power of his line, will be raised up and re-established in the day that Christ takes to himself his great power and commences his rule over the nations, and that is the meaning of the promise here. *"It shall come to pass in that day"* says Isaiah, *"that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it"* (Isa. 2.2) Zechariah, in his vision of the End Time when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of God, declares that *"the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them"* (Zech. 12.8). One can picture the celestial rule and control of our Lord, with his glorified Church, manifested upon earth in the persons of his earthly representatives, hinted at in Scripture as being certain stalwart men of God of ancient times who by reason of their loyalty and uprightness have become *"princes in all the earth"* (Psa. 45.16) to administer Divine government amongst men. These will stand as the visible house of David, appearing *"as God"* *"as the angel of the Lord"* in the sight of men, and men will behold in these the rebuilt tabernacle of David. An apparently isolated text in Isaiah illustrates the position. *"In mercy shall the throne be established; and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness"* (Isa. 16.5).

And so, under the influence and leadership of the tabernacle of David, the remainder of men will earnestly seek God. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this statement. It implies quite positively that the duty and privilege of this restored Israel is to evangelise the nations and bring them to God. The purpose of the Millennial Age is to present all men, the entire human race of all generations back to the beginning, with the final opportunity to become reconciled to God through Christ and so attain life in the eternal state. None will be compelled; *"he that is filthy, let him be filthy still"* (Rev. 22.11) but nothing that defileth will ever enter the holy city (Rev. 21.27). The end of that Age will see all who have been alien from God, and who can possibly be led to repentance and conversion, reconciled and accepted into the Divine family, possessors of eternal life. The others, if others there be, who refuse to accept life in God's creation, abide not in life (John 3.36). Here in Amos the implication is plain that the whole of mankind are to have the opportunity to *"earnestly seek"* God. Zephaniah says exactly the same thing; *"for then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one con-*

sent" (Zeph. 3.17). The pen-pictures in both Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation, depicting a time when the river of life will flow from the sanctuary of God, bringing life to all who will, and trees of life which afford both food and healing for the nations, bears the same testimony (Ezek. 47; Rev. 22). Whilst the Scriptures are positive that Christ and his Church, Christians of this present Age, will conduct and administer this work amongst mankind from the celestial sphere, they also indicate that there will be their earthly counterparts moving amongst men and relaying the laws of the Lord to all. *"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* says Isaiah; he goes on to indicate that there will be a whole-hearted and enthusiastic response from the sons of men (Isa. 2.3-4). And this is the time, he indicates further, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks and the nations shall no longer go to war one with another.

"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" (vs. 13).

Here is a picture of luxuriant fertility. The corn harvest shall be so plenteous that harvesting will still be in progress when the ploughman comes along to turn up the soil for next year's crops. The vines will yield so prolifically that men will still be gathering grapes when the sowers are going forth with next year's seed. This was the promise made to Israel at Sinai; if they kept the covenant and maintained their loyalty to God *"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"* (Lev. 26.5). Israel failed then to keep the covenant and so the promise was not fulfilled; they, and all the world, will maintain loyalty to God and communion with him in the blessed Age to come and so the promise will be realised, as Amos says here. The renovation and fertility of the restored earth was foreseen by the prophets, speaking under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose . . . the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree . . . the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and a little child shall lead them . . . they shall build houses, and in-*

habit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble . . . My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places . . . And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 11.6; 32.17-18; 35.1; 55.13; 65.21-23). This is only what one prophet, Isaiah the far-seeing, had to say about the exhilarating future that awaits humanity. Many of the other prophets supplemented his words and Jesus set the seal upon it all when He spoke of the days of "regeneration", of giving new life, which were to be characteristic of his Second Advent and Millennial reign over the nations (Matt. 19.28).

The mountains will drop sweet wine, says Amos. The vine-clad slopes would be so full of ripened grapes that it would be as though the luscious stream of as yet unfermented juice—the meaning of the expression "sweet wine"—was literally pouring down the mountain-sides. All the hills shall melt; covered so plentifully with standing corn that as the wind rippled over it the corn moved in waves as though the hills were literally melting. This is the picture of the abundance and prosperity of the future Age when evil is being progressively eliminated and the nations are turning to rightdoing and justice.

"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: they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (vss. 14-15).

Amos was himself a child of Israel and it is only natural that he should come back at the last to his own people's place in this glorious sequel to the Divine purpose for mankind. Israel was inside God's plans for fifteen hundred years, from Moses to Christ, and for that period of time was regarded, and regarded themselves, as his chosen people, representing him in the world and preserving his revelation to man. Because of disloyalty and idolatry and unbelief they lost that favoured position and for two thousand years have been on the side-lines, so to speak, whilst God executed his further purposes in and through the Christian Church. But this state of things is not to continue indefinitely. *"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew"* said Paul in Rom. 11.1. Israel is to be restored when belief and faith on their part render such restoration possible. This is what Amos sees here, the fulfilment of God's promise that one day He will be able to restore this ancient people

in the same way that He is going to restore all mankind. So the ancient Holy Land will become a holy land in very truth and the ancient people of God become what they were always intended to be, missionaries to all nations, declaring the salvation of God and dispensing the blessings of God.

This was the constant theme of all the Hebrew prophets. They all perceived and foretold this day, to come after their people had learned their lessons the hard way. Zechariah was most eloquent. *"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies"* said the Lord; *"My house shall be built in it, my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad."* Joel declared that *"in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,"* and the nations shall dwell safely for ever. Ezekiel pictured the resurrection of a dead host into a living nation, never again to be uprooted or destroyed (Ezek. 37). Perhaps the finest presentation of this people's destiny is the 60th chapter of Isaiah, in its entire course outlining the future which awaits Israel. *"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee"* is his introduction. *"The nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy morning shall be ended . . . a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a great nation"*. That stirring chapter is preceded by a declaration which enshrines all that God will do in the power of his Holy Spirit by which all things are accomplished. *"My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever"* (Isa. 59.21).

This is the goal and at last the goal is attained. Amos in his prophecy traces a long sad history of Israel's apostasy and consequent judgment but he brings them through eventually into an "afterward of peace" when all the failures and shortcomings have been overcome and relegated to the past, and Israel is at last fully in communion with God, with no fear of ever returning to the bad old ways. That in its entirety runs parallel with exactly the same process with all mankind. The same history of rebellion and sin, the same Redeemer and Saviour, the same utter destruction of man's world in consequence of his own folly, and the same deliverance at the end when God moves to save man from himself and show him the better way. The radiant future described by Amos, and not by Amos only, but all his fellow-prophets, and not by them only, but the Apostles and Jesus himself, is for all mankind "whosoever will" may, at the last, come and partake of the water of life freely.

The End.

IN THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP

"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (Hos. 6.2).

A striking feature of the Divine Plan is its orderly development, each successive step advancing the work of the overthrow of evil one stage farther. There are three main phases, each having its own special time and place, each preparing the way for its successor and waxing old and passing away when its work is done. One might almost trace an analogy between these successive phases and the account of the creative week in Genesis when at the end of each period of time, or "day", devoted to some specific development, God looked upon what had been achieved and pronounced it "good". At the close of the sixth day, when He had created earth's crowning glory, man, and placed him in his home, God looked upon all that He had made, and pronounced it "very good". So one might imagine him looking upon the finished work of each Age in history, and approving the progress toward ultimate redemption from sin, and then, at the end, when Christ has delivered up the Kingdom to the Father, viewing with serene satisfaction the triumphant outcome to his great plan of salvation and endorsing it "very good".

The Scriptures indicate that there are two "salvations", two destinies, provided for in the Divine plan. The Early Church saw this matter more clearly than did the ecclesiastical systems of later times. The influence of the great theologian Augustine has profoundly affected the beliefs of Christendom and since he set his face resolutely against the earlier beliefs founded upon Scriptural teaching of an earthly salvation upon a restored and perfected earth, the doctrine of the Millennium, or "Chiliasm" as it has been called, has almost completely disappeared from ordinary Church teaching.

The vital principle behind God's intention is this: the earth had been created, and man placed upon it, to be an everlasting feature of Divine creation. What forms of spiritual life existed before this earth came into existence we do not know, and Scriptural revelation on this point does not tell us much. What intentions God has regarding other spheres of material life akin to the human, on other worlds, we do not know and the Scriptures are even less clear as to this. They do seem to indicate, however, that the human race has been created to live on and to enjoy this earth in all perpetuity, and that the power

and commission given to man to increase and multiply is in order that the planet may be adequately populated. When this end has been achieved it is expected that such powers will lapse and cease, and this is perfectly in harmony with the Scriptures as they are at present understood.

Now out of this human race, and whilst it is still in process of learning for itself the dire results of sin, God is calling to himself those who are prepared to yield up all they are and have, even to life itself, to become co-workers with him in the execution of this Plan. The significant thing about this is that all who accept this invitation and devote themselves to the interests of God and his Kingdom do become his representatives and missionaries among men, and will be appointed positions of service in that Day when his Kingdom is established over all the earth; but they will not all serve in the same sphere.

It would seem that the faithful ones of the age prior to Christ will be of the earth, human beings, resurrected to a human perfection such as they will have never previously known, and that those of the days since Christ came will inherit the heavenly salvation and become members of the spiritual world, for ever associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in his work of reigning over and blessing the nations. Why there should be this distinction made between men and women who, although separated in historical time, are yet one in their devotion and loyalty to God, it is not our province to enquire. Without doubt there exists good reason for the Divine arrangement, and we may well expect, as we come to comprehend more and more clearly the mysteries of God's ways, to discern something of the reason for this differentiation.

The selection and preparation of these two companies of "workers for God" has been and remains the principal work of the Divine Plan and will continue so until the heavenly company, the "Church" of this Age, is complete. The time will then have come for God to turn his attention to the world of men in general and, with his two companies of trained workers at his command, to set about the final phase of the elimination of evil by the conversion of all mankind—"whosoever will".

Of the three phases of this Plan, therefore, two—the first two—are concerned with the selection and preparation of these two companies, and the third has to do with their appointed work of re-

conciling the "residue of men" (Acts 15:17) to God and undoing the effect of sin in their lives. The first phase has to do with the preparation of the earthly people and the Old Testament reveals an interesting chain of development in this connection.

Two thousand years before Christ, God called Abraham, a Hebrew living in the Sumerian city of Ur, and, finding him responsive to his leading, told him that in him, and in his seed, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. This promise marked the beginning of active measures for the development of the "chosen peoples". Abraham became the progenitor of a line of patriarchs whose loyalty to God was unquestioned, and of a family the descendants of which, six hundred years later, became a nation, the nation of Israel.

There can be no doubt that God saw in Abraham and Sarah his wife qualities which, reproduced in the nation that sprang from them, rendered that nation particularly fitted for the duties it was afterwards called upon to perform. The claim of the Israelites to be the "chosen nation" is a valid claim; the authority of the Old Testament can be invoked to support it; but it will only be those members of that nation who have entered fully into sympathy with God's design for mankind, and have devoted themselves to the Divine will for them, who will eventually be brought together as an earthly missionary nation for the execution of God's work on earth. The fact remains, however, that by the time of the First Advent a goodly number of faithful men and women had been laid aside in death waiting for the time that God should call them forth to enter upon their destined work.

For two thousand years longer, a second "day", a second phase in the Divine Plan, God has worked in the world calling men and women to come to him by faith in Jesus Christ that He might fashion and conform them to the likeness He has foreordained, conforming them to the image of his Son. This calling is a spiritual calling, and the standards to which the Christian is called to attain are higher than those which were set before the pre-Christian "saints". This calling

is to a higher sphere and this training for a greater work. Whereas the earthly people are to administer affairs in the Kingdom of God upon earth and stand as the permanent visible representatives of the spiritual government of Jesus Christ, the heavenly people are to be associated with him in the government (Rev. 3:21), and will direct the work of the Kingdom, causing life and blessing to flow to those who are coming willingly into harmony with God through faith in Christ, and bringing to bear all Heaven's powers of persuasion upon those who still exercise their prerogative of free will to remain in sin.

The first phase ended at our Lord's First Advent. The second ends at his Second Advent, which is designed in the Plan for the dual purpose of completing the gathering of the Church and so bringing this "Gospel Age" to an end, and introducing the "Millennial Age" with all that it holds of life and blessing for every man.

The third phase is the Millennium, the Kingdom of God upon earth. That day is to be pre-faced by the General Resurrection, in which the earthly people of God will be restored from their graves and established in their own land the Holy Land, from whence the Law of the Lord will go forth (Isa. 2:3). The Church will have been completed and gathered to spiritual conditions, ready for its own work. The Devil will have been bound, that he might deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20:1-3). By the end of that Age it will be true that "everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord". The inevitable result of sin will have come upon any who refuse to turn from sin to serve the living God, and with the disappearance of such, the earthly creation will have been purified and perfected. Sin will not again invade the habitation or the heart of man. Men will have entered into eternal life, realising at last that it is in God that they live, and move, and have their being (Acts 17:28).

"In the third day he will raise us up and we shall live in his sight" (Hos. 6:2). The words were spoken of Israel's final restoration and entry upon her destined position in the dawn of the Millennial Age, the "third day", but they are a fitting commentary upon the three historical aspects of the Divine Plan.

Christians have a joy of spirit, of which no earthly experience can rob them, and their joys increase daily, yearly, as they ripen in Christian experience, and as they grow in knowledge and in grace. Theirs is a privilege of access to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and a privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father and with their Lord Jesus Christ. They may rejoice in the

privilege of being God's ambassadors, and of telling the Good Tidings to others, thus to "show forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Oh, great are the privileges and mercies and blessing of these Spiritual Israelites, far more than compensating for their discipline, tribulations and oppositions!

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

*St. Paul's vision
of the future*

5. Dispensational Change

2 Cor. 12.1-9

It is instructive to take note of the preparatory steps adopted by Divine Providence to drive home to the Apostolic mind the fact that he was living and labouring amid the trends and tendencies of a world-shaking dispensational change. An old-established order was passing away and a new one almost imperceptibly coming in. An Institution, established fourteen centuries previously was creaking towards dissolution, while that which was to replace it was as yet only in its 'scaffolding' stage.

It is not easy to stand amid time's whirling machinery, as it grinds out the 'old', and shapes out the 'new', to appreciate the portents and possibilities of the change. It is much easier for the subsequent generations, looking back, to understand and evaluate the meaning of the trends and movements which have accompanied the change, or grown out of it, as it progressed from cause to conclusion. It is no matter for wonder that it took the Apostolic nucleus of the Church so long after Pentecost as it did, to learn and appreciate the patent fact that the most important change since the birth of their nation at Sinai was under way. If, by way of comparison, this England of ours, with a full thousand years of growth and development behind it, were slowly but surely crumbling away, while a new structure was slowly assuming a ghost-like shadowy shape all round, no blame could attach if we failed to comprehend the nature of the change or the reason therefore.

The nation of Israel had stood, since the Exodus. Changes in the form of its government had occurred—Judges and Kings and Priestly supremacy—but essentially and politically the nation had continued the same throughout the whole period. As far as Priestly and Rabbinic expectation was concerned there was no reason why it should not continue for centuries more. With the recorded wealth of prophetic forecast behind them, they might have expected their Law and their nation to continue as long as the sun, moon, and stars ran through their heavenly courses.

But Scripture contained a second line of evidence which fore-indicated a condition of 'change'. Another Leader of the people—one like to Moses—was forecast to come; a High Priest of a new order was fore-spoken about; a New Covenant with better promises was foretold and provided for. All this betokened supersession and change. But even so, time was required for

the great fact to register upon the Apostolic, and unofficial believer's, minds that the change was then under way, and was of so drastic a nature that it would sweep the whole nation away from their standing before God, and from the land of their fathers.

The first premonition of this change may be seen in the thanksgiving prayer which Jesus uttered when He came to realise that God was hiding things from the wise and prudent leaders of the people and revealing them to babes. (Matt. 11. 25-26). The manner of his teaching—in parabolic language—also testifies to the same fact. (Matt. 13. 11-17). But the most obvious indication was set forth in his final words ere He withdrew from the Temple for the last time (Matt. 23. 34-38). "*Your House*" said the Master "*is left unto you desolate.*"

Though most of the Apostles knew this, its import did not register itself upon their consciousness sufficiently to influence them in their actions and teachings, for several years subsequent to Pentecost. Indeed, in some cases, special disclosures and revelations had to be made even to the previously selected leaders in the Church ere the great fact registered. Already we have noted the setting for one such revelation.

Note how Divine Providence drove the fact home in many diverse ways. After the first persecution, in which Stephen lost his life, the disciples became scattered from Jerusalem throughout the land and beyond the sea. When the chief persecutor was converted the persecution subsided, and the scattered companies enjoyed a season of quietness. (Acts 9. 31). During this intermission Peter embarked upon a journey of Pastoral Visitation, passing through Lydda and other places till he arrived at Joppa. (Acts 9. 43). At this place the Apostle received a vision which initiated a far-reaching change in the direction of the young Church's ministry. Hitherto only believers of Jewish birth had been received into the Church. At Cæsarea Peter opened the door to the first Gentile convert and was led to the conviction that, in every nation, all who believed and lived accordant with that belief would be acceptable to God. This was the first significant departure from the age-long exclusiveness of the Israelite people. Here began one of those vital changes which left its mark indelibly upon the course of the Christian Church.

To introduce this change Peter was made the recipient of an extraordinary vision, thrice repeated, in response to which he went across the threshold of a Gentile home, to speak words which the Lord had given him to say. While thus speaking he had the unprecedented experience of witnessing the Holy Spirit's gifts fall upon his Gentile auditors. As with Jesus at Jordan; as with the assembly in the Upper Room (Acts 2. 1-4) so here at Cæsarea, the Holy Spirit was poured forth to initiate a new and vital phase in the Calling of God. This is a most important point, for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit's gifts and power was an indication that Heaven was leading the way.

Peter's act in entering a Gentile home and eating bread at an alien table was considered suspect when he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 11. 1-3) though after hearing his defence his critics had nothing more to say beyond the remark "*Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life*". The record goes on to say that they "glorified God" for the grant, but their later record shows how little they acquiesced in this Gentile entry into the Church. This reluctance to accept the Gentiles on equal terms lay like a smouldering fire beneath the surface of the Church's life for several years, until, at last, it had to be uncovered and brought out into the open for full discussion in a specially convened session of the Church (Acts 15 6-21).

Yet another line of preparation must be noted. After Paul's arrest on the Damascus Way the Lord caused him to understand that he was a chosen vessel to carry his Name before Israel, before kings, and before the Gentiles. But the Master did not intend Paul to become too closely identified with the mother-church at Jerusalem. No sooner had he begun to speak for Christ in Damascus than plots to destroy him began to be made, in consequence of which he was compelled to flee. Three years retirement to Arabia followed: Returning thence to Damascus, he found the fury of his foes still strong and aggressive, and deemed it needful to quit the city. (Gal. 1. 17; Acts 9. 23-25). He went to Jerusalem, and sought to join the disciples there (Acts 9. 26-28). His stay was of short duration because the Lord Jesus himself commanded him to leave that city. His sphere of service was not intended to be in Jerusalem, but "*far hence among the Gentiles*" (Acts 22. 18-21). The risk to his life was accounted so great in the metropolis, that brethren there sent him home to his native city, Tarsus. (Acts 9. 30).

Paul was not inactive during this period of enforced separation from the brethren, but, from testimonies afforded us in other places. (2 Cor.

11. 25-27; Gal. 1. 21-23) was witnessing for his Lord, on independent lines, in the uplands behind Tarsus. The chosen vessel for the future missionary service was 'in-the-making' in the out-back districts of a Gentile land, awaiting there the Lord's due time, and the Lord's commissioning "Call". That Call came when Barnabas sought him out in Tarsus, soliciting his help for the great work in Antioch. (Acts 11. 25-26).

Actually this is one of the great land-marks in Church history. Though the Gentile call began in Cæsarea, it was here in Antioch that the door of entry was thrown open to the Gentiles, and, coincident with the opening of that door, the Lord brought forth the man whom He had chosen and equipped for the task. The hour brought forth the man, as it has done so many times at the turning points of history. This was the time and the occasion when, in order to equip and inspire him for the unprecedented task, the Lord drew near, drew up the curtain that over-hung the consummation at the end of distant years, and gave his chosen a glimpse of Paradise restored. Before the task began, the Saviour accorded his faithful lieutenant a glimpse of victory achieved, of foes destroyed, and eternal peace begun. The 'Enemy of enemies' had also taken note, and forthwith deployed an angel to thwart and harass both man and work, — "*A messenger of Satan to buffet me.*"

After one year's arduous and successful work in Antioch, the Holy Spirit broke through into that thriving congregation's activities, and said "*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*" (Acts 13. 2). Thus the great missionary work in Gentile lands began.

For several years this missionary activity progressed but with increasing opposition directed by certain members of the mother-church at Jerusalem; an opposition so severe and persistent, that, at last, it became necessary to convene a general Council of the Church in Jerusalem to consider the facts of the situation, and to determine (under the Holy Spirit's control) the meaning and purpose of a long series of events dating back over these several changeful years. The Assembly began with much uncertain questioning and heated debate as, first, this party and then that, had its say, until Peter stood up in their midst to review the position as it had developed in connection with his own ministry. "*Brethren*" he said "*ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us, and he*

made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their heart by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that we shall be saved, through the Grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they. (Acts 15. 7-11). Peter's address had a quietening effect, and, in the subdued silence that followed, Paul and Barnabas told of the signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Then James, the pillar of the Jerusalem Church, under a flash of inspiration, took up Peter's recital of events, and cast the essential facts into a new form. "Brethren" said James "hearken unto me! Simeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles to take out a people for His Name." Then, bringing prophecy to bear on the subject he continued, "and to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written. After these things I will return and I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning. Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God" (Acts 15. 13-21).

This interpretation and suggestion won approval from the whole assembly, and resulted, not only in an agreed declaration being sent, but a deputation also chosen and dispatched along with Paul and Barnabas to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to verify and substantiate the testimony which the two brethren would carry home.

This was a fateful, decisive Conference, because the Apostolic and official Judaism within the Church openly acknowledged and accepted the entry, on equal terms, of the Gentiles into the fellowship of the Saints. It was a painful and

humbling experience for these long-exclusive people of God.

The judgment of James submitted three main points for the consideration of the Assembly:—

- (a) that the events of the last few years betokened the out-going from favour of the unbelieving Jew.
- (b) that other co-related events indicated the incoming into favour of believing Gentiles, and
- (c) that the present coalition of believing Jews and Gentiles must continue until a people to bear God's Name had been taken out, after which, there would be a return of Divine favour to the outcast nation, and a rebuilding of the Davidic system of government among them, and its establishment in the earth, so that all other non-believing men (Jew or Gentile) might then be given an opportunity to seek and find the Lord.

This decision of the Council stands thus as the distinct sequel to the Revelation Jesus vouchsafed to Paul at the outset of his Gentile ministry. But for Paul's pertinacity and firmness all through the intervening years, the mother-church at Jerusalem, with the Apostles at its head, would not have been enlightened and persuaded of the great and portentous fact that a mighty change was under way, and that the Church of God must stand separate and apart from the fallen nation, as it gradually fell away into hardness of heart, and blindness of understanding. God's judicial sword had been upraised to smite the apostate people, and only as the newly instituted Church kept itself apart from its racial kith and kin could they hope to survive when, at last, the sword of judgment fell. Paul learned that secret direct from the Lord; the Council learned it mainly through Paul's words and ministry. *(To be continued)*

“. . . . always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus . . . for we . . . are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake . . . so then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2. Cor. 4. 1-12). It was a case of Paul putting Paul to death, for his brethren's benefit, that life, and strength might be induced in them. It was the life's-blood of Paul that became the quickener, the energiser of these, his dear brethren in the Lord. When other men might be taking life leisurely,—yea, when many of his brethren were taking life easily, Paul was intensively seeking ways and means of putting himself at the service of these

believers, hoping thereby to produce spiritual energy in his brethren. Persecution might stop some men, but not this seasoned warrior—perplexities might daunt less determined men but not this unconquerable spirit—"On every side pressed hard, but not hemmed in, without a way, but not without a bye-way; pursued, but not abandoned, thrown down, but not destroyed. At all times the putting to death of Jesus, in our body bearing about." That is Rotherham's beautiful translation of Paul's intensive words, as he describes what it means for him to serve his Corinthian brethren.



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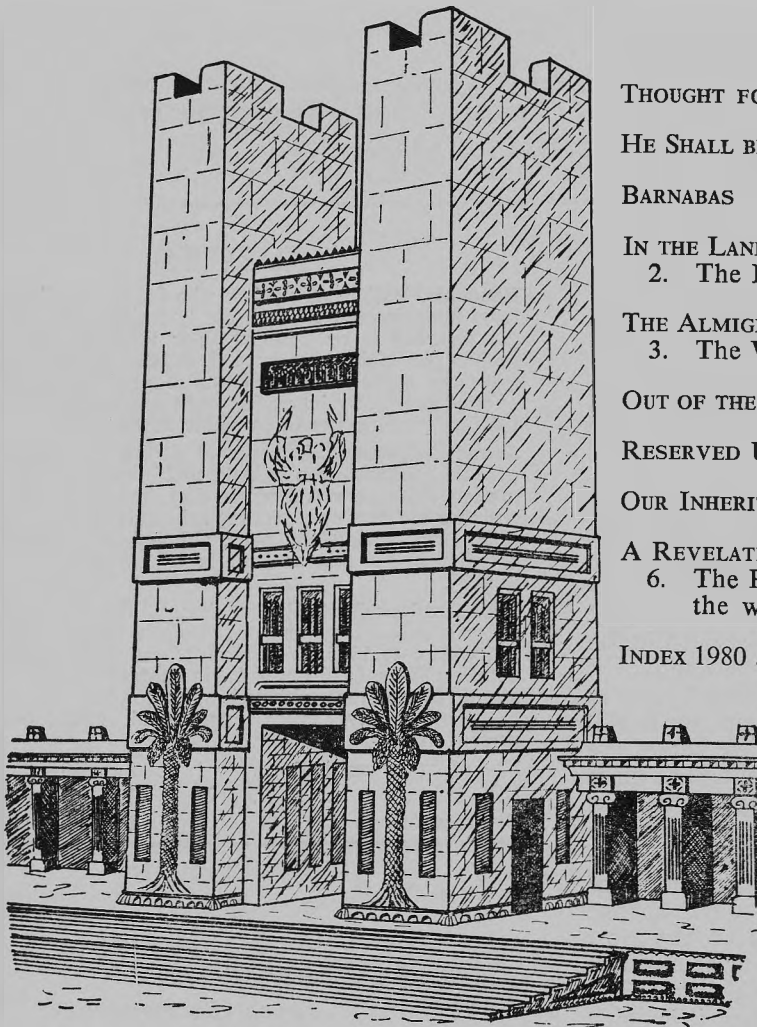
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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

*"Shall mortal man be more just than God?
 Shall a man be more pure than his maker?"*
 (Job 4.17).

First propounded by an Arab philosopher, Eliphaz the Temanite, descendant of Esau, three and a half millenniums ago, that question is one that is relevant to Christian thought to-day. The situation which called it forth then is still with us. Job the old patriarch, embittered at the afflictions which had come upon him, saw nothing more to hope for in life, and was perilously near to reproaching God for allowing such an ending to a blameless and upright life. Had he been in the place of God he would not have acted thus. His friend Eliphaz took the long-term view; whatever the apparent injustice of the present life it will be found at the end, not of this life, but of the Divine plan for human development, that all is well and all has been for a wise purpose. "Do not reject the discipline of the Almighty, for though he wounds, he will bind up; the hands that smite will heal" he says (ch. 5.17-18). There is more of experience and development and moral change to come after the end of this life before the Most High passes judgment, and whatever of injustice there has been now will be made right then. The Lord created man for a purpose, and it is going to take more than this lifetime to fit men for that purpose. The intent of the literary drama which is the Book of Job is to caution we who read it against judging God before the time.

NOTICES

Renewals. Will those readers who found a pink renewal form in their copy of the Sept./Oct. issue and have not yet returned it or signified their wish to continue as readers please do so at once. It is becoming increasingly necessary to be advised of our readers' interest in the light of constantly increasing costs and we need to make the best possible use of available funds.

Acknowledgments. The recent notice on this subject appears to have been a little ambiguous and to make matters clear we would repeat that in view of high postal costs we are now only sending acknowledgments for gifts of £1 (two dollars) and over, although our appreciation of gifts below this amount is by no means lessened thereby.

Back numbers BSM. Recent demand for these has been exceptionally heavy and our stock is exhausted for all years prior to 1976. We therefore can only supply back numbers from 1976 onward. No charge is made beyond asking for postage although gifts toward the printing costs are always much appreciated. Postal costs at present are:—

No. of years required ...	1	2	3	4
U.K. Pence ...	25	40	65	80
Overseas dollars ...	1	2	2	3

Gone from us

— * —
 Bro. L. Chrimes (*Chester*)
 Sis. E. James (*Brentwood*)
 Bro. L. Leach (*Bournemouth*)
 Bro. F. Musk (*Bury*)
 — * —

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

"HE SHALL BE GREAT"

*A Christmas
Message*

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest." (Luke 1. 32).

In this world men are accounted great because they have achieved some noteworthy thing that has produced immediate results. A skilful general wins a crucial battle—he is accounted a great soldier. A commercial magnate welds a number of trading organisations into one enormous unit, controlling a major part of some vital commodity—he is a great business man. A shrewd and plausible politician rises to the top by his astute handling of foreign affairs—he is a great statesman. None of these is called great while as yet he is in the state of progress towards his goal, while his plans are developing, but only when he has "arrived". The world demands, not only success, but the visible evidences of success, before it will bestow its diploma. The man who patiently and zealously builds for the future, knowing that his goal will not be reached in his own lifetime, and that the fruit of his labours will only be reaped by posterity, is never esteemed great whilst yet he lives, even though recognition may come after his death, when at last the realisation of all his dreams is there for all to see.

So be it then, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Of all great men He is the greatest. He came down from Heaven to achieve the greatest work of all time, the redemption and reconciliation of mankind and the consummation of God's creative Plan. His greatness was not recognised then, but in days to come it will be plain for all to see. "He shall be great"—that is the promise and it cannot fail of fulfilment. Men, and angels too, will join together in worship and adoration, praising and blessing the name of the Son, that name which is exalted above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

At the time of his birth there was no evidence of coming greatness. He was born in the meanest of mean circumstances, lowly descendant of a once kingly line from which all the insignia and trappings of kingship had long since departed; born citizen of a conquered and subject people; born into a humble workaday environment. What promise of greatness reposed here? His only credentials were those declared by an old priest and an aged woman Temple attendant, neither of them of any moment or influence in the world of big things. Who would have thought that this infant son of a village maiden would start a fire that was destined to sweep the world and never

be put out? Who would have thought that this tiny babe was foreordained to outlive all the kings who ruled at his birth and to succeed to the kingship of the world when all their thrones had been swept away? Who would have thought that this little life so quietly and unobtrusively come into the world would catch up and knit together so many other lives through generations yet unborn and make of them a mighty striking force, a power so great that even the proud gates of hell will not prevail against it? That was to be the outcome, an outcome that has not been fully realised even as yet, but an outcome that will surely one day cause all men to recognise the true greatness of that Light which two thousand years ago came into the world.

We do perceive that greatness. To us He is already great. How could it be otherwise? We know of the mighty power that descended upon the Church at Pentecost and has remained since with all whose lives have been given to him. True, we do not yet find it possible to perform mighty outward works and so far as the world is concerned there is still little evidence of the power working within. But the power is there, a power that is preparing us and fitting us for the full revelation to all men which is to come "at his appearing". And without the long years of that inward working in our hearts and minds we would be quite unready for the duties and responsibilities which will devolve upon us directly the Messianic Kingdom is established in power and the word of the Lord begins to go out to all people.

During the first few years of this century a young man in his early thirties resided in London. He was poor, made so by his chosen way of life, for he was a student, studying and equipping himself with the intention of one day delivering his people. Day after day he could be seen in the reading-room of the British Museum, groping after the knowledge that was to give him ability to choose and judge aright when the time of power should come. No one who came in contact with him took him very seriously; he was just an enthusiast riding a hobby-horse of his own and he would never achieve anything great in this world. His name was quite unknown to the people who mattered, and only a very few people knew he existed at all.

There came a day when as a mature man of forty-seven he stepped to the front of the dais before a wildly cheering crowd of elected repre-

sentatives packed into a great hall in one of the world's capitals, and uttered a few simple words. "We will now proceed" he said "to the drafting of the constitution of the new Republic". From brief notes on a few papers held in his hand he sketched the outlines of the creation which he had been planning and for which he had been equipping himself through those arduous years of study in London and Paris. To-day, less than seventy years later, the power set up by Vladimir Lenin on that historic night in 1917, controls nearly half the world, and has transformed a feudal, benighted, ignorant people into a community of States which together form one of the world's great Empires.

Lenin is rightly esteemed one of the world's great men. Whether the social system he founded is a good thing or a bad thing for the world does not alter that fact. He was an atheist and his achievement was a purely material one, but from the world's standpoint he was a great man. But no one esteemed him such in those early student days; only after the fruit of his labours appeared in the creation of the Soviet State and its continuance against its enemies was that recognition granted.

So will it be with our King. He was despised and rejected of men, accounted a dreamer and an enthusiast, ignored and unheeded, in the days of his flesh. His followers too, in like manner, are accounted fools, for his sake. The world does not really believe that the saints are going to reign. Men do not take seriously the oft-repeated declaration that in a day yet to come

By "vision" is frequently meant prophecy as a vehicle of the revelation of the will of God, but it is necessary to understand what prophecy really is. The prophet was a seer, the interpreter of the signs of his times, often a shrewd thinker, frequently a man of deep passionate patriotism, sick of the heedlessness of court and temple, who had retired into solitary places with his grief and his dream, until suddenly, impelled as by the out-thrust of a hand invisible, he found his way again into the streets or even to the foot of the throne, denouncing, revealing, awakening, inspiring. He did not so much guess at the future as interpret the present. He occupied the position

We have wonderful need of learning of Christ. There are things in the New Testament that Christian people have got to learn and they cannot learn them anywhere except from the Lord Jesus. You cannot learn history except from God. You may know who reigned a few years ago, but it is God only Who tells us how the world began, and how sin entered into the world, and how salvation comes.

the Lord Jesus will assume his great power and command all men's obedience. The disciples of Jesus go about their studies and their training, conspicuous only by their poverty in the things of this world, and their absolute devotion to the ideal they have set before them, and the world smiles tolerantly and takes no further notice.

One day our King will stand up, a nonentity in the counsels of the world no longer. He also will proceed to the creation of a new social order, one which will embrace, not half the world as does the Soviet system, but the whole of the world. "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." The kings of the earth will fight against it, just as the Western powers tried to fight at first against the new Russia, and they will fail to arrest its progress. The Rider on the White Horse will cleave the heavens in his descent to the last great battle and the powers of this world will give way for the last time. The kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ—and He shall reign for ever and ever.

"He shall be great!" The promise stands, disbelieved and disowned by the world of men. They will believe, in that day when He stands up to command obedience. There will be no uncertainty about the matter then, no disputing. The benefits of that Kingdom will be abundantly manifest to all, and in their joy and exaltation of spirit men will declaim to the heavens "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

of an outside critic — standing apart from the welter of politics and the battle of little ambitions, and according as he had the gift of perception of relationship of cause and effect, according as he saw the drift and trend of actions and tendencies, so was he of value to his own generation. The nation along whose far horizon beat the inspiration of no gleam, whose darkness was not stirred by the voice of any dreamer, was certain to fall into stagnation. There was no uplift without the vision of the idealist. The most prosaic, matter-of-fact age could not shake itself free from the effect of the teaching of the idealists and dreamers of the age preceding it.

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

BARNABAS

He comes into view soon after Pentecost, when the newly born Christian Church was beginning to demonstrate the sincerity of its faith by practical measures for the relief of poverty and sickness in its own midst. He comes striding through the assembly of the brethren to add his offering to those already contributed to the furtherance of that work. The senior disciples, Peter and John and James, stood receiving the gifts; he walked up to them and laid down his, a bag of money, fruits from the sale of land which he had owned in Jerusalem. There was a murmur of approbation from the spectators, for Barnabas was already known to them as one of the earliest converts to the faith, a man of integrity and generosity, one marked out for distinguished service in the cause of Christ. The history of later years confirmed that he was indeed a man of sterling worth.

Barnabas was not a native of Judea. He was what is called a Jew of the Dispersion, that is, a Jew born in some foreign country of Jewish parents who themselves, or perhaps their ancestors, had migrated from the land of Israel at some past time to make their home in foreign parts. There were many such; the vicissitudes of war and unrest had sent them into a form of exile and so then, as now, Jews were to be found in every part of the known world. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus, not far from Judea, but at the present time, for a reason not stated, he was living in Jerusalem. He had a sister, Mary, also living in Jerusalem with her young son, John Mark, who afterwards became famous as the writer of the Gospel according to Mark. As a Jew of the wider world, he was a more knowledgeable and open-hearted man than the rather parochially-minded Jews of Jerusalem, and this fact made him the man of the moment at a crucial point in the history of the Church.

Seven years after our Lord's death Saul of Tarsus was walking the streets of Jerusalem, with a problem. Some three years earlier, as a militant Pharisee intent on the persecution of the emerging Christian Church, he had experienced the vision on the Damascus road which had changed his life and made him a servant of the Lord Christ for ever. Now, for the first time since that conversion, he was back in Jerusalem but the Christians would have nothing to do with him. They all knew him for what he had been, a relentless enemy of them all, and they did not

believe his story, that he was now one of them. They suspected a trap (Acts 9.26-27). His old colleagues among the Pharisees and priests had, of course, washed their hands of him and now he was without a home, friendless and alone, uncertain what to do next. At this juncture he and Barnabas met; it is probable that they were old friends for Barnabas knew all about his experiences at Damascus and was able therefore to take him back to the brethren and vouch for his sincerity and truthworthiness. So for a short while Barnabas and Saul worked with the Jerusalem brethren in the proclamation of the Gospel; it was not long though before Saul's turbulent nature got him into trouble with the orthodox Jews, and for his own safety—and for theirs—the brethren shipped him off to his own native city of Tarsus, there to cool his heels awaiting some definite indication from his Master as to what his life's work was to be.

Barnabas remained, sharing with Peter and the others in the work going on in Jerusalem, where the message of Christ was being preached mightily and finding a wide response. The Church was increasing in numbers and influence, although as yet it was not much more than a sect of Judaism. That the Gospel was intended for Gentiles as well as Jews had hardly begun to be realised — until news came that Christian churches were springing up outside Judea and that Gentiles as well as Jews were being accepted. Antioch of Syria was named as one notable example. The Church realised that authentic information about this development was necessary and a reliable man was needed to embark upon an investigating trip and come back with a full report. The man chosen was Barnabas.

"A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" is how he was described on this occasion (Acts 11.22-24). In the upshot he is seen to have been resourceful and decisive also. He came to Antioch and threw himself into the fellowship and work of the Church there, and speedily realised that a great and momentous opening for the work of the Faith was being inhibited by lack of the right personality to take the lead. A lesser man might have been tempted to step into the vacant position himself and carve out for himself a position as leader of the Church, but not so Barnabas. He knew just who was the right man for this work and without delay he took ship the hundred miles across the sea to Tarsus

in Cilicia and sought out his old friend Saul (Acts 11.25-26).

For twelve months these two worked at Antioch building up the Church and making known the appeal of the Gospel throughout Syria. Antioch was at this time a magnificent city of half a million inhabitants, ranking politically next to Rome and Alexandria in importance, the official residence of the Roman governor of Syria and a busy commercial centre. It was adorned with many handsome buildings and public monuments and was in no respect inferior to Rome itself in splendour and luxury. The growing Church therefore must have included many educated and probably some wealthy men; under the pastoral care of Barnabas and Saul all these, some erstwhile Jews and some erstwhile Greek and Roman pagans, became notable examples of the power of Christ to transform men from the power of darkness to the image of the living God.

Another deputation arrived from Jerusalem, with an intimation from the Holy Spirit at the instance of a believer named Agabus that a time of great famine and scarcity was shortly to come upon the world (says Luke by way of comment "*which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar*" Acts 11.28; this famine is attested by contemporary historians.) The feeling of the Antioch Church was that in the light of this prediction they, with their wealth and resources, ought to send a money gift for the relief of the anticipated consequent suffering of the poorer Church at Jerusalem. "*Which also they did, and sent it unto the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul*" (Acts 11.30). It is to be noted that at this time Barnabas is always mentioned before Saul. He was the senior partner of the two and although in later years Saul, as the Apostle Paul, became the chief of all the Apostles, it is a tribute to the character and worth of Barnabas that at this earlier time he should be regarded as the leader. It seems as if the real founder of the greatness of the Church at Antioch was Barnabas.

The commission executed, the two returned to Antioch and to their pastoral duties, bringing with them John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. Mark would be about twenty-two years of age at this time and apparently giving promise of becoming a useful worker for the Lord. It was evidently intended that he should play some part in the missionary outreach which was beginning to form an important part of the life and activities of the Antioch Church. It looks as if Barnabas was always looking out for new promising material for the furtherance of the Gospel

and now felt he had found such in this young nephew of his. The later known history of Mark is evidence that his judgment was rightly founded.

The time for action came soon, perhaps not more than a year or so later. The Church now had a number of senior men, pastors and teachers, well versed in the Gospel of Christ and well able to care for the flock (Acts 13.1). Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, all are named in addition to the original two stalwarts. The Church decided, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, that two of their leaders could now be spared for an ambitious missionary trip into Roman Asia. The two selected, after much prayer and careful thought, were Barnabas and Saul, Barnabas again being alluded to as the leader. They were sent forth, together with Mark as their assistant, with the prayers and exhortations of the home Church, and with those words ringing in their ears they went down to Seleucia the port of Antioch sixteen miles away and found a ship to take them to Cyprus, two days' sailing distant.

This is where Barnabas began—willingly, there can be no doubt—to concede first place to Saul. It would seem that Saul was the more fluent speaker. It might be, and such evidence as there is seems to confirm the thought, that Barnabas excelled more in the field of pastoral care and exhortation than in that of public promulgation of the faith. At any rate, from now on it is Saul who does all the speaking and occupies the centre of the stage. From now on the expression used is "Paul and Barnabas" instead of "Barnabas and Saul". This is the point also at which Paul adopted the more familiar Roman form of his name in preference to the Hebrew "Saul". But Barnabas was to have one more moment of precedence.

They had crossed the sea again, from Cyprus to Roman Asia, at which point John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. The two older men continued on their way and eventually arrived at Lystra, in the province of Lycaonia, where Paul performed a notable miracle, the instantaneous healing of a man who had been a hopeless cripple from birth (Acts 14.8-18). The reaction of the bystanders was an unexpected one. This miraculous healing caused them to jump to the conclusion that two of the gods had come down to them in the likeness of men. Paul, they reasoned, "*because he was the chief speaker*" must be Hermes the messenger of the gods, whilst Barnabas could be no other than Zeus the supreme god of all (these are their Greek names; the A.V. has adopted their Latin equivalents, Mercurius and Jupiter.) There is this

indication that Barnabas was a tall and well-built man, for Zeus was always pictured as huge and overpowering. Without more ado the High Priest of Zeus set about acknowledging this signal honour conferred upon the city by collecting oxen and garlands and preparing to offer sacrifice. His enthusiasm was probably considerably increased by the fact that, according to their historians, Zeus had once before, long ages previously, visited the district in the guise of an old man and been treated rather unceremoniously by the citizens. Finding only one old couple who would give him hospitality, Zeus took his revenge in the fashion quite normal with the proverbially short-tempered supreme god of Greece. The priests and people of Lystra were not going to be caught a second time, and Barnabas and Paul found to their dismay that they were being accorded full divine honours. The two missionaries hurriedly and vehemently repudiated the identification; as Jews, to be adored as gods must have sent a wave of revulsion through every fibre of their being. But before long they were on the road again to their next stop and the brief moment of alleged divinity was over. Eventually they completed the planned tour and returned to Antioch to report the results of their work to those who had sent them out.

There followed something like seven years of pastoral and evangelical ministry at Antioch with Barnabas and Paul the recognised leaders of the Church in all its life and affairs. That phase was interrupted when a number of brethren from the Jerusalem Church arrived with the old insistence that the Gentile converts should conform to the Mosaic Law — the native Jewish converts to Christianity in Jerusalem never did fully realise that acceptance of Christ nullified all obligation to the covenant of Moses. The upshot of this was that Barnabas and Paul made another visit to Jerusalem to discuss and arrive at an agreement on this matter; the account appears in Acts 15.

Not long after that visit Paul recommended another missionary journey to visit all the communities they had originally founded with the object of strengthening them in the faith. Barnabas willingly concurred and expected that his nephew John Mark would accompany them as he had done at the first. He met an unexpected objection. Paul remembered that Mark had left them halfway through the first tour and he was not willing to accept him again. Why Mark did leave them on that occasion is not stated and not known; it has been surmised that with the breaking out of persecution in Judea he felt he should return to be with his mother in Jerusalem. At any rate, this apparently led to a strong dis-

agreement. Barnabas insisted, Paul refused. The upshot was that for the first time in their long association, going back to the beginning of things, they separated. Paul chose Silas, another leading figure in the Antioch Church, and went off on the planned tour, the one now commonly called his second missionary journey, whilst Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus where they had first planted the seed of the Word (Acts 15.36-41). This is the last that is known of Barnabas. There is no record of his subsequent service, as there was with Paul by the ready pen of Luke. It is known that Barnabas went to Cyprus and that is all.

One wonders why his nephew Mark did not record the progress of that unknown missionary tour. That Mark was a writer of no mean skill is evidenced by the Gospel which bears his name. He was only a boy of fourteen or so at the time of Jesus' life on earth but he bequeathed a vivid account of the things Jesus said and did. Why did he not do the same for his uncle? Mark himself disappeared from the history for the next ten years; when he does reappear it is when Paul is in the condemned cell at Rome and Mark is one of his faithful companions. What happened in the meantime?

The most likely hypothesis is that Barnabas was dead. He must have been about sixty years of age at the time of his separation from Paul. It is asserted by early Church historians of the first two centuries, relying upon beliefs handed down through the first half dozen generations of Christians, that he was martyred at Salamis, the entry port of Cyprus, after he parted from Paul. The story is that while preaching in the synagogue he was set upon and murdered by Jews from Syria who resented the effect of his work in Antioch. That, if true, would at least explain why there is no further mention of him in the New Testament, no inclusion of his name with those who send greetings or to whom greetings are sent. Paul, writing to the Corinthians from Ephesus about three years later, spoke of Barnabas as though he was still alive (I Cor. 9.6) but this could be explained by the fact that if Barnabas did meet his end in Cyprus there was no way that Paul could be apprised of the fact until he got back to Antioch later still, even if then. Only Mark was with his uncle and his absence from the history probably means that he went back to Jerusalem and only in after years became associated with the Antioch and Ephesus brethren again.

We are left with the picture of a generous, warm-hearted man who gave himself wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ as soon as he

came in contact with it. One tradition says that he was originally one of the seventy evangelists whom Jesus sent forth to preach in the villages of Judea (Luke 10.1). There is no New Testament evidence for this but he was certainly one of the number immediately after Pentecost. His personality and character was that of a father in Israel—a pastor and a shepherd, able to comfort and encourage the believers in the life they should live and without doubt a tower of strength in times of stress and persecution. His real name was Joses; Barnabas appears to be the name given him by the brethren, a name which means in Hebrew “son of exhortation” which yields a strong clue to his character; (“consolation” in Acts 4.36 is not very accurate; the word *paraklesis* means a comforting or stirring exhortation, as in Heb. 12.5 and Acts 13.15). Theology as such was perhaps not his strong point, at least in the field of public oratory, which could explain why Paul eventually superseded him in that field. As a minister and pastor in the assembly Barna-

bas probably stood supreme and it may well be that to him more than any other man must be credited the rapid and stable growth of the Antioch Church. Of all the well-known Christian communities whose activities are recorded in the New Testament that at Antioch shows the best and happiest harmony between Christian Jew and Christian Greek, between theology, devotional life and evangelism, between Church fellowship and missionary endeavour. The name “Christian” was first applied to the believers at Antioch. All the evidences go to show that this was a remarkable Church founded upon a basis of sound Scriptural teaching in a spirit of mutual tolerance combined with certainty of personal conviction on matters concerning the faith. Barnabas went to his rest quietly to await his Lord; the Church he so valiantly helped to found and in whose founding he played so great a part lived on for centuries after his death, a bulwark of the Faith in a world rapidly relapsing into formalism and unbelief.

Eulogy on the Bible

The Bible's horizon is eternity. In its growth it has been the Light of God in the history of Grace, and will continue so to be until the perfect Day. The history of Creation, man's trial and fall by sin, the sentence of death; the promises and covenants of God, embracing the full scope of the Divine Purpose for the world's salvation, are therein disclosed. THE LAWS — moral, ceremonial and sacrificial, are made known and form the foundation of subsequent purposes revealed in the Book.

GOD'S revelation to the prophets was partial. He has since spoken by his Son—his last mouthpiece, the final Prophet, his only Apostle, the Messenger of the New Covenant that is everlasting. Combining both Testaments we have the Alpha and Omega of God's Word, and in these sixty-six books we have a wonderful unity of spirit. There are many chapters, but one book; many petals, but one flower; all the fruit of one Mind. Their message is chiefly concerning THE CHRIST, and but for HIM the sacred Volume would not have been written. They are joined together by a spiritual bond and none can put them asunder. Their testimony will not have ceased until their pages are known and understood by both the living and the dead (Rev. 20 12). Written by Historians, Lawgivers, Judges, Kings, Poets, Prophets, and Apostles, each moved and inspired by the Spirit of God, their one

supreme theme was the MESSIAH, the PROMISED SEED, the SECOND ADAM, the ONE MEDIATOR, the ADVOCATE and REDEEMER of all men. He is the top Stone of the entire PLAN of God, because it was in the interest of every soul that “HE by the grace of God tasted death for every man”. (Heb. 2.9).

All the most urgent problems that confront men, such as the prevalence of evil, of disease and death, of inequalities and injustices, and the problem of how to change and bring to an end such a condition of things—the problem of death itself, what it is, and what future hope, if any, there is for those who have died; the problem of better things to come—these questions which baffle human wisdom, are answered completely and to the entire satisfaction of heart and mind, in this inspired Word of God. Both the origin and the destiny of man are there disclosed, and we see clearly that while “weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning”. (Psa. 30.5). A comparison of the opening pages of the Bible with the closing pages, will reveal by contrast that in its outworking, God's glorious Plan of Redemption will completely reverse the evil effects of the Fall, and fully emancipate mankind from the thralldom of sin and death.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly).

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN Short stories of the Millennium

2. The Eyes of the Blind

He watched the girl making her way towards him across the grass. Her slender figure outlined against the greensward made a pretty enough picture as with lithe steps she came quickly up to him. The radiance of youth gave a touch of eagerness to a countenance aflame with missionary zeal as she approached.

"Well, Arthur, have you made up your mind yet?"

"I have not, Sindra."

The girl sat down on the low wall beside him, stretching out one hand to coax an inquisitive sparrow towards her. "Is the evidence still insufficient, then?"

The man leaned forward, hands together between his knees. "I don't know" he said slowly. "I don't want to be unreasonable but..."

"But you are sure there's a rational explanation of it all somewhere, if you can only have time to find it," replied Sindra, a mischievous smile lightening the gravity of her face.

Her companion flushed. "Now you're teasing again. Well, yes, there must be a rational explanation. Things like this just don't happen, that's all—it's absurd, incredible."

"But this one *has* happened," returned the girl gently.

Arthur looked out over the cliffs to the distant sea. "I know just what you are going to say. That I look thirty and feel it, sound in wind and limb and fitter than I ever remember feeling before—and yet I know that I am sixty years of age and not long ago fighting for my breath with two nurses and a doctor doing their best for me. You are going to tell me again that I didn't fall asleep at all, but that I died and was buried and have been raised from the dead, and I tell you it's incredible. I won't believe it."

"How do you account for your being here, then?" His hands moved restlessly. "I don't know. I remember the room beginning to go dark and the doctor's voice coming, as from a great distance, 'He's going,' and then everything seemed to swim before my eyes and things just faded out. When I opened my eyes again I was lying on the grass fully dressed and you were holding my hand." His eyes held a far-away look. "Just like *she* did on the day—"

"—you slid down Giles' gravel pit and knocked yourself silly at the bottom?" suggested the girl. Arthur sat bolt upright. "How do you know anything about that?" he demanded. "That hap-

pened years ago—you couldn't have been born then."

She laughed lightly. "Perhaps your mother told me."

"You're a queer girl, Sindra. I can't make you out at all. I'll wager you are not more than nineteen and you talk sometimes as if you've lived for years and years. How could you have known my mother? She died when I was sixteen." He was suddenly silent.

"Tell me about her," said the girl softly.

"There isn't much to tell. We were the best of pals—more like brother and sister. They brought her home one day from the river. She had tried to save a child from the water. The child was saved, but my mother was dead when they got her out." He paused for a moment. "I was sixteen and about to become a Sunday School teacher. That night something died in me. It was all so cruel, so senseless. If God exists, He would not have allowed it. I became a rationalist, and for forty years preached rationalism until my illness."

"And now?"

"I shall go on preaching it, I suppose."

"Why 'I suppose'?"

"The people here don't seem as if they are likely subjects somehow. They are so *sure*."

"Sure of what?"

"That God *IS*—and that they are living under a new and righteous system of government."

"Well, it *is* new, and it *is* righteous, isn't it?"

"I grant you that. Everything seems different somehow—and everyone seems happy, except—" He dropped his face into his hands.

"Poor laddie."

He looked up instantly.

"Sindra, you said that in exactly the way my mother used to say it when I was in trouble as a little chap. The same tone of voice, the same tricks of speech—yes, and the same fixed faith in your God. What does it mean? Who are you? I can't understand..."

Blue eyes looked into his own. A cool hand was laid on his. Incredulity and amazement fought for mastery on his face as realisation came to him. The words fell from his lips slowly, haltingly, as though he feared to speak them. "Sindra—you are my mother. Younger than I have ever known you. Living, and I saw you dead. Talking to me here, and yet I saw them filling in... Then God be merciful to me a sinner."

He broke down, shoulders heaving. Strong young arms encircled him and an endearing voice he had thought was forever stilled spoke words of comfort in his ears. A woman's heart gave thanks to Heaven for answered prayer and the surrender of one more life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The evening mists began to gather. Youthful voices carried on the breeze to the two seated on

the cliff top.

*"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
And laden souls by thousands come for healing,
Great Shepherd, turning eager steps to Thee.
Angels of Jesus! Angels of light!*

Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night."

Hand-in-hand, they wandered together down the pathway into the village.

Seiss on the reality of the spiritual world

One of the 19th century's noted preachers was Dr. J. A. Seiss of Philadelphia. In this extract from his writings ("Lectures on the Book of Revelation") he reveals his grasp of the substantial reality of the celestial world at a time when Christian theology visualised heaven as an intangible, insubstantial realm in which the redeemed exist as wraith-like disembodied spirits having neither purpose nor activity. In this respect at least Dr. Seiss was well in advance of his times.

* * * *

"An incorporeal and immaterial eternity for man is aside from the teachings of God's Word. No wonder that professed believers of our day are anxious to put off getting into the heaven they believe in as long as the doctor's skill can keep them out of it, and finally agree to go only as a last despairing resort. It has no substance, no reality, for the soul to take hold on. It is nothing but a world of shadows, of mist, of dim visions of blessedness, with which it is impossible for a being who is not mere spirit, and never will be mere spirit, who knows only to live in a body and shall live for ever in a body, to feel any fellowship or sympathy.

"But such are not the ideas of our futurity which the Bible holds out to our faith and hope. Did men but learn to know the difference between a Paradise of sense and a Paradise of sensuality, the truth of God would not suffer in men's hands as it does, and their souls would not suffer as they do for something solid to anchor to amid the anxious perturbations of life and death. Did men but rid themselves of the old heresy that matter means sin, and learn to know and feel that there was a material universe before

sin was, and that a material universe will live on when sin shall have been clean washed away from the entire face of it, they would be in better position both to understand and to enjoy the fore-announcements of the futurity of the saints which God has given for their consolation amid these earthly vicissitudes and falsities. Says one of the greatest Scottish preachers (Dr. Chalmers) *'There is much of the innocent, and much of the inspiring, and much to affect and elevate the heart in the scenes and contemplations of materiality,—and we do hail the information, that, after the loosening of the present framework, it will again be varied and decked out anew in all the graces of its unfading verdure, and of its unbounded variety, and that instead of being transported to some abode of dimness and mystery, so remote from human experience as to be beyond all comprehension, we shall walk for ever in a land replenished with those sensible delights, and those sensible glories, which, we doubt not, will lie most profusely scattered over the new heavens and new earth.'* We are now walking on a terrestrial surface, not more compact, perhaps, than the one we shall hereafter walk upon; and are now wearing terrestrial bodies, not firmer and more solid, perhaps, than those we shall hereafter wear. It is not by working any change upon them that we could realise, to any extent, our future heaven. The spirituality of our future state lies not in the kind of substance which is to compose its framework, but in the character of those who people it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterized."

When we depend upon organisations, we get what organisation can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but WHEN WE DEPEND UPON PRAYER, WE GET WHAT GOD CAN DO.

True prayer is the process by which we learn to know God and to realize what He wants to be to us, and to take possession of the wondrous inheritance of riches and power which are ours in Christ Jesus and which He is waiting to help us work out in our experience.

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

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

3. The Word made Flesh

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

First of all it must be accepted that this giving of God's Son was a very real transaction and no figure of speech. The basic truth of the Christian faith, one plainly and unequivocally attested by Jesus himself, is that the Son of God came down from heaven and took upon himself human nature in order that He might die for the sin of man and thereafter release man from the condemnation under which he lay. The words of St. Paul admit of no other construction *"He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all . . ."* (Rom. 8.32). This was a real giving and a real death, and the measure of the Father's love for mankind is comprehended in the reality and the severity of that parting and that loss. Unless there was a real giving and a real sacrifice, to use a human word, on the part of the Father in this matter, then John 3. 16 has no meaning. Our Lord attested the truth of his death and resurrection by Rev. 1.18 *"I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."*

The identity of the only-begotten Son with the Word of God, who was with the Father from the beginning, is plain from John 1.14 *"And the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."* The Word made flesh possessed title to two names, the Son of God, relative to his Divine origin, and the Son of Man, relative to his human nature through Mary from David. In another place He called himself David's son and David's Lord, an apparent paradox which proved an insoluble enigma to the Pharisees and Scribes who were presented with the problem of its solution.

It is necessary to guard against a too literal application of the human analogy here. Jesus did not become the only begotten Son by reason of his humanity. He was the Son of God, supreme over all Divine creation, from the very beginning. *Monogenes* is a word indicating the principal son or heir, hence the association with the idea of firstborn or only son, and it is the idea of primacy which has to be borne in mind. Isaac

is called the only begotten son (*monogenes*) of Abraham in Heb. 11.27 although he was not the only or even the eldest son of the patriarch—but was the heir. Scripturally God has many sons. The angels are called sons of God. Adam in his perfection was called the son of God. Reconciled Christian believers are called sons of God. In fact it would seem that the title is properly applicable to every one who is in a state of sinless perfection or by means of the justification by faith which comes from acceptance of Christ has been accepted of God as such. But the sonship of the Word is something different and on a higher plane. Angels and humans are sons of God by creation, because God has given them life. The Word is the Son of God because He is of the Father, and stands in a relationship to the Father which is neither shared by angel or man nor can be understood by man. He is the first-born Son of God, one with the Father in thought and action, executive agent of the Father in all that is done, the sole manifestation of the Father to his human creatures. With that definition we have to be content.

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . ." (Rom. 8.3) is one of the Scriptural allusions to the manner in which the Word "became flesh". This one passes over the fact that He was born a babe at Bethlehem and stresses instead the departure of the Word from his heavenly glory with the Father, and his sojourn on earth as man. That manhood was real; certain heresies in the Early Church pictured the Word as inhabiting the human body of the man Jesus of Nazareth and leaving that body to its fate as it expired on the Cross. The New Testament is positive to the point of dogmatism against any such understanding. The One who came from above became man, even although in doing so He by no means renounced his Divine Sonship, his relationship to God the Father. Whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, says the beloved disciple John (1 John 4.2-3) is not of God. The writer to the Hebrews goes a little deeper when in his second chapter he declares that He took hold not of the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham; because men are sharers together in flesh and blood, he also shared in the same. That he definitely means a true sharing of human nature is made plain in the same chapter where, after quoting David in the Psalms describing man as "created a little lower than the angels" and

nevertheless "crowned with the glory and honour" of human nature, he says that Jesus was likewise made "a little lower than the angels" and similarly crowned with glory and honour. He goes on to explain that this was in order that He could be made subject to the suffering of death, "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." St. Paul, writing to the Philip-pians, goes deepest of all. "Christ Jesus" he says "although in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (this is the R.S.V. rendering; the A.V. "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," has been long since recognised a poorly defective translation) "but emptied himself, . . . being born in the like-ness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2.5-8). One common theme runs through all these allusions; it was necessary that the Son of God become man and die as man in order that Adam's race of men could be redeemed. Whether we understand the philosophy of the Atonement or not, whether the necessity of Christ's death on the Cross for man's salvation is apparent to us or not, we must accept the plain, uncompromising statement that "since by MAN came death, by MAN also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15.21). The death of Christ on the Cross was no metaphor, no pantomime action having no reality behind it. It was no crucifixion of a mortal man whose body had been temporarily inhabited by a Divine Spirit which vacated it again at the moment of death. This death was reality, as real as the death of any man of Adam's race who in his own turn and time has returned to his dust, his spirit going back to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12.7). Christ's death as man constituted the *anti-lutron*, the corresponding or equivalent price paid for the redemption of slaves in the Roman world ("the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom—anti-lutron—for all" (1 Tim. 2.6) by which He fulfilled his promise to give his flesh for the life of the world (Jno. 6.51). It was after He had thus been "delivered up to death for us all" (Rom. 8.32) that the Father put forth his "mighty power" and "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand" (Eph. 1. 19-20), not now as man—for his humanity had been given "for the life of the world"—but restored to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (Jno. 17.5) and with the addition of that supreme exaltation described in Phil. 2. 9-10 "Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord . . ."

These are the facts. We do not understand, we cannot hope to understand, just how it was that the Word of God, the Father's agent in all creation, resplendent in the glory of his heavenly station, "emptied himself" and became the child of Mary, growing over the term of some thirty years to the full estate of man. We do not understand how Jesus of Nazareth lived his life within the limits of human manhood and yet maintained that link with his Father which enabled him to say, as He did to the Jews "I and my Father are one" (Jno. 10.30), to remain aware of the circumstances of what for want of a better term we must call his "pre-human existence", and to manifest powers which belong, not to man, but to God. Neither do we understand the nature of the happening, three days after the lifeless body had been laid in Joseph's tomb, when He rose from the dead "in the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7.16) and "appeared in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9.29). We may not understand, but there are enough positive Scripture declarations to enable us to grasp the elemental truth; the Word, the Son of God, came from the Father into the world and was made flesh; He gave that flesh for the life of the world and died upon the Cross; he went out of the world and returned to the Father, and now is Lord over all things in heaven and earth.

This is where those texts which speak of the Son as bearing the image of the Father have their place. It is a truth not always readily appreciated by Christians that upon his ascension into Heaven our Lord left the body of flesh behind for ever. In mediæval times the incongruity of a human body existing to all eternity in the spiritual courts of the celestial world was not realised; even today the implications of such a belief are not always faced and considered. He was raised from the dead, not to a renewal of the human nature and body which He had given for the life of the world, but to the glory of the celestial state of being which had been his before He came to earth, and with added glory consequent upon his triumph over the forces of evil. Nothing less is demanded by his own words "and now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Jno. 17.5). St. Paul in 1 Cor. 15 explains that there is a fundamental difference between earthly (terrestrial) and spiritual (celestial) bodies, and lays down as a maxim that the terrestrial body—flesh and blood—cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is necessary therefore to think of our Lord in his exaltation as being in the image and likeness of his Father in the celestial sense and not in the terrestrial. Several texts assist in this understanding. The writer to the Hebrews refers

to him as "*being the brightness (effulgence) of his (God's) glory, and the express image (exact impress, says one translator) of his person*" (Heb. 1.3) and that this refers to a time prior to his coming to earth is supported by a very similar expression applied to the Wisdom of God—synonymous with the Word of God—in the Apocrypha "... *the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty... the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the glory of God, and the image of his goodness.*" (Wisdom 7. 25, 26). Writing to the Colossians, St. Paul said "*He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation*" (not "every creature"

as in A.V.; Col. 1. 15). And it is this Christ, who is the image of God and shares his glory, who comes in that glory at his Second Advent. He does not return in the form of man, for He is no longer man; He returns in his other-world glory, the glory of the Divine nature, a glory which cannot be discerned or apprehended by the natural sight, for the sense organs of men are incapable of perceiving that which belongs to the celestial world. A reasoned view of the principal hope of the Church on earth, the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish his Kingdom, reign over the nations, and judge the world, has to take that into account.

(To be concluded)

RACHEL AND THE STOLEN IMAGES

The story of Jacob's flight from his uncle Laban, when with wives, children and cattle, he determined to return to his own country, comes readily to mind and one remembers how Laban pursued the runaways greatly distressed at the loss of his images or "teraphim" which Rachel had stolen. Gen. 31. 19 tells us "And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's". Rachel had the images, and Laban had to return home without having found them.

What were those images? Why did Rachel steal them, and why did Laban, going to shear his sheep, discover his loss and manifest such distress of mind?

It has been known for many years that these "teraphim" were miniature images of gods and were kept in the house to be a kind of guardian deity. They were thought to ward off evil and to keep the household in health. When any undertaking was planned special ceremonies were conducted before them, and thus Laban, prior to commencing his sheep shearing, which was always an important event, found to his dismay that the usual ceremonial could not be observed, for the deities of his household were gone.

The discoveries of recent years have given the clue to Rachel's object. Some years ago, research in Northern Mesopotamia revealed written records of a great nation which in Jacob's time occupied the region in which Laban and Jacob lived and kept their flocks. These people

have been given the name "Hurrians", and they are the same as the Horites and the Hivites of the Old Testament. Laban, living among them, was subject to their laws and must have adopted many of their customs. Among those laws there is one which states that possession of the family gods or "teraphim" entitled the holder to a son's share in the father's estate. Here then is the reason for Rachel's theft. By securing and retaining possession of Laban's teraphim she could justly demand a share in her father's property at his death. Doubtless she was anxious to provide for the future of her son Joseph, fearing that Jacob's other ten sons might deprive him of a share in Jacob's possessions. It may have been that the jealousy which was openly manifested in later years was present even then, and Rachel sought this means to ensure that her own son would not be "left penniless".

Her theft was of no avail. Soon afterwards Jacob commanded all the "strange gods"—"the teraphim"—in the hands of his people to be given up and had them buried; a sign that the old beliefs of Laban's house were banished for ever. (Gen. 35. 2-4). A little while longer and Rachel herself was dead. Neither was her scheming necessary, for Joseph became the most powerful man in the most powerful empire of his day—Prime Minister in the land of Egypt—and so far from losing his inheritance amongst his brethren, he became their preserver and the means of establishing Israel in the place where they grew into a great nation.

Christian experience is something entirely different from experience as it is known to the unconverted. As a Christian looks back over his life, he can find countless illustrations of the way

in which the Lord has caused good to come out of evil, and of the way in which events that were thought at the time to be heralds of misfortune have turned out to be as a door opened in heaven.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

*A collection of
interesting items*

A prayer of Constantine

"O Lord, we know thee to be the only true God; we are sure that thou art the only king, and we call upon thee as our helper. Through thee we have gotten the victory and by thee we have overcome the enemy".

The Emperor Constantine, A.D. 273-339, was the emperor who made Christianity the State religion of the Roman empire and unwittingly paved the way for the rise of the later Church-State system which gave birth to so many abuses and so much persecution. He was born in Britain and was at first King of Britain (under the Romans) later on becoming head of the entire empire.

* * *

Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet (John 7.53)

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

* * *

Worship

"I fell at his feet to worship him." (Rev. 22. 9). This act of worship so often mentioned in the Scriptures was in fact merely a humble obeisance or act of reverence. Even to-day in the Holy Land the recipient of a favour will throw himself on his knees, bow his head to the ground, and kiss the lower part of his benefactor's clothing. Thus did Cornelius fall down and worship Peter (Acts 10.25) and the servant in the parable worship his Lord (Matt. 18.26) and the three wise men worship the infant Jesus (Matt. 2.11). To the Philadelphia Church came the promise that *their enemies would come and "worship before thy feet"* (Rev. 3.9) and probably this is what is meant when Satan desired Christ to fall down and worship him (Matt. 4.9) to submit to him, to engage in his service, and to acknowledge him as overlord.

No evolution here!

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

* * *

"A fire of coals" (John 18.18)

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

* * *

"Mysterious people" might the pensive unbeliever say within himself, "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 and fashions, its prizes and blanks; tranquil 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 yourselves, 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 touching 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." (*Author unknown*).

RESERVED UNTO FIRE

An examination of
2 Peter 3. 3-13

One of the most vivid descriptions of the end of the Age in the New Testament is that which forms the climax of Peter's Second Epistle, a description of the coming of the Day of the Lord in terms borrowed largely from the ancient Hebrew prophets,—and not only from them, but from pious writers of his own or immediately previous generations whose works, not especially supervised by the Holy Spirit, have not themselves found a place in the Canon of Holy Scripture. It has been pointed out by more than one theologian of modern times that this is the only place in the New Testament where the end of the world is described in terms of destruction by fire; if for this reason only the passage deserves careful attention. For all its setting of remorseless judgment and utter destruction, Peter twice alludes to the "long-suffering" of God in the same context; this characteristic of the One we serve and adore must be kept in mind as we consider the implication of a remarkable passage.

The primary purpose of the chapter is not to give a description of the Day of Judgment, but to incite the believers to continued faith and belief, and to this end, to stir up their minds "by way of remembrance" (vs. 1) that they might be "mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of . . . the apostles of the Lord" (vs. 2). This reference back to the word of the prophets helps to explain the somewhat apocalyptic nature of this chapter; the background is that of Old Testament history and prophecy, and the allusions are to be understood accordingly. Without doubt the mind of Peter has reached forward to a time in the far distant future when he speaks of the "last days". (vs. 3). He is no longer expecting an immediate Second Advent. Whereas in the very early years after Pentecost the general expectation was that Christ would return in their own lifetime, the passage of the thirty-five years which elapsed before this Epistle was written had shown Peter as well as others that a long period, an entire Age, must elapse before the Return could take place. The commission to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth, was a greater thing by far than any of them had thought when first they heard Jesus utter those words. Peter's allusions to the "thousand years" later on in the chapter show that he had learned also that the Day of Judgment itself was not to be the work of a moment, of a single twenty-four hour day as has been

thought by so many in the past centuries of this Christian Age; that Day itself, when at last it should come, was to be a thousand years in length and it is in that connection that he refers to the long-suffering of God as though that explains a great deal—as in fact it does.

So Peter warns against those "scoffers"—unbelievers, agnostics so far as this matter is concerned—who "shall come in the last days . . . saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as from the beginning of creation". (vs. 3). "Coming" here is *parousia*—presence. Where is the foretold presence of Christ, who promised that, having gone away, He would surely come again, and in that Second Coming and continued presence fulfil all the glorious visions of the prophets concerning the Messianic kingdom on earth. That Second Advent has been consistently and persistently proclaimed in the world, either as an imminent event or as an accomplished fact—where now is the evidence? That is the question put by those who believe not and upon looking around them see nothing to convince them that the world is not proceeding on its accustomed way just as it has done since the creation.

These people, says Peter in verse 5, are "willingly ignorant" of certain fundamental principles of history and prophecy which should have shown them the folly of their assertion. In rashly saying that they can see nothing unusual in the affairs of their day which would justify expectation of the Advent, they close their eyes to the principle enunciated by Jesus when He declared that the day of his Advent would be like the days before the Flood, in that the world was going about its normal business, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, with no indication whatever of the catastrophe of Nature which was about to break, save the preaching of Noah the messenger of God. That preaching they rejected and ignored because there was no outward evidence of its truth. "They knew not" said Jesus "until the Flood came and took them all away; so shall also the presence (*parousia*) of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24. 37-39).

Peter accepted that allusion of Jesus as a reminiscence of true history and now weaves it into his argument. "They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the Word of God heavens

existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished." (vs. 5-6 RSV). "Standing out of the water and in the water" in the A.V. is a bad translation — "standing" is properly "consisting of" as margin and Col. 1.17. "In the water" is an old error carried over from the Geneva Bible of A.D. 1560. The intended implication of this verse is that the heavens and the earth were originally brought into being by the power of the Word of God—which truth is attested in detail by the eighth chapter of Proverbs and plainly stated in Col. 1.16 — that they were originally formed out of, or drew their substance from, the waters of the abyss and occupied their permanent position in the midst of those waters. At the time of the Flood, says Peter, those waters were used as a Divine Judgment to bring to an end the order of things, the *kosmos* (translated "world" in verse 6) then existing. So, he argues triumphantly, notwithstanding the unbelief of the antediluvians on account of the absence of visible evidence that judgment was imminent, the world in which they lived already possessed, stored up within itself, the agent of judgment, ready to be let loose at the right moment.

All very well, says the unbeliever, but Peter's premise is a false one. We moderns know very well that the earth and the heavens are not constructed out of water and are not enveloped in waters above and below as Peter appeared to think in company with the writer of Gen. 1.7 and the Psalmist. We know, he insists, that the earth is a spinning globe journeying through space on an annual circuit round the sun. And if St. Peter's astronomical knowledge was so inaccurate his argument falls to the ground and we need take no more notice of him. In all of which the unbeliever reveals how little he knows of the Holy Spirit's teaching in the world of men.

"*Holy men of old*" says this same Peter in the same epistle (1.21) "*spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" The preservation of the Bible and its claim to Divine authority can only be explained and upheld by the belief that its writers were led and guided by the Holy Spirit in the narratives and homilies and doctrines they set down on paper. It is unthinkable that erroneous doctrine or unsound ethics or historical narratives of events which never happened should be permitted to find place on pages intended for the edification and guidance of God-seeking men and women throughout the world's history. But the Holy Spirit has never undertaken to make of the Bible a final text-book of accurate knowledge in all the fields of human secular enquiry. The Apostles are reliable and infallible teachers

of the "whole counsel of God" under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the things that they have written, but what they have to say is of necessity against the background of their own personal knowledge in other fields, whether scientific, philosophic, political or social, and that knowledge cannot from the nature of things be in advance of such knowledge current amongst men in their own day.

If the Apostle Peter brings in matters from the geological and astronomical fields to illustrate his argument, as he does in this instance, such illustrations cannot be expected to be other than those he had acquired in his own experience. Peter was by trade a Galilean fisherman; from early life he must have been thoroughly acquainted with the Law and the Prophets — the Old Testament. Allusions in his epistles show that he was also well versed in other Jewish religious literature of his time, and there is no reasonable doubt that during the years of his Apostleship, moving about from place to place, he acquired a fair knowledge of the educated Greek outlook of his day. Now the ancient pre-Christian view of the universe, a view that is occasionally reflected in the Old Testament, pictured the earth as a flat mass having a bowl-shaped solid vault—heaven, the firmament — superimposed over it, above which were the "waters above the firmament"; below the earth lay *sheol*, the grave—in Peter's day already being conceived as a conscious state—and below that still, the "waters below the earth". The earlier Greek view was much the same but by about the third century B.C. the spherical shape of the earth was known and becoming accepted; even so heaven was still thought to be a hollow globe inside which the earth was suspended, as the early writers said, like the yolk of an egg within its shell. Peter's description of the earth subsisting by water and having waters above and below was consistent with this, the general understanding of his day regarding the nature of the earth. The Greek scientist Thales (640-550 B.C.) had already explained the philosophy of the earth constructed entirely of water and then made to float on a sea of water like a flat cake in a dish. All of that fits very accurately with the rendering of vs. 5 "standing out of the water and in the water", weak translation though it be. The fact that Thales and all his brother scientists, and all men everywhere including St. Peter, did not have the advantages of modern knowledge on this matter and were to that extent in error on this score, makes no difference at all to Peter's exhortation. His whole point was that the earth and the heaven were created by God and possessed, stored up within themselves, the agent of future

judgment at the time of the Flood. That statement was still true; by whatever means the Flood came and destroyed the world of the ungodly, and there are a score of theories as to the precise natural cause, it remains true that God had in-built into the structure of Nature that which at the right time brought about the end of the "world that was". Genesis says the fountains of the abyss were broken up and the floodgates of heaven were opened. Unseen forces, there all the time but ignored and disbelieved by the men of that world because they saw no visible manifestation of their existence, were suddenly let loose and that world came to an end.

Likewise, says Peter, will it be at the end of this present Age. *"The present heavens and earth, again by God's Word, have been kept in store for burning; they are being reserved until the day of judgment when the godless will be destroyed"*. (vs. 7 N.E.B.). As with the first world, so this world has within itself the agents of judgment; as with the first world, men will refuse to believe because of the absence of visible evidence even in the face of missionary preaching calling to repentance and pointing to the certainty of judgment to come; as with the first world, the crisis will come upon men suddenly and unawares. *"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the presence of the Son of Man"*.

The destructive agent is fire, a fire which reduces all things on the earth and in heaven to their primary elements. *"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be discovered"*—laid bare—(vs. 10). This is the kind of language that is familiar enough in the Old Testament and in much of the Apocryphal books, but nowhere else in the New Testament as a picture of the end of the world. The idea of the earth being stored with subterranean fires by means of which it would one day be destroyed was a familiar one in the First Century. It was not of Hebrew origin—it came originally from Greek thought,—but it was seized upon by the intolerant though pious writers of works like the Book of Enoch to build up a picture of the destruction of the Gentiles and of the wicked at the Last Day, which in turn paved the way for the later Christian doctrine of Hell torment. Peter probably did accept the current belief of his day that the earth was stored with subterranean fires but he certainly did not believe that the Lord intended to destroy the physical earth by those fires or any other agent of destruction. He remembered too well the inspiration of the Spirit which had led him on a memorable occasion many years previously to

speak of the coming of the Lord to earth to inaugurate Times of Restitution of all things, times of refreshing and a new life upon earth, which presupposed a continuing earth from which evil would be banished. The whole theology of St. Peter is built upon the basis, not of destruction, but of reconstruction, of man and the works of man, and this passage in 2 Peter 3, so often hailed as a "proof text" of the destruction of the world by fire or its equivalent at the Day of Judgment, does in fact teach the very opposite. Peter sees the destruction of all that is evil on this present earth and the end of an evil order of things, *"this present evil world"*, that upon the same basic stage God may build a better, a *"new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (vs. 13).

A clue to this view is found in vs. 10 where the A.V. has it *"the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up"*. The expression "burned up" is a doubtful reading possessing only limited authority. The word as it appears in the Sinaitic and the Vatican MSS, and as endorsed by leading authorities Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort, from their investigations, is literally "shall be found" in the sense of being revealed, discovered, made evident to the sight. Of several possible alternatives this one is the most strongly attested by scholars. At a time when popular theology demanded a fiery destruction of the world at the last the climax "shall be burned up" was too good to miss in this text, but more sober scholarship has to insist on the correct rendering first and look to modern exegesis for its meaning afterwards. That meaning is suggested by Peter's own argument in the passage. The earth, overlaid with a superstructure of evil during so many centuries, is to be stripped down to its primitive state again and a fresh start made. Just as the Flood swept the antediluvian world order away with all its works and revealed a pristine earth forming the basis of a new world for Noah and his sons to build, so the fires of Divine judgment—metaphorical fires, but effective nevertheless—are now to sweep away every vestige of evil things and evil works from the earth and leave it revealed once again as the basic earth on which the edifice of God's eternal kingdom will be built.

The real evidence that this is metaphorical and not literal fire, sweeping away all evil things but not destroying the planet itself, lies in verses 8 and 9 and Peter's reference to the long-suffering of God. The Lord, he says *"is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (vs. 9). This sentiment follows on from his intimation that the consuming fire he is talking about is reserved for

"the day of judgment and destruction of the godless". This is a most important point. The fire continues not only until the evil works and institutions of this present Age have been swept away to make clear the scene for the Messianic Kingdom, which is itself the Day of Judgment, but is to continue throughout that Day—which in verse 8 Peter indicates is to last a thousand years—until "the godless" are destroyed. Now if God is long-suffering beyond the end of this present Age—which is the only possible implication of verse 9—not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance, and this is the reason for God's apparent tardiness in bringing the fires of judgment upon evil—also the implication of verse 9—and yet those fires at the last do destroy the "godless", it is obvious that the final effect of the fire in that destruction can only come after the expiry of God's last endeavour to bring the erring to repentance, and that is at the end of the thousand years and not the beginning.

Verse 8 bears this out. Immediately following his reference to the Day of Judgment and destruction of the godless (vs. 7) Peter reminds his readers that from the Divine standpoint a thousand years is the same as a day is with men, and the apparent delay in the execution of judgment has to be viewed in this light. The hasty reading of 2 Peter 3 with mediæval ideas of theology in mind may well leave one with a mental impression of all being accomplished within a twenty-four hour day of judgment; readers in the First Century brought up under the influence of Judaistic ideas of the Last Day might well react similarly. Not so, says Peter; remember that when the Lord speaks of a day it may well mean a thousand years of human time. A remark like that, set in this particular context which deals primarily with the final judgment of

God against all evil and the establishment of universal righteousness, makes clear that Peter is speaking of the same period which John pictures in the 20th chapter of Revelation, the thousand years of the Millennium in which Christ reigns as King and evil in the hearts of men is progressively reduced and eliminated, culminating as it does at its end in the irremediable destruction of the hopelessly wicked.

It may well be that Peter was originally even more definite and that the copying of manuscripts has clouded the sense, for at least five of the Early Fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Methodius, and the unknown First Century author of the "Epistle of Barnabas" all use the expression "the day of the Lord is as a thousand years" and it is this verse of Peter's epistle from which they have most likely taken it.

The broad conclusion then is that in this chapter we have Peter drawing a comparison between the unbelief of the antediluvians who failed to realise the onset of Divine judgment until it was upon them, and the men of this present Age who are guilty of the same fault; that just as the antediluvian judgment swept the earth clean without destroying its material fabric and enabled a fresh start to be made, so will it be again at the Second Advent; that the non-existence of outwardly visible signs of that Advent—*parousia*, presence—is no guarantee that it has not commenced, and that once commenced it will continue, as the Day of the Lord or the Day of Judgment, for the full thousand years of the Millennium during which all that is of evil will be consumed in the devouring fires of that day, and the whole order of things existing upon earth be cast into the Divine crucible, and emerge therefrom "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness".

Purpose of the Universe

The universe was created to reach its perfection in Christ, and the eternal thought of God has been moving through countless ages of imperfection, development, pain, and conflict, towards this great end. Crossed, resisted, defied, apparently thwarted by moral evil, the Divine purpose has remained steadfast, has never been surrendered. Its energy has been wonderfully revealed in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its final triumph is secure. God will "sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." In him the discords of the universe will be resolved into an eternal harmony; its conflicts will end in golden

ages of untroubled peace; it will find God, and in finding God will find eternal unity and blessedness. What we hope for in the endless future is a still more complete participation in whatever knowledge and love of God, whatever righteousness, whatever joy, may exist in any province of the created universe. Race is no longer to be isolated from race, or world from world. A power, a wisdom, a holiness, a rapture, of which a solitary soul, a solitary world, would be incapable, are to be ours through the gathering together in one of all things in Christ.

Rev. R. W. Dale, 19th Cent.

OUR INHERITANCE

St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians after he had been for some time a follower of the Master. For at least twenty-five years he had been blessed in heart and mind by the understanding of prophecy and the Lord's providences over-ruling his experiences. In this epistle, more perhaps than in any other, he shows forth the eternal purpose of God, and dwells on the class predestined by God to be associated with Jesus in his sufferings and the grand work to follow this Dispensation. In the first chapter he sets forth two wonderful thoughts, viz., "God's inheritance in the saints" (verse 18), and "our inheritance in Christ Jesus" (verse 11). It is on the latter thought that minds will dwell for a while; if faithful, we shall be part of the class described as God's inheritance.

Paul opens the epistle with the words "*Blessed be God, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*". His mind was always full of gratitude to God, and this expression "Blessed be God" is synonymous with the Psalmist's "Bless the Lord O my soul". He does not refer to blessings that are to be ours in the future, but says, "Who *hath* blessed us". Our blessings are present, spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, the spiritual relationship we have to Christ. A change has taken place in the spirit of our minds; we are now the children of God. "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3.26. Rom. 8.17) Weymouth's translation of Col. 1. 12-13 says: "Give thanks to the Father who has made us fit to receive our share in the inheritance of God's people in light. It is God who has delivered us out of the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us into the Kingdom of his dearly beloved Son, in whom we have our redemption — the forgiveness of our sins." "Who has made us fit to receive our share of the inheritance of God's people in light . . . who has delivered us . . . and has transferred us." This surely refers to our present inheritance; the light of Divine truth and all it means to us in Christ Jesus is our share of the inheritance now. We have been transferred into the Kingdom of his dearly beloved Son; we who were children of Adam, sold under sin, have become children of light. "*For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor. 4. 6-7). When we read: "God commanded the light to shine out of darkness," we think of Gen. 1.

2-3, when the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, and God said: "Let there be light," and there was light. The same spirit, power, energy, of God is shining into our hearts, and it has brought about the change.

The Apostle shows that we are now the children of God, and he shows how we entered into this relationship. It is well to review and consider this Scripture over and over again, for it brings back to our minds what we were, and how much we rely on our Father's providences in Christ Jesus. "*In whom we have redemption, (deliverance) through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" This is a simple truth, but one which we must accept right at the beginning; it is through his blood alone that we have any standing before God. "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him" (verses 8-10): He has made known to us something that was not revealed in past dispensations, that there should be a class not only redeemed by Jesus but associated with him in his sufferings and later in his glory. Weymouth says: "He made known to us the secret of his will". The revelation of the plan of God has made these things known to us and we understand that we are "predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will".

That which brings us into relationship with Christ is shown in verses 12-13, where the word of truth is shown to be the "Gospel of your salvation": "after ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise". This word "believed" carries the thought of obedience after hearing; it is when we have heard the instructions in the Word and acted upon them by making an unreserved consecration that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

The Scripture is often quoted: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," but believing implies more than accepting as a fact the life and death of Jesus; it means believing and acting upon all He said. "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life will lose it, and whosoever will lose his*

life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 16. 24.25). Jesus showed the terms of discipleship to be complete submission to the Father's will. When this step is taken the sealing of the Holy Spirit takes place in our hearts. Our Lord also said: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you". Jesus knew when He said these words that his disciples would not understand him, but he also knew that when they received the Holy Spirit in their hearts they would understand the full significance of his words, and would appreciate the opportunity of "eating his flesh" and "drinking his blood", by being associated with him; so He said, "at that day shall ye know" (John 14.20). The day came at Pentecost, when there began to dawn upon them the meaning of what their Master had taught, and they understood the true significance of John 15, and the relationship existing between the Vine and the branches.

A wonderful relationship exists, not only between our Lord and his followers, but between the Father, the Lord, and those willing to lose their lives in obedience to the terms, and to continue faithful to the end. "*He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. If a man keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" These are loved of my Father! He looks down and sees the sin of the men and women of the world today, and He also sees a little company here and there who believe the precious word and take it as direct from him, believe it, and endeavour to shape and control their lives by the things written in his Word. These are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and this sealing is a very real thing in their lives.

"As certainly as God is faithful, your language to you is not now "Yes" and now "No". For Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . did not show himself a waverer between 'Yes' and 'No' but it was and always is 'Yes' with him. For all the promises of God . . . have their confirmation in him, and for this reason through him also our 'Amen' acknowledges their truth and promotes the glory of God through our faith. But he who is making us as well as you steadfast through union with the Anointed One, and has anointed us, is God, and he has also set his seal upon us, and has put his spirit into our hearts as a pledge and foretaste of future blessings" (2 Cor. 1.18-22

—Weymouth). Happy are we if we have this pledge or guarantee in our hearts; all the promises are ours, present and future, and the sealing or guarantee of the Holy Spirit produces a deeper and deeper conviction in connection with our vital union and relationship with God. We are learning to know God; "this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". Both the acquiring of knowledge and Christian experience contribute to this. Knowledge is necessary, but there is something that is more than knowledge; "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3. 17-20). This is something more than intellectual knowledge; it is the vital relationship in our lives. "Being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." It is our Christian experience to which Paul is here referring, and every one of us, as we go along the pilgrim way, knows that there are things in our Father's dealings with us that surpass knowledge. Paul said, in his wonderful 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "*Though I have all knowledge . . . and have not love, I am nothing*". Knowledge will pass away; it is the right use of knowledge that matters. It requires some knowledge to exercise love, and as the spirit of Christ is in our hearts, his principles will guide our life. We may all have reached more or less the same degree of knowledge, but we are at different stages of faith, and our Father deals with us individually according to our faith; we have experiences differing from each other, but we are assured that from the standpoint of the future all things work together for our good. Paul had many bitter experiences, but he never complained; the desire of his heart was "if by any means I might attain", and towards the end of his life he said "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content". "I have learned", said Paul; all that most of us can say is, "I am learning".

Our final inheritance is in Heaven. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.*" (1 Peter 1. 3-4).

It is in the family alone that the one thing we call affection or love is divided and spread out like a sunbeam into the rainbow's sevenfold hues, there to display itself in all the rich tints of

hidden beauty. So it is in the church alone that the love of God is fully seen, not merely in all its intensity, but in all its varied riches.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

6. The Providence that leads the way

St. Paul's vision
of the future

2 Cor. 12.1—9

Reviewing still the statement made by James to the Council at Jerusalem, we find it composed of three main propositions, each of which has reference to a particular phase of the Divine Plan, but all of which, in right relationship, were linked together as parts of one greater whole. This statement, thus presented, becomes a most valuable key to the right understanding of the Ages-long purpose of God in the earth.

First, there is the section stating that "*God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his Name.*"

This can only begin to apply, in conformity with Peter's previous explanation and declaration, from the time when he was providentially directed to proceed "*nothing doubting*" (Acts 10. 20) to the house of Cornelius, to declare all things "*commanded thee of God*". (vs. 33).

Secondly, there follows the assertion, in line with much prophetic testimony, that God will "*build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and set it up again,*" its present ruinous state notwithstanding!

This can only begin to take place after there has been a return of Divine favour, and "*after this*"—the taking out of a people for his Name—has been accomplished.

Then thirdly, the declaration that when Israel is thus recovered and restored, "*the residue of men*" — all the Gentiles, the nations outside Israel—will seek after the Lord, and find him, culminating at last in his Name (his Authority) being proclaimed over them. His Kingdom, in the end, will thus embrace them all.

The whole statement of James was based upon the recognition both by himself and the Conference that the nation had already been set aside by God, to drift irrevocably into hardness of heart and blindness of mind. The nation (as a body corporate) had been cast off, and its House left desolate, only a "Remnant" being accounted worthy, at that time, to receive and enjoy further favours from God's hand. To this Jewish Remnant, another elect remnant from among the Gentiles was to be added-on—as joint-heirs and co-participants in Christ—and from these two remnants "a new man"—a new constitution with its varied members—was to be made. (Eph. 2. 11-19).

As there were two elect remnants, previously separated from both Jew and Gentile peoples, so also there were two residues left over for later redemption — a Jewish residue and a Gentile

residue. According to the statement of James, and accordant with prophetic testimony, God proposes to recover and restore the residue of Israel first, in point of time. When they have been thus restored and installed in their appointed place among the nations, the invitation of the Most High will go forth to the Gentile 'residue', and call whosoever will respond from among this final residue to enter into the way of righteousness, and live thenceforth as subjects, beneath his Name, of his universal Kingdom. James thus provides a synopsis, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, of the remainder of the Divine Plan for human redemption, as it was ordained to develop, forward from his own day, till that Plan was complete, each part in its respective order and occurring in its own due time. It is thus a most valuable key to all prophetic testimony which yet remains to be fulfilled, both in the Old Testament and the New, the right use of which will assist the watchful people of the Lord to understand the nature of each respective change of procedure, and thus enable them to align themselves with the drifts and tendencies of each succeeding change. In all these changes the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the supervision of Divine Providence, is an absolute necessity to the right leading of the child of God. God's hand must guide and direct the drift of circumstance as the change proceeds from 'this' to 'that', and, happy indeed will be the child who can trace the leadings of his Father's hand, as the change proceeds, and as the 'old' gives place to the 'new'.

Already we have stated that the first of these changes, as outlined by James, had been instituted and established by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord at Jordan, and later, upon the nucleus of the Jewish remnant at Pentecost, and still later, upon the nucleus of the Gentile remnant at Caesarea. Additionally, it is promised in God's Holy Word, that when the next change is due, and God is about to invite Israel to return to his favour, there will be another out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon that rejected and cast-off people, as a result of which "*All Israel shall be saved*" and their suspended relationship with God restored under the terms of a New and better Covenant. (Ezek. 37. 20-28, and many other Scriptures). And yet further, there will be still another and later diffusion of the Holy Spirit's power among men when the wider nations of the earth are invited to turn into the Way of Truth

and Righteousness and enter into the City of the Living God, and find life, peace and happiness beneath his control. "*The Spirit and the Bride say come*", etc. (Rev. 22. 17) and be thus a source of help to all who long to walk in his ways.

Thus the residue of men will seek the Lord and delight to have his Name called over them for ever. By the impartation of his Spirit, in its various and different manifestations, God is shown to lead the way and supervise the change at each stage of the redemptive Plan. This is the vital and essentially important point for us to note. As with Israel of old, the 'Glory-Cloud' must go on before; so with us, (and every other child of God at any time) the leading of his Presence must point the way, and only when it moves must we move forward on our way. When it stays, and forbears to move onwards towards another change, we also must stay, no matter how much the stake in the flesh intensifies the inward smart.

To out-pace the Cloud would have meant the perils of the wilderness for Israel of old; no guidance, no protection, no food, no drink, and no priestly cleansing from sin. To seek to out-pace God today will mean (and can only mean) the perils of isolation and the wreck of all expectations when He arises "to shake terribly the earth".

God's changes have never yet been instantaneous or abrupt. Always, thus far through the ages, a preliminary indication of impending changes has been given. A long period of warning preceded the Flood; a long line of prophetic testimony preceded the departure of "The Glory" from the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 10. 16-22) a 'Voice of one crying in the Wilderness' preceded the coming of the Lord to his own, a period of full forty years preceded the fall of the city and the destruction of its polity! Only when the hour before appointed arrives is the judgment swift, and the work short in its execution. Until that hour God is long-suffering and wills not that any of his servants should perish by mis-judging the day and hour, but when the hour has struck the sword of judgment falls swift and sure, and the besom of destruction sweeps away the debris of the old, and clears the stage and site for the incoming of the new.

God does not leave his servants uninformed or unguided as the era of long-suffering ends, and the sword is upraised to strike. Noah was most definitely informed of the impending Flood; Israel were also most carefully fore-warned that the Glory would depart and leave the 'House' untenanted, in Ezekiel's day, and also in that of the Lord's visitation. Those who were heedful

of his Word had the information essential, and the 'eyesalve' necessary to see and observe the preliminary trends and tendencies leading on to the hour of change. God did not leave them in the dark as to the impending change, but no more did He commission them to seek to forestall that coming change, nor out-pace, in any way, the rumbling of his Chariot. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and without doubt warned men of the on-coming flood, but like Paul, again, without a doubt, the knowledge of the world's approaching doom would be as a stake driven into his own heart, twisted and turned about to aggravate the inward smart, as day followed day and warning succeeded only in exciting ridicule. The tears of Jeremiah only too well indicate the stake that pinned him down at that cross-road of time. And our Lord's own piteous lament over Jerusalem only shows, again, too well, the probe and pang of sorrow that was thrust through his suffering soul.

To be called upon to stand helpless and un-availing amid the gathering storm, and know that the impending out-burst of judgment will sweep away the society in which we move, is not an easy thing to endure. To have seen the distant scene of Paradise restored, and yet be unable to make men know what impends is not a state, in itself, to be desired. Far better, so it seems to us, to give voice and utterance thereabouts, than endure the stifling chill of silence and restraint. But needs must, if so be the Will of God. Only by so doing can we become recipients of the special Grace—"My Grace" of which the Master spake.

The great fact is that it is not for us to inter-mix and inter-muddle the respective phases of God's Plan, at our own sweet will and preference. It is not for us to spend our time over the Jewish element of the House of Israel before their due time arrives. God will lead the way when that time comes. A "white horse" movement will proceed from the environs of the Divine Throne when that auspicious moment comes. (Rev. 6.1-2) and He who sits thereon will be progressively victorious until the great Israelitish change has been effective through and through.

No more is it our duty to waste our time over the great Gentile residue till the Spirit of the Lord marks the time for such advance. Even if the world is suffering more today than it ever suffered before, that is no warrant for our out-pacing God. Paul had to stand and watch his people drifting irretrievably upon the rocks, knowing the while that it must bleed itself white upon the edge of the cruel Roman sword. Right willingly would he have sacrificed himself as Israel's substitute had that been possible, (Rom. 9. 1-2) but, spite of that impassioned love, it was

of no avail. No more can we avert the judgments of the coming Change for our own kith and kin, but, if, like Paul, we have to stand and watch, and suffer where we cannot help, it is for us to be submissive to the Will of God, and let the stake pierce and twist our inmost soul until He come!

By all the evidence we have we are still living in the "taking-out-of-a-people" period! It is still the season of the visitation of the Gentiles! That this period has been of some nineteen centuries duration is of no consequence. To us it may seem long, to God it is as but a short watch in the night. But whether long, or short, there is no gain-saying the fact that Israel's alienation from her God, and the consequent suspension of her promises still continues, and that her blindness is not yet at an end. The story of the grace of God is still in Gentile hands, proclaimed as yet only in Gentile lands, from whence for long and wearied centuries the Spirit of the Lord God has been calling his Elect.

The order of things instituted at Caesarea and Antioch still continues, and all believers,

whether of Gentile or Jewish stock, who find entrance into Christ, must do so in conformity with the conditions there laid down. Spite of the many shifts and changes in Church history and government, this is the Order which, beneath the surface, has remained unchanged until today, and will still continue to remain unchanged until the glory-Cloud moves on, and the Spirit of the Lord be poured out from on high upon his ancient people. There is no other interim Order between the casting-off of Israel, and the calling of that people back to God, than this!

Seen in this light, God is not working upon either residue of peoples. His work is still upon the remnants of his Elect only, called out from both sources. The "glory-Cloud" has not yet moved on to other ground, but still abides on the Gospel Church. The Creative Spirit of the Living God has not yet completed the work of this present Age—the transformation of his Elect.

(To be continued)

Man's Inadequacy

*"Vain is the help of man" (Psa. 108.12).
"O God our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home."*

There are times in the life of everyone when human help is inadequate. How often someone is forced to stand helpless while another is left to fight singlehanded with some difficult situation. Sometimes sorrows and griefs, disappointments and disillusionments come when no human word or action is of the slightest use to the stricken.

It is then that faith and habitual leaning upon the almighty arm of God prove themselves, the rock in the storm, the shelter from the blast, the strength by which we endure and conquer the onslaughts of misfortune, change, loss or betrayal.

Because all people are individuals, with their own personal viewpoint, feelings, failures, needs, longings and experiences, no other human heart can fully enter into or understand how deeply the waters of grief overflow, or how fierce the tempest howls, or how sharp the stab from

trusted hands which goes through the quivering heart. Eloquent testimony has been given in every age to the saving grace of God. The brave have often said of their exploits, "God was with us". Many a one looking over life's chequered pathway can point to places where but for God's help they had been destroyed by despair or overcome by perils too great for any human aid, but not beyond the deliverance of God.

Life is short, uncertain and full of problems for the most fortunate. Even the best informed have their moments of doubt and perplexity when all seems dark. Man is a mere speck beside earth's mountains, his days a shadow, a hand's-breadth compared to their everlasting substance, yet the privileges of humanity are many. They can scale the steepest slopes, stretching out arms to the heavens, breathing a rare air, looking up into the face of mysterious space. They can lean back on the solid crags, find shelter in the cleft rocks, make their dwellings in the green foothills. Immovable and sure, unchanging God is the shelter of mankind, too wise to make mistakes, kind enough to remedy the mistakes of human nature, to wipe tears, to heal hurts, to lead the weary into everlasting rest.

