



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

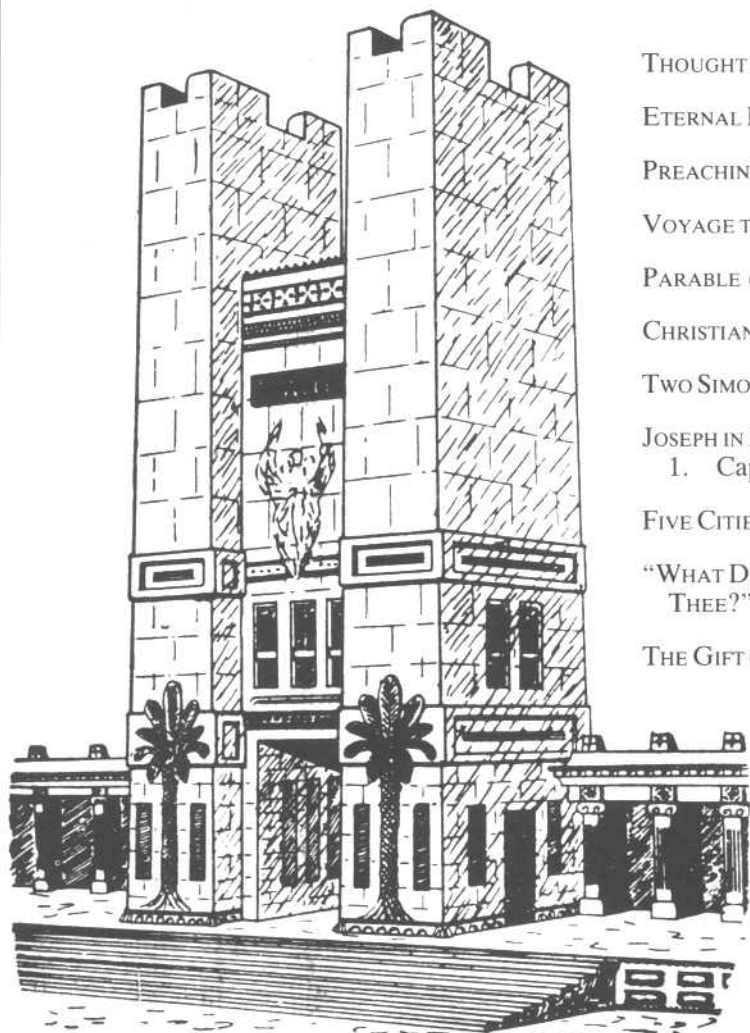
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

There is much concern nowadays about world pollution. Not before time. Some authorities go so far as to say that there is now no remedy; matters have gone too far. Others declare quite frankly that to eliminate the "greenhouse effect", to cease from decimating the world's rain forests, to stop destroying wild life and interfering with the balance of Nature, would be so resisted by powerful vested interests, heedless of the damage they are doing, that the task is hopeless. The world is in process of destroying itself and there is nothing that can be done.

Which is where the Lord steps in. He did not create the earth and man upon it, an orderly and efficient working system, to have it irretrievably destroyed by human selfishness even though He bears with men through long ages of time. The task of restoration may well be beyond the scope of human power but is not so in the realm of Divine power. Before the "point of no return" is reached—perhaps even at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour—God intervenes, and then, at last, men will have to stop, and look, and listen.

In that majestic drama-picture of the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, the day of Divine intervention in world affairs for the salvation of man from himself, presented in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, the drama of the transition of the kingdoms of this world to the Kingdom of God contains a significant phrase directly connected with present-day world affairs. The Lord says He will "bring to ruin those who are ruining the earth" (the Authorised Version has it that He will destroy those who destroy the earth but this is unduly pessimistic—the Greek word means to bring to ruin). And when something is brought to ruin it can usually be rebuilt. So now. Those responsible for this world pollution will with all their policies and schemes and deeds be brought to ruin and then become subjects for Divine restoration. In the day of Christ's Millennial Kingdom they will find themselves bereft of all power further

to corrupt the earth, all their resources and possessions and influence and positions gone, and they themselves compelled to listen to the voice which speaks from Heaven and act accordingly. And if it is true that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap—and it is true—then we can expect these financial wizards and political pundits and captains of industry put to work to help reverse the continuing degeneration of the earth and make the wilderness and desert place to blossom as the rose, as Isaiah has it, in that day which Jesus called "the regeneration"—the time of the giving of new life. New life, not only for man, released at last from the thralldom of sin and death, but for the planet itself, likewise released from the effects of man's misuse and then in process of becoming what the Lord has ordained. For the earth, according to the Psalmist, is God's footstool, and He has said in another place "I will make the place of my feet glorious".

NOTICES

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Overseas Renewals

Will overseas readers, particularly those in U.S.A., please note particularly that since transit time for the BSM is seven to ten weeks it is inevitable that in some cases an issue is already on its way with an enclosed renewal notice when a renewal subscription is received, and there is nothing that can be done about that. The pink renewal notice enclosed when renewal is due states that it should be ignored if a renewal has been sent recently and been acknowledged. It is hoped that all concerned will realise the position and not be disturbed when this happens.

ETERNAL LIFE

Scripture quotations herein are from the Standard Revised Version.

* * *

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

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

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

Perhaps this seeming contradiction is due to the rather natural tendency to think of eternal life or everlasting life—the same word in the original is used for both terms—from the standpoint of that perpetual, never-ending life of the future which the Christian believes is his destiny after human death.

"There shall be no more death"; this to him is synonymous with eternal life, a condition of existence in perpetuity amid all the future-worldly splendours which his theology has taught him to visualise. Now whilst all this may be very true it is not the meaning of the Scriptural term eternal life. The word "eternal", with its idea of time-perpetuity, came from the Latin versions, but in the original manuscripts the Greek word so often rendered "eternal" and "everlasting" has the significance of enduring, of the permanent as opposed to the transient. It is true that the eternal life will endure for ever, but it is because of its *quality* that it endures for ever, and it is to its quality rather than its duration that the term "eternal" applies.

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

What of the non-possessors? It is a manifest fact that of all earth's millions, past and present, only a relatively small proportion come within the requirements of our Lord's words. Most of the remainder have never even heard of the "only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved". They live, in a biological sense, but they do not have eternal life. In that state, and unless they eventually come within the scope of our Lord's standards, they must inevitably die, and be no more. The life that is in them cannot sustain them indefinitely. This, says the Scriptures, is because of sin, sin which is the element of disorder in God's creation, the continued presence of which in the individual life makes continued life impossible, just as its continued presence in any part of the creation—in this earth, for example—must ultimately render the continuance of that part of creation impossible. The story of Eden is the record of the entrance of that disorder into this world, and the sentence on Adam *"return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. You are dust,*

and to dust you shall return" its consequence. The position is summed up by Paul in the cogent words "*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 6. 23).

If then the quality of life with which man is born is insufficient to carry him into the illimitable future; if he can only fulfil the God-given ultra-human potentialities of his being by becoming the recipient of what the Scriptures call "eternal life", then it is obvious that God must have provided for every child of Adam to have knowledge and opportunity sufficient to accept this free gift of God in Christ. That many have lived their lives and gone into death without that knowledge and opportunity does not invalidate that fact. In some manner and at some time every human being who has lived will be brought face to face with these eternal verities and make his choice, for good or evil, for life or death. With any rational and moral being, repentance for the past and acceptance of Christ for the future must be just as possible after death as before, and the Divine response to such an one must be always on the same principle "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,*" so the period of time in history during which it is possible for the individual to turn from "dead works to serve the living God" and receive his gift of eternal life is limited, not by the end of that individual's earthly life, but by the close of the time-span which God in his wisdom foresees will be adequate for the whole of the race of mankind to realise the issues and to make the choice. For be it remembered that God, having created and constituted men as independent living beings having powers of free-will, cannot possibly compel them to the good life, to a forced conformity with the system of order which is his creation. There must at least be provision for a man to refuse the blessings of conscious life on the only terms on which it can be offered. It is at least conceivable that a man could be so wedded to the principles and practice of evil that he could not endure life in a system in which evil has no place; that such an attitude is possible is indicated by the Scriptures which show that in the final outworking of things God withdraws the gift of conscious life from those who cannot accept and make use of it aright. And since the progress and approach of the human mind toward that decision is a matter of time and not eternity, there must come an end to the period of human probation and a time when only those who have attained to eternal life will remain to take their appointed places in the Divine scheme.

This is where the Messianic Kingdom of God upon earth becomes an important theological factor. The Scriptural presentation of a thousand-year period, following the Second Advent and the disintegration of the existing world order, during

which Heaven's rule will prevail to the infinite betterment of earth's peoples is fairly generally known, with divers variations, among Christians. It is perhaps not so generally appreciated that this period provides the very means necessary whereby the "unsaved dead" of past times may receive that knowledge of Christ which is essential to their salvation but was denied them in the past life. Jesus did say that the day is to come when all who are in their graves will hear his voice "*and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment*" (Jno. 5. 28-29). It is easy to see in those that come forth to the "resurrection of life" Christian believers of this Age who have already received the gift of eternal life and have not subsequently repudiated it. In their resurrection they enter into the heavenly realm in the full glory and power of celestial nature and in eternal association with the Lord Christ their Leader and Head. The others, who come forth to a resurrection by judgment, have not yet arrived at the point where acceptance of Christ gives them, in their turn, the gift of eternal life. They have not yet made their decision. In many cases they have not yet received the knowledge necessary to making a decision. No wonder this is called a resurrection by judgment. The entire Messianic Kingdom is a process of trial and judgment to those who are its subjects; by its close all will have come to the crisis of decision and made their choice—for God and his ways, or against.

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

on earth" (Eph. 1. 9-10).

This is as far as human mind can penetrate. The possibilities and certainties of the distant future are hidden from us until in the fulness of time we have powers of thought and perception the range of which can take in the scope of those transcendent worlds which lie beyond and above the terrestrial. We can only rest ourselves in that conviction which possessed the great Apostle's Spirit-filled mind when he declaimed "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived; what God

has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 9). There is a spiritual understanding of a life and a world yet to be in our experience, which is impressed upon our minds, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and becomes conviction, whilst as yet we cannot visualise its nature and appearance. Says the Beloved Disciple (1 Jno. 3. 2) "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is".

PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

"Christ also died . . . being put to death in the flesh, and made alive in the spirit, in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah" (1 Pet. 3. 18-20 RSV).

Who were these "spirits in prison" and in what manner did our Lord preach to them and for what purpose? An intriguing text, for there is no mention of this matter anywhere else in the New Testament. Something known to Peter, and apparently to the Christians of his day, for he mentions the matter as though the details were already known.

The identity of the "spirits in prison" is easily established. Peter himself refers to them again in his second epistle; "for if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (Gk. Tartarus) "and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment . . ." (2 Pet. 2.4) and so does Jude "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in chains of everlasting darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). These are the rebellious angels of Gen. 6, who in the days before the Flood materialised into human bodies and married human women with the object of infusing new undying life into the human race and found, too late, that their plans had gone terribly wrong. (For full explanation of this subject see BSM Mar/Apr 1989 art. "The Nephilim". Ed.) Their human bodies destroyed in the Flood, they reverted to their normal celestial state, and in this condition were barred from re-entering Heaven and confined by the Most High to a condition described as "chains of darkness" until the judgment. Jewish legend described this as in the depths of the earth; this agrees with Peter's words, for in Greek mythology Tartarus was a dark and gloomy prison "as far below Hades" (the grave) "as Earth is below Heaven". Unable to appear on earth, forbidden to appear in Heaven, these rebel angels are depicted as in a condition of restraint "until the judgment". And it was to this intermediate "world", so to

speak, that our Lord is said by Peter to have gone, after his resurrection, to preach to them.

Jesus died on Friday; He was raised from the dead on Sunday. It was then that He re-entered the celestial world from which He had originally come. But not until another forty days had elapsed did He return to his Father, at the Ascension. In the meantime He appeared from time to time to his disciples, not the man Jesus of Nazareth they had known, but now materialising in human form on each occasion in similar fashion to the angelic appearances recorded in the Old Testament. But all those recorded appearances could not have aggregated more than twenty-four hours. Where was He for the rest of the time? Does Peter's remark supply a partial answer to that?

If the resurrected Christ did in fact visit those imprisoned spirits before ascending to the right hand of God, why did He go and what did He preach? Perhaps the answer to that lies embedded in the foundation principles of the Divine Plan.

God will "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2.4). "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33.11). This is the Lord's attitude and desire, and to accomplish this intention He has appointed the coming Millennial Age in which, under the supervision of Christ and his Church, the faithful disciples of this present Age, all of past ages who have never had the opportunity of knowing him, or have misused the opportunity they had, will stand again upon earth to hear the call of the Gospel, and if they respond and accept, to live. So the Lord's wish will be fulfilled, and all who can be saved will be saved.

Now if this is to be the Lord's way with fallen man, and that coming Age, the Millennium, be the time of preaching and conversion of those who can thus be reclaimed for righteousness, should not the same principle be applied to the rebellious angels? They have sinned, as man has sinned. They have

been kept in a bondage suited to their angelic state of being, just as man has been in bondage to death and the grave. If the Millennial Age is to be the Day of Judgment for man, with an opportunity for reform, should it not be equally so for the angels who sinned, with an equal opportunity to demonstrate desire for reconciliation with God? And if Jesus came to man to preach his Gospel and point the better way, as He did at his First Advent, would not logic demand that at some time before He returned to the Father He would do the same for the angels? To quote the words of St. Paul, "how shall they hear, without a preacher?" (Rom. 10. 14). It would seem that some such witness must be given to the angels if they, equally with men, are to be subject to the disciplinary judgments of the future Age (I Cor. 6. 2-3).

Perhaps, then, Peter's words do mean exactly

what they imply, that Jesus did, during that forty days' interval between resurrection and ascension, go to the sinful angels in their intermediate state of captivity, wherever that may be, neither Earth nor Heaven, and preach to them the Gospel of sincere repentance, reconciliation with God, and so eventual reunion with the company of the holy ones in Heaven. That some kind of journeying to the place of those angels is intended is evidenced by the expression "went and preached" in verse 19, in which the word rendered "went unto" is the same as "gone into" in verse 22, where Jesus "is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God". He rose from the dead, He appeared to his disciples, He went to the angels, and then He ascended to his Father, there to wait until the time should come for his return to earth to finish the work He commenced in those far-off days.

A PARABLE OF OLD BRICKS

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

How are the mighty fallen! That wooden platform with its painted sign marks the site of what was once the mightiest and most magnificent city on the earth, a city that for size and wealth would have compared favourably with the greatest of cities to-day, a city that throughout a considerable portion of human history was the acknowledged queen and mistress of all nations. Merchant vessels from Africa, from India, and even, it is thought, from far-off China, made their way up the great river, the River Euphrates, from the sea four hundred miles distant, bringing the produce and the riches of the four corners of the earth to her quays. Caravans of camels and asses, bearing the

wealth of the interior lands of Asia and Arabia, travelled the trade routes which ran over desert and mountain, through valley and plain, to converge at last on the market squares of Babylon. Here were gathered the rich men and the merchants of the earth, and all in the city shared in their prosperity. Sometimes native kings dwelt and ruled in her palaces; sometimes alien conquerors imposed foreign rule and sat upon the throne, but always Babylon paid tribute and remained through all political changes the unquestioned commercial centre of the world. Her palaces and her temples were the admiration and the envy of all who came to see. Her public monuments, her architecture and her many works of art displayed the creative artistry, no less than the mechanical skill, of the people that had created this great city. For two thousand years she remained thus, arrogant in her proud title of the "lady of kingdoms" (Isa. 47. 5), flaunting herself before the admiring world as the achievement of men who had given themselves over frankly and avowedly to the law of brute force, proclaiming abroad their determination to live their lives and build a nation that should endure for all time, without God, in defiance of God—and to-day there is nothing left of all the glory that was Babylon save a few masses of mouldering brickwork and a wayside station through which the trains pass without troubling to stop.

Eternal God, make me willing to ignore slights and abuse meted out to me by those who take thy name in vain. Fill me with thy spirit that, instead of being influenced by them, I may be a witness to thy love.

Heavenly Father, forgive me when I become impatient with what seems to me to be the slow revealing of thy will. Make me content to rest in thee, knowing that in the fullness of time thou wilt bring all to fruition.

VOYAGE TO ROME

No. 19 in a series of
stories of St. Paul

It is noteworthy that the two great stories of storms at sea, one in the Old Testament and one in the New, have their setting in the same locality. The storm which caught and nearly wrecked the ship carrying Jonah the Hebrew prophet was of identical nature to that which overtook and did wreck the vessel carrying St. Paul to Rome eight centuries later. The same peculiar combination of climatic conditions which makes this particular kind of storm possible and creates such havoc over this area of the Mediterranean Sea still exists, with the same effect, an interesting confirmation of Scriptural accuracy.

Paul was committed to appearing before Cæsar. He seems to have viewed this prospect with considerably more confidence than he had the trials and inquiries to which he had been subjected in Judea. At this early date there was no official Roman persecution of Christianity. The opposition came from the Jewish ecclesiastical hierarchy. Every Roman official having anything to do with the case—Lysias, Felix, Festus—besides the Jewish king Agrippa, had given his verdict for Paul's innocence. He evidently had sufficient confidence in the impartiality of Roman justice to expect a formal acquittal before the tribunal of Cæsar. Whereas a matter of two years previously he came to Jerusalem convinced that not only bonds and imprisonment, but probably death, awaited him there, he now cherished a reasonable expectation that he would soon be embarking upon a new phase of evangelistic activity. It had long been his ambition to visit Rome and preach the Gospel in the world's capital city; now it seemed that his wish was to be fulfilled.

It was probably a comparatively cheerful party which stood on the deck of the little coasting vessel making ready to cast off from the jetty at Cæsarea. Paul himself was under guard, with a number of other prisoners also consigned to Rome, but Julius, the centurion in charge, appears to have been a kindly and considerate man and allowed Paul to associate with his friends Luke and Aristarchus. These two had determined to go to Rome with him and were most likely on the boat as farepaying passengers. Luke would have had with him his manuscript of the major portion of the Book of Acts, or at least the notes and documents on which the Book was to be based. It does not come readily to the mind that in the ensuing shipwreck this invaluable literary work might easily have been lost; through all the vicissitudes of that experience the "beloved physician" must have been at pains to preserve his work intact, that he might complete it during the ensuing two years spent with the Apostle at Rome.

The "little ship of Adramyttium", a port of Mysia not far from Troas in Asia, was built only for close inshore sailing. Julius could expect to get part of the way to Rome by its means, but when it reached the ports of Asia he would look for a larger ship bound directly for the Imperial City. The first port of call was Sidon, sixty miles or so along the coast, and this was reached after one day's sailing. Whilst cargo was being loaded and unloaded Julius gave Paul leave to visit his friends in the town; one can imagine the hurried coming together of the believers and the short session of fellowship and exhortation before the three travellers had to rejoin their ship. From Sidon the normal route lay across the sea south of Cyprus to the port of Myra (modern Finike) in Lycia but at this point rumblings of the approaching storm became evident. "We sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary." The Etesian winds, which blow with gale force from the north-west during the summer months, should by now, late August, have given place to a soft south wind which the shipmaster would be relying on to take him home to Asia without trouble, but had failed to do so. So he had to tack round the north side of Cyprus under the shelter of the high mountains of the Asiatic mainland in order to escape the full force of the adverse wind and so attain his objective.

Myra was a kind of maritime interchange point where vessels plying between Judea and Asia made contact with those sailing between Egypt, Greece and Rome. Julius was probably not surprised to find, riding at anchor in the harbour, one of the giant Egyptian cornships whose function was the transport of wheat and barley to Rome, for Egypt was the principal source of Rome's food supply in those days. In the name of the Emperor, Julius demanded, and obtained, passage for his soldiers and prisoners—he may very well have used his good offices to include Luke and Aristarchus also. At any rate, any seagoing captain would accept passengers for a suitable consideration so that without doubt the Apostle's two companions experienced no difficulty in getting accommodated.

Several detailed descriptions of Alexandrian cornships exist in the works of ancient Roman writers and it is possible to visualise the vessel which was involved in the shipwreck. Built especially for the transport of wheat, they were about three hundred feet long and could carry something like fifteen hundred tons of cargo. They were, of course, sailing ships, having one enormously strong mast bearing a gigantic sail carried on long cross spars, and usually two lesser masts with smaller sails for use generally in stormy weather,

when it was dangerous to use the mainsail. In order to keep the ship moving in times of calm or to manoeuvre her in difficult positions, rowers handling huge oars, four to six men to an oar, were often included. Steering was not by rudder as in modern ships, but by two large paddles, one on each side of the stern. Under full sail and a fair wind the vessel could make about seven knots, equal to eight miles an hour. When in the open sea they sailed by day and night, steering by the sun and the stars; in the vicinity of land it was usual to anchor at night for safety. Under these conditions the run from Egypt to Rome could be accomplished in about a fortnight. A great many ships were engaged in the trade and when, as sometimes happened, during seasons of prolonged stormy weather the arrival of the ships was delayed for a protracted period, Rome suffered famine conditions.

So Paul found himself on the second stage of his journey to Rome. At the outset there were difficulties in consequence of the persistent adverse wind. *"And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone."* Leaving Myra, the vessel coasted close to the land, the high mountains of the Asian hinterland shielding it from the north-west wind which was still blowing with unmitigated force. From Myra to Cnidus is about a hundred and fifty miles, no more than a twoday cruise with a good wind, but under these circumstances, constantly veering and tacking against the head wind, they *"sailed slowly many days"*. At Cnidus, where the coast of Asia turns sharply northward, the vessel encountered the full force of the wind blowing down from the Aegean Sea, so that the captain had no choice but to turn and run before it in a more or less southerly direction towards the island of Crete, passing the eastern extremity and immediately running under its southern coast to secure the same kind of shelter he had just lost on leaving Asia. The ship, protected from the wind by high cliffs, could now veer and tack its way along the coast of Crete and make some progress.

After about a hundred miles of this they reached the port of Fair Havens—no longer existing—and it was here that the captain began seriously to consider whether he should put off the rest of the voyage until the following spring. It was customary to treat the period October to March as a "close season" for sailing; ships caught in mid-voyage would "lie up" at a convenient port and wait until the passing of winter made the seas safer for navigation. Verse 9 indicates that this time had been reached; *"now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was already past . . ."* The "fast" referred to is the Day of Atonement, 24th September in that year,

roughly at the end of the sailing season. The unusual persistence of the north-west Etesian gale, which should have subsided a month before, justified the captain's doubt as to the wisdom of proceeding.

This is where Paul comes to the fore-front, a position he maintains until the end of the story. He advised staying where they were; he believed there was grave risk of damage and loss if the voyage continued. Paul could speak with some authority; he was no stranger to sea travel. During the course of his missionary journeys he had crossed and re-crossed these same waters a number of times and he had known storm and shipwreck before. To that might be added the probably not inconsiderable maritime experience of Luke. It is not likely that there was any Divine revelation to either of them in this matter; more likely that their combined judgment was adverse to proceeding. It seems that something like a vote was taken and the majority thought was against them. The wisdom of staying in Crete for the winter was conceded, but a strong body of opinion advocated taking a minor risk and pushing on another thirty-four miles to Phenice (modern Lutro) which had a better harbour and, from the point of view of shore amenities and attractions, was preferable to the rather third-class port of Fair Havens. The vessel had a total complement, crew, passengers, soldiers and prisoners, of two hundred and seventy-six and most of them would be greatly dissatisfied if there was not enough amusement and excitement on shore to keep them occupied. As if to justify the decision to make the move, at long last the persistent north-west wind dropped, a full month late, and was replaced by the usual seasonal south wind which could normally be relied upon to continue for a considerable period. With alacrity and no doubt some enthusiasm the anchors were hauled in, the mainsail spread, and the vessel began to scud along the Cretan coast in good style. Past difficulties and delays were forgotten; thoughts were centred on the more cheerful prospect of a few months' respite from the daily round amid the pleasures and attractions of Phenice while the ship lay at anchor waiting for springtime.

Their rejoicing was premature. Before they had reached the safety of Phenice a new and more serious danger presented itself. Without warning, a raging hurricane, the dreaded "Levanter", as it is called nowadays, swept down from the mountains of Syria and whipped the sea into fury. The Levanter is a wind of gale force originating over Syria and blowing westwards across the sea; when such a gale meets the south wind from the African coast the result is a cyclonic storm, a typhoon. (The word itself is derived from "Typhon", the storm-demon of Greek mythology. "Tempestuous" in

vs. 14 is "typhoon" in the Greek). Caught in the grip of this storm the mariners were helpless. To make Phenice was out of the question; the gale was driving the ship in a south-westerly direction away from all land and there was little or nothing they could do about it. Their entire attention had to be given to keeping the ship afloat and in front of the wind to avoid the danger of capsizing.

Twenty-three miles from the mainland of Crete lies the rocky islet of Gozzo, known in ancient times as Clauda. The account says "when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive; and running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much ado to come by the boat, which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven". All of which is quite unintelligible until the nautical expressions are sorted out and the map consulted. The storm struck the ship somewhere between Fair Havens and Phenice. For twenty-three miles she pounded along with her huge mainsail bellied out to full capacity by the raging wind, her mainmast straining and threatening to snap under the tremendous pressure, the ship's timbers creaking and groaning as if to give way. Her south-westerly course, dictated by the wind, brought them within a few hours and by good fortune within sight of the little islet, and by what was probably a bit of good seamanship the ship was brought round to the "lee" side of the island, protected by its shelter from the full force of the gale. This is what Luke means by "running under a certain island . . ." With this temporary respite they first took in the boat. Ancient ships always had in tow behind them a small boat; in a storm there was danger that it might be swept away and so they took it up on board and made it secure. Next "they used helps, undergirding the ship", an ancient practice known as "frapping", consisting of passing strong ropes completely round the hull to hold the timbers together against the hammering action of the heavy seas. The quicksands here mentioned are those known as the Greater Syrtis, off the North African coast near Cyrenaica, some two hundred miles southwest of Crete. The sailors knew that with the wind in its present quarter they stood in grave danger of being blown directly on the sands, so they "strake sail", a term implying that they lowered the mainsail and set the smaller stormsails in such fashion that the vessel no longer ran directly before the wind; by allowing her to drift westerly several points out of the wind they hoped to pass well to the north of the quicksands and so avoid the danger.

The policy was one of despair, for they were thereby committed to drifting, at the mercy of the elements, without any guarantee of reaching land

before the vessel succumbed to the battering of the waves and foundered with all on board. The storm continued and now black despair did settle on the ship's company. "When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay upon us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away" (vs. 20). The compass was unknown in those days; ancient ships set their course by the sun in the daytime and the stars at night. The sky was obscured by heavy clouds and the mariners had no idea where they were. They might be hundreds of miles from land in the open sea; they might be dangerously close to unknown reefs or rocks. Their vessel was waterlogged and liable to go to pieces at any moment; they gave up hope and waited for the end.

That night Paul saw a vision; the angel of the Lord appeared to him with a message of assurance. "Fear not, Paul" he said "thou must be brought before Cæsar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (vs. 23). Such visions were no new experience to the Apostle; several instances are recorded in the New Testament and it does seem as though the Spirit-filled mind of Paul was peculiarly receptive to other-worldly revelations, particularly at times of stress such as this. There was evidently much more in the message than is recorded, for in the morning Paul recounted his experience to the entire company, exhorting them to be of good cheer, for that although the ship must be lost, they themselves would be saved, cast upon a certain island. The extent to which he was believed is debatable, but in quiet certainty Paul reiterated "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

At midnight on the fourteenth day since leaving Crete, there was a sudden excitement on deck. The lookout believed he had sighted land! Perhaps a light, perhaps the darker outline of a mountainous mass silhouetted against the darkness of the night sky with its storm clouds. Eager to clutch at any straw, the sailors dropped their sounding line and found the sea-bottom at twenty fathoms—a hundred and twenty feet (orguias—practically the same as the English fathom—). That at least confirmed they were not far from land. The vessel drifted a little farther and they tried again; this time the depth was only ninety feet. They were evidently approaching a shore, but on what coast and of what nature they had no idea. "Fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks" they dropped four anchors to hold the ship stationary "and" says Luke rather quaintly "wished for the day".

Again Paul took the lead; throughout the voyage he was the one most in command of the situation. Reminding them that for fourteen days they had eaten virtually nothing, in their labours and anxiety ignoring the necessities of life, he

recommended that now there was prospect of escape they would be wise to build their strength; there was no knowing what may be demanded of them in the next few hours. Assuring them "*there shall not an hair fall from the head of any one of you*", and taking bread, he solemnly gave thanks to God and began to eat. Heartened by his example, the whole company followed suit. The knowledge that, for the moment at least, they were at anchor not far from some kind of land, and the example of Paul's own confidence and doubtless that of his companions, changed despair into hope. "*Then were they all of good cheer.*" The storm continued; the ship was still taking in water and in danger of foundering even as she rode at anchor, so that after the meal "*they lightened the ship and cast the wheat into the sea*" (vs. 38). This wheat was, of course, the cargo. There must have been at least a thousand tons of grain in the vessel. It is not necessary to suppose that all of it was jettisoned, but a considerable quantity, enough to remove the immediate danger, went overboard, and by that time it was daylight and the most experienced among the crew began to scan the coastline in an endeavour to judge where they were.

No one recognised the land. As they looked across the heaving waters they did see what appeared to be a wide creek with a flat beach and the possibility of running head-on into that beach and so getting to land became the focal point of discussion. The wind would be behind them and if the mainsail could be raised a bit and the vessel get some way on her the manoeuvre might succeed.

Unknown to them at the time, they were at the north-eastern tip of Malta, having drifted nearly five hundred miles during those fourteen days. Luke's description of the place is so precise that the exact spot has been identified and is now known as St. Paul's Bay, seven miles from the Maltese capital, Valetta. The "*certain creek*" which the sailors perceived, although it looked like a creek from the position of their vessel, is not really a creek at all. A small island now called Salmonetta is separated from the mainland by a channel only a hundred yards wide; strong currents enter this

channel from both sides of Salmonetta and meet in the middle, creating a tumultuous mass of rough water. This is the place described in vs. 41 as "*a place where two seas met*", a fine example of St. Luke's accuracy of description.

Confident that their plan was workable, the crew raised up the anchors and "*loosed the rudder bands*" (vs. 40). During the long period of drifting the two steering paddles had been lifted out of the sea and lashed to the deck for safety. They were needed now for this operation and consequently were unloosed and lowered into the sea, with strong men ready to manipulate them as necessary. The great mainsail was slowly hoisted, and as the still fierce wind filled it the ship began to move forward towards the shore.

Too late, the steersmen, bearing heavily upon their paddles, realised the true nature of what they had taken for an inland creek. The other end of the channel came into view, and beyond it, the open sea on the other side of Salmonetta. Before anything could be done they were in the middle of the maelstrom formed by the opposing currents meeting head-on. Beneath this meeting-point of the waters there is an extensive mud-bank. Luke says that "*the ship ran aground, and the forepart stuck fast and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves*" (vs. 41). It was this mud-bank in the middle of the channel upon which the ship had stranded; the bows were held firm but the stern, still floating, began to be battered to pieces. A vessel three hundred feet long could easily break in two in such circumstances and that is what appears to have happened in this case.

They were only fifty yards from land. The water was rough but the distance not great. Those who could swim threw themselves into the sea and got to the muddy shelving beach without mishap. The remainder followed them, riding over the breakers on planks or anything that would carry them. "*And so it came to pass*" the narrative concludes, that, just as Paul had foretold, "*they all escaped safe to land*".

(To be continued)

Napoleon's army on one occasion was demoralised, and the general ordered the drummer boy to sound the retreat. The little fellow straightened up with pride and said, "Sir, I don't know how to sound a retreat—I never learned—but I can sound a charge." He sounded the charge. The army rallied and was victorious.

Be patient. God's clock strikes but once or twice in a thousand years; but the wheels all the while keep turning. Over the caravansary of Bethlehem, with silver tongue, it struck one. Over the University of Erfurt, Luther heard it strike nine. In the rockings of the present century it has sounded eleven. Thank God! It will strike twelve.

Author unknown

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD LABOURERS

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

We shall miss the point of the parable, therefore, unless we bear in mind that it is intended to teach the disciples the truth regarding this matter of ultimate rewards in the heavenly Kingdom. Here is a rich man who was debarring himself from entrance because he would not give up his riches; there were other men who would attain to glory and power in that Kingdom because they had given up their scanty possessions. But there was something else beside. They had "followed" Jesus: the rich man had failed to follow. The sacrifice of worldly possessions was not of itself enough; there must also be the willing acceptance of the life of labour "with him" if the desired end was to be reached. And above all things, the idea of, and the thought of, personal advancement in front of one's fellows must be eradicated from the mind; there can be no ruling over one another, no taking precedence or assuming superior glory, in the Kingdom. All will be brethren, and there will only be one Master, Christ. The story of the request made by the mother of James and John, that they should be given special favour in the Kingdom, comes immediately after the parable and probably not

without design. The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, said Jesus, *but it shall not be so among you*. So the parable of the vineyard came readily to the Saviour's lips in furtherance of his purpose to show his disciples the better way.

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

But the particular employer who occupied the centre of the stage in this little drama which Jesus, with his consummate skill, was working out for the benefit of the enthralled disciples, was not as other employers. He left his own duties and went out into the market place again about nine o'clock and, probably as he anticipated, found men standing about idle, not having been hired. He had no need of them, but—he sent them into his vineyard to labour, and they evidently went gladly. At noon, when the work of the day was half-way through, he went again, and found more men idle, and sent them in similarly. Came three o'clock in the afternoon and the sun swiftly dropping down the western sky, and yet a little knot of men, renewed hope in their faces, wending their way to the householder's vineyard for three hour's work before the night came in which no man could work. Truly a strange but a welcome employer to have this altogether unusual concern for the unemployed and hopeless.

The disciples must by now have been wondering toward what this story was leading them. They were of the working classes themselves, and they

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

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

By now more than one or two of the other labourers were convinced that this householder was not altogether accountable for his actions. A whole *denarius* for one hour's work; such a thing was unheard of! It looked as if some of them who had been fortunate enough to start earlier in the day would take small fortunes home to their families. They stepped up in their turn, covetous eyes seeking to discern what their fellows were getting, and—"*they received every man a denarius*".

Of course, there was disappointment, and expostulation, and talk of injustice. The householder was called to the scene, and listened to their complaint. Quietly he told them that none of them had suffered loss; all had received the amount for which they had bargained, the amount they had expected, the amount which, if commonly accepted observation be true, was the normal day's wages for a labourer at the time. True, they had worked longer and harder than had the late comers, but it was their good fortune that they had obtained work and in the ordinary way the others' misfortunes that they were workless. Their material needs were the same; their families at home needed food and clothing in equal measure, and the householder had recognised that fact by giving to each, *not according to his accomplish-*

ment, but according to his need, and without injustice or hardship to any one of them.

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

Evidently from the fact that the parable is given in consequence of the disciples' question regarding future reward for present sacrifice, it has reference to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God in the next Age, the Messianic Age, when the Church of Christ, glorified and associated with him in the spiritual realm "beyond the Veil" will have ceased from their labours in the vineyard of this Age and appeared to receive their "hire", the "reward" of their consecrated walk before him. The householder, of course, is the Lord himself, going out himself to find disciples who will serve his interests in this world. His "going out" thus continues during the whole of this Gospel Age, from Pentecost until the setting up of the earthly Kingdom, but the third hour, sixth hour, and so on must refer, not to the early, middle and late centuries of the Age, but to stages in the lives of individuals at which the call comes to them. Quite obviously no one has laboured from Pentecost until today, for life does not last so long. But some there are, and such there have been at every point of time throughout the Age, to whom the call came in youth or early life, and who heard and obeyed the call and laboured zealously and faithfully until old age ended their labours. These are they who were sent into the vineyard "early in the morning". Others receive the call in middle life; these are they who respond to the householder's invitation at the third or the sixth or even the ninth hour. And some are already in the evening of life when they give themselves in whole-hearted surrender to the Lord Christ; they come in at the eleventh hour but the Lord has work for them to do and a work to do in them.

So it will be, then, when the hope of every true believer is realised, and the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" has become an accomplished fact. We shall meet our fellows and our companions of the pilgrim way, those that have gone before us into the glory land, the saints and martyrs and prophets and apostles of earlier times, and we shall

find that we are all equally citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, thinking no more of station or rank, of preferment one above another, but all rejoicing together in the wondrous companionship and over-lordship of Christ our Head, the heavenly Bridegroom. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace." The "penny" which each one will receive is the prize of eternal association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of his Kingdom, and before the presence of the Heavenly Father; and, associated with that for the duration of the Messianic Age, the inestimable privilege of working together with the Saviour for the conversion of the world.

Some will ask what there may be in this happy state to correspond with the "murmuring". Is there to be murmuring in heaven, amongst the redeemed and glorified saints? The idea is both absurd and unthinkable. Jesus meant something quite different from that, his story showed the disciples what *they* were making of the calling to which he had called them, and was yet to call others. *They* were the men who were manifesting the spirit of self-assertiveness, who wanted to be greater than others in the Kingdom, who even quarrelled among themselves as to which of their little band should be greater than the rest. That is the spirit, said Jesus in effect, which would lead you at the end to murmur against Me when I finally apportion the crowns of life, in the Kingdom. It was a warning, and the subsequent history of the

disciples shows us that, though in some cases the lesson was long in being learned, at the end it was learned, and well learned.

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

The White Stone

"To him that overcometh will I give . . . a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."—Rev. 2. 17.

In ancient times the Greeks and the Romans had a custom of noting and perpetuating friendship by means of a white stone. This stone was divided into halves, and each person inscribed his name on the flat surface, after which the parts of the stone were exchanged. The production of either half was sufficient to ensure friendly aid, even from the descendants of those who first divided the stone. A similar custom was sometimes observed by a king, who would break a white stone into two parts, one of which he would retain and the other part give to a special ambassador. That part could be sent to the king at any time and would ensure aid. Thus the divided stone became a mark of identification.

Rev. 2. 17 seems to refer to this ancient custom. The white stone signifies a token of the Lord's

love, and the new name written in the stone suggests the Bridegroom's name. The statement indicates a special acquaintance with the great King of kings, secret between himself and the individual. The overcomers are not to be recognised merely as a class—the Bride class—but each will have the personal favour of the Lord. Of this no one will know save himself and the King. There is an individual and personal relationship between the Lord and the overcomers, who may be said to receive the mark of identification—the anti-typical white stone—now, in this life.

This mark is the sealing of the Holy Spirit by which the Lord identifies the overcomers. While this is said to be a part of the final reward of the Church, yet from the very beginning of our experience we have this personal acquaintance with the Lord. The full seal of the Holy Spirit will be given in the Resurrection, when we receive the new body. Then we shall have the complete knowledge of the name by which we shall be known to the Lord and He to us forever.

CHRISTIAN MISSION

The prophet Jeremiah had a burning zeal in his heart, a consuming sense of the importance of the message given him to deliver. His previous declaration of the Word of God concerning Israel had been so despised and rejected that he had become disheartened. He himself declared, "*The Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary of forbearing and I could not stay!*" His message *had to be* spoken. The Lord had instructed him to tell Israel that they were about to be given over into the hands of their enemies.

If Jeremiah had allowed his fears to overwhelm him, and had withheld the message, undoubtedly he would have been set aside as the mouthpiece of God, and another would have been commissioned to deliver the message. The burning within the heart of the Prophet would have grown feebler and would ultimately have died out. When a fire is kept shut off from a draught for some length of time, it will become extinguished. This is as true in the realm of moral and spiritual forces as in that of physical nature. This is why the Apostle Paul urged: "Quench not the Spirit". We might let the Holy Spirit of God die out in our hearts by a failure to do our duty, a failure to keep our covenant faithfully. The light within us, the holy fire, would smoulder for a time, and finally become extinct. He could not withhold that which God had commanded him to speak; he could not quench the fire within his soul without losing his relationship with the Father.

Thus it is with us to-day. God has let us into the secret of his counsels. He has granted us a wonderful spiritual illumination. He has given us a message of the utmost importance to deliver. We have been informed by the Lord that a great change is impending, that the present order is about to end, and that the dominion is about to be given "*to him whose right it is*" to reign. The "*kingdoms of this world*" are about to "*become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and He shall reign forever and ever*".

This Message is not to be stated in a rude manner. But it is to be stated, nevertheless. The great King whom God hath appointed is about to come in. In Jeremiah's time, the message was that the Kingdom of God, His typical kingdom, was about to be overthrown. The lease of power to the Gentiles was about to be inaugurated. This order of things was to be permitted to run for an appointed

time. That time is now about to run out. The King's Son is soon to receive his long-promised inheritance (Psa. 2. 7-9). Our Message is not now the *overthrow* of God's Kingdom, but the very *opposite* of this—the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

So we are to tell forth this glorious Message. We are to tell it in our actions, in our words, by the printed page, by pictorial presentations to the eye, and in every way that the Lord shall give us the opportunity.

If we refrain from telling the Glad Tidings, the result will be that the fire of God's Holy Spirit will become extinguished within us. And if the light that is within us becomes darkness, how great will be that darkness! The possession of the Truth—God's Message—brings with it great responsibility. Shall we prove faithful to it? Shall we show to our God our deep appreciation of his loving kindness in granting us the knowledge of his wonderful Message of Salvation, his glorious Plan, with its times and seasons?

There is a difference between the operation of the Lord's Spirit in his children now and its operation in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah, and the other holy Prophets. During the Jewish Age the Holy Spirit acted upon the servants and mouthpieces of God in a mechanical manner. Now the people of the Lord have both his Message in his written Word and the illumination of the Spirit, which gives us a spiritual understanding impossible to his people of past Ages. The mysteries of God are now opened up to his children, the watchers; and we are granted a clear understanding of "*the deep things of God*", some features of which were never revealed until the present time, even to the most faithful of the Lord's saints (1 Thess. 5. 1-6).

We are told by the Apostle Paul that the things which were written of the servants of the Lord in past dispensations were written for *our* admonition and instruction and comfort, "*upon whom the ends of the Ages are come*" (1 Cor. 10. 11). Seeing all these things, "*What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?*" How earnestly, with what painstaking care, should we give heed to the Word spoken unto us! Let us be faithful in proclaiming the Message of our Lord, now due. Let us tell forth the words which He has put into our mouths, whether others hear or whether they forbear—whether our faithfulness brings us favour or disfavour. But let us speak his word in meekness and love, leaving the results with our great Chief Reaper. "*The Day is at hand!*"

TWO SIMONS

*The story of
an opportunity*

The last few days of Jesus' earthly life were full of mental and physical strain. Luke says (21. 37-38) "*And in the day time He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the Temple, for to hear him.*" Following this came the last Passover and a long talk, then the Garden with its anguish and agony. An armed company came to take one defenceless man. He was betrayed by a kiss, bound and led away to trial. Mocked, humiliated, insulted, scourged and crowned with thorns Jesus began his journey to Calvary. He, bearing his Cross for himself, went forth to die. (John 19. 17, R.V.).

When the journey began Jesus was "led" forth carrying the cross but before the place called Calvary was reached and probably at a point just outside the north gate of the city (for note "*as they came out*" in Matt. 27. 32) it was necessary to transfer the heavy cross to someone else's shoulders. Moreover whereas at the beginning of the journey He was "led," at the close of it, such was his physical exhaustion, that He was "brought" or "borne along" (Mark 15. 20 and 22). Even his sinless body had its limits of endurance and they were reached that day. For three and a half years He had daily poured out his soul unto death, giving forth his vitality and strength, but like the Psalmist (Psa. 73. 26), He could say, "*My flesh and my heart faileth but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever*". His faith never faltered though his steps might.

A passer by was "impressed" by the Centurion in charge, one Simon, a Cyrenian, and he walked behind Jesus bearing the cross. Perhaps he was one of the "scattered abroad" Jews mentioned by Peter, come up to keep the Passover and obliged to lodge himself outside the city. Suddenly he found himself compelled under the law of Rome to carry a burden laid upon him by the Roman soldiers. The unlooked for happened and he found himself with his day's programme changed, walking in a direction opposite to that he had intended, following a Person with whom he had never thought to be associated and bearing a burden he had never dreamed of carrying! How came it that the moment at which Simon met the procession was the very one at which the Centurion decided that somebody was wanted to carry a cross? If Simon had been a little earlier or later, if he had entered by another gate, if the Centurion's eye had looked in another direction; but there are no *ifs* in the out-working of God's purposes. Behind apparently chance circumstances lies the planning of the wise God, that was why Simon's name that day found a

place on the page of Scripture. Nothing happens by chance where God's providences are concerned. It is not likely that Simon welcomed the interruption of his day's programme but it was God's way of bringing him into touch with Jesus.

It must have happened like that in thousands of cases since; some trivial circumstance, some slight incident, some strange turn of event has made all the differences in the life. Sickness, sorrow, loss, the breaking up of a cherished plan, these and a host of other unwelcome happenings have resulted in bringing many into touch with the Lord Jesus.

Peter, the leading Apostle; how was it he was not carrying his Master's cross at that great moment? If he had been as good as his word and had lived up to his boast he would have been so close to Jesus that morning that it would have been impossible for any other to be chosen to carry the cross. A few hours previously Peter had said, "*I am ready to go with thee, to prison and death*" and when somebody was really needed to go with him to the place of death Peter was not there. He was afar off hiding his tears and his shame, far off with that last look his Master gave him burning into his tortured mind. The echo of his own denials and curses was still in his ears; so Simon Peter lost the opportunity that could never come back. Never again was the Son of God to walk that sorrowful way of the cross and because Peter was not there he lost the right to carry the cross for his Lord and go step by step with him to Calvary. Think of it! Their Lord and Master who had shown such willingness to serve them in the most menial of tasks—washing their feet—was needing such a service at such a moment and not one of his own disciples was at hand to render it, so that to a stranger the undying honour must needs fall.

Simon the Cyrenian in a very real sense took Simon Peter's place that day. How glad we are that the grace of God restored Peter to his place, for he was in peril of losing, not only his opportunity of service in carrying the cross after Jesus but also his crown, "Let no man take thy crown".

The sight of a man carrying his cross was quite familiar in Jerusalem. Our Lord had chosen the figure of a cross bearer as an illustration of a true disciple and added the paradox concerning losing life by saving it and saving life by losing it. Everyone seeing a man carrying his cross saw one whose life here was ended. So it is with one who sets out to carry his cross, he is serving his connection with old pursuits belonging to the old life, and following Christ into the new life. Simon the Cyrenian had this signal honour; alone of all the characters of Scriptures he was the embodiment of our Lord's own illustration of a true disciple—a

man carrying a cross after Christ! See him associated with Jesus in his shame, all his strength devoted to the carrying of a cross, walking pace for pace behind the Lord himself, but with this difference—Simon carried Christ's cross; the disciple carries his own. The disciple's cross is Christ's only in the sense that he bears it voluntarily, gladly, "for my sake". (Mark 8. 35). Paul is our example. He was always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 4. 10) and filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1. 24). He counted all things but loss and dross that he might win Christ and be found in him.

We may suppose that Simon the Cyrenian never forgot that morning's burden carrying nor the after incidents. If the Centurion who laid the cross on

him was constrained before the day was out to say "truly this was the Son of God", we may believe that Simon's heart was reached.

Simon is mentioned in Mark 15. 21 as being the father of two sons, Alexander and Rufus. These two men were evidently well known Christians at the time Mark's Gospel came to be written, for the evangelist doubtless mentioned them by name because they were known to those Christians to whom he was writing. This in itself is strongly in favour of the assumption that Simon was so moved by his experiences on that eventful day that he became a follower in the deeper and spiritual sense of him whose cross he bore and trained his boys to do the same.

STRENGTH FROM ON HIGH

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

None save the consecrated child of God realise the truth of this statement, "In confidence is strength, in returning and rest is salvation". It is upon this and like promises that the Lord's people rely in these days of stress and turmoil. Strength today is measured in a very different manner. Calm, quiet confidence and rest in God is not considered strength and finds no place in unregenerate hearts. It was ever thus, for the next verse has the reply made by Israel of old to this wise counsel from God, "But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses". They preferred their own way rather than the way of God, and God's answer to them was, "therefore shall ye flee".

The horse in Old Testament usage is a counterpart of modern tanks and guns. It was their idea of confidence and strength. Egypt was distinguished for producing fine horses and the Egyptians used them much in war. God had forbidden the kings of Israel to multiply horses (Deut. 17. 16) and in prohibiting them He designed to distinguish his people from the Egyptians. It was not his purpose for them to rely upon horses for strength and deliverance but solely upon their God, who had promised them victory over their enemies on conditions of faithfulness to him. Psalm 20. 7 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God".

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

downfall and the downfall of his kingdom as shown in the next chapter (1 Kings 11. 9-12).

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

Isa. 20. 16 continues, "We will ride upon the swift, therefore shall they that pursue you be swift." Alas that man still, as Israel in Isaiah's day, should rely upon the "swift", and his pursuers have access to the same "swift", whatever it be, whether the horses of the ancients or their modern counterparts, and it is still necessary for the Lord (as in verse 18) to "wait that He may be gracious". Yet hearts rejoice as we continue this passage, in verses 19 and 20. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more; He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when He shall hear it He shall answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers". Even as we apply to ourselves the words of verse 21, "This is the way, walk ye in it", so, soon, God will say with authority, "Stand still, and know that I am God"; mankind will then no longer have any trust in horses, but will in quietness and confidence wait for the word of God.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

*A brief life
of Joseph*

1. Captive in a strange land.

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, born to Rachel eight or nine years before the family left Haran and returned to Canaan. He comes into the story in Gen. 37 at seventeen years of age and already in bad odour with his elder half-brothers, for, it is said, he brought unto his father their "evil report" (37.2). To what extent this procedure partook of "tale-bearing" does not appear; it is plain though that several of Jacob's sons were most undesirable characters and Joseph might well have been justified in whatever it was he told his father. What does stand out is Jacob's avowed predilection for Joseph, clearly on account of his being the first-born son of his beloved Rachel. The "coat of many colours" which 37.3 declares Jacob had made for his favourite son has been variously explained but there is good reason for supposing that it was what the A.V. says it was, a variegated garment made of various materials of different colours sewn together in a definite pattern. There is a famous Egyptian tomb painting of the 12th dynasty, which is some time before that of Joseph, showing Asiatic visitors to Egypt clad in just such garments. It would seem that Jacob, perhaps influenced by the power of the Holy Spirit, was already realising something of Joseph's future exaltation. The brothers' jealousy was intensified when Joseph began to relate his dreams, and they perceived the implication. One dream showed them binding sheaves in the field when Joseph's sheaf stood upright and all the others bowed down to it. Later on he dreamed again and saw the sun and moon and eleven stars making obeisance to him. His father rebuked him at this, for in the strict code of the East the father is supreme until his death and this dream savoured of something like high treason. Yet 37.11 says that his father "observed the saying" where "observe" means to take diligent heed. Perhaps he remembered his own dream of the ladder stretched up to heaven something like half a century earlier and wondered if this was another pointer to the outworking of God's purpose. He must have realised that his elder sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, were all of them men of blood and most unlikely to be chosen to execute the Lord's purposes. But for the present Joseph must take his place as a lad in the family duties and so it came about that he was sent to report on the welfare of the brothers who were guarding Jacob's far-flung interests at the other end of Canaan.

Jacob had established his headquarters somewhere near his father Isaac at Hebron. His flocks however apparently ranged far and wide over

Canaan as far north as Shechem, fifty miles away. When Joseph got there he found that his brothers had moved on to Dothan, twelve miles farther still. Casual allusions like this make it plain that Canaan must have been very thinly populated at that time; it is highly probable that Abraham and his descendants counted for a large part of the inhabitants if their flocks and herds could thus apparently graze unmolested over what was practically the entire length and breadth of present-day Israel.

The rascally brothers saw him coming and hatched a plot. It would be easy to kill him and persuade their father that he had been slain by a wild beast somewhere on the way and all they were able to recover was the bloodstained garment. Reuben, the eldest, was evidently not in agreement with the proposal but felt himself in a hopeless minority—he therefore proposed that Joseph be cast into one of the rockcut water cisterns which abounded in the district, deep excavations from which a man could not escape unaided, intending to rescue him later and smuggle him back to his father. Reuben's plan worked up to the point of dropping Joseph into the pit, but while he was away from the others, evidently busy about some duty connected with the flocks, Judah, also somewhat conscience stricken at the projected murder of their brother, proposed that their end could be equally well achieved by selling Joseph as a slave to passing traders and so the guilt of blood need not rest on them. The bargain was struck and the Ishmaelite traders took Joseph in exchange for twenty shekels of silver and carried him into Egypt. Reuben, returning later to the pit, was grief-stricken at the turn events had taken; it would appear that he regarded himself responsible to his father for the younger son's safety. But there was nothing to be done; Joseph was gone from their lives, and all Reuben could do was acquiesce in the brothers' lie to Jacob, a lie which broke the old man's heart. "All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him but he refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." (37.35). This particular verse is interesting as showing that in addition to his twelve sons Jacob also had a number of daughters; the only one whose name is recorded is Dinah. A characteristic of the Old Testament, or rather the genealogies which are incorporated in the Old Testament, is that daughters are usually not mentioned or recorded unless some particular incident is connected with their names.

So Joseph travelled with the caravan of merchants along the highway which connected Canaan

with Egypt, a slow two hundred mile journey lying for the most part along the seacoast, until his captors passed the frontier guards and Joseph saw with his own eyes the land his greatgrandfather Abraham had visited nearly two centuries earlier, the land of the Pharaohs. Modern research has established that his entry must have been during the 17th century BC, when the Hyksos, Semitic invaders from Syria, ruled Egypt. The Hyksos capital was Zoan (later called Tanis) in the eastern Nile delta, and this was the district in which lay the land of Goshen later assigned to the people of Israel. An incidental support for the view that it was in the time of the Hyksos that Joseph entered Egypt lies in the fact that according to the narrative he was bought from the Ishmaelites by "*Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh, an Egyptian*". Were the reigning house an Egyptian one there would seem no point in mentioning the fact that the captain of the guard was an Egyptian; the fact would be assumed as a matter of course. But if the reigning Pharaoh was of the Semitic race almost certainly most of his court officials would be Semitic also and the historian would feel some reluctance to have it thought that any such would take a brother Semite as slave, hence the care to point out that in this case the individual concerned was an Egyptian.

The story of the attempted seduction of Joseph by his master's wife is well known and has formed the subject of many a sermon and homily. The fact that Joseph's master contented himself with putting Joseph in prison instead of to death, which was the usual punishment for the crime, seems to indicate that Potiphar was probably not altogether convinced of the truth of the accusation. But Joseph stayed in prison for anything up to ten years and it was during that time that the incident occurred which became the means of his subsequent exaltation to the highest position in Egypt next to Pharaoh himself.

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

Two years went by, and then it was Pharaoh's

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

This Pharaoh was probably Salitis, the first of the Hyksos kings, an Arab or Syrian chieftain who invaded Egypt and set up his court at Zoan in the Delta and ruled, with his successors, for something like a hundred years, constituting what are known as the 15th and 16th dynasties. Towards the end of the rule of the Hyksos, or "Shepherd Kings" as they are sometimes called, native Egyptians challenged their grip on the land and for a long time there were Hyksos and native kings exercising sovereignty over different parts of Egypt so that the 17th dynasty overlapped those of the Hyksos. Then at last Aahmes the first king of the 18th dynasty expelled the last of the Hyksos from the country and Egypt was united under a single rulership. This was about twenty years after the death of Joseph and since the Israelites were of the same race, the Semitic, as the hated Hyksos, and moreover had been greatly favoured by them, it is probable that from this time began the oppression of the children of Israel which hardened later on into the slavery which led to the Exodus.

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

With impetuous informality Pharaoh immediately appointed Joseph to act in the character suggested. At this point there is another sidelight on the likelihood of Joseph's Pharaoh being one of the Hyksos. Said Pharaoh (41. 38-39) "*Can we find such a man as this, in whom the Spirit of God is?*" and then, addressing Joseph "*forasmuch as God has showed thee all this . . .*" Now all the native kings of Egypt acknowledged and served many gods; it is most unlikely that this Pharaoh, who thus acknowledged one God, in the singular, was other than one of the Semitic Hyksos. It is well known nowadays that the worship of the "Most High God" was common in Canaan and Syria at

that time. Melchisedek, the priest-king of Jerusalem in Abraham's time was one such worshipper and so was Abimelech king of Gerar. Here is another. It is very likely that this similarity of worship is one reason, perhaps the principal reason, for the welcome which Jacob and his family received when they came into Egypt.

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

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

41. 41 declares that Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to "Zaphnath-paneah" an Egyptianised word meaning "the food of life", in obvious allusion to his mission of preserving Egypt through famine. He also married Joseph to Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of the Sun-god (not to be confused with Potiphar captain of the guard, Joseph's erstwhile owner). It might be queried why Joseph consented to such marriage when the Lord had beforetime laid emphasis in marrying only within the Semitic race. The answer may well be that Potipherah was himself a Semitic immigrant like his royal master so that no objection could stand on this score at all. There is just one hint that this may in fact have been the case. "Potipherah" is an Egyptian term meaning "servant-of-the-Sun-god" and is extremely common in the Egyptian inscriptions; it is really a title rather than a proper name, indicating that the holder was the senior religious official in the land, "High Priest" so to

speak. Potipherah would be a man of immense authority and in the closest counsels of Pharaoh. But the name of his daughter, Asenath, means "dedicated to Anath", and Anath was not an Egyptian deity. Anath was a goddess worshipped by the Semitic Syrians and before them by the Babylonians, who looked upon her as the consort of Anu the god of heaven. It is very unlikely that a native Egyptian High Priest should commit so grave a breach of etiquette as to name his daughter in honour of a goddess of the Semites. On the other hand, if Joseph's father-in-law was a Syrian who came in to Egypt with the first of the Hyksos kings, what more natural thing than to name his daughter after one of his own national deities. This cannot possibly be claimed as proof, but her name does at least give some reason to think that Asenath might have been of the Syrian Semitic race and not native Egyptian, in which case she could even have been descended from one of Abraham's relatives and have derived ultimately from the parent stock of Terah. There is a sense of fitness in thinking that perhaps, after all, Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim, progenitors of two tribes in Israel, were full blooded Hebrews and not half Semitic and half Hamitic.

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

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

(To be continued)

Mighty God, thou knowest my weak faith and how I long to have a greater belief in thy power. Increase my trust that I may be more willing to attempt big things for thee, knowing thou art working through me.

Loving Father, hear the prayers which spring from the deep longings of my heart and forgive me when, in thy great goodness, I am surprised that those prayers are answered. Give me confidence to expect great things from thee.

FIVE CITIES IN EGYPT

*Examination of a
strange text*

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called, The city of the Sun" (Isa. 19.18).

A strange statement, one that most commentators have studiously avoided in consequence of its strangeness. Why should five particular cities in pagan Egypt, including one named after the Sun-god, forsake their own language for that of the Canaanites and Hebrews, and declare their allegiance to the God of Israel? Whatever the meaning, its fulfilment must lie in future times, for never in past history has such a state of things existed in Egypt.

Look first at the setting. Verses 16-25 clearly constitute a prophetic description of conditions involving Egypt at the end of this Age, when the "kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our God" and Christ is supreme in the Millennial world. The passage opens with Isaiah's favourite introduction "in that day". In almost every instance of that phrase in his book it refers to the events surrounding the end of this Age and the commencement of the next. "*The land of Judah*" he says, "*shall be a terror unto Egypt; everyone that makes mention thereof shall be afraid*". Never in the past has Egypt stood in terror of Judah, whether ancient or modern. But in our own day it has become fact. But, says Isaiah, Egypt will cry unto the Lord and He shall deliver them. The Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall serve the Lord. They shall return to the Lord, and He shall heal them. And the chapter closes with the Lord saying "*Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance*". Here is a picture of three nations always in history at war with one another now joined together in a bond of peace, and united in their allegiance to the Lord. Such outcome can only be achieved in the Millennium, and the doctrine of the Millennium is essential to hold if this passage is to be understood.

So back to the five cities. Why five, and why one specifically identified? A certain amount of investigation does yield one interesting fact. Egypt under the Pharaohs was divided for political and administrative purposes into forty-two nomes, or provinces, something like the States of the United States of America, each province having its own capital city. Of those forty-two capital cities the Old Testament mentions and records the names of five. And one of those five is the city of On, whose High Priest's daughter Asenath became the wife of Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 41. 45; 46. 20). Four centuries after Isaiah's day, On was renamed Heliopolis by the then Greek rulers of Egypt, and that name means "city of the sun". Isaiah four cen-

turies previously by inspiration of the Spirit foretold that name change! The names of these five cities, with their later Greek names, are: No (Thebes) Jer. 46. 25; Hanes (Herakeopolis) Isa. 30.4; Noph (Memphis) Isa. 19.13; On (Heliopolis) Gen. 41.45; Zoan (Tanis) Num. 13.22. These five, these five only.

They are to "speak the language of Canaan". This word "language" here is not "*lashan*" which denotes a national language in the ordinary sense, but "*saphar*", derived from the motion of the lips, as of one speaking. Again, "speak" in this text means to declare abroad rather than the mere act of speaking. Five cities are to proclaim the speech of Canaan, to ally themselves with what is said and declared by those in Canaan. And why "Canaan", a territorial name which had dropped out of use five or six centuries before the days of Isaiah? What had once been known as Canaan was now Judah in the south and Israel in the north! It would appear that there is a significance in this going back to the ancient name, which needs a little thought.

Back in the days when the land was known as Canaan, the worship of the Most High God was there. The worship of many gods with all its attendant degradation had come into the world only about five centuries before Abraham and it started in his native land of Sumer. He left that land for one "which God would show him", and so he came into Canaan where he found a people still worshipping the Most High God alone, ruled by their priest-king Melchisedek. Not far away he encountered another Canaanite people subject to their equally devout king Abimelech. Here, in Abraham's day, was a national faith purer and more sincere by far than that of Judah in the days of Isaiah—and this was the "speech of Canaan" to which the five cities are to turn rather than the mixture of one God and many gods characteristic of Judah and Israel in those later times. So the Egyptians are to turn, not to the adulterated faith of eighth century BC Judah but to that of second millennium BC Abraham. Back to the primitive faith which men knew when the world was young.

So the chapter closes with Egypt returning to the Lord in sincerity, first a partial move back, the five cities of vs. 18, then a more universal turning to him in vs. 21-22, and finally the full and complete conversion of vs. 25 which leads the Lord to say "Blessed be Egypt my people". All this must see its fulfilment in the Age to follow this present, the Millennial Age, under the beneficent reign of Christ, the day concerning which the Lord said to Zephaniah "*for then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent*"—the "language of Canaan".

"WHAT DOTTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE"

"What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6. 8).

We know nothing of the circumstances under which these words were originally uttered. How they came to be preserved for nearly a thousand years, then to be quoted by the prophet Micah, we do not know either. Micah accredits them to Balaam, and all that we know of Balaam is that he was a prophet of God although a Gentile, that being hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel he blessed them instead, and that having fallen into the hands of the Israelites he was put to death by them. This wonderful utterance shows a side to his character which otherwise would be quite unsuspected. *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* he says, as if he but reminds us of what we already know perfectly well, something that God has manifestly and admittedly shown us already. And that is the first keen truth that comes home to us. *We do know these things.* We have enough of the original law written in man's heart to realise that justice, goodness and unselfishness are fundamental in human relations and that without them we cannot make progress toward the Heavenly city. God has shown us that and inwardly we know it. We might do very well by writing in our hearts the one line *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* for in calm, quiet reflection upon those nine words there is a wealth of spiritual instruction. The Israelites of old were treated as servants and given a code of laws in which every crime and penalty was clearly defined, and, as the writer to the Hebrews says of that law "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward"; we who are of the New Creation are treated as sons, as men and women whom the Father trusts to work out the Divine law for themselves on the basis of certain cardinal principles which He has laid down, and hence we do need calmly and quietly to think out the implications of those principles.

Justice has become a harsh, unyielding word to us in the English language, calling up visions of transgressors having meted out to them the due of their deeds. Of course the true idea behind the word is that of rightness, or righteousness. The man who takes into account all that is due to his God, his fellowman, and to his own self, and renders to all the due that is theirs, is a righteous and a just man. This involves a sober recognition of the purpose of God in creating man and placing him upon the earth, and a willing taking up of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen of earth. Those who have consecrated their lives to God and become footstep followers of Jesus Christ, have

the added duties and responsibilities of that calling to consider. These have entered into a family, the brethren of Christ, and there are family obligations to be honoured. How many there are who look upon the fellowship solely from the doctrinal angle and fail to realise that it is a brotherhood which has its basis upon things far deeper and more potent for good than mere intellectual understanding of God's Plan? There are many who are very correct in doctrine but have utterly failed to appreciate and honour the family relationship which must exist between those who hope ultimately to "reign with him".

This first principle, then, must be understood along the lines of righteousness; not a cold, austere, "holier-than-thou" righteousness the possessor of which thanks God that he is not as other men; not a bigoted, rigid cast of mind which sees nothing save its own narrow conception of the Divine dealings; but a warm, generous, zealous attitude of heart which manifests itself in a constant endeavour to maintain the highest ideals of faith and conduct before men, a refusal to compromise those standards under any circumstances, and a firm conviction of the rightness of God's ways and the certainty of their eventual triumph that nothing can shake.

Our consecration to Divine service does not absolve us from our Christian duty to our fellowmen. Rather it intensifies that duty. We are not of the world, but we are in the world, and whilst so we cannot escape the obligations which properly devolve upon us as God's representatives in the world. The monastic form of life which involved a complete separation from ordinary affairs and ordinary people was a retreat and an escape upon the principle that all created things were inherently sinful and corrupt and that withdrawal from them, and a physical mortification of the flesh, was pleasing to God. All this is wrong, for God himself is the Author of creation and what He made, He made very good. Paul's words regarding the mortifying of the flesh were intended to teach and inculcate quite another truth, one that was perhaps best enshrined in the words *"except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."* (John 12. 24). The Church of this Age is called to suffer and die in Christ that, like him, they may be sown for the bringing forth of fruit, new life, in the coming Age amongst mankind. Lights in the world, bread of life, salt of the earth, every Scriptural illustration we have shows the intimate contact of the Christian with the world in which he lives, and yet his essential separateness from it.

It is thus he learns to love mercy. Goodness,

benevolence, kindness, cannot be attained by reading about them in a book—even though that book be the Bible. They are essentially practical virtues, and a man becomes a good man, a kind man, a benevolent man, only by means of his dealings with his fellows. To love mercy therefore implies a desire to practise mercy and this in turn leads to a way of life which finds scope for the practice of the desire. There is so much opportunity for the exercise of goodness to-day and it is not limited to those possessing money or outstanding talents. The Christian commission to “bind up the broken-hearted” is one aspect of “loving mercy”. One may very conceivably do more good to a sad soul by giving assurance of the coming Kingdom than by a present of money. Sympathy and friendly compassion may upon occasion be more sorely needed than food or clothing. The word in season, the helping hand, the friendly endeavour to lighten a burden whether in a spiritual or material connection are evidences of the attitude that God requires of us, that we “love mercy”.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God” says James “is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”. Once again there is that intimate association with practical Christian endeavour toward the distressed of this world and separateness from the world that is the hall-mark of the instructed Christian. Moving among these people, ministering to their distresses, but not of them, professing and manifesting a citizenship which is not of this earth, this is experience which will stand us in good stead when the time comes to turn the “pure language” to all people and teach them to call upon the name of the Lord with one consent.

These things are duties toward man. We have also, and of supreme importance, our duty toward God. “Walk humbly with thy God” said Balaam. Can we amplify his words to include that life of

reverence and worship which must be ours if we would eventually see his face? “He that abideth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” said the Psalmist. All our right doing and goodness will avail us nothing if it is not lived in “reverence and godly fear”. Above all our outward activities we must place the importance of the inner life, that life which finds its all in complete consecration and submission to God. Our behaviour towards our fellows will bring us rich lessons of experience that are necessary to our future work, but our dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will show us the Divine character and transform our minds and hearts into a copy likeness of his Son. Unless we have attained that likeness all the benefit of life’s experiences will have been lost so far as our High Calling is concerned. Many there are, claiming with justice to have performed many wonderful works in his name, who will nevertheless be rejected from among the number of the triumphant Church. We must diligently follow after those things which will increase our perception of the inward life of the Spirit if we would truly come to know as well as worship God in spirit and in truth.

The active, businesslike, “practical” Christian often finds this a hard thing. There is so much to be done in active service, so many opportunities of preaching the message, so much of distress and suffering to be relieved, and he, by nature and temperament well fitted to undertake such labours, is very apt to give insufficient time and thought to that calm, quiet, leisurely communion with God in the things of the spirit that comes so much more easily to less active souls. He does not realise his loss, until, it may be, the failure of his activities, or disappointment at their outcome, awakens him to realisation of the things he is missing. In all our activities let us always leave room for walking “humbly with God”.

HOPE

There is a palm, called the Comb Spine palm, which grows in the midst of dense forests. It has a crown of leaves so heavy that the slender trunk is wholly unequal to the task of supporting it. Yet by a beautiful provision the tree is enabled to stand erect and grow upwards. A stem, or continuation of the trunk, rises to a considerable height through the leafy plume that generally terminates the growth of other palm-trees. This stem is furnished at the end with hooks or grappels, by which it lays hold upon the giant branches of some overshadowing tree, and is thus supported and rendered stable. This anchor thrown on high entering within the leafy curtain of the growth above, keeps the palm from falling or being blown away.

Behold an image of the Christian’s hope! He, too, has a crown, “an exceeding great and eternal

weight of glory,” which his own feeble powers are not able to sustain. But just such a means of support as we have described has been given him. When heart and flesh fail, and his spirit sinks within him, he may reach the arm of a confident hope far above, and thus lay hold on the immutable promise of God. “Hope of salvation,” “hope in Christ,” a good hope through grace,” this steadies and strengthens the soul. A happy, steadfast expectation of eternal life proves to the child of God an unfailling stay. Anchors are generally cast below, but that of the Christian is thrown on high. Thus the Apostle says of those who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, “*which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*” (Heb. 6. 18-19). (Selected).

THE GIFT OF WISDOM

Discourse on an important theme

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

With the coming of Christ things changed for the better, as far as mankind was concerned. Now indeed, light has been shed on the Scriptures which are able to make one wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, justification. This could be described as the heavenly wisdom, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This wisdom, like faith, is a gift of God, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. But this gift of wisdom is different to many other gifts from God, inasmuch that before it may be enjoyed it is withheld from all but those who are prepared to ask for it. It is not like the sun that shines, the rain that falls, on just and unjust; not like the wonderful air we breathe, available for righteous and unrighteous; nor like the fruitful seasons providing food for saint and sinner. All these gifts are available freely, without money and without price, no charge made by the Giver; in fact one is compelled to accept them. The earth yieldeth her increase; there is good food and drink, good sense, sight, hearing, smelling, ours to use and enjoy, gifts already in our possession without asking for them. How we receive and employ those gifts is another story. If we employ them wisely, "this man is blessed in his deed." If we choose to employ them foolishly and find ourselves floundering it would not avail much to ask for added wisdom when all that is necessary is to correct foolish behaviour. But of this gift of wisdom, the subject of this discussion, there is a reservation attached to its possession. Of those for whom it has been reserved, each one is obliged to ask for it.

James sets it out—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not and it shall be given him." Those not needing any, along with those who have enough, do not ask. Automatically they exclude themselves from a rich heritage. People indifferent about gifts

seldom put them to good purpose. They stow them away in some out of the way place, out of sight. If wisdom is employed in the daily problems weightier trials will not seem so formidable. No trial can successfully be endured; no lesson can be learnt, without wisdom. "God giveth liberally," but not to all those who do ask. The motive for the request is considered, and if it is found selfishness would be served, "they ask amiss" and might well wonder why they do not receive.

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

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

No one could refer to Wisdom and not think of King Solomon. Universally acknowledged the wisest of Adam's sons, whence cometh this wisdom of his, thought of as being supernaturally

endowed? "To him that hath, more shall be given." A previous and, in this case, generous possession of wisdom being put to use qualifies for more. "He giveth wisdom unto the wise" (Dan. 2. 21), those wise enough to exercise what they already have. Most people would be familiar with some of the marvellously wise things done by Solomon. It would be very interesting to hear answers to the question, "What was the wisest thing Solomon ever did?" Our reply would be, when he requested the gift of wisdom above every other consideration. He wisely asked for "a wise and understanding heart, wisdom to govern this great people". He already had enough, as his request shows, of wisdom to value above everything, an increase of the same gift, to help him govern. God granted benefits Solomon had not asked for, wealth, power, length of days—all given without request. David had left untold wealth and materials for his son for a certain project. But how could David's will be executed without the gift of wisdom? Solomon was one who could truly and sincerely say "Amen" to Job's appraisal of the value of Wisdom. (Job 28. 12-19.)

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

good works can atone for indiscretion. "*Oh that God would speak and show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is.*"

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

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



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

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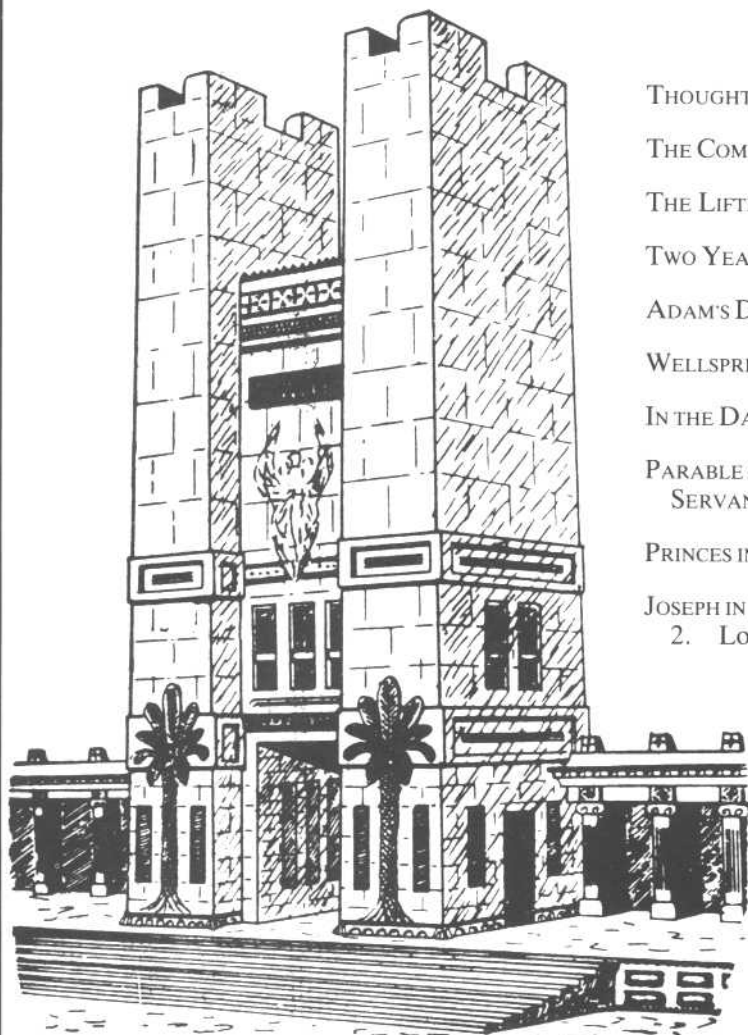
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed" (Psa. 2.2).

The noble words of the Second Psalm are not always given the attention they deserve. That they constitute a foreview of the world situation at the end of this Age is obvious from the reference to the Son receiving his power and commencing his reign over the nations. This is the time when, despite all the opposition and intransigence of the powers of this world, the Divine Lord from Heaven persuades earth's warring factions to recognise his supreme authority and the righteous administration of his kingdom upon earth. This is an event which will surely transpire, in the evening of human sovereignty in the world, the time of which it is said *"the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 11.15). The powers of this Age will not give up without a struggle; they will assemble themselves in battle array before the heavenly forces, but the weapons of Heaven are greater by far than all the weapons of man, and the forces of Heaven will prevail. The vision of Rev. 19, where the kings of the earth and their armies are gathered together to make war on the Rider on the white horse and his armies, who appear from the celestial world, is the splendid imagery of that struggle.

That conflict is imminent; let there be no doubt about that. The power of man to destroy both himself and the earth he inhabits is now within his grasp, and grave apprehension there is in many quarters that, whether by design or accident, and unless halted by a superior force, man will eventually exercise that power. God must intervene; God must, and God will. The many prophetic visions of the End Time are converging toward fulfilment. The rulers of humankind are marshalling their forces and moving their armies into position. *"The*

kings of the earth and of the whole world" says the Revelator (16.14) are gathered together to the battle of the great day of God almighty.

Recent events pinpoint the significance of that grim phrase. There is a tendency among many students of the prophetic word to water down the universality of this opposition to God and his Kingdom. Quite understandably, many Christians feel that their own country and countrymen are not so heinous in the sight of God as their country's political opponents. The hand of the Lord will fall more heavily upon them than upon us; we may even get into the Kingdom relatively unscathed! How history does repeat itself! The Jews of old felt exactly the same about the Gentiles; too wicked to live and the Lord would punish them and exalt his own people. But instead *"the kingdom of heaven is taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21.43). Still stand the words of the revealing angel *"the kings of the earth and of the whole world"*—there is no exception; the statement means the kings of the entire inhabited earth, and there is no compromise. That is why current events are of such moment. If two great powers, despite their differences, begin to find common cause, how long before all line up together in face of the approach from Heaven—and Revelation find its fulfilment in reality?

Gone from us

— ❁ —

Bro. F. Harris (Coventry)

— ❁ —

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

The Memorial. For the convenience of those who hold a Memorial service on the anniversary of our Lord's death, advice is given that the appropriate date this year is Sunday April 8, after 6.00 p.m.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

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

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

The outward expression of that unity is to be found in the Memorial of the Last Supper and the coming together from time to time in regular assembly for the simple sharing of bread and wine—a symbolic feast that at one and the same time expresses our one-ness with each other and our one-ness with the Lord. Whether that celebration be as often as once a week or as seldom as once a year it always symbolises, not only our acknowledgment of the saving power of our Lord's death, our acceptance to ourselves of his shed blood and sacrificed life, our association with him in the offering of life to the world in due time; not only all this, but also that kinship, that brotherhood, that oneness with each other as brethren in Christ, without which none of the other significance can be really appreciated by us or true of us. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, asks James, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? So the one that has not entered truly into living relationship with his brethren may by no means be in living relationship with Christ. His acceptance by and standing with Christ may be, and is, the result of an individual decision and based upon his personal justification by faith, but he can maintain that acceptance and standing only by becoming one of "the brethren", a fellow-member of the Body. He must enter and accept the communion of saints.

Paul chose a wonderful word to express this relationship, and he used it in a variety of connec-

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

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

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

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

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

This in turn led to a realistic understanding of their common participation in the sufferings of

Christ. There was no beclouding or confusing the plain issue by theological definitions of doubtful value and full of incipient sources of argument and misunderstanding. To these earnest, enthusiastic souls, participation in the sufferings of Christ was a sharing the life that He lived and enduring the same trials and distresses that came upon him in consequence of that way of life; and this participation was a very real thing to them. The history of early Christian persecution and martyrdom shows that. The ordeal of fire which so many of them went through and endured until death released them from their sufferings is too terrible to recount—historians have already described it in sufficient detail. Let it be realised that nothing but the one-ness of the Church in which all members suffered with one, and so the strength of all was given to one in the hour of need, could have enabled them thus to endure. Many in later times have wondered how those stoical souls withstood the fiendish cruelty of their pagan persecutors. The answer is that their strength was not of themselves, it was of the Body, and from him Who is the Head of that Body. And without the true unity of the Spirit the strength would not have been theirs. Paul knew this when he desired that he "might know . . . the *fellowship—communion—of his (Christ's) sufferings*" (Phil. 3. 10). He knew that in that common-sharing there resided a source of strength such as his own self-resolution could never give him. To the Corinthians he says "as ye are *partakers—common-sharers—of the sufferings* (both of Christ and of his disciples) so shall ye also be of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1. 7). That word "consolation" is full of significance here. It means the arrival of help at a time when it is needed (*paraklesis*—a being alongside to help). That is the effect of conscious sharing in the sufferings of one another and of our Master—it gives strength to withstand all that makes our Christian way difficult and arduous. There is then a "being alongside to help". What wonder, then, that Peter, in the calm maturity of his old age, bids his suffering brethren to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers—common-sharers—of Christ's sufferings*, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4. 13). And it is Peter who takes us to the highest level of this communion of saints, for in two eloquent Scriptures he relates it to the consummation of our glorious hope. In 2 Pet. 1. 4 he tells us that we shall be "*partakers—common-sharers—of the divine nature*" and in 1 Pet. 5. 1 that we shall be "*partakers—common-sharers—of the glory that shall be revealed*". The communion of saints is not only one of suffering, it is also one of glory. The fellowship that is begun here below in conditions of "weakness and much trembling" is to be continued forever in that

eternal kingdom where it will be expanded into the glorious fellowship of the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven.

Seeing then that we know these things, how ignoble and petty become those specious arguments which limit and restrict the unity which can exist between all who name the Name. We who have a glorious hope for mankind, a clear perception of the Divine Plan, and a noble tradition going back to Apostolic days, should we be one whit

behind those who in those same early times took their Lord at his word, and because He bade them "share together", brought that spirit of sharing into every phase and aspect of their fellowship, and in that joyful union found a strength and a power that in its outworking shook the pagan world until that world tottered and fell? If we in our day could by any means achieve a unity such as that, what man could foretell the magnitude of the blessing that would flow out from the "communion of saints"?

THE LIFTING UP OF JESUS

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12. 32).

God is a God of order. He works out his plan in a methodical way, finishing one stage before commencing another. This is seen in that famous passage in Acts, where James says that the first thing God did after the Ransom had been provided, was to visit the Gentiles to take out a people for his Name. Just before his death Jesus said: *"I have finished the work thou gavest me to do"*, and on the cross He said, *"It is finished"*. We have no difficulty in recognising that He meant one stage of the Father's Plan committed to him had been successfully brought to a finish, namely, the giving of himself for sin. This would have availed the world little if the Plan of God had stopped there; there are further stages to be worked out. The benefit of that redeeming sacrifice must be proclaimed by all men far and near. *"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"* (Rom. 10. 13-14; Acts 4. 12). If belief in Jesus is the only way to life, then it clearly follows that everyone, living and dead, must have an opportunity to know the way, else it cannot truly be said that Jesus gave his life a ransom for all.

The New Testament contains two statements of our Lord which are difficult to understand until one recognises the fact that one feature of God's plan must be worked out before another commences. Both are found in John's Gospel, and both of them speak of the lifting up of Jesus. The first is the well-known one when, early in his ministry, Jesus talked with Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler who went to him by night because he was afraid of others knowing of his interest in Jesus. To him Jesus said, referring to himself: *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"* (John 3. 14). The other passage, spoken to his disciples, occurs in the words of Jesus at the close of his ministry. *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (John 12. 32).

The first text indicates that God has provided a means of salvation, but that the onus of obtaining the same is put upon the one who sees himself smitten by sin and under sentence of death. He must do something himself if he is to obtain relief. The other text indicates something different, for it tells of an active work by Jesus which will result in his victory over all the forces which have hindered, and would hinder men from seeing him, and then obtaining those blessings which God has set in him.

These two words of Jesus illustrate the two phases of the programme which God purposed when He sent his Son into the world to be its Saviour. The two phases are distinct in character. Clearly the first passage tells of an opportunity provided to accept a favour set forth for those who seek it. This is voluntary in character. The second just as clearly indicates that a work is to be done, not primarily by man himself, but which begins outside man and apart from him, a work which shall draw him to Christ, that at least he may know and understand that He is God's appointed Saviour. Whereas the former phase is voluntary in character, this one is in a measure compulsory.

Jesus told Nicodemus why He came into the world. *"For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* For thousands of years the world had been under the rule of sin and death; millions had perished in that they had died without any hope of resurrection, and men would continue thus to perish unless God did something to stop the reign of sin. The illustration Jesus gave to Nicodemus is a graphic one. Nicodemus knew the story well, how in the wilderness shortly before they reached Canaan, their fathers were attacked by fiery serpents, whose bite resulted in burning inflammation and speedy death. That difficult people, then nearly at the borders of the Promised Land, had complained of God's provision for them, saying they would rather be in Egypt. The fact was that many of that multitude, who had been sentenced to wandering

in the wilderness some thirty-nine years before, had not yet died, and now God brought them into tests which demonstrated that they were still of the same disobedient and unbelieving spirit which they had manifested a generation earlier, and which brought upon them that sentence of death in the wilderness. God had said: "*As truly as I live, your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness . . . doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb and Joshua*".

The fiery serpents were means used to bring retribution, but, as the people cried out and expressed repentance, God, on the plea of Moses, instructed him to make a brasn serpent and set it on a pole. In the sunshine it would bear the appearance of fire, and He said that whoever looked on the serpent should live. As they looked upon it they were reminded of their sin. It was only by an acknowledgement of their sin that they could gain freedom from the curse which had come upon them. They looked and lived. "*When he beheld the serpent of brass he lived*" (Numbers 21: 9). It is interesting to note that the word "beheld" has a sense of, not a casual glance, but a purposeful set gaze, a look of expectancy, a look of faith.

It was to this incident that Jesus referred when He said to Nicodemus: "*Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*". There could be no special point in his referring to the lifting up of the serpent if He meant only the fact of his being put to death on a cross; evidently it was his intention to show that in his lifting up He, too, should be as one bearing sin. It is a graphic picture, but it tells as perhaps no other illustration could, not only of the fact of the ransom price being provided, but that the poison of sin can be eradicated, and the sufferer completely healed. God has provided not only for the forgiveness of the sinner, but also for the breaking of its power in the lives of those who accept the salvation He has provided in his Son. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.*" This text tells of the cost to God of his provision for human salvation. The Bible explains quite simply that the love of God was so great for mankind that He gave his Son, for its salvation. The sacrifice was made greater by reason of the shameful death which was necessary, and the cost to the Son was great too, for He gave that we through his poverty might be rich. He had been loyal to his task and faithful and trustful throughout. "I do always those things which please him" was his outspoken conviction. Why, then, should He go out of this life

with such a stigma upon him? Branded as a sinner, would it not appear that Satan had won the contest and secured a notable triumph in his death? He had come to show how sin and death could be conquered, and should He, the would-be conqueror, succumb as a victim just as millions of the human race had done before him? But so it was to be. Jesus, in the manner of his death, was to be made to appear as if He were a sinner.

After his resurrection the proclamation that God had made him a Prince and a Saviour was made by the Apostles, and since then thousands have heard something of his righteousness, that the power of sin would be broken, and all the forces of evil, which had kept men down, would be restrained, and liberty to serve God and find eternal life would be possible. He knew, too, that He would be chosen of the Father to reveal unto men the beauty and grace of his character, but with this difference—that whereas now the spiritual perception of most men was so dulled by the poison of sin that understanding was impossible—then the blinded eyes should see, faculties so long blunted by human frailty would be awakened to full power. Not only a handful of Gentiles would be enquiring for him, but the whole Gentile world would be drawn to him, and He teach them of the love of God for all men, for all the power of the Kingdom would be in his hands. Meanwhile, if it was his Father's will, Jesus was content to declare his message to the few. Now was the opportunity for him who hated his life in this world to secure the life eternal: "*If any man serve me let him follow me, and where I am there shall my servant be*". While it was his Father's good pleasure that the door of opportunity should remain open, He must wait until his day should come to be lifted up in power and glory and establish his Kingdom.

Thus it is seen that the two texts considered tell of two ages during which the Gospel is preached. The first occupies the time between the two Advents, when God is drawing a people to himself by the message of his love, and when He causes those who come to him to behold his beloved Son crucified, and tells them of the resurrection and the power of salvation which now is to be realised in him. The second is the time of Christ's reign, spoken of as the Millennial reign, because the Bible says it will last a thousand years. It is when the Kingdom of Jesus is fully established that the turmoil of the present trouble will cease, and there will be a drawing to righteousness which will prove to be the world's real hope and its salvation.

Man's province in the Universe is not to create, but by thought and labour to combine and direct the forces that already exist and convert them into different forms for new purposes.

Great Creator, help me to rise above pettiness and the small things which irritate, and turn my eyes to thee, realising anew the greatness of thy might and the wonder of the universe which is for ever in thy control.

TWO YEARS IN ROME

No. 20 in a series of
stories of St. Paul

"The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the roots of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever; yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." (Jonah 2. 5-6).

That eloquent thanksgiving by the Hebrew prophet Jonah after his deliverance from this same sea must have echoed in Paul's mind upon finding that he and all with him were safe on dry land—dry only in a relative sense for apparently the rain was beating down remorselessly, and in the early morning it was biting cold. So says St. Luke who, like the rest, stood there dripping wet after scrambling up from the sea. The wind blew strongly and the great waves came rolling up the beach; out in the channel the ship from which they had escaped was rapidly breaking up. They were safe, but they needed warmth, shelter and food.

Their plight did not go unobserved. The inhabitants of the island quickly came to their aid. *"The barbarous people showed us no little kindness"* continues Luke *"for they kindled a fire and received us, every one"* (ch. 28. 2). The term "barbarian" as used by the Greeks did not indicate savages, as would be denoted by English usage. It was a word describing any people outside their normal circle of contacts in the Roman and Egyptian worlds, without reference to the stage of culture or civilisation achieved. The Maltese of that day were descendants of the Phoenicians and just as cultured as the Greeks and Romans. They were friendly too, and set about doing something practical for these shipwrecked mariners so unceremoniously introduced to their country. Probably some kind of encampment was set up to house the two hundred and seventy-six, and a great fire made around which the shivering men could dry themselves and take stock of the position.

Julius, the centurion, soon turned his official position as a military officer to good account. Not far away was the residence of the Governor of the island, one Publius. Paul and his fellows, Luke and Aristarchus, together no doubt with Julius and his senior men, were entertained at the house of Publius for three days, probably whilst suitable permanent lodgings were being found. This visit heralded a short season notable for the last recorded exercise of miraculous power by St. Paul and therefore the last to be noted in the New Testament. It is rather remarkable that when, later on in Paul's life, there were two instances of close personal friends and valued fellow-workers, Onesiphorus of Colosse and Trophimus of Ephesus, being seriously ill the Apostle did not use this power to heal them; it is almost as if its exercise

was strictly reserved for purposes connected with the witness of the Gospel to unbelievers and not for the converted. At any rate, when Paul found that the father of his host was lying sick of fever and dysentery—the "bloody flux" of the Authorised Version reflects the hazy knowledge of medical matters possessed by our seventeenth century translators; St. Luke uses the correct medical term—he lost no time in effecting a cure, and in consequence was soon besieged by suppliants from all over the island bringing their sick and diseased for healing.

It is not likely that any question of "faith-healing" in the modern sense of the term is involved here. The subjects of these cures were pagans, worshippers of Roman and Greek and Oriental gods and goddesses. No suggestion is made that they believed in Christ and by faith in the power of his Name were made whole. Paul prayed, and laid his hands on the sufferer, and the healing was effected. Any faith involved in the transaction was that of Paul himself. In this the proceeding differs from certain similar instances during the lifetime of Christ, when the suppliant was specifically told that if he had faith, then he could be healed. In at least one notable instance the Lord could do no mighty works because of unbelief. When Peter healed the lame man in the Temple porch he said *"His Name through faith in his Name hath made this man strong"* (Acts 3. 16), but here in Malta there was nothing of that, only the belief that Paul possessed a marvellous power of healing. The account is certainly literally true; Luke is too sober a historian to embellish whatever happened with imaginary details, and as a physician he must definitely have known whether these were genuine cures or not. His professional outlook would lead him more likely to tone down the record to a sober note of the facts. One remembers that when John Mark wrote of the afflicted woman who had *"suffered many things of many physicians and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse"* (Mark 5. 26), Luke, in his own account written a decade or so later, feeling perhaps that Mark had rather overstated the case, merely remarked tersely that she was incurable. The presence of Luke as a witness here is therefore a reliable guarantee that Paul did call upon Divine power and that Divine power was exerted to heal.

To what extent that demonstration advanced the Christian faith in Malta is not recorded and is unknown, but there is every reason to surmise that at least a number of those concerned, or of the onlookers, were led to become Christians in consequence of what they witnessed, and that when

Paul sailed away from the island he left behind him a nucleus which afterwards played their part in furthering the cause of Christ in the world.

Thus passed three months; with the approach of February the seas became safer for sailing and Julius began to look around for a means of getting away. He found another Alexandrian cornship which, more prudent than the ill-fated one that nearly cost them their lives, had laid up for the winter at Malta and was now preparing to resume its voyage to Rome. A passage for the legionaries and their prisoners, and for Paul's companions, was soon arranged—the crew of the wrecked vessel probably remained at Malta until they could find a means of returning to Egypt and home—and before long the travellers were on the last stage of their journey. Rome was now only four hundred miles away and the weather was propitious. The vessel called first at Syracuse in Sicily, across the Straits to Rhegium (modern Reggio) and a day later to Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) near Naples.

Here Julius landed his party with the intention of completing the remaining hundred and forty miles to Rome by road. Perhaps the ship itself was going no farther. In this seaside town, says Luke *"we found brethren and were desired to stay with them seven days, and so we went toward Rome"*. Christianity was already well established in Italy if this little place, so far from Rome, possessed a company of believers. The centurion Julius must have been a very accommodating man to wait here a week with his other prisoners purely for Paul's benefit. It is quite likely that he held the Apostle in some esteem, realising that he and his men owed their lives to him; it is evident that Paul was not regarded by the authorities as an ordinary prisoner and Julius probably had orders to treat him with consideration. So for seven days the little party of missionaries enjoyed a brief season of fellowship with their fellow-Christians at Puteoli amid the scenic loveliness of the most beautiful part of Italy. Much of that loveliness was to be destroyed eighteen years later when the sleeping volcano Vesuvius, just across the bay, awoke in fury and blotted out the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, less than twenty miles distant. In both these towns, since their excavation in modern times, there has been found evidence of Christian worship, so that Paul might well have met believers from these places also during that short stay.

The week passed all too quickly; the travellers took their leave of the brethren and set out on the road with their escort. Twenty miles farther on the party reached the Appian Way, the main highway traversing the length of Italy and ending at the capital. It is not likely that they walked; they were probably provided with horses or asses on which to ride. The legionaries marched on foot, but they

were accustomed to that. The journey must have occupied at least a week or ten days. Forty-three miles from the city, at the village of Appii Forum, they were met by a party of Christians from Rome who had heard of the Apostle's approach and had come this distance to welcome him. Ten miles farther, at another village called Tres Tabernae (the "Three Taverns" of Acts 28. 15) they were met by another contingent *"whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage"*. It must have been with quickening interest that the Apostle strained his eyes for his first sight of the city about which he had heard so much. This was Rome, the capital of the world and the mistress of all nations. This was the city whose iron rule had imposed a Roman peace upon all the earth and made it possible for Christianity to spread in the way it did. Paul had a certain admiration for Roman rule and administration. His words in Romans 13 and 1 Tim. 2 illustrate the importance he placed upon the position of the "powers that be" in the Divine scheme of things. These "powers that be", he insists, are ordained by God and those who resist them are resisting the ordinance of God. He counselled that in the Christian services prayer should be offered for kings and all who are in authority, *"that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all goodness and honesty"*. It must be realised that Paul wrote these words at a time when Christianity was not subject to persecution. Later on the position was decidedly different, and by the time the Book of Revelation was written, ten years or so later, Rome had become synonymous with Babylon, the persecutor of the saints and an object of Divine judgment soon to come.

Rome in Paul's day was a city of four million inhabitants, covering an area about two and a half miles square. It was therefore just about the size of a modern English city such as Leicester. Although adorned with many magnificent public buildings and monuments, temples and palaces, and a greater proportion of parks and open spaces than most English cities, it nevertheless consisted, to a great degree, of tall multi-storey tenement buildings in which the working classes and the poor lived in crowded and insanitary conditions. At first Paul passed through the outer suburbs, containing the better class houses and villas of the wealthy. Then he came to the poorer quarters, blocks of flats, five and six stories high, teeming with occupants. Finally he entered the centre of the city where were concentrated government buildings and the palaces of the Cæsars.

Here the journey ended. Somewhere near the Forum, the centre of Rome and the centre of the world, the little party entered the barracks of the Prætorian Guard, and the centurion Julius handed over his prisoners. Before entering, Paul might

have set eyes on the *Miliarium Aureum*, a tall column marking the centre of the city and having engraved on its sides the names and distances of the distant cities to which roads radiated from Rome. Jerusalem appeared there as the capital of Judea; Paul might also have noticed another name which was also there, one not so familiar to him, Londinium, the commercial capital of a far distant province called Britain. He may have noticed it; he could not have known that many centuries later that same city of Londinium was to possess a great cathedral of the Christian faith bearing his own name—St. Paul's Cathedral!

Temporarily, he was parted from Luke and Aristarchus, and those two faithful friends went off to find lodgings in the city. It is almost certain that the Christians who had come out to meet them would accompany them back to this point so that the two were not likely to have any difficulty in finding an abiding-place. And it was not long before Paul was reunited with them. The nature of the charge against him did not demand confinement in prison and he was allowed a measure of freedom. He was not to leave Rome but he could make his own arrangements for a place to live and conduct himself as he pleased, the only stipulation being that he must be constantly under the surveillance of a legionary who would remain with him day and night. His occasional references to his chains at this time has given rise to the assumption that he was chained to this soldier. This is possible but it might well be that the reference is metaphorical, and that he was merely not at liberty to be out of his guard's sight.

It must have been the first time for many long years that Paul had a house in which to live. He had been more or less constantly on the move from place to place; now he was perforce compelled to rest. He had "his own hired house" in Rome (Acts 28. 30) perhaps sharing it with Luke and Aristarchus, the three of them working at their respective trades in order to support themselves. There was no knowing how long a time would elapse before his case would come up for trial; in the meantime he could realise his long cherished dream of preaching Christ in Rome.

Three days after thus settling in, Paul called a conference of the leading Jews. This does not imply that he ignored the Christian community in the city nor that they were not already well known to the Jewish colony. The fact that Paul was a Pharisee made him unique among the Christians; it gave him a standing in the eyes of orthodox Jews which no other Christian in Rome possessed. The Jews were prepared to come to him and enter into discussion. Perhaps Paul felt that in the liberal atmosphere of Rome he could expect a more tolerant and dispassionate examination of his claims for

the Gospel than could be had in fiercely nationalistic Jerusalem. He certainly had a good hearing. They came to him without prejudice or antagonism and were anxious to know what he had to say, remarking only that there was a general prejudice against the Christians among Jews everywhere. It is apparent that they welcomed this opportunity of hearing an authoritative exposition from the most famous Christian apologist of the day. From morning until evening Paul talked to them, "*persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the prophets . . . and some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not*".

So far as can be discerned, this was the last time Paul tried to convert his own people. With the close of the Book of Acts at this point we are dependent on stray allusions in the Epistles for information as to his future activities, but it does seem as if from now onward he devoted himself entirely to the Gentiles. That is in keeping with his pronouncement as the disagreeing Jews departed from his house. "*Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it*". Christianity was now spreading like wildfire throughout the Roman empire and eastward into Asia. Christian communities existed in countries so far apart as Britain in the west and the north-west of India in the east. No one really knows how the Gospel spread so quickly; there is not much doubt that many Roman soldiers became Christians and carried the faith with them as they were moved from place to place. The activities of the twelve Apostles, apart from those of Peter and Paul, are only vaguely known but it is fairly certain that several of them were as active in the lands east of Judea as Peter and Paul are known to have been in the west, but there was no St. Luke with them to act as chronicler and historian. By one means and another during the years between the Crucifixion in A.D. 33 and Paul's arrival at Rome in A.D. 60 the Gospel had penetrated every part of the Empire and quite a few places outside. The bigoted refusal of orthodox Jewry to recognise this universal appeal of the Gospel, that God is the God of Gentile as well as Jew, was still reflected in the thinking of most Jewish Christians and in consequence the purely native churches in Judea and Galilee were either stationary or retrogressing. The Jewish rebellion of A.D. 67-70 which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the depopulation of all Judea virtually extinguished hope of further missionary work from that centre and although the Jerusalem church reformed after the catastrophe the flaming torch had left them for ever. As the years went by those native Jewish churches dwindled until there was nothing left. Words spoken by Jesus half a

century previously had become burningly true, "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof".

This is where St. Luke concludes his narrative. St. Paul, dwelling two years in Rome in his own rented house, under constant guard but free to preach and teach as he saw fit, received all who came in to him. Most of those who came were Gentiles—Romans, Greeks and men and women of all nations who for one reason or another had business in Rome. The Christian companies in the city were growing in numbers and must have owed much to Paul's continued fellowship and ministry. During this period he wrote what are called the

Pastoral Epistles, to the Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and that to Philemon. He received visits from some of his old friends from Asia—Epaphroditus, Tychicus, Demas, Timothy, John Mark—and confident of release when he was called to trial, laid plans for the future. The indomitable spirit of the Apostle refused to consider any relaxation from service while any remained in the world to whom the Gospel had not been preached. The Book of Acts concludes with this remarkable man still at work "preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him". (To be continued)

ADAM'S DAUGHTERS *A Digression*

This short note responds to the request of one reader for information regarding a subject to which reference was made in his local newspaper. The cutting which is before the writer makes a surprising and altogether inaccurate statement, namely, that "the bishops of the Church have cut various books out of the Bible which they for some reason or other did not like . . . One of the books thus taken out is the Book of Jubilees." The extract goes on to say that the Book of Jubilees supplements the Bible record by giving the names of Adam's daughters and the solution of that age-old problem "Where did Cain get his wife?"

* * * *

The "Book of Jubilees" is a work that is thought to have been composed by some pious Jew in the time between the return from the Captivity and the First Advent. It is not part, and never was part, of the Bible. It is one of the numerous "apocryphal" works which were produced at that and subsequent times, based on Bible narratives amplified with legendary material. The book is interesting and useful to the research student but has no Divine authority and stands on the same level as many other literary works produced by godly men.

The book was apparently originally written in Hebrew and translated into Greek a century or so later. It professes to be the account of a Divine revelation to Moses comprising a history of mankind from Creation to Exodus, with a "dating" system expressed in jubilee periods of forty-nine years each, whence the title of the book. The account follows that of Genesis but is embellished by much material gathered from Jewish traditions. It has been observed by scholars that the source from which "Jubilees" apparently takes its information points to a Hebrew original midway between the Masoretic text, which forms the basis of our Authorised Version, and the Septuagint, which fact sometimes renders "Jubilees" useful in considering difficult Old Testament texts. This however is likely to be more of interest to the student than the general reader.

According to the Book of Jubilees Adam had twelve sons and two daughters. Cain is said to have been born sixty-seven years after the Fall, followed by Abel seven years later, and Eve's first daughter, Awan, seven years after that. It goes on to say that the murder of Abel by Cain was ninety-nine years after the Fall, Seth was born in the year 130 and the second daughter, Azura, in 137. Eve subsequently bore nine more sons. Cain married his sister Awan in 193 and Seth married Azura in 228. These figures would imply that Cain was 32 and Abel 25 at the time of the tragedy, that Cain was 126 and his wife 112 at their marriage, and Seth 98 when he married his younger sister, all of which almost certainly has its origin in the fertile imagination of zealous Bible students in very ancient times anxious to clothe the brief accounts of Scripture with additional details explanatory of questions that are still propounded to-day.

If the Genesis story of our first parents is literally true then obviously both Cain and Seth—and probably other of Adam's sons—did take their sisters to wife. In those early days, with human physique so near its primeval perfection, there would not be the biological objection that does obtain now. In fact it seems from Jewish tradition that such unions were normal up to the time of the Flood and it is clear from the Scriptures that the marriage of blood relatives was not unusual in the days of Abraham, which is halfway between Eden and the present time. None need decry the accuracy of the Eden story on this account therefore.

Gen. 5. 4 tells us that after the birth of Seth Adam "lived eight hundred years and begat sons and daughters". The traditions of the Book of Jubilees, therefore—apart from the fairly obviously "manufactured" dates—rest upon reasonable grounds and need not be dismissed completely. They represent the conclusions of some long since departed student on what was the probable general outline of happenings in the far-off days with which he was dealing.

THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE

*Discussion on
basic principle*

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

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

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

A good many in this modern age think otherwise. Failure either to believe in the existence of a supreme Creator or to comprehend the essential relation that must exist between the Creator and his creatures leads them to enquire elsewhere for the origin of life. A goodly number of biologists and other research workers are trying very hard to find the answer. Unfortunately, for them, they have not much to go upon, for all that is available for study is the finished article and the only book which so much as claims to furnish the information they seek has to be rejected by them on principle. So the biologists have been very busy, especially in quite recent years, separating bodies into cells and cells into molecules and molecules into atoms to find out, if they can, at what point life can be said to start. Not surprisingly, they have come up with some remarkable discoveries. Thus in 1953 it was found that by exposing a mixture of water, ammonia and methane to ultra-violet light some of the basic constituents of the cells comprising animal bodies were produced. Much construction of theories aimed at explaining how such basic constituents could have come together in the form of living organisms able to grow and reproduce themselves has taken place but when all is said and done it remains that the investigators have only discovered or produced the material structure in which life is manifested; how life got into it or how

life originated or what it is no man knows. There is a fundamental difference between tracing out the origin of living creatures and the origin of life. So there is considerable discussion now going on as to whether life began as a chemical reaction between non-living matter and the surrounding environment, the sunlight, the air, the water and so on, or is the result of "seeds" or "spores" of life reaching the earth from outer space and entering into combination with elementary substances and so producing the first living things. In either case the origin of life remains unknown.

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

The New Testament presents the person of Jesus Christ as the means by which God is manifest to man, and the means by which He imparts life to man. The writer to the Hebrews describes Christ as the effulgence of God's glory and the delineation of his being (Heb. 1. 3). We finite creatures, with our limitations, can see the Father only when we look at the Son; *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (Jno. 14. 9). It follows then that what we receive from the Father comes to us through the Son. That is why Jesus taught that life, vital life, eternal life, can only come through him and be attained by acceptance of him. There is no other way and no other channel. The Gospel of John stresses this in a variety of incidents and sayings all the way from chapter 3 to chapter 6. The first Epistle of John continues in the same strain. *"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life"* (1 John 5. 12). *"The gift of God"* says St. Paul *"is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6. 23).

The patriarchs of Old Testament times had a simpler and more material idea of God and of course the person of Christ was not revealed to them, but they, many of them, had grasped this

fundamental principle, that life is of God. The Old Testament presentation of God giving life to man by breathing his Spirit into man's frame is literally accurate even if intended metaphorically. In the story of man's creation, God "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul*" (Gen. 2. 7). The necessity of the continual sustaining of that life by the power of the Almighty is recognised. "*The dust*" says the Preacher "*shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*" (Eccl. 12. 7). That principle obtains with the lower creation also. "*Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*" (Psa. 104. 29-50).

The New Testament recognises these two aspects of life—life as it can be when lived eternally in union with God and life as it is manifested temporarily in an earthly body—by its choice of descriptive words. Two Greek terms are used consistently throughout the New Testament. Life that is associated with an animal or terrestrial being, life in a fleshly body, is *psuche*. This word occurs some hundred times and is rendered sometimes "life" and sometimes "soul". The life which terminates when the body dies is *psuche*, a life that comes from God but is dependent upon the terrestrial organism to be conscious of itself and to find expression in its environment. That is why it is so often explained that the "soul" is the combination of the spirit of life with the earthly body; that is clear from the very beginning of things when "*man became a living soul*". St. Paul uses the same word in 1 Cor. 15 when contrasting the two states of life of which we know, the terrestrial and the celestial. He says "*there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body*" where *psuche* is the word rendered "natural". But the life of man as we know it is only a shadow of the real thing. The life which comes to one who has entered into union with God through Christ, the vital force which so often in the Scriptures is called "eternal life", the life of the everlasting future which awaits all who eventually find their place in the Divine purposes, is *Zoe*, life in all its fulness and with all its possibilities. *Zoe* occurs about a hundred and thirty times and in only about seven instances can it be made to apply to the earthly life animating the terrestrial body. All those Scriptures which speak of life as inherent in Christ, as coming to the believer through him, as awaiting the faithful at the end of their pilgrimage, all these employ *Zoe*. In perhaps no clearer fashion could the Scriptures indicate the profound difference that exists between life as it now is to mortal man and life as it can be—will be—when man has entered into the fulness of his destiny, and yet preserve intact the fact that the origin of all life is in

God.

So, all unknowingly, the advocates of what is called panspermia, the scientific theory that there are eternal seeds of life winging their way throughout the vast distances of space ultimately to fuse with non-living matter on earth and so give rise to living creatures, are not so very far from the mark once it is accepted that the power behind that continually pulsating life is God. The Greek philosopher Anaxogorus first suggested this theory in the 5th century B.C. and it has been revived in modern times now that men are bringing all their recently acquired knowledge to bear on the problem of life. But the Bible had the truth of the matter long before Anaxogorus, a truth which, if accepted, solves all the problems of the biologists, problems which those of them who are honest freely admit do exist. As, for instance, does Prof. J. D. Bernal in his book ("*The Origin of Life*" 1967) wherein, speaking as a convinced believer in evolution, he says "*the problem remains as to how did the first organism know how to make itself?*" and poses the question "*how, from a set of fairly simple chemical substances, can the whole of the complete reproductory metabolic mechanism be evolved without the benefit of any preformed structure?*" by which he means how could a complete living creature with all its wonderful powers evolve itself from the basic dead elements when there was no existing pattern to point the way. To which question he returns his own answer; "*this is the major unsolved question of the origin of life*".

Perhaps the glowing words of David in Psa. 139. 14-16 form the best commentary upon that rather despondent remark. It is not likely that David the shepherd-boy knew much about the origin of life but not much doubt that he was used as an agent of the Holy Spirit to express things which he himself would understand only in part. "*I will thank thee therefore that I am so fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works and that thou knowest right well. My being was not concealed from thee when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. My undeveloped substance did thy eyes see, and in thy book were all of these written—the days that were formed for me when as yet there were none of them.*" It is fairly evident that David was speaking representatively for man in general in this passage; this is a description of the forming of man, the handiwork of God. There is an atmosphere of gradual development as the words run their course; one might easily understand an evolutionist seeing in them a picture of the slow development of the human frame from more elementary forms of life. At the same time it could also quite reasonably be said that here is an expanded version of the story told briefly in one sentence in Genesis: "*the Lord*

God made man of the dust of the ground". The important thing to notice here is that man is the workmanship of God; this terrestrial body of which nearly ninety-nine per cent consists of three elements only, carbon, oxygen and hydrogen, was put together by the incomprehensible power of the Holy Spirit to become the vehicle of Divinely bestowed life in a world specifically designed to meet its needs and aspirations. And the pre-existence of a Divine pattern for man before any action was taken to execute the work is implicit in the passage. "*My being was not concealed from thee when I was being made*"; God saw the finished product before one step in the process had begun. "*My undeveloped substance did thy eyes see*"—the Hebrew word *golem* which appears only here in all the O.T. means, according to Gesenius, "rude or unformed matter, not yet wrought, as of parts not yet unfolded or developed". There is something here that runs parallel with the condition described in Genesis 1 when the earth itself was unformed and

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

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

"IN THE DAYS OF THESE KINGS"

Enquiry into a well-known text

"*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*" (Dan. 2. 44).

The dream of the great image and the prophet Daniel's interpretation, as recorded in the second chapter of Daniel, is very familiar to all students of Bible prophecy. This forty-fourth verse is the focal point of the prophecy; the stone cut out of the mountain which first struck the feet of the image and reduced the whole structure to powder, and afterwards became a great mountain that filled the whole earth, is a symbol of the Kingdom of God which first destroys all man-made systems of government and then takes their place as the long-promised earthly kingdom of Messiah under whose beneficent reign the power of evil is finally to be broken and all nations of the earth be blessed.

There is one element in this verse which is sometimes the cause of misunderstanding. "*In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom*" were the words of Daniel, inspired, we may be sure, by the Holy Spirit and therefore words whose veracity and importance cannot be minimised. On the basis of this expression it has been argued by some that before the present age comes to its end, and whilst the great powers of earth pictured by the four metals of the image are still in active operation, the Kingdom of the next Age will be established in power, in some sense, so

that it may be truly said that the Kingdom has been set up and the work of Christ begun while as yet the Kingdoms of this world retain their own power. Since it is perfectly evident that the Millennial kingdom has not been established in an outwardly and physically manifest sense and that Satan is still without any doubt the god of this world the suggestion is made that the Kingdom is set in power in the "heavens"—the sphere of spiritual control—of the earth, and that this meets the requirements of the statement in Dan. 2. 44.

This short note will endeavour to put forward a much more logical and easy-to-grasp explanation. Let it be noted that Daniel did not say the kingdom would be set up in Millennial splendour and power "in the days of these kings"; only that it would be "set up". In the vision itself the stone did not become a great mountain which filled the whole earth until after it had overthrown the image and scattered the residue until nothing of it was left. The Book of Revelation makes it clear that the enemies of the kingdom must be overthrown before the reign of the saints can commence, and the whole of the New Testament bears confirmatory witness. There is no sense in which the Church reigns in glory and power whilst still in the flesh, and it is unthinkable to conceive our Lord commencing his reign without his bride by His side. The wedding feast must precede the shining forth of the saints in the Kingdom of their Father.

The key to Daniel's words lies in Matt. 12. 28 "*If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you*" and even more

definitely in Luke 16. 16 "*The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*". The Kingdom is dual in its nature; it has an earthly aspect and an heavenly aspect. The earthly aspect is not yet established; it will be so when the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ has reached that phase in which it is openly manifest to all men and the rulership of the world has passed into the hands of his representatives. The heavenly aspect commenced at the First Advent, with the preaching of the Kingdom and the "bringing of life and immortality to light through the gospel" which was characteristic of that Advent.

The more spectacular establishment of the earthly Kingdom at the end of the Gospel Age has tended to overshadow the no less important—in fact much more important—introduction of the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom at the beginning of the Age. The burden of the message preached by Jesus and the Apostles was "Repent—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". Those who heard and responded were urged to come into the Kingdom there and then. The Apostle Paul in Col. 1. 13 plainly declares that we who are the Lord's consecrated followers have already been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Son. When the Pharisees in Luke 17. 21 demanded of Jesus a statement on when the Kingdom of God should come—and the kingdom they looked for was of course an outwardly manifest Kingdom of Israel in power over the nations—He told them that the Kingdom was not coming in an outwardly perceptible fashion; men would not point here, or there, to show their fellows the Kingdom in power, for said Jesus "the Kingdom of God is within you". It is well-known that one translation, the Emphatic Diaglott,

renders this phrase "God's royal majesty is among you" in order to avoid the implication that the Kingdom was in being there and then, but the variation is not justified. "*Basileia*" means kingdom, and never "king" or any substitute implying personality. The words in the A.V. accurately represent the Greek text and what Jesus meant the Pharisees to understand is clearly that in their looking for the Kingdom they were not to expect, *then*, an outward Kingdom but an inward one, in their own hearts and lives. It was their failure to appreciate his meaning which led them to miss the opportunity for which their whole nation had been trained during the previous fourteen hundred years.

When therefore the writer to the Hebrews exhorts us ". . . *wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably*" (Heb. 12. 28), he refers to a Kingdom which was a real thing even although it existed as yet only among the believers and in their hearts. Entrance into the "Covenant by sacrifice" has been entrance into the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God has truly been "set up" in the days of these kings" in the sense that God has called into his Covenant a body of men and women, the consecrated followers of Christ from Pentecost until now, who have been delivered from the power and authority of the god of this world and constituted members of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is true that each such disciple is in the position of being a kind of advance outpost of the new Kingdom in enemy territory, for we live our lives still in the midst of a world system which is opposed to the things for which we stand and with which we have little in common. But the work of the Kingdom is going on, in the hearts of those whom Jesus called "the children of the Kingdom".

The Daily Round

It is surprising when we come to reckon up the instances how often it has pleased God to come down into the daily rounds and daily lives of his people, to equip them or call them to his service and favour, not when they were secluding themselves for purposes of devotion, but while engaged in the common-place, every day duties of very humble callings. Moses received his call and commission by a Voice issuing from a burning bush while tending his father-in-law's sheep on the slopes of Mt. Horeb. Gideon, as he threshed out the wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, was greeted by the Angel of the Lord, and charged to deliver his people from the hand of their oppressors. David, the shepherd boy, attend ing the ewes, great with young, is called by God to

shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. Elisha, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, finds the mantle of Elijah thrown across his shoulders, thereby designating him to be prophet of the Lord in the room of Elijah. Even the shepherds on the hill sides of Judea, while watching over their flocks by night were blessed, above men, by the songs of the Heavenly Host, as they sang of the babe of Bethlehem. Peter and Andrew were casting a net, when Jesus walked by, and called them to be "fishers of men". Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, entering up the payment of tribute, when the Lord called him to apostleship. Within the narrow sphere of "the common round, the daily task," the Lord found his servants and equipped them for greater things.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Matt. 18, 21-35

It must have been after that breath-taking declaration of Jesus "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18, 11) that the train of thought was set up in Peter's mind which led to his asking that question about forgiveness. "*How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?*" (18, 21). Forgiveness was very much an alien thought to an orthodox Jew; the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth did not easily square with forgiveness of enemies or those who do injury to one. And the popular conception of the Son of Man was one that pictured him as coming in the clouds and tempest to execute judgment upon sinners, not to reclaim and forgive them. A Messiah who would punish and destroy the Gentiles and the rebellious, and exalt righteous Israel to everlasting felicity they could understand; one whose mission was to convert and reconcile the wayward and the sinful, to seek and find the lost ones, was a new kind of Messiah altogether and such ideas must inevitably have started new trains of thought in the disciples' minds. As usual, it was Peter the impetuous who put into words the question which probably came to all their minds. "*How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?*" Even then the range of forgiveness was to be narrow; they were perhaps prepared to tolerate forgiveness of their own brethren whilst as yet the idea of forgiving enemies was not entertained.

According to Matthew, the parable of the lost sheep was spoken at this time. Luke in his Gospel groups the three parables of the lost, the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the lost son (the prodigal son) together, but this does not necessarily demand that they were all spoken together. More likely they, and perhaps many others like them which have not been recorded, were spoken at different times in the Saviour's ministry. It may be that a fairly frequent repetition of this seeking and saving and forgiving aspect of Jesus' mission had given cause for enquiry in the minds of the disciples for some time past, and now, at last, it came out into the open. "*How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?*"

Jesus took advantage of the opportunity thus created. It was necessary that they come to understand this vital principle in the Divine purpose. The incident of the Samaritan villagers, upon whom they wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy them in the manner of Elijah of old time, showed how far they were from understanding the purpose of coming of Christ to earth. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" God had told their fathers in times gone by but

they had forgotten that. They were not really concerned with the Samaritans' conversion; only with revenge for the slight the villagers had offered the message of Jesus by rejecting his messengers. They still had much to learn. We ought to sympathise with them, for the lesson is even now only very imperfectly realised. Far too many Christians still think in terms of the punishment of the wicked rather than their conversion and reconciliation. Jesus, looking upon the serious questioning faces around him, knew that they were ripe for this advance in the knowledge of God and his ways.

First of all, a direct answer. "*I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.*" That came as a bit of a stunner. Peter had thought he was being pretty generous in going so far as seven successive acts of forgiveness. Jesus surpassed all expectation by naming a figure so fantastic in the circumstances that He might just as well have said "to infinity". At any rate, his ruling implied that forgiveness would become such a habit that they never would be able to stop forgiving, and that is most likely exactly the idea He intended to instil. Our God is a forgiving God, and we, to be like him, must be forgiving also. Having made that point, Jesus proceeded to tell them by means of this parable exactly why men should be forgiving in their relationships with each other in the affairs and the wrongs and enmities of daily life.

A certain king had the auditors in to bring his financial affairs up to date. During the course of the ensuing investigation it was found that a debt of ten thousand talents owed by one of his servants had been outstanding for considerably more than the statutory period. The unlucky man was summoned into the king's presence and immediate payment demanded. But the sum was so enormous that payment was impossible and the unfortunate debtor found that he, his wife and children, were to be sold into slavery and all his property confiscated in order to pay off at least part of the debt. This practice was a usual custom although in Israel the maximum period for which such unfortunates could be sold into slavery was six years. But the man's life was ruined; he would have to start all over again at the end of the six years. In utter despair he fell on his knees and begged for mercy. "*Have patience with me*" he pleaded, "*and I will pay thee all*". Whether he honestly expected ever to be in a position to clear off the debt is not stated and perhaps he knew within himself that the amount was far too great for him ever to be able to pay, but in his extremity he could do no other than beg for mercy.

His hope was realised beyond his wildest

dreams. "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Not only did he grant his plea for time to pay, but he went even further and in compassion for the man's hopeless position he forgave him the entire debt and the servant went out from the king's presence lightened for ever from a load which had burdened him for a long time in the past but would never burden him again.

The story was half told; the other half is of darker hue. As the rejoicing servant went on his way he met one of his fellows who owed him a hundred denarii ("pence" in the A.V.). For the moment all thought of his own recent marvellous deliverance vanished from his mind; here was someone who owed him some money and he wanted that money. Laying hold of the other man, he demanded payment. "Pay me that thou owest." This debtor, however, was in no better position to meet his obligations than his creditor had been a few minutes before, and he asked for time and patience on exactly the same terms that the other had so recently desired of the king.

This time, however, the creditor was not so accommodating. Heedless of the fate he had himself so narrowly escaped, he invoked the full rigour of the law and had his hapless comrade cast into prison, there to remain until he should find some means of paying his debt.

The force of the Saviour's simile in this parable can be better appreciated if the import of the sums of money involved is realised. The "talent" was equivalent to three thousand silver shekels, and the silver shekel had just about the same intrinsic value as the silver in an English half-crown (12½p). One talent would therefore be worth intrinsically about £375. The Roman denarius was, on the same basis, worth about three pence and a hundred denarii amounted to three pounds. But this is not what these amounts meant to men in our Lord's day. The value of money has steadily declined throughout human history so that both the prices of goods and rates of wages have continuously increased, a phenomenon that is not by any means confined to this post-war era nor to be blamed in its entirety upon the activities of the trade unions. Whilst the intrinsic value of the shekel has remained at about half a crown since the days of the early Sumerians the number of shekels, or halfcrowns, needed to buy any given quantity of goods, or to pay the rent, or to fill the wage-pocket, has increased to a fantastic degree. In the year 530 B.C., which would be just about the time of the death of Daniel in Babylon, one Nabu-nasir-aplu signed a contract to rent a house in Babylon from Itti-marduk-balatu for the sum of five shekels a year, equal to about 60p or one USA dollar. (Landlord, tenant and house alike are dust these

many years, but the contract remains, safely preserved in the British Museum). But since the wage rate for a working man at the time was about thirty shekels a year, the worthy Nabu-nasir-aplu spent one-sixth of his income on rent. Of course prices in Daniel's day were considered very high compared with earlier times—in the days of Abraham a house could be purchased outright for seven or eight shekels, but on the other hand a man was well paid if he got five shekels a year. The intriguing thing is that the relation between current wage rates and the cost of living seems to have remained the same from Abraham's time to now but perhaps only the financial kings of this world can explain why this should be so.

Applying this to our Lord's day and the parable in question we have to set this ten thousand talents and hundred denarii against the background of their value to the creditors and debtors in the story. A labouring man could earn six denarii in a week's work—these servants would probably enjoy about the same financial status. A hundred denarii was equivalent to four month's wages; the same class of labour in this post-war world would expect £2,500 in wages for that same period. On the same scale the ten thousand talents represents a truly fantastic sum. To buy what £375 would purchase at the First Advent would require the respectable sum of thirty thousand pounds to-day, so that the servant faced with a debt of ten thousand talents was in the same position as a man to-day who owes someone three hundred million pounds. No wonder he could not pay!

Why did Jesus name so fantastic a sum? No servant could ever in practice have accumulated so great a debt. "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all". If he paid over the whole of his wages every week, leaving nothing for himself, and the king charged no interest, it would still take him 400,000 years to pay off ten thousand talents. Was it that Jesus indulged in the Eastern passion for exaggeration in order to heighten the dramatic appeal of the story? That is not very likely. More probably this tremendous sum was deliberately chosen in order to suggest the truth underlying the parable. This debt is one that no man could ever possibly pay. He is completely helpless unless One greater than himself extends a full, free forgiveness and sets him on his way, freed from his burden. And that, of course, is the meaning of the parable. The servant owing ten thousand talents is every man, standing helpless before God, completely unable to do anything that will justify him in God's sight and earn for himself the title of God's freeman. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him" (Psa. 49. 8). All that the man can do is to ask for God's patience. "Have patience with me . . ." The publi-

can, standing afar off in the Temple, smote his breast and cried "God be merciful to me a sinner". There is the key, God is patient and will wait while the slightest gleam of hope remains that the man can be restored to his upright standing. "*Ye have heard of the patience of Job*" says James (5. 11) "*and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.*" So the provision is made; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". Repentance, conversion, reconciliation: and the ten thousand talents are remitted, the debt forgiven. "Being justified freely by his grace through the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3. 24).

But the repentance must be sincere, the conversion sincere. Faith must be demonstrated by works (Jas. 3. 17-24). The man who has received "so great salvation" must needs reflect towards others the glory that has come into his own life. Unless he in turn is prepared to extend mercy and forgiveness towards his fellows in everyday affairs, he has received the grace of God in vain, giving evidence that he has not properly understood or appreciated the purpose and the nature of his standing before God. So he loses that standing. In the story the freed servant threw his own debtor into prison, refusing to extend to him the mercy he himself had received, and the consequence was that the king rescinded his former decree, summoned the unforgiving one into his presence, reprov'd him, and then delivered him into that same prison into which the servant had cast his own debtor. In a moment he lost all, and his fate, because of the magnitude of his debt, was final, hopeless.

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." (18. 35). That is how Jesus concluded the parable. A strange—in some ways paradoxical—ending to a story devoted to extolling the virtues of forgiveness. Does this mean that even God will be unforgiving at the last in token of revenge for the unforgiving attitude of some recipients of his favour? Are we, following such a lead, to withdraw forgive-

ness from those of our fellows who show themselves unworthy of our forgiveness? Elucidation of the subject would become confusing if we allowed ourselves to argue on that basis. The truth is that we must set this statement against the fundamental principles on which God builds his purpose. The statement says nothing about God's forgiveness; it does say that the unforgiving man forfeits all the benefits he had attained by virtue of God's forgiveness, all that he could have had of salvation and life, and having forfeited that, loses all. God "*will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2. 4). He is "long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3. 9). "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways . . ." (Ezek. 33. 11). That is the Divine wish, but it is contingent upon the willing compliance of the subject, and although God is patient and long-suffering and will not let go of the sinner whilst the slightest chance remains that he can be converted from his ways, the time must come when in his infinite wisdom God sees that the "point of no return" has been passed. The man will not and will never respond to the Divine Spirit, he will not and will never assume his rightful place in Divine creation, and so, with infinite sorrow, we must be sure, God lets him go to his chosen fate. The principle upon which God has built creation, the principle upon which alone that creation can endure, decrees such consequence in the case of such an one. The door to life stood open, but the man refused to enter in. That is what Jesus meant when He said that God would do to the unforgiving man just what that man did his fellow. Divine forgiveness, reconciliation with God, eternal life, are for the repentant, and this man was not truly repentant. The everlasting continuance of creation requires that every man shall give as well as take. This man took, but he would not give, and so there was no place for him in all that God has made.

Is it not true that many times in the individual Christian life we find ourselves thanking God that we are not as other men. Does it not often happen that this wonderful separateness to God which we call consecration degenerates into a mere smug and self-satisfied separateness from the world. And should we not be very circumspect therefore and walk very humbly before our God, realising

that by nature we are "children of wrath" even as others?

* * *

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

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

PRINCES IN ALL THE EARTH

*A little-known factor
in the Divine Plan*

The reign of Christ and his Church over the earth during the Millennial Age is a well-known Scripture theme and there are many who look forward to the coming Day when the present social order gives place to that reign and its righteous Administration. But who are the Administrators? The destiny of dedicated Christians, to be with and as their Lord in His other-worldly glory, implies that their home and "base", so to speak, will be in the celestial world even though during the duration of the Millennial Age they will have much to do with this earth with the evangelising and conversion of the world. That leaves open a place upon earth for some who might be termed resident Administrators, earthly representatives of the celestial powers, men and perhaps women of such proved sterling worth that they may fitly guide the affairs of mortal men along lines laid down by earth's spiritual ruler, the Lord Christ. What does the Bible have to say about such?

The fact that the Divine Calling for this present Age is to a celestial destiny implies that these earthly executives of the new order must be drawn from the ranks of those who in pre-Christian ages manifested the same degree of devotion and loyalty to God as does the Christian Church now. In recognition of this fact the Nineteenth Century designated them "Old Testament Saints" or "Ancient Worthies" in token of their sterling qualities, which incidentally are praised in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. A number of Biblical allusions suggest that these earthly rulers, who will, as it were, "take over" when the Messianic Kingdom is established in power, will be selected from among those "heroes of faith" whose exploits are narrated in many a thrilling Old Testament story. "Princes in all the earth" is one of the Scripture titles given them (Psa. 45. 16) and a very good descriptive title it is.

The earliest intimation on record that God purposes such an arrangement was at the hand of Isaiah. In a brief pen-picture of purified Israel's part in the inauguration of the Millennial order God said "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning" (Isa. 1. 26). The force of this promise lies in the fact that the word for "judges" is that used for those "judges" who rose up from time to time to deliver Israel in the period between Joshua and the Kings. These men were deliverers, inspired by faith in God and belief in his all-pervading power, and the advent of each was coincident with a time of repentance for past apostasy and a renewed national dedication to God. Deliverers and counsellors; this is what the world needs, now and until these men appear on the scene. "A King shall reign in righteousness, and

princes shall rule in judgment" says Isaiah (ch. 32. 1) in one of his Millennial descriptions. Remembering that what this world needs more than anything else is sound and righteous judgment in high quarters, the coming of such "princes" is surely an event to be fervently desired. (It is of interest to note that "righteousness" in this text is *tsedeq*, ethical righteousness, and "judgment" is *mishpat*, judicial righteousness. The relative spheres of the King and the princes are thereby indicated.)

It is of course inevitable that much of what is said about these "princes" is against the background of the Holy Nation, the idealised Israel of the Last Days which is established in the Holy Land in faith and fortitude, awaiting the final conflict in which God himself is to be manifested for its deliverance. Thus in Jer. 3. 15 He promised "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" and again in Jer. 23. 4. "And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more . . . neither shall they be lacking".

It is necessary to turn to Hebrews 11 for positive identification of the "princes". That chapter is devoted to the praise of various Old Testament characters whose predominant characteristics were unquenchable faith and fierce loyalty to God, by virtue of which they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness . . . out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens . . . had trial of mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment, were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword; wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having received a good report on account of their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect". (Heb. 11. 33-40.) This last remark provides the key to what has been a most puzzling text to many, our Lord's words in Matt. 11. 11. "Among men that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he". John the Baptist died before Christ initiated the new way, the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" by which the Christian Church of this Age is fitted for its future celestial mission, and so could have no part in that calling. But the Lord's words leave us no room for doubt that he is one—perhaps the greatest one—of those Old Testament stalwarts who are to be princes in all the earth and whose resurrection to that high duty waits only for the prior resurrection of the Christian Church. In that way it is true that "they

without us shall not be made perfect".

The manner in which the princes will be made manifest to the world at the time of their resurrection is perhaps best indicated in Zech. 12. 5-6. This is part of a prophetic foreview of the last great trial of faith to come upon the restored nation of Israel, loyal to God and settled in faith that He will deliver them from the threat of hostile forces which will then come up against the land "*And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour the people round about . . . In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem*". These "governors" are the ancient stalwarts of Israel, resurrected from the grave. There is no intimation that the Holy Nation is to have national leaders other than these "princes in all the earth" at the Time of the End. Since it is a fact that directly this long-predicted final deliverance has taken place the Law of the Lord is to "*go forth from Zion and the words of the Lord from Jerusalem*", it is logical to expect that these stalwarts of old will have been present upon the earth for some time previously and attained positions of unchallenged leadership among their own people. The men who guide the new nation through its severest trial of faith will be the men to whom is entrusted its future destiny.

A Scripture that may indicate some connection between the resurrected "princes" and the ultimate solution of the "Arab question" is found in that little known book, the prophecy of Obadiah. That prophet based his message upon the scenes he saw during his own time, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, taking the people captive to Babylon, and Edom, one progenitor of the Arabs of today, rejoiced at Israel's calamity and joined hands with the persecutors (Psa. 137. 7, Ezek. 25. 12). Obadiah was moved by the Spirit to speak of the far distant future when "*upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; . . . and the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Esau*" (Edom) "*for stubble . . . and saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to possess the Mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's*" (Obad. 17-21). That word "saviours" appears also in Neh. 9. 27, where it is referred to the Judges who were raised up to deliver Israel in the early days. This passage can never possibly refer to any time now past, for there has been any occasion in history when "saviours" of any description have extended their rule from Mount Zion—a godly, righteous rule therefore—over Edom, a united kingdom of God resulting. Edom certainly did become tributary to Judah for short periods during the troubled centuries just before Christ, but the slightest

acquaintance with the history of those times is sufficient to show that in no sense could this prophecy have been fulfilled then. And Edom ceased to exist as a nation two thousand years ago. The passage refers, conclusively, to the events of the Time of the End, and Edom fairly evidently is here representative of the Arab world.

If Obad. 19-20 is taken literally the area of territory occupied at that time by the Holy Nation, even although not so much as that promised to Abraham as the final extent of the Holy Land, will certainly be appreciably greater than that held by the present political State and this would seem to imply that these "saviours" appear at a time when the stage is set for the final judicial settlement of a problem that is at present embittering Arab-Israel relations. Many of these "princes in all the earth" were progenitors of Arab peoples as well as of Israelites. Many of Abraham's descendants are Arabs—numerically many more than Israel, and it is probably true that in any case the whole of the Arabic world traces its descent back to Abraham's progenitor Heber six generations earlier. The patriarch Job—probably destined to be one of the princes—was of Arabic and not Israelite blood. It might well be, therefore, that the first achievement of the "princes in all the earth" after their resurrection and advancement to power will be the mutually satisfactory adjustment of the, at present bitter relations between the two peoples. It is worth noticing in this connection that in the great "Gog and Magog" prophecy which describes the enemies of Israel in the last conflict not one Arab nation appears.

There is a remarkable Messianic passage in the 5th chapter of Micah which appears to have direct reference to the princes. The general theme is the coming of Messiah to rule and deliver Israel at the last and inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom. Out of Bethlehem-Ephrathah is to come the future ruler in Israel, whose destiny has been fore-ordained from times of old—from everlasting. He is to "*stand and feed in the strength of the Lord*" and be "*great unto the ends of the earth*" (Micah 5. 4). He is to "*be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men. And they shall rule (RSV) the land of Assyria with the sword . . .*" (Micah 5. 5-6). This is a difficult passage to elucidate but its nature makes clear that it can only refer to the coming of the Millennial Kingdom and Israel's prosperity immediately prior to that coming. The "Assyrian" here mentioned is evidently a term used to designate the prophetic king of the north, the host of Gog and Magog, set to invade the Holy Land just as the Assyrian kings did in Micah's own time. The all-conquering Messiah is to be the Deliverer when

this "Assyrian" invades the land but when the event transpires there will be auxiliary agents raised up to execute the Messiah's judgments; seven "shepherds" and eight "princes of men". The numbers may be readily recognised as symbolic and based upon the seven days of the week. The seventh day completed the work of the week and symbolised completion and rest; the eighth day the beginning of a new week and the commencement of a new work. Ferrar Fenton, who for all his sometimes rather flamboyant style of translation often seems to grasp the underlying idea behind an obscure phrase better than most, renders this verse "*He will bring us deliverance from Assyria and will . . . appoint seven shepherds above us and eight who will organise men*". The function of shepherds in Scripture metaphor is spiritual; the same Hebrew word is rendered indiscriminately "shepherd" and "pastor". That of princes is secular. If the verse is taken to indicate that there will, in that day, be spiritual teachers, pastors or shepherds, the Church of this Age developed and completed on the last day of the "week" of man's rule, of the "kingdoms of this world", and also secular leaders, princes in all the earth, brought forward in the eighth day, the commencement of the new Age, the Kingdom of our God, there may be some meaning in the expression "seven pastors and eight princes". At any rate, it is plainly stated that the "eight princes of men" will appear at a time when not only shall the "Assyrian", invading the land, be repulsed, but the "*remnant of Jacob*"—significant expression—will be to many people as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon grass, and as a lion among the beasts of the forest—on the one hand, a refreshing draught of new life, and on the other, a destroyer of the wild beasts of evil. Quite clearly, this pictures the end-

ing of this Age and the dawn of the next.

Theologically, the resurrection of the "princes" must wait until all who participate in the First Resurrection, the Church, have finished their earthly course and experienced the change of nature which introduces them into the heavenly world. The coming of the Lord *for* his Church is one of the first events in the succession of events which comprise the Advent. His coming and revelation of himself *with* his Church is a later event. Between these two events, and before the powers of evil of this present world have been overthrown, occurs the resurrection of the princes, the first to experience restoration of life to terrestrial conditions. Obviously they must be present upon earth, unknown to men in general, for some time while they are familiarising themselves with the conditions of today, so different from those they knew when on earth before. Eventually they will gain the confidence of their fellows and with their notable grasp of world affairs and their evident abilities will quickly come to the front. It may be that no man will be able to say, with certainty, from whence they come but there will be a time when their identity is declared and they are accepted in that knowledge. The rest of the world may well dismiss their claims with scorn and incredulity, but these men will be armed with the power of the incoming Kingdom and one will be able to fight against that. In a very real sense the end of the dominion of evil and the commencement of the long-promised era of righteousness will have arrived when men become conscious of a new force operating in world affairs against which they find all their traditional weapons of offence and defence valueless, a force which is manifest in all that is said and done by these "princes in all the earth".

The Happy Man

The Happy Man was born in the city of *Regeneration*, in the Parish of *Repentance unto Life*: he was educated at the school of *Obedience*, and now lives in *Perseverance*: he works at the *Trade of Diligence*, notwithstanding he has a large estate in the country of *Christian Contentment*, and many a time does jobs of *Self-Denial*: he wears the plain garment of *Humility*, and has a better suit to put on when he goes to court, called the *Robe of Christ's Righteousness*; he often walks in the valley of *Self-Abasement*, and sometimes climbs to the mountains of *Heavenly-Mindedness*: he breakfasts every morning on *Spiritual Prayer*, and sups every evening on the same: he has *Meat* to eat which the world

knows not of, and his *Drink* is the *Milk* of the Word of God. Thus happy he lives and happy he dies.

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

(selected from an old book)

JOSEPH IN EGYPT Gen. 42-45

2. Lord of Egypt

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

The famine itself was nothing unusual. Egypt had known such times before and knew them again. This one was of somewhat unusual duration. Most commentators speak of a "succession of years when the Nile remained low" but in 41. 57 it is made plain that Egypt was not the only land affected. "*The famine was sore in all lands.*" Jacob and his family were not the only ones to come into Egypt for the purpose of buying food; and probably not the only ones to settle in that land, at least temporarily, either. There is some evidence (as in Brooks' "*Climate through the ages*") that for several centuries terminating about 1600 B.C. the world as a whole passed through a dry and arid phase, followed after that date by a much more rainy era which of itself induced considerably improved fertility. If Joseph did indeed enter Egypt in the early years of the Hyksos regime then the commencement of the twelve tribes' growth in Egypt would more or less coincide with this change; this could have been one factor in the phenomenal increase of the Israelites, and of other nations too. It has to be remembered that although Canaan in the days of Isaac and Jacob was evidently very thinly peopled, when the Israelites after the Exodus only a few centuries later returned thereto they found it well populated with numerous tribes and cities "*with walls reaching up to heaven*". Explorations in the ruins of Babylon have shown that city to have increased in size many times over at about the same period; it would seem that the population of the Mesopotamian plains showed just the same acceleration of increase as did Israel and Canaan and this fact goes far to

confirm the veracity of the Genesis story. The famine of Joseph's time, too, was probably merely the last of a series of such calamities extending over several centuries previously; Egyptian history relates several such occasions reaching back to the time of Abraham. It is likely that the wanderings of Abraham and Isaac recorded in Genesis were largely dictated by necessity due to the impoverishment of the land by dry weather; the various recorded conflicts between their servants and the people of the land over the possession of water holes and wells would tend to support the same conclusion.

The despatch of Jacob's ten sons to Egypt for the purpose of buying food as related in chapter 42 was therefore a perfectly natural thing and one that was paralleled by many other families. 41. 57 makes that plain. "*All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy food*", and so does 42. 5 "*and the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came*". Chapter 42 tells the story of the first expedition, one in which Jacob would not allow his youngest son Benjamin to participate. The popular image is all too often that of a little lad perhaps ten or twelve years old whom Jacob would fain shelter from the risks and rigours of the journey; in actual fact Benjamin was at the time a grown man thirty-two years of age, and probably already the father of a goodly proportion of the ten sons he ultimately had. The word "lad" used by Judah in 43. 8 to denote Benjamin is probably partially responsible for this very general impression, but "lad" here as in so many places in the Old Testament is the Hebrew "*naar*" which can denote a boy or young man and is so translated in numerous instances. King Solomon at his accession is described as a "*naar*". At a time when men habitually lived to six or seven score of years Benjamin in his thirties would be accounted as a stripling anyway. Jacob's motive in keeping him at home was undoubtedly on account of the fact that, Joseph being lost to him, Benjamin was his only remaining link with his beloved Rachel. The other sons, headed by Reuben, the eldest at sixty-four years of age, took their way to Egypt, travelling almost certainly by the high road skirting the sea shore and passing the frontier guards at the wall called the "Shur" which Egypt had built somewhere near the present Suez Canal, and so at last coming into the presence of this high Egyptian official whom they utterly failed to recognise as their brother Joseph.

That is by no means surprising. There must have been a tremendous physical difference between the seventeen year old country shepherd lad whom

they had sold into slavery and this calm, dignified Egyptian, whose very mien conveyed authority and self-assurance. Already awed and subdued by the magnificent buildings and all the other trappings of a civilisation these rough countrymen had never before seen, they were not likely to perceive in the countenance of this clean-shaven, well-dressed man in whose presence they stood as suppliants any resemblance to their own bearded and roughly apparelled fellows. So they answered his questions respectfully, hopefully, and quite unsuspectingly.

Joseph, of course, knew them at once. He had probably been expecting them. He must have realised that his father's family back in Canaan would be as hardly hit as anyone else by the famine, and when parties of Canaanites began to appear in Egypt buying corn he knew it would not be long before his own brothers would appear. And he had the advantage of knowing for whom to look; although it was twenty-two years since he had last seen them they would not have changed as he had done. So he was ready with a plan, a plan devised, we may be sure, at least in part by the over-ruling of the Holy Spirit, that Joseph might be the means of a much greater deliverance to his father's house than could be achieved by selling them a few sacks of corn to tide them over until they could resume life in Canaan again, a deliverance that was to have as its most far-reaching consequence the creation of a nation which has profoundly affected all human history and is destined to survive still, and fulfil its Divine commission to "*blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit*" (Isa. 27. 6). So in pursuance of his plan Joseph at first pretended to disbelieve their story and accused them of being spies; to their indignant denials he responded with the demand that they prove their story by bringing before him the younger brother whose existence they had inadvertently made known to him, commanding that one of their number be held prisoner as hostage against their return and the production of their youngest brother. Joseph made it clear that there was to be no alternative; Simeon was summarily bound before their eyes and hustled away to jail, they were given the corn for which they had made the journey and nothing remained but to return to Jacob without Simeon and bear the heavy news that another of his sons was lost to him.

The brothers' anguished conversation between themselves recorded in 42. 21. 22 is significant. They had immediately jumped to the conclusion that this disastrous sequel to their mission was a Divine judgment upon them for their treatment of Joseph. "*We are verily guilty concerning our brother . . . therefore is this distress come upon us . . . therefore also his blood is required*". It would seem that these men's consciences must have

smitten them before this day; it might well be that they had long ago bitterly repented their hasty action in getting rid of Joseph. The effect of the tragedy upon their father Jacob was always before them, and believing as they did that Joseph was irretrievably lost to them they did not expect ever to be able to right the wrong. For them so quickly to associate this experience in Egypt with that event of twenty-two years earlier can only mean that the evil deed was always in their minds and that to some extent at any rate they regretted their action and would have put it right if they could. So they talked together, agitatedly, in their own tongue, not realising that the Egyptian standing before them understood every word they spoke—for, according to verse 23, Joseph had pretended unfamiliarity with the Hebrew language and had talked with them through an interpreter. For a moment he was overcome—"*he turned himself about from them, and wept*"; partly, it is almost certain, with emotion at finding his brothers were at least conscious of the sin they had committed and to a degree repentant. So he sent them away, and they set out on the journey back to Canaan.

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

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

Jacob capitulated. "*If it must be so . . .*" He was old and weary; he could resist no more. Pathetically, he tried to make arrangements to placate the grim Egyptian potentate who threatened his life's last consolation, "*Carry down the man a present, a little balm, a little honey . . .*" There was not much they could take; the famine had seen to that; but

Jacob desperately strove to make the best he could of a bad business in the hope that his meagre offering might please the man in whose hands lay Benjamin's fate. And having done all he could, he committed the whole thing to God who had led him through so long a troubled life. "*God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin.*"

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

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

ously; adversity had gone, prosperity come, and all was well with the world. That was their happy frame of mind, until Joseph's steward caught up with them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was Judah who resolved the crisis—Judah, who had been the one to suggest the selling of Joseph into slavery. But this time it was his own self he wanted to sacrifice. In a marvellously impassioned and eloquent speech he pleaded with Joseph to accept his own self a slave forever as substitute for Benjamin, so that the latter might be able to return to Canaan and his father Jacob be not utterly heart-broken in his old age. "*For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with*

me?" Rather than have that happen, Judah was prepared to renounce his home and family for ever, ending his days in slavery in a strange land. From the expression in 44. 16 it is evident that Judah at least, and probably his brothers as well, had by now become persuaded that this terrible position in which they found themselves, innocent of the charge though they were, was of God's own appointing, come upon them in judgment for the crime they had committed against their innocent brother those many years back. Judah was ready now to expiate in his own person the guilt for which all his brothers shared the responsibility.

That broke Joseph down. Evidence of the emotional strain under which he had been labouring ever since his brothers first came to Egypt crops up from time to time as the story unfolds. Now, his purpose achieved, satisfied that his brothers had truly experienced a change of heart, he broke down completely and revealed to the amazed group his true identity. At first they were terrified, as well they might be, but Joseph allayed their fears and with true magnanimity asserted that the whole sequence of events had been overruled by God as a means of getting Jacob and his family into Egypt to save their lives, in this time of famine. That does not mean that God was responsible for the evil thing that the brothers had done; it does mean that God can take hold of the position that has been created by evil and make of it a means contributing to the accomplishment of his own eternal purpose. *(To be continued)*

THE SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY

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

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

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

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

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



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

"A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense on altars of brick . . . which say 'Stand by thyself, come not nigh to me, for I am holier than thou'. These are a stench in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day" (Isa. 65. 3-5).

Not only in the days of Isaiah was that spirit manifested. We have it to-day, with ourselves, in the professedly Christian church, all too often a smug self-righteousness which is the very negation of all for which Christ stood. There were Pharisees two thousand years ago who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others". They have their spiritual descendants today; if the Lord Jesus was right when He told those of his own time that they were of their father the Devil, we should logically come to the same conclusion now. That might come as a shock to some who labour under the delusion that they and they alone have the monopoly of Divine Truth. Better that kind of shock than the one that would inevitably come if they should stand and hear the Saviour say "I never knew you . . . workers of iniquity". "There is a generation" said the Wise Man in Proverbs "O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up". Complacent in the oversight of the little religious clubs they control, secure in the knowledge of their own assured salvation, contemptuous of believers whose understanding of the Divine mysteries differs anywise from their own, and resolved to allow no breath of air from outside to disturb the serenity of their sacred enclosure! But nothing can hinder the development of Divine Truth as it becomes known to successive generations, and nothing can restrain the strivings of the human spirit after a more accurate understanding of the ways of God. The very impulse so to strive was at the first built in human nature by God.

Sacrificing in gardens; burning incense on altars of brick! It is a terrible condemnation, and so easily earned. It is tempting to apply the terms to certain

church buildings or particular Christian groups. But the Most High is not talking about our denominational affiliations when He talks like this, nor yet our preference for one or another kind of worship, whether rich in ceremonial or Puritan in simplicity. He is talking about those who use their position in the church to build a wall around their flocks to separate them from others of Christ's brethren, to compel them to gather around a man-made altar instead of the table of the Lord. Such, He says, are as the acrid smoke of a fire burning all day long and getting into the nostrils—an everpresent irritant and vexation. And that is a very different thing from the incense which ascends to God from his faithful as a sweet-smelling savour. We all do well to remember that.

NOTICES

Concerning changes of address—U.S.A. readers

We have a problem which seems to be unique to the U.S.A. It is probably well realised that the "Monthly" takes seven weeks to reach the American continent and it follows that when advice of a change of address is received here almost inevitably one issue or maybe two are already in transit to the old address. Sometimes the U.S. Post Office affixes a yellow label to the returned envelope giving the new address and sometimes a similar one merely saying "forwarding order expired" but in either case the returned envelope rarely gets back here in less than six months from despatch, by which time several more issues have been sent, eventually finding their way back here. It will be a great help if brethren will advise change of address at the earliest possible date to minimise this problem.

Gone from us



Sis. M. J. Bibby (Bridlington)



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

MISSION TO THE WEST

No. 21 in a series of stories of St. Paul

It was springtime, A.D. 62. The Apostle Paul stood in the streets of Rome, a free man. His trial was over and he had been acquitted. Henceforward he was at liberty to go where he would and conduct his evangelical work without hindrance.

Those two years in captivity had been ones of great activity. Not only had Paul enjoyed the constant companionship of Luke and Aristarchus throughout, but at some time during the two years Timothy, John Mark, Demas of Thessalonica, and Epaphras of Colosse had arrived to remain with him. With these six stalwart friends of long standing at his side it is easy to understand why the Christian cause in Rome prospered as it did. The faith spread among the slaves and the poor, the high-born and the wealthy, even into Cæsar's household. These were the halcyon days when the joyousness of the teachings of Christ overwhelmed and extinguished the gloom of paganism; none knew of the ferocity of persecution which lay only a few short years ahead.

There were visitors who came and went. Epaphroditus arrived from Philippi and after a short stay returned home bearing with him Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (Phil. 2. 25). Onesimus, the runaway slave from Colosse, reached Rome, came into contact with the faith and was converted, returning to Colosse a Christian, in company with Tychicus, the pair taking with them the Epistles to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and that to Philemon (Col. 1. 8, 4. 7-8, Eph. 6. 21, Philem. 12). Paul's enforced stay in Rome had been a productive time, and our New Testament is the richer in consequence.

From this point the only clues to Paul's activities are casual allusions in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. Two of these were written during his subsequent journeyings and the Second to Timothy whilst he was in prison in Rome for the second time. Why St. Luke ended the Book of Acts just before the first trial when it is obvious from Paul's own testimony that he remained with him to the end is not known; this has been a matter of speculation for centuries. The fact remains that there is no record of Paul's later life and in consequence any picture of that period has to be founded on a reconstruction of these few allusions and such basis of truth as can be concluded lies beneath the traditions of the Early Church and the scattered statements of Early Church writers.

There are some half-dozen such reconstructions, all attempting to describe Paul's movements between his acquittal in A.D. 62 and his death in A.D. 67 or 68. Most of them seem to suffer from the demerit of having been built up on the basis of

the literary allusions without looking at the map; in consequence they imply a bewildering sequence of to-and-fro crossing of tracks without any credit being given the Apostle for an orderly and economical planning of his journeys. A presentation of all the facts, evidences, and arguments for these unknown travels of St. Paul would take up a great deal of space and would be outside the scope of this treatise, but a brief outline of what seems to the writer to have been a possible sequence of happenings is offered and this will be based upon two important factors which do not seem to have received full weight in other expositions of the subject.

The first is Paul's own conviction that he had been called to preach the Gospel to the whole world of the Gentiles, which in that day meant the entire Roman Empire. Long before his appeal to Cæsar he had cherished the idea of going to Rome as the first step in a wider programme embracing the western side of the Empire. Writing to the Roman church many years previously he had told them he proposed to visit them on his way to Spain. Now he was in Rome, free to go where he wished; it is almost a certainty that before returning to the East he would want to fulfil his original plan and proceed farther west to preach Christ in Spain, and, a little less likely perhaps, extend his ministry through the remaining provinces of the west, Gaul and Britain, before making the long journey home. Once back in Asia, at his time of life—he was now sixty years of age and in indifferent health—he might have thought it unlikely that he would again have the opportunity to return to the West. So if Paul went to Spain at all—a point on which there has always been some doubt—it must have been directly after his release.

The second factor is also connected with his age. Paul would have been less than human if he had not desired to see his Asiatic converts again before he died, and particularly his old friends of his own home Church, Antioch in Syria. After all, it was the Antioch Church which had originally commissioned him to set out upon these travels and had it not been for the riot in Jerusalem, his arrest, and despatch to Rome, he would long since have been back among them with his report. Memories of his fellow-elders in that Church, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, must have inspired a longing to see them again and tell them of the experiences he had undergone. A final visit to Antioch after he had reached the uttermost parts of the Empire with the message, perhaps to end his days among his early friends, must have played an important part in his planning.

Now these considerations, added to such allusions in Timothy and Titus as throw any light at all upon this journey, coupled with sundry statements by Clement of Rome, Eusebius, Jerome, Chrysostom and other early writers are all satisfied by the assumption that immediately upon his release Paul set out for Spain and during the next two or three years travelled through the western part of the Empire, returning by way of Northern Italy and the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea to the converts he had previously made in Illyricum, then to Crete, back through Greece by way of Corinth, Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi, and across the sea to Troas with the intention of visiting in sequence Ephesus, Colosse, Laodicea, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and the other churches of the Asian hinterland, again taking ship at Tarsus, his birthplace, for Antioch in Syria as his terminus. The programme could take five or six years and he might well have felt by that time he would be too old for further travel. If, then, it so fell out that he completed this itinerary as far as Troas or perhaps Miletus and was there arrested and sent back to Rome, every requirement of the references in Timothy and Titus is met; this at any rate is the basis upon which this final picture of Paul's life is here drawn.

It seems, then, that on this spring day in A.D. 62 there was a rapid re-appraisal of the situation and a deployment of forces. Timothy was to go at once to Philippi (Phil. 2. 19). When next we hear of him, some years later, he is at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1. 3). John Mark was to stay for the present in Rome, where during the next two or three years he would work with the Apostle Peter who seems to have arrived in Rome shortly after Paul departed, and would write the Gospel according to Mark, the first of the Gospels to be written. When next we hear of him he is also at Ephesus. Of Demas nothing is said; he may have stayed at Rome or gone to Greece. Luke certainly accompanied Paul wherever he went and was with him at the end; the other member of the trio, Aristarchus, who joined Paul during his third missionary journey and had stayed with him ever since, is likewise not mentioned but it can be taken as a tolerable certainty that if Paul and Luke were off on another journey then Aristarchus would be insistent on going with them.

To one of Paul's ardent temperament there was no time to waste and probably before many days had passed he was taking his leave of the Roman brethren, with whom he had fellowshiped for the past two years—Flavius Clemens, nephew of Vespasian the coming Emperor, Linus, soon to become Head of the Church in Rome after the martyrdom of Peter, Clement, a young man now but in later years to succeed Linus as Bishop of Rome, and a host of others some of whose names

are recorded in Romans 16 and others in 2 Tim. 4. The three missionaries boarded the ship at Ostia, the port of Rome, and sailed out into the west, seven hundred and fifty miles across the blue Mediterranean, until the coastline of Spain appeared and the vessel tied up at the quays of the port of Nova Carthago (now Cartagena).

It is quite impossible to say what St. Paul achieved in Spain, if in fact he did go there. Not a whisper of tradition beyond the confident assertion that he went to Spain has survived. He would naturally make for the main centres of population and the first would most likely be Cordova where there was a considerable Jewish colony. From there he could make his way northward, perhaps spending a time at Toletum (Toledo) and Cæsar Augusta (Saragossa) so that after eight hundred miles or so and the expiry of say nine or ten months he found himself on the borders of Gaul (France).

Long distance travel was very easy in the days of the Romans. The famous road system covered the whole of the Empire and every road was equipped with Government rest houses a day's journey apart at which horses or asses for travellers able to pay for them could be secured for the next stage. Order was maintained by the legionaries, and military detachments were constantly traversing the roads en route to garrison duties in distant lands, so that travel for the civilian was safe—safer than in later centuries after Roman power had been withdrawn. It must not be imagined that St. Paul had to pick his way over trackless wastes in imminent danger to life and limb. From this point of view there is nothing incredible in the idea of his having visited any part of the Empire, however remote.

At the conclusion of this ministry in Spain the Apostle would have to face alternatives. He could either retrace the eight hundred miles to Nova Carthago and sail back to Rome and so eventually home to Asia, or he could follow the road over the frontier to Lugdunum (Lyons) in France where was an important meeting point of roads to Spain, Italy, Northern France and Britain. One can hardly imagine the Apostle resisting this challenge. If he went to Spain at all and found himself on the northern frontier he would surely have continued into Gaul to preach the Gospel there. So, after another four hundred miles, the three companions could have arrived in Lyons.

The origin of the Church in Lyons is shrouded in obscurity. The celebrated Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, lived in the 2nd century and the Church was already old in his time. No one really knows by whom it was founded but the fact that a church existed apparently from the very earliest period at this important meeting place of the roads is at least an indication that some fervent missionary of the faith must have evangelised this district in the First

Century.

Here again the Apostle had a choice. He could now consider his ministry in the West at an end and take the road for Italy and Rome, or by diverging before reaching Rome could travel overland to Greece and home. On the other hand he could take the northerly road and set out to preach Christ in all Gaul as he had just done in Spain. He could cross the Oceanus Britannicus—the English Channel—and preach Christ in Britain. There are not wanting scholars and protagonists who insist that sufficient documentary evidence exists to make it a certainty that Paul did in fact visit Britain and preach in London at this time; it is probably fair to say that the consensus of authoritative opinion is against the evidence being conclusive but there is no doubt that many early traditions do point this way. A consideration which does not depend upon tradition or documentary evidence, however, is that unless St. Paul did spend a couple of years or so in the west or north of the Empire it is difficult to understand why he only got as far as western Asia before being arrested the second time. During his five years or so of liberty he got no farther east than Troas in Asia—not even to Ephesus where Timothy, whom he so ardently longed to see, awaited him. The conclusion is wellnigh irresistible that Paul must have spent a considerable time in hitherto unvisited lands before he returned to Greece. The traditions concerning his visit to Britain may therefore have more substance in them than is generally supposed.

From Lyons, then, the party may be pictured as continuing northward, making converts as they went, probably no longer troubled with Jewish opponents since they were now traversing parts of the world in which the Jewish Dispersion was not so much in evidence. The natives were not savages; the old idea of Gaul and Britain at this time being inhabited by blue-painted barbarians has long since been exploded. The Gauls had known Roman culture for a long time and the Britons were a civilised race before the Romans came—and able to render a good account of themselves, as the Roman commanders Aulus Plautius and Vespasian found to their cost only twenty years earlier when Britain was conquered after stubborn resistance.

The next eight or nine months, then, might well have been occupied by a missionary tour through Gaul, ending on the coast at Portus Itius, which is now Calais. Here the Roman road ended but ships

were available to take soldiers, travellers and merchandise across the Channel to Britain only twenty miles away. Paul and Luke and Aristarchus, if they indeed had come so far, would most certainly want to go the last few hundred miles necessary to include Britain in the journey before setting their faces definitely for Asia and home.

If this reasoning is sound, then round about the beginning of A.D. 64 one of the merchant vessels engaged in the Channel crossing business included among its passengers the Apostle of the Gentiles and his companions, standing in the prow of the ship gazing with intense interest at the white cliffs of Dover, or Porto Dubris as it was then called. Of all the lands the Apostle had visited this must have been the one of which he knew least. Britain had only recently been added to the Empire (Julius Cæsar claimed a lot for his invasion in 54 B.C. but in point of fact he was soundly beaten by the Britons and retreated to Gaul as hurriedly as dignity would permit). Rome was greatly interested in Britain; it was believed that great opportunities for exploiting the mineral and agricultural resources of the island existed and the business men of Rome were expecting rich pickings. Paul would have known all about this and be naturally curious to make contact with this hitherto relatively unknown people.

Did Christianity then really come to Britain on that day when Paul, Luke and Aristarchus walked across the gangway to the wooden pier at ancient Dover where the ships from Gaul disembarked their passengers and unloaded their merchandise? No one can say for sure; Roman intercourse with Britain was only some twenty years old and even the Roman legionaries, some of whom were known to be Christians and took the faith with them wherever they went, had only been there that long. One thing is certain; there was a British Church in existence very early in the First century, nearly six hundred years before the famed Catholic Augustine had landed with his monks at Sandwich in Kent to introduce the Papal brand of Christianity. Paul may well have found believers here already to welcome him and accept his apostolic ministry. Nobody really knows; there must be some kernel of truth underlying the persistent traditions and assertions of ancient historians to the effect that the Apostle did in fact set foot in this country and preach Christ. And there certainly was a British church contemporary with the last days of the life of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

To be concluded.

Great Creator, help me to rise above pettiness and the small things which irritate, and turn my eyes to thee, realising anew the greatness of thy

might and the wonder of the universe which is for ever in thy control.

"IN MY FATHER'S COURTS"

*A note on
Luke 2. 49*

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

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

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

There naturally arises from this incident the question as to what degree Jesus, as a child or as a youth, was able to remember anything of his pre-human existence. As a fully grown man, entered upon his mission and possessing the Holy Spirit in the sense in which the Spirit came upon him at Jordan He was obviously and without doubt fully cognisant of the glory He had formerly shared with the Father. (Jno. 17. 5). Did that knowledge or that recollection come to him as it were instantaneously at the moment when the Spirit came upon him when He stood before John in the water and the voice sounded from Heaven "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1. 11), or was it a gradual revelation, slowly filling his mind as childhood gave way to youth?

There is very little data upon the basis of which a conclusion can be formed. Luke, in his record of

this very incident, says that Jesus "increased in wisdom and age, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2. 52). This implies progressive development in knowledge as the years passed, but that need mean no more than it would in the case of any intelligent lad. The "favour with God" could be natural comment from onlookers who observed his piety and devotion to the things of God. On the other hand the expression in Matthew's account at his baptism "the heavens were opened unto Him" (Matt. 3. 16) might well be held to indicate a moment when a whole new world of spiritual perception broke in upon his mind and that in a flash He knew himself for whom He was, the "Word made flesh" (Luke 1. 14), and the entire memory of his past was imprinted upon his human consciousness. The manner in which the Lord from heaven laid aside his other-worldly glory and appeared on earth in the likeness of men is an abiding mystery to men because we have no knowledge of the world from which He came and the nature of life as it is therein existing. There must be something of vital truth in St. Paul's words when he declares that our Lord "emptied" or "divested" himself when He took human form (Phil. 2. 7). "Kenosis" means being completely empty or reduced to nothing, and this can only mean that every element of his glory pertaining to the celestial order of things was stripped away and left behind, that when He was born of Mary, He was in every physical respect man, though sinless. But at the same time He was still and is for ever the Son of God. Although we cannot comprehend the mystery of the Divine Life, the link which bound the Son to the Father must have remained unbroken throughout. Whether it was by positive knowledge or by some kind of sub-conscious instinct that He used the expression "my Father" at twelve years of age, it was a true prompting. It might be the case that from the time He was able to think rationally on the human plane Jesus knew that He was not the same as other boys were; He might have been conscious of a link with the Eternal which maybe the purely physical brain could not define; yet for all that there might still have been no memory of the past and no power of visualising the scenes and happenings of the celestial world. We do not really know; what is quite certain is that after Jesus came out of the baptismal waters the power of the Divine broke through the physical barrier and from that time onward Jesus possessed a full mental understanding of all those things which once He had known beyond the veil that separates the terrestrial from the celestial.

THE RULE OF THE IRON ROD

A scripture very familiar to the Bible reader who looks for the coming reign of Christ is that one in the Second Psalm "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*" and even the most gentle of disciples has felt a thrill run through his being as he pictures a day in which all opposition to the Kingdom of righteousness is relentlessly crushed. Many have solaced themselves in present distress by anticipation of a coming day in which the tables will be turned on those who set themselves against the Lord's Anointed, and the proud and mighty of this world are compelled to lick the dust at the feet of earth's rightful Sovereign.

A number of Scriptures, mostly in the Books of Psalms and Revelation are habitually cited to buttress this idea of an all-powerful Dictator ruthlessly crushing all opposition and setting up his rule of absolute righteousness and justice by the exercise of brute force. The end is considered to justify the means, and the Scriptural assurance that as a result of the Millennial reign all humanity will come into heart harmony with the Divine law of selflessness and love is held to stamp the means employed with the hallmark of Divine approval.

But the whole tenor of Christ's teaching discountenances the use of coercion or force. He himself resolutely refused to employ any other agency but love. Even although He faced death, the death for which He had come into the world, He refused to call upon the twelve legions of angels to come to his aid, and trod the winepress alone. When in surprise and mystification Pilate queried "Thou art a King then?" Jesus uttered those memorable words which have resounded down the ages, "My kingdom is not of this world (*kosmos*) ELSE WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT". Not for him the standards of kingship by which this world measures kings. And it was in the passive and yet overpowering force of love that the early Church went forth conquering—and conquered.

But if the teaching of Christ at his First Advent definitely repudiated the use of force as a means of accomplishing the work of his Kingdom, how shall statements of so definite a nature as Psalm 2. 9 and Revelation 2. 27 be understood? Certain it is that as students of the Divine Word we can neither afford to ignore them nor to wrest them to mean the opposite of their plain implication. We can only approach them, armed first with a clear knowledge of the principles upon which Christ will deal with man in the future Age and then look at these Scriptures in the light of their local meaning—the significance they had for the Israelites who lived in the day in which they were uttered—and so deduce that prophetic indication which is there given in the

guise of a familiar reference to some everyday incident or custom.

It is generally agreed that the work of the Millennial Age is portrayed in miniature and in principle by the life of Jesus Christ, by his words, actions, miracles, and so on. It is equally definite that He preached the overcoming of hate by love, of greed by selflessness, of force by persuasion, of self-centredness by service for others. This then is the law of the Kingdom, and however the rule of the iron rod is to be understood it must in no sense do violation to the principles which underlie the teaching of Jesus. In a very real sense it must represent fairly and accurately the law of the Kingdom of God on earth.

What then is this rod of iron?

The figure, like so many in the Psalms, is a pastoral one. The shepherds of David's day—as both before and after, in the unchanging East—went about their occupation provided with two implements, the pastoral staff and the iron club. The iron club was the shepherd's weapon of defence, not only for himself, but also for his sheep; for the Palestinian shepherd followed his calling under very different circumstances to those associated in our Western minds with the care of the flock. The pastures were often found in mountainous and desolate places, and whilst roving bands of robbers threatened danger to the shepherd, wild beasts such as hyenas, jackals, bears, leopards and lions were liable to attack the flock, and the safety of the defenceless sheep depended entirely upon the watchfulness and strength of the shepherd.

A number of Scriptures attest the familiarity of Israel with the fact of wild beasts in their midst—for example, 1 Sam. 17. 34-36, 1 Kings 13. 24, Jer. 5. 6; and to realise this aspect of the shepherd's work is to understand more clearly the import of our Lord's own words in John 10. 11-17 "*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them and scattereth them*".

The rod of iron (*Hebrew—Shebet*) was the shepherd's iron club, his weapon of defence and his means of defending the sheep. But since in the ordinary course of events the shepherd's care for his sheep transcended all thought for himself, the iron club became in a very special sense associated with the protection of his flock from every kind of danger. This is borne out by the Scripture in a very remarkable manner. The quotation in Rev. 2. 27 "He shall *rule* them with a rod of iron" employs a Greek word (*poimaino*) which has the significance of "shepherding" in the sense of "feeding"; and the

phrase would be more correctly translated "He shall *shepherd* them with the *shepherd's club*". In addition to its use for defence against robbers and wild beasts, the club was used for beating a way through jungle or undergrowth in the search for fresh pastures, and so its association with feeding as well as defence became obvious.

The same word is translated "feed" in John 21. 16 ("Feed my sheep") 1 Pet. 5. 2 ("Feed the flock of God") Rev. 7. 17 ("The Lamb which is in the midst of them shall feed them") and in several other instances. In the Old Testament the same allusion occurs in Micah 7. 14 "Feed thy people with thy rod", where "rod" again is translated from "shebet".

In the same connection also is the word of the Lord to the Israelites of Ezekiel's day "I will cause you to pass under the rod (*shebet*) and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" (Ezek. 20. 37). "He will smite the earth" says Isaiah "with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked". (Isa. 11. 4.) This "iron rod" is in very truth a means of sustenance and defence to those who are the "children of the Kingdom" and who stand in need of that which the Kingdom is designed to provide.

But what is the significance of that parallel expression in Psalm 2. 9 "He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel" and its companion text in Rev. 2. 27 "As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers". Another Eastern custom of every day is alluded to here. A common occupation in the East was the making of "*homrah*", broken pottery reduced to a very fine powder by constant grinding with heavy stones, and used in the manufacture of cement. The common use of earthenware vessels of all kinds rendered an abundant supply of broken pottery continually available, and with painstaking care the makers of "*homrah*" squatted upon the ground with a little pile of potsherds between their feet and rolled the heavy boulder to and fro until the fragments were reduced to the finest of dust. Not until then was the "*homrah*" ready for the next stage in the making of cement for use in lining water cisterns and aqueducts, and for many other purposes.

Here then is afforded an eloquent picture of the disintegrating forces which break down and scatter not only the kingdoms of this world but all that is lifted up in defiance against Christ. The vivid picture drawn by Daniel when he expounded to King Nebuchadnezzar his dream of the great image is on the same line—the image broken to the ground and pulverised to dust by the "Stone" Kingdom—(Dan. 2. 34-35).

This disintegration is not of individuals, but of

institutions, governments and organisations of man. "Everything that can be shaken will be shaken" says the writer to the Hebrews (12. 27) and every student is thoroughly familiar with the many lines of Scriptural reasoning which indicate that at the time when the reign of Christ begins it is the institutions of man which crash to destruction that every individual member of the human race may be given the opportunity of walking up the "Highway of Holiness" to perfection of life.

With this destruction of every man-made institution the individuals comprising them are set free to be built into that new and universal organisation which is the New Jerusalem come down from heaven to earth—just as the broken potsherds were ground into dust in order that that same dust might be welded together in a new and indestructible cement that should endure forever. The broken potsherds, having outlived their usefulness and like a "garment, waxing old, ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8. 13) are converted into new and imperishable structure which shall serve the needs of man for all time. Could there be in all the range of Scripture allegory a more perfect picture of that "Stone" Kingdom which "shall break in pieces and devour all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever".

Thus the entire picture is one of the beneficent reign of Christ under which evil will be restrained and the "flock" defended from those wild beasts of iniquity and sin which would otherwise still lie in wait and dog their footsteps; and the willing ones led by the "green pastures and still waters" of the Twenty-third Psalm, where they may in perfect confidence and security "obtain joy and salvation" whilst "sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isa. 35. 10). In the meantime the enlightening influences of this day will have played their part in bringing about that "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" (Dan. 12. 1; Matt. 24. 21) in the course of which all the broken potsherds of human government will be reduced to the dust—and upon their ruins will arise the fair edifice of that "city" which hath foundations, "whose builder and maker is God" for which Abraham looked so many long years ago (Heb. 11. 10). The "iron rod" is a guarantee of Divine protection and sustenance to all mankind. The "breaking as a potter's vessel" predicts the final collapse of the power of man and the reconstruction work of the Millennial Age—founded upon love, peace, persuasion to good things, that the words of Isaiah so many centuries ago may at last come into a rich fulfilment—

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Gen. 46

3. Migration of Jacob

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

An interesting digression in Chap. 45 tells how Pharaoh himself intervened to assure Joseph of the welcome he was pleased to extend to Jacob and his dependants. "*Take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land*" (45. 18). That the ruling monarch of Egypt should take such notice of one Canaanite family is noteworthy in itself; obviously the fact that the family involved was that of his own Chief Minister had something to do with it, but there could also be an element of policy in his attitude. If this Pharaoh

was, as seems likely, one of the Semitic Hyksos rulers, he would clearly be more than amenable to the idea of a family of fellow-countrymen coming to settle in his domains and to that extent assist in the consolidation of Semitic rule over the native Egyptians. The land of Goshen, to which the immigrants were directed, was in the vicinity of Tanis the Hyksos capital—perhaps Pharaoh prudently saw in this an opportunity of surrounding himself with a few more friends and supporters of his own race.

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

It is noteworthy that before setting out on this momentous journey the old man stopped first at Beer-sheba, the place made sacred by Abraham when he instituted a place where God might be worshipped. There he sought by sacrifice and supplication to know whether what he was doing had the approval of God. Jacob had come a long way since first he had fled the land of Canaan for fear of Esau his brother, but he had remained faithful to his vow made those many years ago, "*If God will be with me*" he had vowed "*and will keep me in this way I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God*" (Gen. 28. 20).

God had kept his word; Jacob had kept his. Now at the end of a long and arduous life he refused to leave the promised land of Canaan, promised by covenant to his seed for ever, even though famine

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

Re-assured, Jacob took the journey into Egypt; he, and his sons, his sons' wives, his daughters—and their husbands without doubt—his grandchildren, and all that he had. That would most certainly include his cattlemen and shepherds, and their families too, and his household servants, in all a larger company than the seventy souls enumerated in Genesis 46 as accompanying him. That account is intended only to preserve the genealogy, to record the names of his sons and his sons' sons for the sake of posterity and to keep alive the constant watch for the Messiah who should come through the line of one of the sons. Jacob had more to say about this when giving his dying blessing to his twelve sons, directed as he then was by the prophetic vision which for the last time illumined his mind and showed him the outline of things to come. He was not at that stage yet; now he was in Egypt and in process of adjusting himself to this new turn of affairs in what must surely have been one of the most varied and colourful lives on record.

Joseph went in his chariot to meet his father, and directed the whole company into the territory they were to occupy, the fertile land of Goshen, between the eastern arm of the Nile delta and the present town of Ismailia. Here, under the

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

One more evidence of the favour with which the ruling Pharaoh regarded these Semitic kinsmen of his valued Chief Minister is offered in 47. 6. Joseph had presented five of his brothers before Pharaoh. In consequence of that audience Pharaoh reiterated his wish that they should dwell in the coveted land of Goshen, and moreover that any of them whom Joseph considered suitable should be put in positions of responsibility on Pharaoh's own stock farms. Following his sons, Jacob himself came before Pharaoh and invoked the Divine blessing upon him. Thereafter the family of Israel dropped out of official notice so far as the Genesis record is concerned. Most of chap. 47 is concerned with the manner in which Joseph administered his public responsibilities during the remainder of the years of famine, five years in all. It was not long before the Egyptians, impoverished because of the continual failure of their crops—for the whole national economy of Egypt in those days was based on agriculture—had spent all their money with Joseph for the purchase of corn. The famine continued, and Joseph took what was left of their cattle; finally they yielded up their land, all they had left, in exchange for the means of life. By the end of the famine all the population were the virtual tenants of Pharaoh; they were given seed for sowing each year and repaid Pharaoh on the scale of twenty per cent of their harvests. Joseph has sometimes been criticised and accused of virtual slave-owning, but the true position is that he set up an organised administration which gave every peasant in the land the help necessary to earn an adequate living and contribute his quota to the establishment of a well governed community. So far as can be

discerned, Joseph was the original inventor of the Welfare State, and the inhabitants of Egypt knew greater security and a higher standard of living under his administration than for many years either before or since.

Here the story of Joseph the Chief Minister of Pharaoh, the First Citizen of the land of Egypt, comes to an end. Nothing more is said of Joseph's official duties or his position after the end of the famine, although he lived another sixty-six years. During that time he served under at least three Pharaohs—the Egyptian records of the period are confused and he might well have seen the reigns of five successive Hyksos Pharaohs before he died. Apparently he remained an honoured and trusted highly placed Minister of State at least until Jacob's

death seventeen years after his coming into Egypt, for the Egyptians themselves conferred great honours upon the funeral cortege of the deceased Jacob. But the Bible gives no details whatever of affairs in Egypt once it has achieved its purpose of relating the circumstances in which the Israel nation obtained its first lodgment in the land. After that, and until the end of the Book of Genesis, the narrative is concerned only with the relation of Joseph to his own father and his own brethren, not with his official position in the court of Pharaoh.

And now the long story is drawing near its close. The chronicler has but to tell of the death, first of Jacob and then, half a century later, his son Joseph.

(To be concluded)

FROM THE HORNS OF THE UNICORN

Scripture references herein are from the R.S.V. except where otherwise stated.

* * * *

"My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psa. 92. 10, A.V.).

This 92nd Psalm is an expression of faith in the eventual elimination of evil from Divine creation and the triumph and eternal prosperity of the lovers of justice and order in God's world—the righteous, to use what has become a theological term. The enemies of the Lord shall perish, exults the Psalmist; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered, but the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree—the tree which in the Middle East in ancient times was the symbol of eternal life. And in that day, he goes on to say, he will experience an infusion of new strength and new power because God will be with him and behind him, rendering him irresistible in all that he undertakes for God. That is what is meant by his horn being exalted like the horn of a unicorn.

The unicorn is a mythical creature known best for its place in the British royal heraldic arms. The lion and the unicorn are familiar symbols, to the English-speaking peoples at least. Because the word "unicorn" appears several times in the Authorised Version it is often thought that in some way the royal heraldic insignia is derived ultimately from Old Testament symbolism and that some connection exists but this is not really so. The figure of the unicorn as employed in heraldry is derived from descriptions of an alleged Indian animal by the Greek writer Ctesias (400 BC) and by others in later years, including the Roman naturalist Pliny in AD 70. According to these writers the animal was larger than a horse, ox-like in shape, with the head of a stag, feet of an elephant

and the tail of a wild boar. One single horn three feet long projected from its head. Strong and very fierce, it could run faster than a horse and was very dangerous to encounter. The Greeks named this creature the *monoceros*, meaning single-horned, and the Latin equivalent is *unicornis* from which the English word comes. No animal completely fitting the description has ever been discovered but there is little doubt that the old writers were repeating vague impressions of the Indian rhinoceros.

This description gave rise to the popular conception of the unicorn in mediæval England. British royal heraldry began in the 12th century and at first the royal arms of England carried the lion, favourite symbol of royalty, and the red dragon of Wales. The unicorn was first used in the arms of James I of Scotland (AD 1424) on which two unicorns were displayed. In the 16th century when James VI of Scotland became James I of England one unicorn replaced the dragon on the British royal arms, creating the design familiar to us today.

The Hebrew word rendered "unicorn" in the A.V. is *reem* which is now known to denote the aurochs or wild ox, an immensely strong and massive beast akin to the American buffalo. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) in 250 BC the translators used the Greek term *monoceros* and this was carried into the later Latin versions by its equivalent, *unicornis*. This is how the English versions and eventually the A.V. came to use the term "unicorn" in the passages concerned. No modern translation uses it; the majority have the correct term "wild ox". In the meantime, however, this unfortunate association of the mythical unicorn with the Scriptures gave rise to many mediæval legends, some of which, for reasons which need not be detailed here, made this imaginary creature a symbol of Christ!

The Biblical "unicorn", then, was the wild ox, a creature so strong and powerful that it became the symbol of overpowering and irresistible force. Like all animals of its kind, it possessed two powerful horns. It was the strongest and most ferocious creature known to the early Hebrews and it is for this reason that horns in the O.T. are so often used as symbols of power and strength. In the Pentateuch, Israel, fortified by the power of God, are likened to the reem, the wild ox. "*The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them. God brings them out of Egypt; they have as it were the horns of the wild ox*" said Balaam (Num. 23. 21-22). "*God brings him out of Egypt; he has as it were the horns of the wild ox. He shall eat up the nations his adversaries and shall break their bones in pieces*" (Num. 29. 8). Moses, blessing the tribes of Israel before his death, said of the posterity of Joseph "*his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousand of Ephraim and such are the thousands of Manasseh*" (Deut. 33. 17). There is in these pages a magnificent picture of the invincibility of Israel when God is with them. They traversed the wilderness and entered Canaan like a charging wild ox and nothing could stop them. One might almost say of the achievements of their descendants in these latter days that there is something of this wild ox in their sensational advances against and victories over their enemies. One is tempted to reflect, if this is what they can do whilst still in a state of unbelief, what will be their achievement in the yet future day when, because of their repentance and faith, God is with them?

So here is the "horn of the unicorn", that irresistible power which resides in the people of God doing the work of God in faith that God is with them. "*Thou hast exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; thou hast poured over me fresh oil . . . for lo, thy enemies shall perish, all evildoers shall be scattered; they are doomed to destruction for ever*" sings David (Psa. 92. 7-10). As a man in his own strength he was weak and ineffectual; "*I am a worm, and no man*" he said on another occasion; but armed with the power of the Most High he was as a wild ox, invincible. As good king Hezekiah said when faced with the crisis of Sennacherib "*Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria . . . for there is one greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord*

our God, to help us and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32. 7-8). Something like this was in the minds of the later prophets when they declaimed the word of the Lord "*On that day I will cause a horn to spring forth to the house of Israel*" (Ezek. 29. 21). "*Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze*" (Micah 4. 13). And the Psalmist was in no doubt at all. "*I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame but upon himself his crown will shed its lustre*" (Psa. 132. 16-17). "*My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him*" (David) "*and in my name shall his horn be exalted*" (Psa. 89. 24). In all of these rhapsodies, Israel, as a nation or as represented in David her king, is pictured as a rampaging wild ox, horns elevated proudly in the air, waiting the moment to rush into the fray and execute the work of the Lord.

What is the moral? It is that the people of God are irresistible and invincible when God is behind them. That applies equally to the Christian of this Age as to Israel in a past age. When the time falls due for another advance in the outworking of the Divine Plan and the "Watchers" are awake and ready to share in the work of that advance, nothing can stop them. There are times when the wild ox is quiescent, waiting quietly in his covert for the impulse which commands him to sally forth, but there are times too when there is work to be done, a battle to be fought for the King of Kings, a harvest to be reaped for the Great Sower. Those are the times when, in out turn, our horn is exalted. "*The Lord gives the command; great is the host of those who bore the tidings. The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!*" (Psa. 68. 11-12). That is the spirit of exaltation and confidence which in our day is perhaps the best equivalent to the rather more bloodthirsty manner in which Israel of old attacked and destroyed the enemies of the Lord. But our object is the same—the destruction of all evil and the turning of all men to righteousness. And when, in the power of his Advent and his Kingdom, our risen Lord leads his own in the final and most successful campaign to evangelise the nations and cause the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and in the power of his leadership our horn is exalted like those of the wild ox entering the battle, we shall cry exultantly as did David of old "*the kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!*"

Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. Fill their lives with sweetness. Speak approving,

cheering words while their ears can hear them, and while their hearts can be thrilled by them.

H. W. Beecher

"TURN YOU NORTHWARD" A Call to Action

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

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

Now, to this new and virile generation, sons of the desert, accustomed from birth to hardship and stern endurance, brought up in an atmosphere of religious observance and ritual worship which pervaded every activity of life, free from the idolatrous influences of Egypt, ready for the task of building up a new nation in a new land, came the call "*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward!*" Northward lay Canaan, the land of promise. Northward lay the fulfilment of all their hopes, the golden land of all their dreams, the place where they would become a great nation, and God himself would dwell with them, and under his leadership and in the glory of his presence they fulfil the promise to Abraham to the blessing of all men. No wonder that the host was excited as messengers went swiftly from camp to camp, from settlement to settlement, through

out the whole area where dwelt the three millions of Israel, proclaiming the message: "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom is at hand; prepare yourselves, O men of Israel, to go forward. *Turn you northward!*"

These were the men who conquered Canaan and translated the promise and the hope into reality. The generation that came out of Egypt could never have done that. They commenced the journey; they were the people who willingly entered into the Divine Covenant and cried with enthusiasm "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient", and they were the people who endured the hardships and privations of that terrible desert, that "waste and howling wilderness" where the sun scorched by day and the frost chilled by night, where they hungered and thirsted and suffered as perhaps few have ever suffered. They did it for an ideal. They followed Moses because they believed he would lead them to a land of freedom for their children, and despite their often waywardness and rebellion they did, in the main, hold to that ideal throughout. We are perhaps too apt to condemn that generation for its unbelief without giving sufficient value to the credit side of the picture. Those people brought into the world and trained in the national hope and worship another generation which was better fitted than they themselves to complete the work. Those slaves who came out of Egypt could never, in the natural way, have conquered Canaan for themselves. They were too weak physically, too divided in counsel, too insecure in their conception of the common ideal, to act with sufficient resolution ever to win themselves the land by the sword. True, God had foreseen that and expressly forbid them to make any such attempt. He would empty the land from before them, He said, and all they need do was to march right up in faith and possess it; but the adverse report of the ten spies was sufficient to destroy any assurance Israel might have had that God could do this thing, and so, because they would not gain the land by faith, and could not gain it by the sword, their carcasses rotted in the wilderness, forty years. But even so, they did, even in their failure, make a great and essential contribution to the ultimate winning of the land. They brought into the world the men and women who did eventually enter, and prepared them for the task, and for that we must give them due credit.

To-day we stand at such a time. There has been a long time of waiting in the wilderness. The exodus from spiritual Egypt is already a long way in the past. We who now live have no personal experience with the difficulties of the pioneers who through the 19th century proclaimed with fire and

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

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

The crisis of an Age is upon us. This crisis is more momentous by far than that which faced Israel on the day those messengers ran from camp to camp in breathless haste with the message—even although their response was an essential preliminary to our own position to-day. If Israel had not answered the call, left their "place of habitation" in Kadesh (Psa. 107. 7) and taken up their responsibilities in the outworking of the Divine Plan, electing instead to remain where they were in the desert, *where would we be to-day?* And if we fail to heed the Divine call when the time comes to act, electing to remain quiet and inactive, intent only on the undisturbed contemplation of the Divine mysteries, *what is going to be the effect upon the continued out-working of that Plan?* Will God revise his times and seasons to await our convenience? Must the groaning creation, traveling in pain because it is "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" go on waiting beyond the time

God has set because the sons of God refuse to be manifested? If God is ready for us, must He be kept waiting until we are ready for him? Or will the words of Jesus come true in a more terrible sense than has ever been known before: "the Kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation which shall bring forth the fruits thereof". (Matt. 21. 43)?

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

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

What doubt can there be that such a time is now upon us? In the hectic years since the last war men have had to grapple with new problems and the whole aspect of the world order has been changed. We have in these years seen visible evidence of the threat to ordered world government by disorderly elements which will culminate in the confusion and disruption which ends this Age. From that to the establishment of the Kingdom in visible glory and power may be a very short space, measured in terms of years. We may not say, even now, that it is five minutes to twelve; but it is certainly a long way past eleven o'clock.

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

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

Fellowship involves much more than the mere

exchange of social pleasantries or the spending together of a pleasant Sunday afternoon. When the children of Israel turned northward they entered upon a fresh stage of arduous experience but they journeyed onward in the ties of a close fellowship. So with us; our fellowship involves the life of a family of God, in which each member is deeply and intimately concerned with the welfare of every other member and all are conscious of a common bond in a common aim and ideal. The first essential to any kind of progress together, whether in knowledge or in service, is a union of like minds and the only possible lasting basis for this is our common standing in Christ as his consecrated disciples. As students we are bound to arrive at varying conclusions in the interpretation of Scripture and this is to the good if by this means the constantly unfolding vista of Divine Truth is seen more clearly in all aspects. As proclaimers of glad tidings and heralds of the Kingdom there are bound to be different ideas as to the most effective methods of proclamation, and this too is good inasmuch as it serves to reveal by the acid test of actual experience how best the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour may be made known. But there is only one fellowship; only one bond of union and that bond is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in each one to sanctification of life, and flowing out from each one to edification and building up. The Shekinah glory, the Angel of the Presence, was in the midst of the host of Israel and under that overshadowing Cloud, and in the radiance of that Light, that host moved forward as one man. We have the Holy Spirit in our midst, around us and within us, to guide and protect us in our turn, and it is as a Spirit-guided company that we shall be united as one family so to fulfil our Divine calling, now as well as in the future, to be a "people for a purpose".

The second essential is revelation. God in his wisdom has from time to time "set" teachers in the Church and their stamp of Divine authority has been such that many, recognising that authority, have accepted the Divine provision thus made and advanced in the unfolding light accordingly. God sees to it that the Church is provided with "helps" of all kinds, ministers who are able, in varying degrees, to instruct, encourage and exhort the household of faith. And God has not provided that a few monopolise this work of the Spirit; every member of the Body of Christ is a "help" in greater or lesser degree according to ability and zeal. So it comes about that although from time to time in the history of the Church a teacher arises to shed some particularly bright light upon a difficult part of its pathway, such interventions are the exceptions rather than the rule, and the more continuous revelation of truth lies in the ministries of each one of the brethren, the Holy Spirit through them all

ministering. It is in the studies, the quiet talks, the reading together, that revelation comes to each mind to appreciation of the truth, and essential therefore that, as the well-known exhortation has it, we "*forsake not the assembling of ourselves together*" so that our progress in the understanding of God's Divine Plan may proceed apace and fit us the more for the third essential in our "turning northward"—evangelism.

Now at the present time, toward the end of the 20th Century, we have to realise that our Christian world has been subject to change since those earlier days of the 19th when Christian interest in the Second Advent and its related matters swept the world like a prairie fire. The recurrent failure of dates set for the event, the rather lurid emphasis upon judgment and condemnation and the fiery dissolution of this planet, combined to bring the subject into disrepute with later and more knowledgeable generations. Not much is said or heard nowadays about the Albany Conference of 1826, London 1873, Mildmay 1878, all in England, or Boston in 1840 and Clifton Springs in 1878 in U.S.A., when crowds of responsible ministers and layman voiced their convictions regarding the imminence of the Advent and the supersession of this Age by a new one "wherein dwelleth righteousness". Later in the century came a more balanced and reasoned view of the purpose and manner of the Advent and the Messianic Kingdom and with the expansion of man's knowledge of the Universe and its possibilities characteristic of our own day there is a challenge laid before every one of us to relate Scriptural truth to that knowledge and show that God is supreme in this greater creation of which men are now aware. The Christian message must take all this into consideration.

The message, then, should include more than the mere proclamation of the coming Kingdom and the issue of present events in a great Time of Trouble to precede that Kingdom. In proclaiming the "acceptable year of the Lord" and the "day of vengeance of our God" we need to place before all who will listen the essential truths of the Bible regarding Sin, Redemption, Repentance and the Divine calling to consecration of life for the service of God. On a lower plane of understanding, but still a very necessary one, must come the explanation and exposition of the Bible itself, its history, its trustworthiness, and particularly its basic principle, that man was created perfect and fell into sin, from which fall he is to be saved by the Mediatorial reign of Christ in the Millennial Age. Let us become known, not merely as prophets of coming woes to be followed by golden days, but serious, reasonable exponents of a Scriptural philosophy which is solidly founded on the "impregnable rock of Holy Scripture", which attempts

fairly to meet the critics' objections even although it may not always provide a completely full answer, which views the problems of to-day in accurate focus and shows how the Divine way of life is the only solution to those problems. It will involve much re-examination of general ideas tacitly accepted for years but not necessarily well founded on Scripture. But it will lead to a new realisation of the appeal underlying those historic words "Go ye, teach all nations".

"The night is far spent; the day is at hand; therefore let us put off the bonds of darkness, and let us

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

‘GOOD IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN’

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

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

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

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

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

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Publicans - sinners - Pharisees - scribes! They were all in the audience which listened while Jesus unfolded his story of the self-willed young man who in his arrogance turned away from his home and kindred, tasted to the full all that this world had to offer, and returned at last, chastened and repentant, to the father whose love had never wavered. So human a story it is and so true to everyday life that it has never lost its appeal. Each generation for nearly two thousand years has told and re-told the story; of all the parables of Jesus this one must be the best known to the man in the street. The individual who is neither interested in the New Testament narratives nor claims to know anything about them will readily use the term "prodigal" in everyday conversation with a very definite idea of its meaning. There is something in the story of the returned son's acceptance by his overjoyed father because he came in repentance and contrition that rings true in most men's minds. This is how God must act if He really is God; that is the sub-conscious thought. If the story had ended with the father sternly turning the returned prodigal away from his doorstep with the admonition "you have made your bed; you must lie on it" there is little doubt that it would never have gained the immortality it now possesses. It is not just that the story has a happy ending; it is because, deep down in the mind of every man, there is embedded the consciousness that this is how a man ought to act. No matter how far he has strayed from the right way, how deeply he has fallen into things shameful and vile, his Father in heaven has never faltered in His love for His erring child and stands waiting for his return—nay, goes out to meet him on the way back. That vital truth colours and illuminates all true Christian theology.

The fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel sets out in sequence three parables illustrating the Lord's words in Luke 19. 10 "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*". These are: the story of one lost sheep out of one hundred; one lost piece of silver out of ten; one lost son out of two. The shepherd went out to seek his sheep, and there was joy among his friends and neighbours when he had found it. The young girl searched diligently for the missing coin from her betrothal string, and there was joy among her friends and neighbours when she had found it. But the father did not go out to seek his son; he let him have his way and go whithersoever he wished, but he waited and watched until the lost one began himself to seek the way back, and then he went out gladly to bring him in. And there was more than rejoicing; there was a feast, and music and dancing. Is there a hint here that when man goes out in

his own self-will to live his life without God, he is allowed to do so without let or hindrance, but God is always watching and will reach out to reclaim the wanderer just so soon as that self-will shows signs of breaking down? God will coerce no man's will; none will be saved except by the exercise of his own free will, voluntarily and intelligently coming to Christ by repentance and justification by faith, and so into a condition of reconciliation with God. But it is only the first step back that the wanderer must take for himself; after that he finds his father hastening to meet him.

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

There has never been a nation, never a generation since the world began, in which this same drama has not been enacted time and time again. The sequel has always been the same. "*He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*" That is always the second stage. Then comes the third "*When he had spent all . . . he began to be in want*". That is the point at which his new-found friends all left him—directly the money ran out. There has been no change in two thousand years—it still works the same way. Now the wanderer is friendliness, destitute, hungry and desperate. Now he begins to think of the home he left and the many advantages he had, which he then so lightly esteemed; what would he not give to be back there and have them now! He looks on his old home and his old life in a very different light from that in which he viewed it formerly. That subordination to his father against which he had so chafed; that obligation to take his share of the household duties and farm work which had so irked him; that day-by-day routine so necessary for the orderly conduct of communal life together; he began to see now why these things had to be. He began to realise that he was one unit in a

community and could not repudiate his duties and place without prejudicing the welfare of that community. He might have had words come into his mind which were afterwards put on record by the Apostle Paul "*No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself*". The thought of responsibility came into his mind and it was a thought that had never occurred to him before. And it was then that a great illumination came to him. "*He came to himself*", and there and then he determined to go back home.

How many of us realise that in those five words in verse 17 "*When he came to himself*" is summed up the whole secret of the Divine permission of evil? All too often Christians—even dignitaries of the Church—confess, in reply to questions, that they cannot understand the reason for the existence or permission of evil; it is a profound mystery. It is really nothing of the kind if the Bible is read carefully from Genesis to Revelation and the full import of the Eden story allowed to sink in. "*I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it*" ruminated the Preacher (Ecl. 3. 10) and there is the answer. God did not ordain that man should fall into sin, and the story of Eden shows that man sinned entirely of his own volition: but evil having thus entered the world, God in His wisdom does not restrain it immediately, because it is, under His providence, yielding to mankind lessons of experience just as the prodigal's life of dissipation did to him. The reign of evil has been under Divine control from the start and will persist only for the period God has ordained, for He has declared "*As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*" (Num. 14. 21) and the day will certainly come when "*the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together*" (Isa. 40. 5). These promises, and many like them, cannot be ignored; the integrity of the Word of God is bound up with them, and they must surely be fulfilled. Evil and sin will one day be banished from God's creation and all things and all creatures will be at one in Christ. Unto him shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2. 10-11), and that means that not one soul can continue in conscious life into the eternal ages without being reconciled to God. It is literally and terribly true that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18. 4; Matt. 10. 28).

It was when the wanderer had repented and started on the way back that his father went out to meet him. The son had the right idea; he was not going to claim the privileges of sonship; he realised that he had forfeited those. He was going to ask merely to be put on the same footing as the servants. He would labour and be obedient, and take his place in the community, but he was not expect-

ing to be reinstated in his former position just as if nothing had happened. The father, for all his love and tenderness, made it plain later on that the returned prodigal could not resume his former position purely on the basis of repentance. When the elder son, coming to the house at the close of day, reproached the father for having received the waster back, he received the answer "*Son . . . all that I have is thine*". (vs. 31). The whole of the father's property would now revert to the elder son, for the younger had already had his share. Whatever the younger son might gain in property in later life must be by his own efforts.

There is something here that demands serious thought. The repentance of one who comes to God is a great thing and there is joy among the angels of heaven over one such sinner that repenteth, but repentance of itself does not fit the converted sinner for his ultimate place in God's eternal creation. The Divine purpose in creating mankind does not envisage human destiny confined to the alternatives of playing a harp or blowing a trumpet to all eternity. Man is created to fill a definite place in creation and has to be fitted and prepared for that place. His experience with sin and evil is only one aspect of that preparation, and after repentance and reconciliation with God there must be instruction in righteousness and a determined co-operation with God in rooting out the effects of sin from the character, so that at last the man stands as did Adam before his fall, perfect and sinless, but with the advantage, which Adam never had, of experience.

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

That is how God is dealing with man. "*God will have all men to be saved*" said St. Paul in 1 Tim. 2. 4 "*and to come to a knowledge of the truth*". Israel in Ezekiel's day had the Divine message "*I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye*" (Esek. 18. 32). The story of Jonah, and the Divine purpose to save Nineveh because the Ninevites repented; of Sodom, and the promise to avert the judgment if only ten righteous men could be found in it (Gen. 18. 32), shows that God is actively working to save men, and will save those who come to Him by belief in Christ. But belief in, and acceptance of, Christ is not merely a lip-service verbal assent to

his claims, but a coming so completely into harmony with all that He is and all that He does that in all respects the life is transformed and a character built that will stand sinless to all eternity. Such a character is not built in a day. That is why we who are Christ's now have to give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1. 10), and why God has appointed a day (Acts 17. 31), the thousand year day of the Messianic Age, to reclaim all from among men who can be reclaimed, before the eternal ages of glory of redeemed mankind commence to run their endless course.

The elder brother? It was not that he himself would be any the poorer. The entire property was still to be his at the father's death. The younger son still had to make his own way in life. But the elder in his passion for righteousness could not find it in him to admit the younger to take any part nor lot in the happiness of the family home. The youth had sinned; he should be punished for his sin and the punishment should be everlasting. He should be banished for ever from the father's home, repentance or no repentance.

Jesus meant that word for the Pharisees who were listening, those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and relegated the publi-

cans and sinners, whether repentant or not, to Gehenna—Hell. Unhappily the same spirit is still abroad to-day. So many worthy Christians want to see the sinners well and truly punished, rather than that God in His mercy and wisdom should come out to meet them halfway and lead them to a better life. Like the disciples who wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the unbelieving Samaritans, they forget temporarily of what spirit they are of; a little quiet reflection should be enough to realise the truth of the Lord's words on that occasion "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them".

There is a hymn which runs:

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

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

TWELVE LEGIONS

"Thinkest thou not that I could ask of my Father and He would presently (meaning "immediately" in the 17th century when the A.V. was translated) give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26. 43).

A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers. Jesus meant his disciples to understand that his Father was able to send to his assistance a heavenly host greater than would be a Roman army of seventy-two thousand men. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psa. 68. 17). "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The disciples had looked and hoped for a time when the Son of Man would come in the glory of his Kingdom attended by thousands of angels—and that time Jesus had told them was certain to come; but it was not yet. To strengthen their failing faith Jesus assured them that He had but to ask, and the heavenly legions would come to his aid—but He had no intention of asking. "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." (Luke 24. 26).

Surely though those legions were there already, like the angels at the time of Elisha's peril (2 Kings 6. 17) in their invisible hosts doing honour to the Son of God in the act of ensuring salvation for the world. How they must have watched and waited, and what a chorus of heavenly praise and exultation must have ascended to God when the defences of the grave were thrown down, and the One they knew and loved so well arose "in the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7. 16) never again to limit his glory to the limits of humanity. Resplendent in his resurrection body, the victorious King Who had vanquished the power of evil forever: with what joy must his ascension to the Throne of his Father have been attended!

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever'" (Rev. 5. 13).

UNTO THE PERFECT DAY

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

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

But we now are still at the beginning of the way; this three score years and ten of human life is our babyhood, as it were, our first introduction to the wonders of sentient sharing in God-given life in a God-given environment, the first perhaps of many of consistently widening range. For us the light is only just beginning to break through the gloom. And because we are still so immature and undeveloped in our powers of perception, it is difficult to comprehend the full sweep of this theme into eternity. Much easier it is to picture the shining light as encompassing the span of our earthly life with our fellows, and to think of the community with which our associations and

activities are bound up and the impact of that light upon that community. Especially is it true to think of that increasing light as the radiance of dispensational truth, the knowledge of the Divine plans in history, coming to truly dedicated Christians in this, so evidently the closing years of the Age, and destined still further to increase in brilliancy and clarity until it merges at last with the greater glory of the Messianic Kingdom. That is a true application of the Scriptural allusions in Prov. 4, but because it is not the full and final sense in which that text is used it cannot and does not take into account the purely local times of recession when, in the particular community, the light ceases to increase because the earlier impetus of that fellowship has spent itself. The passage of years, the non-fulfilment of expectations fondly held, the realisation that there is much more in the problem of existence and of God than was at one time thought, bring doubt and uncertainty to some as to the validity of the fellowship and its predominant theme.

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

of that work, have retained the radiance in their own hearts, yea, and will retain it until the end of their days. The organisation may be no more, the fellowship may seem to be in process of dissolving, but the individuals who are the true fruitage of such a work are progressing still in the light of that vision "unto the perfect day".

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the sandy plains of Mesopotamia, when Babylon flourished and Daniel administered affairs of State, there existed a road of another kind. The "Processional Way" it was called, and it traversed the principal districts of the city of Babylon from the gates of the Temple of the great god Marduk, past the king's palace, to the river. Once in every year there was a great festal occasion. The image of the god was brought out of his place in the Temple, placed upon a conveyance, and taken in solemn state along that Processional Way amid the cheers and admiration of the populace. Making gracious acknowledgements to the temples of the lesser gods as he passed them, accepting the homage of the king before the entrance to the palace, and paying his respects to that very important lady the goddess Ishtar, Queen of Heaven, as he went through the great gateway dedicated to her honour, he eventually arrived at the river Euphrates, was placed in the state barge, and continued his journey by river. He eventually arrived back at his own temple, was duly landed and restored to his accustomed position, where he remained for another year. He had a most interesting journey, saw a lot of interesting sights and met a great many interesting people. But at the end he was back where he started; he never got any farther.

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

at all.

"A people for a purpose." We want to remember that. The road we are treading will continue to shine more and more brightly until the perfect day if we remember all the time that we are called for a definite purpose which awaits the next Age for its full accomplishment. There is a goal toward which we are pressing and it is not attained in this life. The road we travel commences in darkness but it ends in light; that, after all, is the principle of God's creation. In Genesis the earth is without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep; but in Revelation the holy city is all radiant in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb,

and there is no night there. Isaiah told of the people who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, upon whom a great light shined and John announces the Lord Jesus as that light of the world which shone in darkness and the darkness could not contain it, and so the darkness was overpowered and swallowed up by it. So it will be with us if we resolutely press forward along this path of the just upon which our feet were once upon a time firmly planted, secure in the knowledge that no matter what may befall us in our earthly circumstances or our earthly fellowship, the light will continue to shine for us more and more brightly, "unto the perfect day".

JEWELS FOR THE LORD OF HOSTS

"They shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts in that day that I make up my jewels." (Mal. 3. 14).

Jewels are unfailing objects of fascination. Their varied colours, their scintillating brightness, their rarity and value arouse in most people an ardent desire for possession. One tiny diamond is dear to its proud owner, while an ornament of genuine gems puts its owner among the elite. Rubies, amethysts, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds, garnets and beryls, with their dark greens, their rich reds and deep purples, their soft yellows, their flashing facets of crystal beauty, form a rich and enviable treasure trove. The crowns of Kings, the robes of Emperors and the swords of conquerors have had first claim on these treasures from the coffer of the earth. Rich women have adorned themselves in their glittering array, for their brilliance they have bartered their honour and for their worth men have risked their lives.

Between them and common clay there is no resemblance, yet they are only forms of the same substances modified and crystallised, fashioned out of the same earth elements by the diversified wisdom and excellency of creative design and workmanship. The gem sparkles, small and infinitely radiant beside the handful of brown earth. There would appear to be no relationship between the two, yet the action of time, chemistry and skill, stored, one to adorn a high priest's breastplate, and kneaded the other into a crumbling surface that seed time and harvest should produce for millions their daily bread.

The adorable, varied, coveted beauty of the sparkling jewels, shaped, polished and set for the adornment and pomp of kings and courts are, in the eyes of God who gave them, a fitting picture of rare people whom He calls his jewels. As men have searched the earth for diamonds, emeralds and rubies, for every sort of precious stone, so the Almighty has searched among the human race his

power produced, for good women more precious than rubies, and good men, whose incorruptible principles of faith and honesty are more bright and enduring than the many faceted diamond.

Jewels for a king's crown, a diadem of beauty, a collection of the earth's choicest human gems, gathered through the centuries, as various and different as the twelve glowing stones which flashed on the breastplate of the High Priest of Israel, yet each one a stone of the first water. Men and women, born and bred in the earth, made and sustained by her elements, yet transformed by the alchemy of Divine influence into glowing, everlasting beauty.

With the eye of an expert, the God who is no respecter of persons has sought his gems in every clime, in every race, in every age. Like a connoisseur He protects and cares for his treasures, delighting in their beauty, setting the highest possible value upon them, awaiting the day when He can show them to the world. To an astonished and chastened world they will be his best rebuke, for the generations in their blindness, in their strange obsessions and their perverted preoccupations have both overlooked and often despised and rejected the good who are God's choice.

The world will then turn about, reversing its standard of values, seeing with wide open eyes things, events and people from the Divine standpoint. They will look on that beautiful assembly of the saints, sorry for the part they have played in the cutting and grinding of these gems of God's gathering, but delighted that they were found, perfected and chosen from among sons and daughters of men.

*"Like the stars of the morning,
His bright crown adorning
They shall shine in their beauty,
Bright gems for his crown."*

A PECULIAR TREASURE

*A consideration of
Divine purpose*

The Lord has called two particular peoples for himself—one under Moses, the other in Christ. Both are spoken of as a “peculiar people” and as a “treasure unto him”. The Psalmist says “*For the Lord hath chosen Jacob, Israel for his peculiar treasure*” (“*segullah*” *Psa. 135. 4*). Peter, addressing the Church, who have a “living hope” through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, says “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*” or as Rotherham translates it “*a people for a peculiar treasure*” (1 *Pet. 2. 9*). In due time both these peoples will be complete—“made up”. Speaking of these, the Lord, through the prophet, says “They shall be mine . . . in the day when I make up my jewels (“*my special treasure*” see *Jerem. Mal. 3. 17*).

When the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt by the hand of Moses they came in the third month to Sinai and camped before the mountain. Moses was commanded “tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, *if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant THEN ye shall be a peculiar treasure (segullah) unto me above all people*”. To this the people answered “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” (*Exod. 19. 3-8*). Moses was instructed to prepare them for the third day, when “the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people”. On that day there were thunderings, lightnings and thick cloud upon the mount, and the sound of a trumpet loud and long. Moses brought the people forth to meet with God. As they stood there before the mount “*the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the whole mount quaked greatly*”. At these manifestations of the Lord’s presence the people feared and trembled. It was here that they heard the “voice of the Lord” as He gave them the Ten Commandments (*Exod. 19. 10-25; 20. 1-21*). It was to this people who witnessed this manifestation of his presence that He said “IF ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant THEN shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me”.

When the time came to enter the promised land, Moses exhorted them to “take heed . . . lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen . . . and teach them to thy sons and to thy son’s sons . . . specially the day thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb”. They were to remember all that had happened there and not forget the commandments of the Lord, lest they corrupt themselves and fall away into idolatry. Otherwise they would be chastised and removed out of the land which they were about to possess, and scattered amongst the nations. They were to remember that “*the Lord hath taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him*

a people of inheritance” (*Deut. 4. 20* and context). Moses reminded Israel of their calling “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people (*segullah*; a special treasure) unto himself” (*Deut. 14. 2*). “And the Lord hath avouched (avowed) thee this day to be *his peculiar people*, as he hath promised and that thou should keep all his commandments” (*Deut. 26. 18, 19*). The blessings and benefits which would be theirs if they were obedient and the penalties for disobedience were clearly set forth for them by Moses (*Deut. 28. 1-68*). The story of Israel is one of repeated falling away from the way of the Lord, one of forgetfulness and disobedience. Yet there were always a few who loved the Lord their God and had his approval because of their faith.

After the reign of Solomon the people became two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Because of their continued apostasy and disregard of the servants of the Lord, Israel was taken out of the land by the Assyrians. (*2 Kings 17. 1-41*). Later, Judah, for the same reason, was taken into exile in Babylon. (*2 Chron. 36. 11-21*). As Jeremiah had said, the Lord opened the way for some to return to their own land after seventy years in Babylon. (*Jer. 29. 10*). Through the proclamation of “Cyrus king of Persia” all “*whose spirit the Lord had raised up*” left Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. After some delay the temple was completed and dedicated. (*Ezra 1-6*). Later, Ezra, “*a ready scribe*” went from Babylon with others taking free-will offerings to further the work at Jerusalem. There he learned that all was not well. The returned exiles had corrupted themselves with the people round about and had forgotten the covenant of the Lord their God. Ezra counselled the people to reform in order that the anger of their God be turned away from them. This they did in a solemn covenant. (*Ezra 7-10*).

Nehemiah, cup bearer to the king of Persia, heard that those who had gone to Jerusalem were in “*great affliction and reproach*”. The wall of the city was broken down and the gates burned with fire. He knew that their plight was due to their failure to remember God and his law. In answer to his prayers, and because the “good hand of God was upon him”, he was sent to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and restore the city. This he did in spite of much opposition from enemies, because, as he said, “*the God of heaven will prosper us*” and when finished, “*the work was wrought of God*”. The task completed, they gathered together to hear Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses, so that all could hear with understanding. In the same month they assembled with fasting and sackcloth to make

a covenant "to walk in God's law which was given by Moses".

Malachi, contemporaneous with Nehemiah, tells of the transgressions which called for reformation in Nehemiah's day. The people had fallen again into the same evil ways. They were reminded that God had chosen Jacob their father. They had forgotten this. They had no appreciation of his love and had lost all consciousness of their calling as the people of the Lord. The priests were denounced for their unworthy and contemptible offerings. They had departed from the way of the Lord and caused many to stumble at the law of God. They were as bad as their fathers and had not kept his ordinances. Called upon to return unto the Lord, they were not aware that they had gone away from him, and said "Wherein shall we return?" They were robbing God by neglecting the tithes and offerings due to him. If they would but keep their part the Lord would pour out upon them such a blessing that there would not be room to receive it. The curse upon the land would be removed and they would enjoy all the blessings promised under the covenant with them through Moses. The lack of these blessings testified to their apostasy. Instead of turning to the Lord they made excuses saying "it is vain to serve the Lord". But there were some who loved and feared the Lord. These spoke to each other about God and his ways. "And the Lord hearkened, and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (*segullah, special treasure*). Each faithful one was a "jewel" belonging to his special treasure. The Lord will have "a people of inheritance," his "holy nation" his "special treasure" when the faithful of all generations in Israel are gathered in "a better resurrection".

The Israelites at the time of the First Advent of our Lord were no better than the unfaithful generations before them, but as in the days of Malachi, there were some who loved the Lord and believed his word. These were "Israelites indeed". They received Jesus as Messiah, the one "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write" (John 1. 40-47). To these was given the great blessing of a new relationship to God, the blessing of sonship. (John 1. 11, 12). They had been members of the house of God under Moses but now became the first members of the house of God under Christ. They became partakers of a heavenly calling, extended to people of all nations; chosen in Christ. (Heb. 3. 1-16. Phil. 3. 14, 20, 21. Acts 15. 14. Gal. 3. 26-29). This call has not ended. Everyone who has "received him" and heeded the call to follow him, belongs to this chosen company. Peter speaks of these as "a chosen generation, a royal priest-

hood, a holy nation, a peculiar people (a people for a peculiar treasure" 1 Pet. 2. 9. see Rotherham). Each member is a "jewel" in the treasure which God has been preparing during this age. To these Paul says "For the favour of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath shone forth,—

putting us under discipline—

In order that—

Denying ourselves ungodliness and worldly covetings—

In a soberminded and righteous and godly manner we should live in the present age—

Prepared to welcome the happy hope and forthshining of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Christ—Jesus,—

Who gave himself up on our behalf,—

That he might redeem us from all manner of lawlessness,—

And purify for himself a people as his own treasure, zealous of noble works." (Tit. 2. 11-14. Rotherham).

The grace of God appeared over nineteen hundred years ago. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1. 15, 16). Jesus is the Saviour of all men. In him there is hope of deliverance for all in due time. (Rom. 5. 19-21; 8. 21). Those who have received him now have the blessed hope of his coming to receive them unto himself, as "his own treasure" (John 14. 1-3). In preparation for this there must be a teaching, a training, a disciplinary process. "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3. 1-3). Peter says "Therefore gird up your minds and fix your hopes calmly and unflatteringly upon the boon which is to be yours at the re-appearing of Jesus Christ." We have been redeemed and called to holiness. (1 Pet. 1. 13-21 Wey). As his peculiar people, his special treasure, we must be zealous of good works, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15. 58).

In this Christian dispensation there have been many professing Christians, but few have entered the "strait gate" and walked the "narrow way" (Matt. 7. 13, 14). Those who do so have a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ". Theirs is "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1. 2-4). This "treasure" will be completed in the First Resurrection when they will "be like him and see him as he is". They speak often to each other—they "forsake not the assembling together". They are looking for the day when they will be together for "ever with the Lord" as his own treasure, to possess the inheritance reserved in heaven.

Both these classes are chosen of God in the outworking of his glorious purpose to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth" (Eph. 1. 10).



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

"Go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people. Cast up the highway; gather out the stones: lift up a standard for the people" (Isa. 62, 10).

Isaiah's vision showed him the gateway of the new Age, the Messianic, swinging open to reveal that fair land which lay beyond, and in his ecstasy he cried out to his own people to enter quickly and prepare the way for the millions of mankind that were to follow. Preparation had to be made and the newcomers encouraged. Isaiah knew that his own people Israel were destined to play an important part in that preparation and encouragement when the time should come. What he did not know was that nearly three millenniums were to measure out their spans and a new people, the Christian Church of this present Age, also be present on the scene when at length the shouting millions would surge through that gateway. Not only purified Israel, but also the glorified Church, are to gather out the stones and lift up the standard.

We are accustomed to blame First Advent Israel for "knowing not the time of their visitation" and failing to measure up to their responsibility and duty when their Age was giving place to the Age of the Gospel. Are we so quick to realise that we in our turn, when this Gospel Age is giving place to the Messianic, have the same responsibility and duty? The gateway is swinging open; before long it will be time to call men to enter. What are we doing in the meantime to gather out the stones and lift up the standard? There are many in the Christian world to-day who look upon the apathy and unbelief of the masses and cry out for revival, but the basis for revival is all too often seen as little more than a profession of belief in the Lord Christ and conversion to a more moral life thereafter.

One tends to forget that true revival is powered by the dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit, and that in the context of this end-of-the-age period in which we live the Holy Spirit is to be "*poured out upon all flesh*"—when the gates of the Messianic era are opened and the work of world conversion really becomes effective. Our mission now, and one that we can neglect only to our own loss, is to do what we can, while those gates are in the act of opening, to gather out the stones of ignorance and misunderstanding concerning the Faith, and lift up the standard of the Divine Plan for man's salvation that some at least may hear, and heed, and believe, and be ready. After all, the commission to preach the Gospel to the whole creation has not yet been revoked. And the popular idea of Christianity is a travesty of the real thing.

NOTICES

Receipts for gifts. With the constantly increasing cost of postage, especially overseas, we feel that it is a better use of monetary gifts up to a certain amount that we do not send a receipted acknowledgment. The continued receipt of the BSM should assure the donor that the gift has been duly received and appreciated; if by any mischance we do fail to continue sending please do let us know and the error will speedily be rectified. In any case we do not delete anyone's name from the list until a considerable time, usually two years, has elapsed from last hearing.

In the light of this, therefore, please do not expect receipts for gifts below £10 in UK or 20 dollars overseas.

THE END OF THE WAY

No. 22 in a series of stories of St. Paul

If then Paul and his companions really did set foot on the streets of Porto Dubris (Dover) on that day in early A.D. 64 the Apostle must have been conscious that he had indeed at last reached the farthest end of the known world—the “*extremities of the west*” as the Romans called Britain at that time. This had to be the end of his journeying; after this he must retrace his steps to Antioch and home.

In practice, of course, if he came at all, he must have stayed some time, perhaps a year. As a Roman citizen he travelled under the protection of the armed might of Rome, and as he and Luke and Aristarchus passed out of the city gate of Dover and headed along Watling Street for the city of Londinium (London), the capital of Britain (the Romans had made Colchester the political capital but the British Queen Boadicea had put a stop to that four years earlier), they must have felt as much at home as in their native East. The relatively short journey of eighty miles, passing Canterbury and Rochester on the way, would mean nothing to these well seasoned travellers. On the third or perhaps the fourth day, still following the ancient Watling Street, they would cross the last sizeable stream at Crayford and commence the long five-mile ascent to the summit of Shooters Hill where a Roman garrison kept ward over the south-eastern approaches to the city.

From this vantage point Paul would have had his first view of London. Below him, four or five miles away, he could see the wide silver loops of the River Tamesis—the Thames—and on its northern bank the city itself, a city of traffickers and merchants. Paul's custom was to concentrate on the commercial centres, and as he traversed the last few miles and crossed the bridge which even then spanned the river where London Bridge now stands he must have been eager to commence his witness, here in this strange land, to the Gospel which was the passion of his life.

If thus he entered London there is nothing improbable in the tradition that he preached on Ludgate Hill, where St. Paul's Cathedral now stands. From time immemorial it has been a sacred spot. In later Roman times a Temple to Diana was built there; in Paul's day it was sacred to the British god Lud—the name London is derived from “Lud's city”—and the impulse which led him to stand on Mars Hill in Athens would direct him similarly here. From London he would have travelled the country—Colchester, St. Albans, Leicester, Lincoln, Chester, Worcester, Bath, Lewes, Chichester, Dorchester, Exeter—; these were the chief cities of Roman Britain—nothing definite or dogmatic can be affirmed except the known fact

that Christianity was in Britain before AD 40 and Paul must in that case have found Christians ready for his ministry. His travels through the country would have consisted in part of a missionary tour similar to those of his earlier years, setting up little groups of converts from the primitive British paganism and the later Roman idolatry which was beginning to permeate the land, and in part of sessions with the Celtic Christian communities which had been growing in numbers during the previous few decades, to instruct and confirm them in the faith. He must, too, have had considerable contact with the native British priesthood, the Druids, whose elevated faith, so much purer than the Roman idolatry with which he had heretofore had so much to do, would have been much nearer to his own and enabled him to find some common ground. (The old 19th century idea that the Druids were a set of bloodthirsty sadists who ruled by terror, first mooted by the Romans who tried to exterminate them, has long since been exploded.) All in all, the Apostle might well have found one of his most promising fields of labour here in this outpost of the Empire.

He must have had his difficulties. The country was still in a state of war with Rome. Since the invasion some twenty years earlier the Britons had put up a stout resistance and the war went on for many years after Paul himself had finished his course. At this time the Roman commanders Aulus Plautius and Vespasian—future Emperor of Rome—with their troops were finding the conquest of the island a well-nigh hopeless task. Paul's earlier missionary journeys had been undertaken in countries enjoying the benefits of a Roman peace; here it was a case of preaching the Gospel of Christ against a background of continuing war. Perhaps that very fact was one of the causes leading to the rapid spread of the faith in Britain, and, too, the continuing adherence to the original Apostolic faith manifested in later years when the doctrines of the Roman church came to this country with St. Augustine. Be all this as it may, there has been an independence in the British understanding of the Christian faith which was manifested in the Reformation and the subsequent rise of the Protestant faith and endures still.

The missionaries could go no farther, for there was nowhere else to go. They had reached the end of the known world; beyond this land lay nothing but raging seas, intense cold and Stygian darkness in which dwelt monsters and horrors unimaginable. At least that was what the geographers of their day told them. This was the end of the outward journey; it was time to set course for home.

At some time in A.D. 65, it might be, the valiant three were on another vessel heading across the Channel for Gaul. The seed had been sown and watered; they must leave the increase thereof to God.

As they returned through Gaul to Lyons they may have met travellers who told them of dark happenings in Rome, of the great Fire which in the summer just past had virtually destroyed the city, that the Christians had been blamed, of the scenes of persecution and martyrdom which were being enacted. There may even have been some of the Roman Christians who had escaped the holocaust, taking refuge with the believers at Lyons; if such there were, the missionaries would learn that the Apostle Peter had proved a tower of strength to the Church in Rome during this time of trial, John Mark and Silvanus still there with him, as yet unhurt. Perhaps at that point Paul realised that the quiet days were over and the time of testing had begun. Perhaps already the shadow of his own approaching end fell across his mind.

From Lyons the route would take them across Northern Italy and through Dalmatia and Illyricum towards Greece. Here at last Paul could meet with companies of converts he had made on previous journeys and here we begin to find Scriptural clues to his movements. 1 Tim. 1. 3 is best understood by supposing that upon leaving the borders of Illyricum he headed across Macedonia to Berea from where he sent a message to Timothy urging him to remain at Ephesus; perhaps Aristarchus left him here and went home to Thessalonica near by and later went on to Ephesus with the message. From here Paul could get a ship to Crete, where he seems to have found Titus, unless he met Titus at Berea and took him along. After a stay in Crete he returned to the Greek mainland and made his way to Nicopolis on the west coast where he had decided to spend the winter (Titus 3, 12), which must have been the winter of A.D. 65, doubtless spending some time with the churches at Cenchrea and Corinth on the way. At this time the First Epistle to Timothy and that to Titus were written and despatched. With the advent of springtime—this desire of Paul to “lay up” for the winter, so unlike his old self, is an indication that the weight of years was beginning to tell—he set out for the churches of Macedonia—Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi—thus at last fulfilling his promise in Phil. 2. 24. Thence he took ship to Troas in Asia and did so probably feeling that he had seen his fellow-believers in Greece for the last time. So far the journey had gone according to plan and within another year he would have re-visited all the Asiatic churches and come to rest at last in his home church at Antioch. After meeting with the brethren at Troas he would have had a few

days' sea voyage along the coast to Miletus and then a forty-mile journey overland to Ephesus, where he would at last meet his beloved Timothy from whom he had been separated the past four years. Next to Antioch, Paul had had more to do with Ephesus than any other centre and it must have been with quickening anticipation that he looked for the reunion in the familiar city.

But Paul never went to Ephesus and he never saw Timothy. Troas was the last place where he was to know freedom.

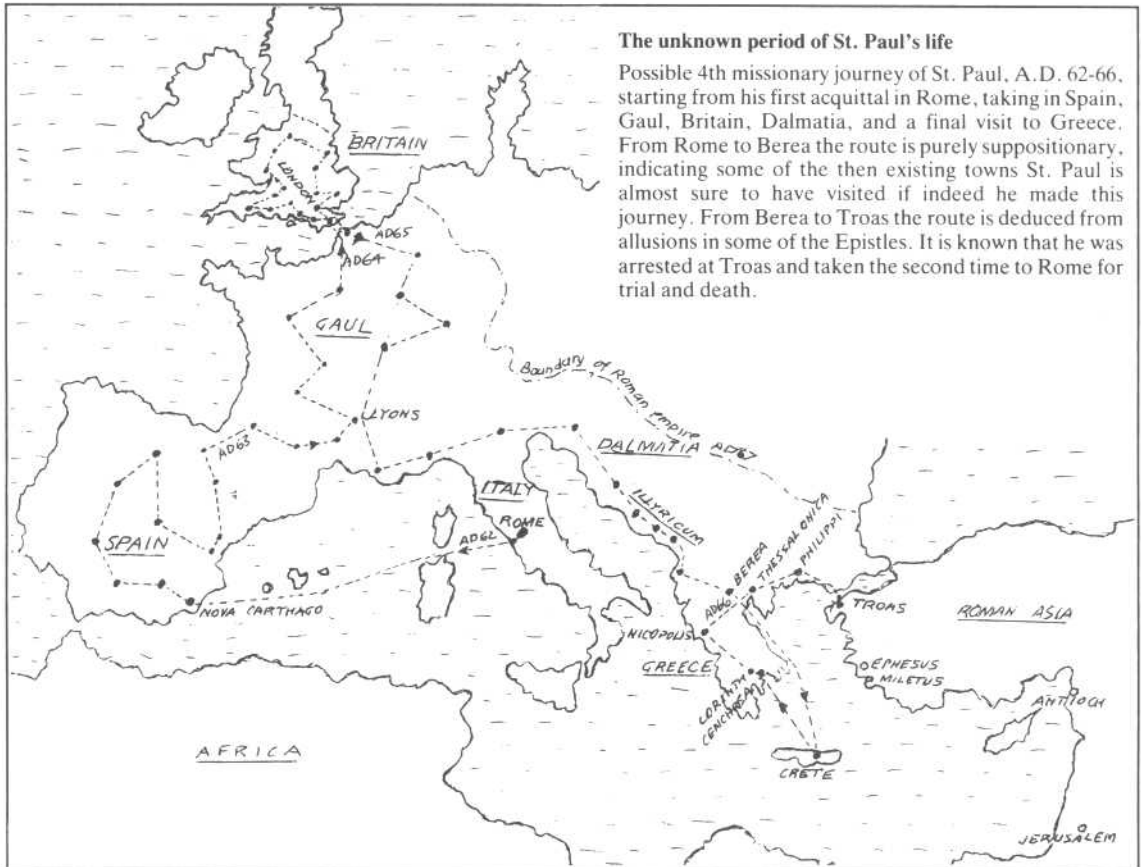
Just what happened is obscure. It is fairly clear that he was apprehended by the authorities either at Troas or at Miletus, a hundred and fifty miles down the coast. In the Second Epistle to Timothy, written from his prison in Rome, he asks for the cloak and books and parchments which he left with Carpus at Troas to be brought to him, from which it has been inferred that his arrest was so sudden he had no time to collect his personal belongings. In the same Epistle he tells how Trophimus had to be left behind at Miletus, being sick, from which it is plain that although only forty miles from Ephesus he did not visit the city or have any communication with the believers there, and that can only be accounted for by supposing that upon touching at Miletus he was already in custody. It is probable therefore that he was arrested at Troas and taken to Rome by sea, the vessel calling at Miletus on the way, but that Paul was not allowed to contact any of the Ephesian believers.

A few weeks later he was in prison at Rome, awaiting trial. The nature of the charge is unknown but since Paul's last appearance the situation had changed. The Neronian persecution of the Christians lasted only six months in A.D. 64 but its effects were still felt. Christianity was now an illegal religion and any Christian was an object of suspicion. The fact that Paul was an acknowledged leader among them was in itself a factor in ensuring an adverse verdict. In addition he was a Jew, and Jews also were now anathema at Rome. Judea was in open rebellion against the Empire and at this very time, or at most but a few months later, Rome had been infuriated by a great military catastrophe. The Twelfth Legion under Cestius Gallus, with auxiliary forces totalling twenty thousand men, had been defeated by the Jews defending Jerusalem, pursued to Beth-horon (where in time past Joshua defeated the Canaanites), and ruthlessly massacred. Six thousand Romans perished and the rest only escaped by headlong flight. It was one of the greatest disasters Roman arms had ever suffered and Rome was eager to avenge herself. The consequence was the despatch of Vespasian from Britain to Judea and the war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These happenings would have made

matters no easier for the Apostle. The Christian expectation that the Second Advent was at hand and their dire predictions of the imminent fall of Rome before the coming King were taken by the authorities as incitement to rebellion. In all probability the charge against Paul was one of treason, and in the then state of public and official opinion the verdict was an almost foregone conclusion.

Paul arrived in Rome in late A.D. 66 or early 67. He seems to have had two trials, the first one resulting in a remand for a season. Probably the assessors were unable to agree on the evidence and

"he . . . was not ashamed of my chain, but when he was in Rome he sought me out very diligently, and found me". The defection of Demas is noted with sadness: Demas who had been with him for so long. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica". A world of tragedy lies in those regretful words! Perhaps the terrors of the persecution had been too much for Demas and he had slipped quietly away. Titus had been sent to Dalmatia and Crescens to Gaul (not Galatia as in the A.V.). These two missions tend to support the view of the



The unknown period of St. Paul's life

Possible 4th missionary journey of St. Paul, A.D. 62-66, starting from his first acquittal in Rome, taking in Spain, Gaul, Britain, Dalmatia, and a final visit to Greece. From Rome to Berea the route is purely suppositional, indicating some of the then existing towns St. Paul is almost sure to have visited if indeed he made this journey. From Berea to Troas the route is deduced from allusions in some of the Epistles. It is known that he was arrested at Troas and taken the second time to Rome for trial and death.

the case was put back. This was the time at which he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy. He told Timothy of the ineffective first trial (ch. 4. 16) but was under no illusion as to the ultimate outcome. He knew that his time was come and he was ready. His one desire was to see his adopted son once more before he died. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me" he pleaded, and again "Do thy diligence to come before winter". That must have meant the winter of A.D. 67. Onesiphorus of Ephesus had visited him in Rome during his imprisonment and he noted this with gratitude;

journey here described; if Paul had recently evangelised Gaul and Dalmatia it is characteristic of him that he should now send two of his helpers to follow up the progress of the faith in those regions. "Only Luke is with me." Luke, faithful Luke, remained with the Apostle in his last days and did not leave Rome until it was all over. Tradition says he afterwards preached in Gaul, and finally settled in Bithynia on the shores of the Black Sea, where he died twenty years later. It may be questioned how Luke himself escaped the notice of the authorities in his close association

with the accused man; probably the fact that he was a Greek, and a physician apparently in constant professional attendance upon Paul, diverted suspicion. The Roman church was in close fellowship with the Apostle and he sends greetings from Linus the bishop or "elder" of the Church, and from Pudens and Claudia. Claudia was a British princess, daughter of the British king Caracac (Roman name Caractacus), who had been the mainstay of British resistance to Roman domination until he was betrayed into their hands and sent to Rome with his daughter to be kept as hostages. In Rome she married Rufus Pudens, whom she had previously known when he was a military officer serving in Britain. The sister of Caractacus, Gladys, had when in Britain married the Roman commander Aulus Plautius, and was now in Rome also. The whole family, being Christian, were in fellowship with Paul during both his sojourns in Rome.

But the sands were running out, and the busy pen was laid down. With the Second Epistle to Timothy, written some time in the summer of A.D. 67, the written word comes to an end. After that there is nothing but the memory of the Church, the recollections of men like Clement and Linus, who were there at the time and knew what happened, and handed down what they knew to succeeding generations of believers, the recollection growing fainter and less definite as the years passed.

Paul appeared before the tribunal. A few months previously St. Peter had been put to death in Rome after leading the Church fearlessly

through the persecution, and Mark had then returned to Ephesus. Now it was Paul's turn. Whatever the considerations which had given rise to doubts of his guilt at the first hearing, there was no hesitancy this time. The death sentence was passed. Paul's Roman citizenship saved him from the crucifixion which had been Peter's lot; he was to suffer beheading. Towards the end of A.D. 67 or early in 68 the valiant heart came to rest.

Did Timothy and Mark reach him in time? No one knows. They certainly must have made the attempt. When Timothy received the letter they probably had four or five months in which to reach Rome, long enough for the purpose. Perhaps, at the last, the Apostle's tired eyes did light up at the sight of these whom, with Luke, he probably loved more than any others of his fellow-labourers.

Then it was all over. An old tradition says that he was taken to a place outside the city and there led aside a few paces. The executioner stepped forward; a swift movement, and the man who had never wavered in his steadfastness to the Master he had served since the day of that vision on the Damascus road came to the end of the way.

"For I am now ready to be offered,

And the time of my departure is at hand.

I have finished the course,

I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing".

(THE END)

A Parable of Date-stones

The great city of Babylon was once the metropolis of the world—its merchandise was renowned among all nations. But the proud city was a city of sin, and Divine condemnation came upon it. The fiery words of the prophets regarding Babylon are familiar to all of us, and in fulfilment of those words, the site of Babylon has now, for thousands of years, lain desert and derelict, the proud buildings levelled with the ground, the wonderful gardens and parklands dry and sterile, and wild beasts the only signs of life.

In recent years there has been a change—date-palms are springing up everywhere over the ground that is ruined Babylon. During the archaeological excavations in the early part of this century, dates formed the staple food of the native labourers, and the stones, thrown down haphazardly, have taken root and begun to clothe the desert with living green.

The date palm was the most valuable product of ancient Babylonia, providing food, several kinds

of drink made from the juice of the fruit, timber for building, and fibre for many other uses. This is the tree which is depicted as the "tree of life" in Babylonian and Assyrian legend and sculpture. How appropriate then that upon the very site of the city which above all cities stands for the reign of evil, there should now be springing up "trees of life", as a result of the work of men who have been busy there proving the Bible true.

During this Age the earnest consecrated followers of Jesus have been sowing seed—the seed of the Kingdom—and soon it will be springing into life in the very soil of the reign of evil, the hearts of fallen men, called at last to rise up from the ruins of this "present evil world", and see it transformed into a "world wherein dwelleth righteousness". The seed sown to-day will become trees of life in the Millennial Age just as those date-stones dropped in the ground of ruined Babylon are clothing the waste place with living green. *"The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."*

MIRIAM

Miriam was the elder sister of Moses and is chiefly celebrated for the part she played when the daughter of Pharaoh found the infant Moses in the bulrushes. She was at that time a young girl, anxious only for the welfare of her baby brother; in later life she appears, in the only two incidents in which she figures, as a somewhat passionate and militant woman. Scanty as is the information regarding her, there are a few deductions possible which can be of interest and perhaps profit.

Miriam was born during the period of the Oppression, when the Egyptians, perturbed at the phenomenally rapid increase of the alien people in their midst, enslaved them and "*made their lives bitter with hard bondage*" (Exod. 1. 14). Thothmes I, the Pharaoh of the Oppression, had issued an edict that all male children born to Israelites were to be thrown into the river; this was an effort to halt the increase in numbers, thought to endanger the native population. Moses' mother had not complied with the command; instead she placed the babe in a boat made of papyrus reeds and consigned him to the providence of God. And it was in that providence that the daughter of Pharaoh, going down to the river to bathe, found him.

The daughter of Thothmes I was the famous Hat-shep-sut, known to history as a vigorous and determined woman who was married successively to Thothmes II and Thothmes III but arrogated their duties as Pharaoh to herself. For some forty years she was the real ruler of Egypt and under her firm and far-sighted administration the country flourished. At the time of Moses' birth, however, her father was still Pharaoh and she herself about twenty-one years of age, married to the weakling future Thothmes II and already despairing of having any children by him. This fact may explain her action in adopting the infant Moses as her own son.

Miriam was about sixteen or seventeen at the time. The word used to describe her in Exodus 2 is *almah*, which means a young girl of marriageable age. Lingered near by, "*to wit what would be done to him*", Miriam watched as the Egyptian princess had the child brought to her, saw that, in her own words "*this is one of the Hebrews' children*", and determined to keep it for herself. In so doing she must have known that she was transgressing her father's edict, but this determination on her part is quite consistent with the headstrong and self-willed character of Hat-shep-sut as it is known to history, as is also her adoption of a Hebrew child rather than a native one.

Here was Miriam's opportunity, and the first indication that she was not lacking in qualities of courage and initiative. It probably needed both in good measure for a young girl of the despised slave

caste to accost and address the leading lady of the land, the daughter of Pharaoh herself. But Miriam was equal to the occasion; she suggested to the princess that she should secure the services of a Hebrew woman to nurse the child until it was of a suitable age to be introduced into the royal palace. Her offer was accepted and of course Miriam fetched her own mother, who thereby had her son restored to her and his life saved. She probably had him for two or three years and then his adoptive mother took him into her own care and began to groom him for royal honours, and his own mother saw him no more. It does not appear that Hat-shep-sut's husband was consulted about all this, but Thothmes II was a physical weakling completely dominated by his wife and the fact that he was unable to give her a son himself probably supplied her with an unanswerable argument.

At this point Miriam drops out of the story and the next glimpse we have of her is eighty years later, at the deliverance of Israel in the crossing of the Red Sea. Much had happened in the meantime. Moses, grown to manhood, had repudiated his royal status and associated himself with his oppressed kinsfolk, in consequence of which he had spent forty years in exile. Hat-shep-sut had been dead for forty years, Amen-hotep II, another obstinate ruler, was now Pharaoh, and he with his people had just suffered the disasters of the Ten Plagues culminating in the loss of his cavalry in the waters of the Red Sea. The Israelites were safe on the other side. And Miriam, who had spent her entire life of some ninety-seven years under conditions of slavery and oppression, now took a timbrel in her hand and led the women of Israel in dancing and song. The song—a fine example of what is called a "taunt song", peculiar to the Old Testament—is given in full in Exod. 15. "*Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;*" she sang: "*the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*" Lest it be thought rather improbable that a woman of ninety-seven should be physically capable of leading the dance, let it be remembered that the normal life-span in the days of Miriam was considerably longer than it is now, anything up to a hundred and forty years. Not only Biblical characters but also Egyptian and Babylonian notables, as demonstrated by ancient records and tomb inscriptions, attest this fact. She was evidently considered the foremost woman in Israel in consequence of the position of Moses her brother as the acknowledged leader of the nation.

At the time of this incident she is referred to as "*Miriam the prophetess*" (Exod. 15. 20). This must certainly indicate that during the dark days of the Oppression she had been a stalwart defender of the

Faith. Whilst little is known of Israel's spiritual condition during those times, it is clear that faith and belief in God was at a low ebb. Of some twenty or so persons of Miriam's time who are named in the histories only about three—Aaron her brother, Hur of Judah and Joshua the son of Nun, figure as men of God, whilst at least seven—Dathan, Abiram, On, Korah, Achan, Nadab and Abihu—appear in some one or other deed of apostasy. It does seem that the family of Amram and Jochebed—Miriam, Aaron and Moses—stand out as rather unique in their zealous faith and it might well be that whilst Moses was in exile in Midian those forty years his sister was a tower of strength to the Hebrew community and kept alive what little faith there was in Israel. There might be a wonderfully inspiring but for ever unknown story of militant heroism and stalwart faith hidden away behind those apparently casual words "Miriam the prophetess".

Jewish tradition—not supported by the Old Testament—has it that Miriam married Hur, of the tribe of Judah, the man who shared with Aaron the duty of second in rank to Moses in affairs of State (see Exod. 24. 14). The supposition is not unlikely; they were very possibly of much the same age and the evident fact that Hur was a trusted lieutenant to Moses implies his close personal connection with the family. If these two were indeed husband and wife it would follow as a matter of interest that Miriam was the grandmother both of Bezaleel, the constructor of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and of Caleb, who with Joshua brought back the true report in the matter of spying out the land, and was specially honoured of God in consequence. In such case the marriage must have taken place while Moses was still a youth, since Caleb was forty years old at the Exodus, so that one could imagine this trio comprising Aaron, Hur and Miriam closely associated together in working for the welfare of Israel during the whole forty years of Moses' exile in Midian.

All that was now in the past and Israel was delivered. Little more than a year later, not long after the momentous happenings at Sinai, where Moses had been manifestly revealed as the intermediary between God and Israel, another side to Miriam's character was thrown open to view. Jealousy, naked and unashamed, brought her into conflict not only with the brother she had worked with so long a time, but also the God she had served so faithfully since childhood. The story is related in Num. 12. 1-16.

"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian (Cushite) woman he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only to Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the

Lord heard it" (Num. 12. 1-2). This is the first indication of a rift in the association between these three. Moses was accustomed to challenges against his authority from others jealous of his position or apprehensive of the unknown terrors of the journey to Canaan and desirous in consequence of returning to Egypt, but now he was faced with a challenge from his own brother and sister, themselves highly esteemed in the eyes of the people. The trouble focused on the wife of Moses. Miriam and Aaron professed to object to the fact that she was not a native Israelite. There is something a little odd in the accepted text here in that, in the A.V. she is called an Ethiopian woman whereas the earlier history of Exodus tells the full story of Moses' marriage, whilst in exile in Midian, to Zipporah, the Midianite daughter of Reuel the tribal chief who sheltered Moses. "Ethiopian" is the Greek equivalent of "Cushite", children of Cush, and there were Cushite tribes in Arabia as well as Africa so that the contradiction may in fact be more apparent than real. At any rate, Moses' wife was not of the house of Israel, and although the fact had apparently not aroused any animosity before, it seems to have done so now when the host was well on its way to the Promised Land.

Very possibly it was the old question "Who shall succeed the ruler?" Moses was at the moment the unquestioned leader of the nation. At eighty years of age he was in the full vigour of manhood, a usual thing in those days. But one day he would die; upon whom would the mantle of authority then descend? He had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, but they were only half Israelite; their mother was a Midianite. Aaron, as the next in authority, was married to Elisheba, of the tribe of Judah, and he had four sons. Jacob, dying, had indicated Judah as the future royal tribe. Surely a man having the blood of Judah and Levi in his veins would be the more appropriate leader of Israel! If in fact Miriam was married to Hur, as the legend claims, then here again, since Hur also was of Judah, the sons of Hur, Uri and Jephunneh, could make the same claim. Here, it seems were all the ingredients of a fight over the future leadership and Miriam seems to have taken the initiative; her name is mentioned in front of Aaron in this, and only in this, instance. Maybe the question of Moses' wife was just the immediate excuse; the militant and probably domineering character of Miriam was no longer content to remain in a subordinate position; she aspired to equality of status with Moses, and Aaron her brother, who is revealed in the incident of the Golden Calf as being easily led, was persuaded to go along with her. If the three of them could be accepted as a triumvirate ruling Israel, then when the time came that a successor to Moses' office was necessary it would be easy to ensure that

a scion of the house of Judah would be chosen and the sons of the Midianite woman cast out. That, perhaps, was the reasoning which lay behind this rather unpleasant incident.

And, of course, in all this reasoning Miriam and Aaron quite forgot that it was the Lord who appointed Moses in the first place and would doubtless be equally positive about the appointment of his successor.

They were quickly reminded of that fact when the Lord came on the scene. This is one of the occasions of what is called a theophany, a visible appearance of God. The narrative says that the Lord appeared visibly in human form and talked with them. Whatever may be the truth of that or the reality behind the story, the pair were left in no doubt of the Lord's attitude. "How dare you" He demanded "speak against my servant Moses?" "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed . . . and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow."

That instantaneous infliction of the dreaded disease, leprosy, brought about a quick reaction. Miriam must have been numbed with horror. She, the first lady of the nation, esteemed a prophetess of God, now and henceforth condemned to live the rest of her life an outcast, forbidden entry to the camp of Israel or to share in its life, trailing along on the outskirts as the people journeyed and living apart with such other equal unfortunates as there were, dependent for food and livelihood upon the thought and charity of the people! The pride and militancy of her nature must have vanished in a flash and left her crushed and broken. The question of equality with Moses, of authority over

Israel, was no longer of any importance; for her, life was finished.

Aaron, equally horror-stricken, was imploring Moses for mercy. "My lord," he said, now freely acknowledging the superior status of his brother which a few minutes ago he had denied, "we have done foolishly . . . we have sinned". He begged that Miriam might be healed, and Moses, doubtless genuinely concerned at his sister's plight, and feeling that the lesson had almost certainly been thoroughly learned, cried unto the Lord "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee". And the Lord, looking down and perceiving that the lesson had indeed been learned, assented and healed her—but stipulated that she should be shut out of the camp and isolated as unclean for seven days before resuming normal life, just to impress the point. It is perhaps reasonable to expect, because Miriam was after all a devoted and fervent servant of the God of Israel, that she came back into the camp a humbled and chastened woman, the old militancy and self-assurance tempered by a new spirit of willing submission to the overruling wisdom of God.

That is all we know of Miriam. Forty years later, on the eve of entry into the land, after enduring with Israel all the hardships and terrors of that long sojourn in the "waste and howling wilderness", she died at Kadesh, on the frontier of the Promised Land, at the ripe old age of about a hundred and thirty-seven. She did make one bad mistake, but after all she was a woman of faith, and without much doubt is included in the gallery of stalwarts who, to use the language of Heb. 11, "received a good report through faith" and will in no wise fail their place in the future purposes of God.

ST. PETER'S FISH

*A strange story
of Jesus*

One of the New Testament stories that some times provokes a smile is that of the fish with a silver coin in its mouth. Peter, approached by the appropriate officials for the customary Temple tribute money, referred the matter to Jesus, who told him to go down to the lake (of Galilee) and cast a line. His first catch would have a silver coin in its mouth which he was to use for the tribute money. The story is found in Matt. 17. 24-27. In fact there is today a species of fish in the Sea of Galilee called the musht, alternatively known as St. Peter's fish, the male of which habitually carries its young in its mouth, and at times substitutes a small stone or other object, being especially attracted to anything bright or shining. It has been known thus to carry coins. This aspect of the story is thereby vindicated. (The musht is specially reared in quantity nowadays in Israel for commercial food production.)

Jesus knew from a distance, which may have been a mile or so and could not have been less than a goodly number of yards—He was in the lakeside town of Capernaum at the time—that a particular fish was swimming about in the lake at that moment with a coin in its mouth. Perhaps He exerted the power necessary to bring it into contact with Peter's line. That should not be thought incredible in a day when men can see with their own eyes what is happening in a space-craft orbiting two hundred miles above the earth, and control the movement of that space-craft by touching a few buttons. There is no physical link of sight and touch between the controller on earth and the space-craft above; the power by which the wonder is accomplished is an invisible electrical energy which men have learned to employ. If men can do that, why balk at the idea that Christ, who came from God, whence is the source of all energy,

should do the same? One of the fruits of man's increasing knowledge of the powers behind Nature's operations is the realisation that so many 'incredible' stories of olden time are not so fantastic after all: they rest on principles which were formerly undreamed of by man but now are beginning to be understood.

This aspect of the story is, however, the least important. Of greater moment is Jesus' reason for the action. Why employ such an apparently elaborate and spectacular way of producing the tribute money when just one coin from the disciples' admittedly slender store would have met the need? There is evidently more behind the story than at first sight appears.

First of all, the background. "*Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute,*" asked Jesus of Peter "*of their own children, or of strangers?*" "*Of strangers*" responded Peter. He knew, only too well, the practice of conquering powers like Rome, who taxed their subject nations and occupied territories rather than their own peoples. "*Then are the children free*" said Jesus; free citizens of the Empire do not pay tax. But Jesus was not declaring himself and his disciples free citizens of Rome. He had already, on a previous occasion, told his hearers to "*render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's*". The tribute money now in question was a levy made upon all Jews for the upkeep of the Temple; it was an ecclesiastical tax and nothing to do with Rome. This is made apparent by the words used. The tribute money due to Rome was a "penny"—the denarius. The tribute demanded of Peter in Matt. 17. 24 was the didrachma, the half-shekel or "shekel of the sanctuary" worth two denarii and this indicates that it is the Temple tax that was in question. The "piece of money" from the fish's mouth in vs. 27 was a stater, equal to two didrachma, sufficient for Peter and his Master. Hence Jesus' words in vs. 27 "*give unto them for me and thee*". As a silver coin the stater was about equivalent to the English half-crown but to obtain the same purchasing power today one would have to spend several pounds.

There had been a celebrated dispute between

the Pharisees and the Sadducees as to whether this Temple tax should be compulsory or voluntary, and after lengthy discussion in the Sanhedrin the Pharisee party had won the day—the tax was made compulsory. It is quite possible that Jesus was alluding to this dispute and showing that the Pharisees, in imposing a compulsory tax on the people, were no better than their Roman overlords. In theory, every Israelite was a child of God, a Freeman of the Commonwealth of Israel, and his offerings to God were traditionally to be "*of his own voluntary will*" which is the formula used in the instructions for the Levitical rituals as laid down in the Book of Leviticus. Now the Pharisees had destroyed that spontaneous basis and substituted the rule of law. "*The children are free*" said Jesus. Every man of Israel should be free to bring his monetary offering for the upkeep of the Temple as his heart inspired him. The question which the tribute-collectors had asked Peter was therefore eminently improper.

It would seem therefore that Jesus could have evaded the tax by quoting the original Levitical law. This He did not do. What the Pharisees demanded as a right He extended to them as a gift. "*Lest we offend* ("scandalise") *them . . .*" was the expression He used. He would not use his knowledge of the Mosaic Law to avoid a payment which was exacted out of his fellows anyway. And here, perhaps comes the real point of the story. The scanty store of money He and his disciple possessed was contributed by the poor to whom He ministered and by his followers among the people, who "*ministered unto him of their substance*". (Luke 8. 3). He would not use their offerings, given for the sustenance of his little band of disciples, to meet this impost. This was a case where He could appropriately call upon the wealth of his Father in Heaven, who owns all the gold and silver, and all the treasures of earth. Hence this exercise of his extra-human power in discerning the whereabouts of that silver stater and his instructions to Peter to go and catch that fish. In a very real sense the Father paid the tribute-money for the Son.

"*Ye shall be my witnesses . . .*" was the promise given by our Lord to those who were with him before his Ascension. So often these words are interpreted to mean that the Apostles would become preachers of the Word, but such interpretation is only part of the whole meaning of witness. Instead of confining the idea of "witness" to the evidence given in a court of law, we should remember that we use the word in other senses, as,

for instance, when we speak of a spectator as a witness. Probably the best sense of the word, however, as far as Christianity is concerned, is that implied by the Psalmist when he says, of the moon, that it is "a faithful witness in heaven". That celestial body witnesses to the sun by reflecting the light of the sun. The Christian's duty, therefore, is to reflect his Lord, and to be the faithful witness of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

There are laws of rightdoing and equity which cannot be broken without incurring grave consequences. The prospect before men in the life to come is one of constantly widening experience and deepening knowledge of God and his creation, but that life must be conducted in harmony with right principles to be sustained by the Giver of all life. The violation of those principles is called "sin" by the Bible, and the consequence of continued and incorrigible sin, the Bible declares, is cessation of life. A wise man of Old Testament days expressed this vital law in pithy words "*As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death*"; "*In the way of righteousness there is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death*" (Prov. 11. 19; 12. 28). St. Paul said that "*the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life*" (Rom. 6. 23). This is the basis upon which is built the Scriptural doctrine of the consequences of sin.

The term "everlasting punishment" appears in the Authorised Version only once, in Matt. 25. 46. Human ideas of "punishment", usually involving an element of revenge, reprisal or retaliation, are not what the New Testament means when it deals with the consequences of sin. A preferable term is penalty, or better still, retribution. The underlying principle is laid down by St. Paul in Gal. 6. 7 "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*". A passage in the Epistle of James puts the case very clearly: "*Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death*" (Jas. 1. 14-15 RSV). The penalty must not be looked upon as a kind of arbitrary Divine retaliation against rebels who displease him, it is rather the logical and inevitable operation of natural law which demands that every disorderly or disruptive element must eventually be eliminated that the purpose of God in creation be realised in the happiness and fulness of life of every living being. The fact that we see not yet this law bringing forth its final results does not deny its truth; humanity is at this moment still in the early stages of that long experience which is at length to achieve that end. The close of this present life in the death of the body is only an incident in this long process and there is more, much more, to come. Eventually it will be evident that sin bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction and the sinner who will not renounce his rebellion against God signs his own death warrant.

The Bible emphasises that eventually evil and sin will disappear from creation. In the whole wide realm of Divine government there will be no such

thing as evil and no such thing as sin. In 1 Cor. 15. 24-28 St. Paul looks forward to a time when the enemies of God have been overthrown, death has become a thing of the past, and in the plenitude of his sovereignty God has become "all in all". Eph. 1. 9-10 (RSV) stresses that God will, at the end, "*unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth*". In what is perhaps one of the grandest flights of eloquence in the New Testament, the Epistle to the Philippians speaks of the time to come when "*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*" (Phil. 2. 9-10). These and other lines of Scripture argument make clear that evil will eventually cease to be.

All life is the gift of God; no created being can continue to live except by the power of God constantly animating his bodily frame and enlivening his mind. "*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*" says the Genesis account (Gen. 2. 7), "*and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*". If that flow of life-power ceases, or if God withdraw it, death results, consciousness ends, and the inert body returns to the elements of which it is composed "ashes to ashes, dust to dust". In a vivid passage relating to the animal creation the Psalmist defines the process; "*thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust*" (Psa. 104. 29). Hope for a man's future life after death rests entirely with God, who can invest that life with a new body adapted to its new environment; this is what is involved in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. St. Paul in 2 Cor. 5 talks of being "*clothed upon*" with a "*house from heaven*" following the dissolution of "*our earthly house of this dwelling-place*". The relation between such a resurrection to everlasting life and the contrasting destiny of the obdurately evil is laid down very plainly by our Lord when He said "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (Jno. 3. 36).

In line with this principle the Scriptures present the ultimate end of the sinner as withdrawal of the gift of life. If, at the end, sin and evil are to be no more, if all intelligent life in every sphere is to bow the knee to Jesus and give praise and worship to him, then there must come a time when sinners are no more. Says Job "*they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed*" (Job 4. 8-9). "*He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love*

death" runs Prov. 8. 36. The two prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel unite in the terse declaration "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Jer. 31. 30, Ezek. 18. 4). David adds his word "*The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth*" (Psa. 34. 14), and puts the responsibility squarely where it belongs in the brief maxim "*Evil shall slay the wicked*" in verse 21 of the same Psalm. These are not just a few casual observations having no particular authority behind them; they are expressions of a fundamental truth which these men, and others like them, being men of God profoundly influenced by his Holy Spirit, fully understood and held tenaciously. These writings form the true basis of Christian theology and must be given due heed on that account; they insist that the penalty for sin is withdrawal of life, the ending of conscious existence.

There are two words in the New Testament which have been productive of much misunderstanding. One is damnation and the other is everlasting. The first, damnation, has a meaning to-day which it did not bear in the seventeenth century when the Authorised Version was produced. At that time it meant, simply and positively, to be condemned: the nature and duration of the condemnation depended upon the circumstances of the case. Thus in Wycliffe's Bible the words of Jesus to the woman taken in adultery are "*Woman, hath no man damned thee?*" Likewise the "*resurrection of damnation*" of Jno. 5. 29 is literally a "*resurrection to judgment*" which at least brings the case of "*those who have done evil*" before the Judge for consideration. The Greek is rendered "*judgment*" and "*condemnation*" some eighty times and "*damnation*" only fourteen times, and the Revised Version has abandoned "*damnation*" altogether. Thus wherever the word "*damnation*" is found it must not necessarily be assumed that the condemnation is final and irrevocable. It may in some cases be limited in scope, as in Rom. 14. 23 "*He that doubteth is damned if he eat*" where the meaning is that the person partaking of the Lord's supper "*unworthily*" stands condemned or judged in his action but not necessarily doomed.

One of the strangest and most misunderstood statements of Jesus is that in Matt. 25, where the King in the parable says to the unworthy "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal*". "*Punishment*" here is *kolasis*, a word which means, primarily, to cut off or lop the branches of a tree as in pruning, and in general indicated restraint or correction. From this it became a term for the restraint of offenders or criminals to prevent continuance of their mis-

deeds, and this is the sense in which it is used here. ("*Fear hath torment*" in 1 Jno. 4. 18, where "*torment*" is *kolasis*, is another example where restraint rather than punishment is the obvious meaning). Penal punishment is *imoria*, a totally different word. Here in Matt. 25 the contrast is between the everlasting life of the worthy, who enter into what elsewhere is called "*the glorious liberty of the children of God*" (Rom. 8. 21) and the everlasting restraint from sin of the unworthy. This is the same thing as the everlasting fire of the same passage. Another reference to the same judgment is found in Rev. 20. 11-15 where the King seated on the Great White Throne—the "*throne of his glory*" of the Matt. 25 parable—arrays all people before him to be judged "*and they were judged every man according to their works*". Here, under a very similar symbol to that employed in Matt. 25, the unworthy are "*cast into the lake of fire*". Earlier in this 20th chapter of Revelation the Devil also has been cast into this lake of fire, a parallel allusion with the fate of the "*devil and his angels*" in Matt. 25. In both passages the picture is one of judgment which proceeds throughout the Messianic Age, the "*Day of Judgment*", and the outcome at its end when the eternal issues, for good or for evil, are decided for every man. The everlasting fire and the fiery lake are symbols for that destruction which overtakes all evil and every incorrigibly evil being. Isaiah saw the same thing when at the close of his vision of the new heavens and new earth he said of those who have right of entry into that eternal world "*they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh*" (Isa. 66. 24). The worm is undying until there is nothing left upon which it can feed; the fire unquenched until it has consumed all there is to burn—just as in Jer. 17. 27 where a fire was to be kindled in Jerusalem that "*shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and it shall not be quenched*".

Passages which speak of sinners destroyed by everlasting fire are metaphors taken sometimes from the story of the destruction of the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven and sometimes from the known use of the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem for idolatrous human sacrifice by fire in the days of the Hebrew kings, and its later use for continuous burning of the city garbage. "*Gehenna*"—the Greek form of Hinnom—occurs fourteen times in the sayings of Jesus (rendered "*Hell*" in the A.V.); the idea in each case is that of destruction as complete as by fire. In Matt. 3. 12 and Luke 3. 17 the chaff which has been separated from the wheat is burnt up with "*unquenchable fire*". In Matt. 9. 43-48 it is better to enter into life maimed than being whole to go into

the unquenchable fire, the parallel passage in Matt. 18. 8 calling this the "everlasting fire". In the same passages it is shown that Gehenna and the unquenchable fires relate to one and the same thing, and in Matt. 21. 44 the assertion is plainly made that it is possible for God to "destroy both soul and body" in Gehenna. This corresponds with declarations such as Psa. 92. 7 "when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever".

Thus understood, the consequence of sin in the face of full light and full opportunity is incurred solely by the individual's own choice and will. It has been suggested that deliberate continuance in evil-doing can destroy a man's capacity for repentance and conversion to the good life. Perhaps a man is capable of destroying his own soul. Eighty years ago Dr. Paterson Smyth wrote "We must believe that through all eternity, if the worst sinner felt touched by the love of God and wanted to turn to him, that man would be saved. What we dread is that the man may not want, and so may have rendered himself incapable of doing so. We dread not God's will, but the man's own will. Character tends to permanence. Free will is a glorious but a dangerous prerogative. All experience leads towards the belief that a human will may so distort itself as to grow incapable of good". More recently Prof. Alexander Finlay said "If life depends upon fellowship with God, the possibility must remain that the time may come when a man, no longer being capable of fellowship with God, shall die and become extinct, simply because there is no life left in

him, because his soul is dead". In a sermon delivered by Dr. Samuel Holmes, a Presbyterian minister of the United States, in 1907, he said "It is implicit in the teachings of both Jesus and Paul that when a soul, through its persistence in sin, comes to the point where it is morally irrecoverable, it comes also to its final death . . . A living creature remains alive only so long as it conforms to the conditions of living. Shall we think otherwise of the human soul . . . When a man has continued in sin, has gone on dwarfing his moral and spiritual nature until every appeal of God is in vain, is it not in accordance with the analogies of life that extinction is the certain outcome?" A noted Churchman of the late nineteenth century, Dr. C. A. Row, Prebendary of St. Pauls Cathedral, summed up his book "Future Retribution" in the words "the disease of moral evil, wilfully persisted in, for aught we know to the contrary, may be capable of destroying man as a conscious being . . . Inasmuch as man is destitute of self-existence the length of the period during which he will continue to exist must be dependent on the good pleasure of him who by his all-powerful energy maintains him in being every moment . . . Evil beings will cease to exist whenever it pleases the All-merciful to cease to exert that energy which alone maintains in existence the evil and the good".

Eloquent in its brevity is the word of the Psalmist (Psa. 37. 10), a word expressed in literal down-to-earth terms which cannot be misunderstood: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be".

Psalm 23 through Indian eyes

This is a Red Indian version of the 23rd Psalm, now in the Indian section of the museum at Banff, Canada. There is no information as to how old it is but it is evidently a paraphrase written by a red-skinned disciple of the Lord Jesus in speech familiar to his fellows. The old, old story, clothed in words comprehensible by each nation and in every age, has always the same appeal and will never die.

* * *

The Great Father above is the Shepherd Chief. I am his and with him I want not.

He throws down to me a rope and the rope of his love and He draws me to where the grass is green and the water is good and I go and lie down satisfied.

Sometimes my heart is weak and falls down but He lifts me up again and draws me into a good

road. His name is Wonderful.

Sometimes, it may be soon, but may be long, it may be a long, long time. He will draw me into a place between the mountains.

It is dark there but I will not draw back. I will not be afraid, for it is there, between those mountains that the Shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger I have felt in my heart all through life will be satisfied.

Sometimes he makes the love rope into a whip but afterwards He gives me a staff to lean on. He spreads a table before me with all kinds of food. He puts his hand upon my head and all tired is gone. My cup He fills until it runs over.

What I tell you is true, I lie not. These roads that are away ahead will stay with me through this life and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever.

NATHANIEL'S IMPULSE

Expectations were running high in Israel, for the times fore-appointed were almost run out. The sixty and nine heptads unto Messiah the Prince (Dan. 9. 25) were almost at an end, and "all men were in expectation" of the Coming Prince. How would He come? From whence would He come? How would they know He had come?

Were not these the points of endless debate in the homes and Councils of Israel (See John 7. 40-42 and 52). Of course He would come in all his might and majesty, spreading confusion and dismay in the ranks of Rome, throwing proud defiance to its Imperial Majesty! And again, both He and they would be victorious, for does it not stand written in the prophecy "*And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High*". (Dan. 7. 27). Were not they the people of the saints of the Most High? To whom if not to them, could that signal honour be given? So undoubting was this expectation that its certitude permeated every discussion as the salt did their bread.

What then must have been the consternation in the mind of one pious son of Israel when his own very brother—his own mother's kindred son—came to him exultingly and most persuadingly said "We have found him"—"*We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth . . .*" (John 1. 4-5). Can we wonder at the humorously doubtful nature of the rejoinder? Nazareth—a mere village place, far out of the beaten track; a mere cipher in the history of Israel! "Jesus of Nazareth! can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Unabashed at his brother's seeming levity, Philip quietly said "Come and see". Suiting the action to the word Philip quietly led his brother along, but not before Nathaniel had enquiring stepped aside beneath the shelter of a near-by tree. Fortified by this resourceful experience, Nathaniel went along to see for himself this animating cause of his brother's newly-found enthusiasm. Forestalling all introductory greetings Jesus said, even while Nathaniel still approached, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" An Israelite, true to the name, neither caught nor catching other men with guile! What a commendation for a careful man! "Whence knowest Thou me" asked Nathaniel surprisedly. "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" was the ready reply. That was enough for that pious soul.

Here he was face to face with One who could

read the motives of the heart, through an external act. Unknown to himself those searching eyes had seen him sheltering in his quiet retreat, and understood why he had gone aside. Willing to be convinced, yet not ready to be duped and led astray, this true son of Israel undoubtedly had lifted up his heart to heaven for guidance and safe keeping in this crisis hour. If, as Philip said, the Christ had truly come, even though unostentatiously, he wanted with all his heart to welcome him; yet, if his brother had been deceived, he wished to escape the entangling net himself and break the deception also that held his brother in its thrall.

At once the deeply moving forces of his soul welled up, and found expression in the words "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!" These words have the ring of the thinker and the strong-convictioned man! They show the cast and mould of that pious soul! "King of Israel", yes! that was an easily reached conviction, but "Son of God"! that is something more. Yet that conclusion lay latent in the Messiahship, as Jesus later found to his cost. (John 10. 31-36).

"*He that seeketh findeth.*" Nathaniel was a seeking soul, and He also found him in whom his soul found delight!

"*We have found him!*" Yes, we too in our throbbing day "have found him" thank God! Oh yes, of course God has found us too (John 6. 65) but that is not the whole story of the "finding". He who drew us on has led us to his Son, for "*no man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him*". (John 6. 44).

Here again there must be the sincere, pious, hungry soul seeking something for his soul's deepest welfare ere he finds Jesus of Nazareth. What do we find in him, as day by day we tread the narrow way?

Perhaps it is true to say that what I want him to be to me will depend in the main on what I want to be to him. Am I satisfied to know him as my distant Friend—my occasional Friend, to whom I turn my heart just once in a while—just now and then; or do I want him for my near, my most intimate and desirable Friend, to whom I turn myself many, many times a day, from whom I can scarcely bear to be parted even by the urgent task of the daily round? Even here there is a tie that binds, and if that tie is one of true affinity, then as the magnet draws the steel so shall He and I be closely drawn together.

"*We have found him of whom . . . the prophets did speak.*"

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Gen. 48-50

4. Last of the Patriarchs

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

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

Jacob was seventeen years in Egypt in all. It could not have been long after the promise, therefore, that signs of the approaching end became manifest and Joseph realised that he must do something to ensure the acceptance of his own two sons into the family of Israel before it was too late. Born in Egypt, of the daughter of the High Priest of another religion, there could understandingly be some prejudice against their acceptance.

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

A very human note is struck in 47. 7-8 where the aged Jacob evidently wanders a little in his thoughts and speech, from the matter in hand to time long past when he lost his beloved wife Rachel at the birth of Benjamin. He is evidently lost in the past at this moment; then, coming back to the present, has obviously momentarily forgotten what he had just been saying regarding the two lads before him and asks Joseph again "Who are these?" Patiently Joseph told his father "These are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place" and Jacob, content, proceeded to confer his patriarchal blessing upon them. Verse 12 indicates that a very ancient ceremonial was enacted here. Jacob had the two lads stand between his outspread knees as

he sat, in token that he had accepted them as his own sons; Joseph then brought them away from Jacob and caused them to bow low before Jacob (the singular "he bowed himself . . ." in vs. 12 should really be rendered plural "they bowed themselves") in token that they in turn accepted the obligations devolving upon sons of Jacob. In that position Jacob laid his hands upon their heads and repeated his blessing upon them. Joseph was not altogether pleased that Jacob's right hand, indicating the chief blessing, was laid upon the head of Ephraim who was the second born but Jacob insisted that he knew what he was about. True to his prophetic instinct, the tribe of Ephraim became predominant relative to that of Manasseh in Israel's later history.

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

Chapter 49 records Jacob's dying injunctions and warnings to his twelve sons. Here again he spoke to some extent by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "*Gather yourselves together*" he said "*that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days*". In general his words reflect the individual characteristics of the sons, sometimes laudatory and sometimes condemnatory. Reuben, his firstborn, who had been guilty of a serious crime against one of his father's wives, Bilhah (Gen. 35. 22) for which reason he was deprived of the birthright by Jacob, was branded "*unstable as water, thou shalt not excel*". There was goodness in his nature, as is shown in the story of Joseph's betrayal, but he was weak and deficient in self-control, no fit person for the headship of the tribes after Jacob's death. Simeon and Levi, the next two in order, were likewise dismissed as men of blood and cruelty. These were the two who treacherously massacred the men of Shechem over the affair of Dinah, and they too were passed over in the choice of the headship. The next eldest was Judah,—all these four were children of Leah, Jacob's first wife—and for this son Jacob had no word of reproof. "*Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise—thy father's children shall bow down before thee*". So Judah became the heir of the birthright, the head of the tribes of Israel, and the one through whom one day the promised "*Seed of Abraham*", the Messiah, should come. The rights of royalty

and kingship were thus confirmed to Judah and his descendants for ever. "*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come—*" (49. 10). This name in the Hebrew is *Sheloh* and means "whose it is"; the sense of the expression is more easily grasped by reference to Ezek. 21. 26-27 where the prophet declares the end of the Jewish Kingdom in Zedekiah's day in the words "*Remove the diadem and take off the crown—I will overturn it and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him*". The Divine intention to hold the throne of Israel vacant until Messiah comes to take his power and reign is indicated there and the same vision of a coming Messiah to assume headship of Israel was in Jacob's mind when he used the word.

The rest of Jacob's sons received messages which concerned either their personal characteristics or references to the territory their descendants would afterward inherit. Many efforts have been made to fit these words in vs 13-27 to the subsequent circumstances of the tribes but the details given are really altogether too vague and shadowy to afford a satisfactory basis for any clear presentation. It is much more likely that Jacob, approaching the gates of death and in his mind still experiencing some flickering of that prophetic insight which was manifested from time to time throughout his life, recounted the fragmentary visions which flashed across his mental horizon, but nothing that was at all detailed.

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

Conforming to his father's injunction, Joseph arranged for Jacob's body to be embalmed in the Egyptian fashion and taken to Canaan for interment alongside his wife and forefathers. The first fourteen verses of chapter 50 tell of the funeral and the wonder of the native inhabitants of Canaan at the impressive cortege which made its way through their country. *It is probable that the route lay across the Sinai peninsula into Edom, the territory*

of Esau, Jacob's brother, long since dead, and then northward into Moab and across Jordan to Jericho. Before proceeding to Hebron where the tomb was situated they halted near the Jordan for a seven days ceremonial mourning, which so impressed the Canaanites that they named the place Ebel-Mizraim—the mourning of Egypt. Finally they came to the field of Ephron which Abraham had purchased for four hundred silver shekels a century and a half earlier to establish his family sepulchre. It says much for the respect for rights of property in those days that the land and tomb were still the unchallenged property of the family. There they left the illustrious ancestor of all Israel and returned to Egypt.

It is a fascinating thing to reflect that the mummified body of Jacob may still be there. The remains of Egyptian notabilities of even earlier times are still in existence. The tomb in which Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, were buried is still in existence and is one of the few ancient sites about which there is no doubt. Ironically enough it owes its preservation during the last twelve centuries or so to neither Jew or Christian, but to the Moslems. Throughout Old Testament times the tomb was of course kept inviolate by the Israelites. After the Saracen conquest of Palestine its sanctity was preserved by the followers of Mahomet, to whom Abraham meant as much as he did to Israel. No "infidel" (Jew or Christian) has ever been permitted to enter the cave, which is now surmounted by a mosque, and this prohibition is maintained to this day. The only non-Moslem known to have set foot in the tomb itself was an officer on the staff of General Allenby during the 1914-18 war. During the advance into Palestine and the capture of Hebron Colonel Meinertzhagen entered the mosque in search of the city headman and finding it deserted penetrated into the cave below, where the patriarchs were buried. Having only matches with him he was unable to see more in the darkness than the outline of a stone coffin, and then, hearing the voices of the returning guards, judged it expedient to leave without delay.

This is the virtual end of the Book of Genesis. It is as if the author felt he had achieved the purpose of his narrative when the death of Jacob had been reached. Although some fifty years were to elapse before Joseph followed his father into the grave the entire period is dismissed in twelve short verses. Nothing is said of the progress of events in Egypt or the welfare of Israel in that period. There is only Joseph's assurance to his brothers, apprehensive that after their father's death Joseph might no longer be friendly towards them, that they had no cause for fear. He bore them no ill-

will; he would still be their protector and friend. The families of the sons of Jacob began to increase and Joseph saw his great-grandchildren before he died. There is wonderful dignity in the last recorded words of Joseph. He gathered his brethren about him—it is certain that Levi outlived him by a few years and probably so did some of the others—"I die" he said "and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob". That was his parting injunction; they were never to forget that they were only strangers and sojourners in Egypt. Attractive as the land was to them, they were not to forget that their Divine commission was indissolubly connected with the country from which they had come; one day they must go back. And to stress the sanctity of that obligation he made them swear on oath that they would preserve his mummified body and take it back with them when the day should come. Joseph intended that his own remains should eventually rest in the hallowed land of Canaan.

He had both his wishes. When at length the Exodus took place, his body in its sarcophagus was taken with the host of Israel, accompanied them in their forty years' wandering in the desert, was carried across Jordan and eventually interred in Joseph's own tribal territory at Shechem—the special inheritance which Jacob had given him at his death. And Israel never have forgotten that they were sojourners; their passionate attachment to the land which was theirs at the start has become proverbial. "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning" was always the cry of the Jewish exile. To-day, in our own time and generation, we have witnessed the tenacity with which the present descendants of Jacob have fought to attain and retain that little strip of land which in the year 1948, out of all the possible names that might have been chosen, was renamed "Israel"—the name of the man whose sons, thirty five centuries ago, gathered around the death-bed of the brother who, under God, had preserved their lives and made the creation of that nation possible. It was because those Hebrew tribesmen, settled in north-eastern Egypt in the latter years of the Hyksos Pharaohs, with all their faults and unbelief never did really forget that they were not Egyptians, but sons of Israel, the Prince of God, custodians of a Divine commission to become a means in God's hand for the eventual blessing of all the families of the earth, that there is an Israeli nation to-day. And the full implications of that national destiny for the wider world have yet to be seen.

The death of Joseph ended the Age of the Patriarchs. During that long span of fifteen hundred years, from Noah to Joseph, the Lord

worked out the details of his developing Plan through individual men, men who were devoted to him and whose lives were given over unreservedly and completely to his service. Other such men there were to be, but no longer serving alone, serving in association with a people, the people of God. For nearly three centuries after the passing of Joseph the Bible story of the outworking Plan of God is a blank; the sons of Jacob, growing into a nation in Egypt, are missing from the records. Then came Moses, and with Moses the emergence of a nation, nation grown from those sons, bound to God in a Covenant at Sinai which made them the

people of God for ever, a people destined to become the Lord's instrument on earth for the conversion of the nations. "*It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth*" (Isa. 49. 6). It was the sterling character and faithfulness to God of that seventeen-year-old lad, sold as a slave into Egypt, which in the wisdom of God became the means which in the fulness of time shall have so stupendous a sequel.

THE END

Dr. Cumming on the Millennium

Dr. John Cumming, (1807-1881), was a devout student and writer on prophecy, although his views on the book of Revelation might be considered sadly out of date to-day. In 1832 he was appointed minister to the National Scottish Church in Covent Garden, London. This extract is from his writings on the coming Millennial Age.

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"Some say, is not this an earthly heaven? My dear friends, earth is not essentially corrupt: there is nothing sinful in the clods of the valley—there is nothing sinful in a rose, nor in a tree, nor in a stone. I have seen spots upon the earth so beautiful, that if the clouds of winter would never overtake them, nor the sin of man blast them, I could wish to live amidst them forever. Take sin from the earth—the fever that incessantly disturbs it—the cold freezing shadow that gathers around it—and let my Lord and Saviour have his throne upon earth, its consecration and its glory, and what lovelier spot could man desire to live on? What fairer heaven could man anticipate hereafter? To me it is heaven where Christ is, whether He be throned upon earth, or reigning amid the splendours of the sky—if I am with him, I must enjoy unsullied and perpetual happiness.

"Great and solemn crisis, I cannot but again exclaim. My dear friends, if you like, reject all my views of Apocalyptic chronology, reject all my historical explanations, if you like; but do not reject this, that Christ, who died upon the cross, will come, and when ye think not, and reign, wearing his many crowns, and upon his glorious throne. Look for him, and the same Christ will come again, the husband to the widow, the bridegroom to the bride; He has promised that He will come to us, and we shall be 'forever with the Lord'.

"And when I think of the time when He does come, I can scarcely realise that glorious Sabbath which will overspread the earth, that noble song which will be heard when the saints shall sing together '*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts*'. What a flood of beauty, magnificence and

glory will roll over this now shattered orb, like the countless waves of an illuminated ocean, illuminated by Christ, the great central Sun, around whom all systems revolve, and from whom all beauty comes. And, my dear friends, if there be the least probability in what I have said, is it not our duty to pause—to prepare and search if it be so? When men heard that there was a new star somewhere to be detected in the firmament, there were some thousands of telescopes directed every night to the skies, and countless stargazers searching if, peradventure, they might discover it. My dear friends, a star comes brighter and more beautiful than any other, the 'bright and morning star', too long concealed by clouds which are about to be chased away; why should not our hearts look for him? Why should not the believer who has shared in the bitterness and in the blessings of his cross, pray and pant for him, if peradventure, he may share in the splendours of his crown? Is not the Lord welcome to us? Crushed and bleeding humanity, amid its thousand wrongs, cries, '*Come, Lord Jesus*'. The earth, weary with its groans, and the sobs of its children, cries, '*Come, Lord Jesus*'. The persecuted saints in Tahiti and Madeira, in the dens, and caves, and solitary places of the earth, cry, '*Come, Lord Jesus*'. And surely, many a heart that has been warmed by his love—that has been refreshed by his peace, sanctified by his grace, shall raise the same cry, '*Come, Lord Jesus*'; and the sublime response will descend from heaven like a wave from the ocean of love overflowing men's hearts, '*Behold, I come quickly*'.

"My dear friends, I say to many of you, 'Farewell'; and I say that in a sense in which it is not often uttered. I say it not lightly, but solemnly. May you fare well in the First Resurrection. May you fare well at the Judgment Day. May you fare well in time; may you fare well in eternity. And at that day when sighs and farewells shall cease, may we meet before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and so be forever with the Lord. Amen, and Amen."

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING GARMENT

Matt. 22. 1-14

This is one of the "dispensational parables", drawing a contrast between the two great ages of this "present evil world" during which God is preparing his agencies for the work of world conversion which is the purpose of the third age, the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 13. 13). There is personal instruction for the individual Christian, in the fate of the man who rejected the proffered wedding garment; there is also illumination on the outworking of the Divine purposes in this description of an invitation that was rejected by those to whom it was at first offered, so that the honour passed to others who did accept it.

A certain king negotiated the marriage of his son and invited guests to the resultant marriage feast. That is the basis of the story and the outworking of the sequel shows that the son and his marriage form no part of the parable proper; they serve merely to explain the reason of the feast being held. The story really begins when the king's servants went out to call the guests to the feast. They refused to come. Not only so, some of them ill-treated and even slew the servants, wherefore the king sent his army and destroyed those men's city. Determined that his feast should be replete with guests he commissioned his servants to go out again, this time to the open streets and gather in all who would, without discrimination. So the banqueting hall was filled. At this point, conformably to the customs of Jewry in the First Century, each guest was provided with a white festal garment so that inequalities of social status, as evidenced by distinctions of dress, would no longer be apparent and all the guests would mingle on a common level. One man, arrogant, refused to don the garment, whereupon he was expelled from the festivity, the warmth and light of the banqueting hall, and thrust into the "outer darkness" of the cold Syrian night. That was the story, and its intent and meaning was so obvious to the Pharisees and priests in whose hearing it was spoken that they once again took counsel, how they might limit or destroy Jesus' influence (ch. 22. 15).

Once it is realised that God is working to a plan, and that the successive ages and dispensations of world history are epochs marked out in that plan, the interpretation of this parable is not difficult to find. The first call, to those invited guests who refused to come, was the call of God to his chosen people of old, Israel, selected at Sinai to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19. 6). After Israel's rejection of the call, a rejection made absolute at the First Advent, a second invitation went out, this time to those who by reason of

their acceptance of the call became the Christian Church of this present Age. In this framework the first ten verses of the parable fall easily into place.

The king "*sent forth his servants, to call them that were bidden . . . and they would not come . . . he sent forth other servants . . . but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise*" (ch. 22. 3-5). In these few words is enshrined the story of Israel's unbelief and hardheartedness. Called to be a covenant people, to declare God's glory to all men, recipients of Divine favour, they rejected all out of hand. The scathing words of the Lord to Isaiah when the youthful prophet received his commission of service were true of Israel all through their history. "*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*" (Isa. 6. 10 LXX). The writer to the Hebrews shows that there is a "rest" awaiting the people of God, but they to whom it was first preached—Israel—entered not in because of unbelief (Heb. 4. 6). The parable is exact even to the sending forth of the servants twice to call in the originally invited guests; one very plain feature of Old Testament history is the distinction drawn between Israel before the Babylonian Captivity and Israel afterwards. That seventy years in Babylon marked a climax of the first Israelitish Age and a judgment involving the destruction not only of their city and Temple but of their whole national existence. Their restoration in the 6th century B.C. gave them a fresh start and a new succession of prophets, the "other servants" of the parable, but the second set of servants fared no better than the first. The post-exilic prophets were given only the same scanty and half-hearted attention that was the lot of the pre-exilic prophets, and most of them suffered or were put to death in much the same manner. "*Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?*" was the scornful accusation of Stephen at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7. 52). The parable of the vinedressers in the previous chapter (Matt. 21. 33-44) has the same succession of two consecutive sets of servants, in that case followed by the sending of the vineyard owner's son, who was killed by the wicked vinedressers. The application is the same in both cases and it is an obvious one.

So the "*king was . . . wroth, and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city*" (ch. 22. 7). At this point the history of the parable passes into prophecy; these words came terribly true forty years after Jesus' death.

when the Roman emperor Titus besieged, captured and destroyed Jerusalem, and scattered the nation to the four corners of the earth. And simultaneously with the rejection of that people which, though "bidden, were not worthy" (vs. 8) the next section of the parable came into the picture with the going forth of the king's servants into the high-ways to call in all who would come.

That invitation had its commencement in history when Peter baptised Cornelius, the Roman centurion who is the first recorded Gentile convert to the Divine call in Christ (Acts 10). Not many years afterwards the Apostle Paul, preaching at Athens, gave formal testimony to the fact that God was now calling upon all men everywhere, without distinction of nationality, to repent (Acts 17. 30). "*Of a truth I perceive*" Peter had said to Cornelius "*that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*" (Acts 10. 34-35). Now in his own ministry Paul declares the same truth. Writing to the Ephesians, he says that the Gentiles "*are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*" (Eph. 2. 19). So the servants went out "witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1. 8). For nearly two thousand years those servants have been going forth—and they go forth still.

So the wedding feast was furnished with guests. This is not a feast of the future, beyond the skies. This feast is here, on this earth and in this life. It has been proceeding ever since the first Christians entered into heart communion with their Lord and began to feast at his table. It is the feast which Israel could have enjoyed in their own day, and failed to enter because of unbelief. "It remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief . . . there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God . . . let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4. 6-11). That is the verdict of the writer to the Hebrews on the matter.

Here the dispensational aspect of the parable comes to an end. The remaining picture is an individual one. Of the guests who have been gathered one is unworthy. "*When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment*" (ch. 22. 11). This was the greatest insult guest could offer host; the man preferred to display his own finery rather accept the covering provided by his host. And when taxed with his offence, he had nothing to say. "*He was speechless.*"

What is the wedding garment? Clearly the free gift of justification by faith, consequent upon our acceptance of Christ, by whose righteousness the

gift comes. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." . . . "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5. 1-2. 18). This is the common covering which renders us all alike acceptable to God despite our own imperfections and shortcomings, and hides the defects which are impure in God's holy sight. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" cries Isaiah (64. 6), but "wash you, make you clean; put away the evils of your doings . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (1. 16-18). We come to God in faith, accepting the finished sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, even though we may not with our limited human minds understand just how his death is efficacious for our redemption. But some there are who come, not having accepted Christ in that sense, trusting more in their own endeavours to maintain a standing before God, maintaining that man needs no personal Saviour to reconcile him to God, that a profession of good works and good intentions is all that is necessary. There are "both bad and good" (ch. 22. 10) gathered into the feast, but the king's inspection speedily discerns those who have spurned the wedding garment and trust rather in the "filthy rags" of their own righteousness; and He commands his servants to expel all such from the feast.

"*Cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (ch. 22. 13). This is the class of text which used to be related to the final destiny and punishment of the wicked and on that account this parable used to be considered a word picture of the separation of righteous and wicked, and the final doom of the latter. There is however no justification for identifying "outer darkness" with the ultimate penalty of sin. The expression occurs only three times in the New Testament, all of them in Matthew's Gospel. In none of these cases is the ultimate fate of incorrigible sinners in question. Jesus in Matt. 8. 11-12 said that many would come from east and west and sit down with Abraham and other men of faith in the kingdom of God, whilst the "children of the kingdom" would be cast into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In Matt. 25. 30 the unprofitable servant who had wasted his talent suffered the same fate. In all three instances the idea is that of rejection and separation from the purpose of God in this present Age through unworthiness, unfitness. The ultimate fate of the individuals concerned is not in question and is left undecided; what is certain is that they are unfit for inclusion in the band of disciples which God is selecting from both Jew and Gentile during the present and past, that He might

use them in his plans for world conversion in the next Age. Separated from the body of believers because of unworthiness now, cast into outer darkness in the sense that they have been excluded from the light and joy of that spirit-filled society which ultimately becomes the "light of the nations", such will eventually realise what high privilege they have missed—hence the typically Eastern hyperbole "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

For it is very true, as Jesus said in conclusion of his parable "*Many are called, but few are choice*" (not "chosen" as in the A.V.). The Greek here is *eklektos*, which means the valuable or choice part of a thing. Jesus did not say that God would call many and then arbitrarily choose only a few of them; what He did say was that all to whom the

Divine call comes in this Age, in whose hearts the Word finds some lodgment, only a few, after the testings of a lifetime, prove worthy, worthwhile, choice. Because God is seeking characters of sterling worth to be his ministers in that day when He sets before mankind the final decision, the choice between good and evil, He is rigorous in excluding the unworthy. They are not necessarily lost; they revert to the mass of unsaved mankind from which they came, to listen afresh in a future day to the appeal of the Gospel, but they have lost for ever the opportunity of sharing with those who live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20. 4) and who in the course of that reign will labour with their Lord in the conversion of all nations. That is the lesson of this parable.

THE HIGHER CONSECRATION

A talk about solemn things

The call of God to the higher consecration comes to us through the words of our Lord. Himself devoted and consecrated to his Father's Will, himself the highest embodiment of the self-denying life, himself the bearer of the world's heaviest cross, He voices forth the invitation of the Holy One of Israel to those who will venture forth to follow in his steps. If any man desires to associate with me, says the Lamb of God, let him deny himself, let him take up his Cross, then let him follow me. Let him deny himself! What does that mean? To appreciate it properly let its opposite thought be set out. It would then read, "Let a man permit himself" or "Let a man satisfy himself". And what would this mean? Here within the compass of a halfdozen words is set the whole course of unregenerate man.

Here is a miniature picture of a world in sin, of a world at variance, of the ruthless aggression of the tyrant, of a race in rebellion against God. "Satisfying himself" has been the cause of all the heartlessness and cruelty of man to man, of all the steep descent into the slime of sin, and of departure from the ways of God. "Permitting himself" has been the cause of the break-down of the human will, of the casting away of all righteous sanctions and restrictions, and of unholy riot in the heart and affections of man. Man has permitted himself to drift with the stream—to run with the crowd—to take the easy course; and the huge aggressive powers of the world to-day are the logical outcome of all the "permitting" and "satisfying" tendencies in fallen man, and have brought the terrific consequences which face fearful trembling men in these dark days.

How vast a field of human experience is thus covered by the Lord's words "Let him deny him-

self"! Let a man deny his self-hood—his self-satisfying desire, his self-permitting desires, his self-permitting ways! That short statement drives right through the heart of things. It cuts its way to the very core of all self-acquisitiveness, self-possesiveness, and self-satiatedness. It strips man of all his exaggerated sense of self-ownership and proprietorship.

He who voiced this invitation on God's behalf owned no place wherein to lay his head. When required to pay the Temple dues, the coin was taken from the fish's mouth. He who had been rich in heavenly wealth had denied himself to become extremely poor on earth. How fittingly then, that He should say "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" Self-denial!—death to self!—self nailed to a cross to die! "*And follow me!*" Not through Israel's pleasant land, but into death, by being baptised into him and into his death. No wonder Jesus says "If any man *will* come after me!" Not every man would want to follow where He led. Not every one would want to end his life upon a cross!

The Apostle Paul sets out the exacting nature of the consecration call in Romans Six. He describes it as death to sin. The degree of a Christian's death to sin will depend entirely upon the measure of his death to self, for self has always been the citadel of sin. Paul's statement makes most remarkable doctrine. After enlarging upon God's abounding grace (Rom. 5. 17-21) he asks the question "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" "God forbid" is his reply. Then he continues "*How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein!*" "Dead to sin!" Dead TO sin! Further along, speaking of our beloved Lord, he makes a similar statement (5. 10). "*For in that he died, he died unto sin*

once." "He died *unto* sin once!" Here is no reference to the great Gospel fact that Jesus died on account of human sin. Though that blessed truth is asserted and attested in a score or more of other Scriptural statements, it is not the subject of Paul's discussion at this point of his letter to Rome. It is not Jesus' death FOR sin, but his death TO sin that is the Apostle's theme.

Thus he links his first query and answer concerning themselves with the tremendous fact in the Saviour's own life and experience. "We who have died unto sin" have had exactly the same experience which He had when "He died unto sin once." It is for that reason that the faithful follower of the Lord, in being baptised into Christ, is being baptised into his death. "His death" was a death unto sin—therefore all who are baptised into "his death" likewise experience a "death unto sin," but at the same time that He was dead unto sin, He was intensely alive unto God, and for that reason the Apostle exhorts "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (5. 11). This is an amazing point of doctrine, but it is the very doctrine that sets out Christian consecration at its proper value.

In what way did Jesus' "die unto sin"? Was He not always without sin? Was He not "holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners"? How then could He die to sin?

It should not be thought because Jesus was sinless and remained sinless throughout all his life, that He was never subjected to temptation. We have only to think of his temptation in the wilderness, and of Satan's subtle challenge to the verity of his Sonship, to realise that that was a temptation of very considerable magnitude. Nor was this the only occasion when He was assailed by the forces of evil, prior to the time of his death; but from the very commencement of his ministry, yea, from his very boyhood, His mind was positively and resolutely set to do only his Father's Will. He had no ear for any other voice; He had no response for any other "call".

The same two magnet forces of Holiness and Sin—of God and of Lucifer—which exercised their pull upon all the sons of men, also exerted their pull upon our beloved Lord. But our Lord had no affinity and made no response to the magnet of sin. To it, he was "dead". He had no self-satisfying desires to fulfil. He had not come to "get" for himself but to "give" himself. Thus, the ways and aims of sin found nothing in his heart to stir it into life, but our beloved Lord was no automaton in his response. Of him it is written that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Heb. 1. 9). Because of this He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

Thus the Son's love for righteousness constituted an affinity for Righteousness and Truth. Of his own free will, He chose to be as dead to sin as though his body was devoid of life. Again, of his own free will, He chose to be alive—intensely and zealously alive—to the drawings and leadings of his Father's Will. Because, therefore, He was so completely dead TO sin, throughout all his days, He was able to offer himself a perfect sacrifice FOR sin, and win redemption for fallen men.

It is an amazing point of doctrine enunciated by Paul when he associated us with our beloved Lord in this deadness to the power of sin. Like him, we are desired by God to be also dead to the "drawing" of sin, and alive, increasingly alive, to the drawing power of righteousness and holiness and truth. Is it possible for us to be like him? Can we really live the sinless life? Unfortunately we cannot live free from sin. But God has made full provision for that. By accepting us in the beloved Son, all the excellencies of his life are attributed to us, to counter-balance our demerits, so long as we are striving daily to mortify our members which are in contact with the earth and the world of sin. We are not so free in the swing of our will as was our beloved Lord, and sometimes, if only for a moment, the pull of the sin magnet may draw us in that direction. But if we have learned to love righteousness and holiness we shall not stay with the sin. Our corresponding hatred for sin will interpose, and by the help of God, will break the connection with the sin. We confess our lapse to God, and in that holy atmosphere, our heart will recover its free swing, and go right over to the other "pull"—the drawing power of God.

Thus Paul goes on to exhort his brethren not to YIELD their hearts to sin and unrighteousness, but to surrender themselves to God and righteousness which will lead on to holiness (Rom. 13. 22).

This is where this whole experience corresponds with the life of consecration. As individuals and as a whole, the Church of Christ has devoted itself to the Will of God. The human life has pledged itself to do the Will of God at any cost. Then that humanity, which has been devoted to the Lord, is given back as a sacred stewardship,—as a charge from the Lord, to be used only to his praise. In every act of life, in every thought and word, the offering should be "waved" before the Lord. The interference of the power of sin should grow weaker every day; the response to the holy Power of God should become stronger every hour, and our *yielding* to our God should be more intensive and extensive with each succeeding act and thought. Thus will life become one continued and unbroken chain of consecrated experience—the yielding of each member—head, heart, hands and feet—fuller, deeper and readier every day.

Is there any wonder then, when the theme on which the Apostle was engaged reaches its noble climax, that he should put all the hallowed fire of his own consecrated heart into that searching moving appeal of Chapter 12. 1 and 2. *"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God . . . your reasonable service"*.

Consecration, therefore, means "a living sacrifice", a daily sacrifice, a complete unreserved sacrifice of all that in us is noblest and best. But there is another side of the consecrated life that tells of satisfaction too, of satisfaction too deep for words. The priestly life was not all sacrificing; there was more in it than that. Into that mysterious dark abode the white-robed priest went betimes, still with his "two hands full" to stand at that Altar adorned with gold, and there raise fragrant odours in the air. For whom were those precious spices burned? Who saw and noted the deep reverence of that ministrant priest, as the perfumed spiral rose aloft? Who watched the holy fire eat up the crumbled incense, as the "two hands full" were given to the flames? One eye alone saw all this service—the eye of that mysterious Light which hung between the Cherubim, just beyond that separating Vail.

What meant this lonely service before the Lord? Why were those odours released by burning flame? This was communion sweet—soul-changing, transforming, sanctifying communion—at the place where the Holy One in Israel had promised to meet his chosen ones (Exod. 25. 22). But there was even more than that. *"Consecrate . . . and sanctify them that they may minister UNTO ME in the priest's office"* said the Lord God concerning Aaron and his sons. (Exod. 28. 41).

" . . . they shall minister unto Me!" That was the purpose of that fragrant ministry. It was no ornate ritual, nor was it waste of consecrated time to minister unto the Lord. The holy incense was not lost because it was eaten by the fire. The heart of the Eternal had been made glad. The ministry brought satisfaction to the Holy One of Israel. He it was who saw, accepted and appreciated that holy

ministration. Thus the white-robed priest was consecrated to perform sacrifice before the Lord, and also to hold "communion with the Lord". Consecrated to sacrifice! Consecrated to commune!! Consecrated to minister to the Lord! What a blessed privilege it was to be chosen of the Lord for this threefold end!

The substance is far better than the "shadowy" thing. Participation in the "better things" is more satisfying to the "inward man" than all the glories of the type. Those who follow Jesus in the way of death walk also in his steps along the way of life. It is not all renunciation in the consecrated life. "Self" must go. Sin must cease to charm. The "New Creature" in Christ Jesus must yield his members as servants of God and righteousness, day by day, and act by act. But there is another side. There are depths of experience from which well-springs of satisfaction flow. *"The spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit"* (Rom. 8. 16). Yes! from the Shekinah Throne of grace comes that surging flow of holy Power which floods our souls with joy and transforms the drabness of our earth-life into communion sweet. Each consecrated child of God can retire away from the busy throng of life into a "secret place" apart, and there enjoy a privilege such as Aaron did not know. The incense of his heart (Psa. 141. 2) may rise morning, noon and night, as fragrance richer far than myrrh, or cassia, cinnamon, or calamus; and the Holy One of Israel will see and hear and appreciate the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13. 15) which thus will rise from the Altar of his heart—an Altar more precious than gold.

Each follower of the Son has been called and justified that he might offer himself in sacrifice. To that end he is set apart. But his consecration vows bring opportunities more than this. He too, as Aaron was, but on higher ground, is consecrated "to commune"—consecrated to enter the chambers of his God, and "minister unto" him who dwells therein, and there, in that secret place, feel within his heart that soul-transforming power that will attune him to his God, and to his universal purposes.

We are by nature and environment of the earth, earthy, and therefore unavoidably susceptible to the beguiling influence of the things of earth. Our human instincts prompt us to be continually reaching out for these things, and we need to be constantly on the alert to set and keep resetting our affections upon the things above. (Col. 3. 2.) Some of us may have had the experience of trying to train some creeping plant such as the morning glory, to climb up some upright structure in order to form a floral archway. If so, we can hardly have failed to

notice how persistently the plant by means of its shoots or tendrils, strives to entwine itself around every garden flower or object within its reach. It has to be constantly disentangled from these things and to be reset around the upright we wish it to cling to. Thus it is with our affections and inclinations. If left to follow their own devices they will persist in becoming entangled with earthly things before we realise the dangerous trend our thoughts are taking.

A Note on the Sabbath

The seventh day was laid down, by the law given to Moses, to be a day of complete cessation of labour, for man and beast. There was no mandate to make it particularly a day of worship, as is the Christian Sunday; worship for Israel was regulated by another set of ordinances. Beside the weekly "sabbath"—which means a cessation, being still, resting—there was a seventh year sabbath in which no work was to be done on the land, and the fields allowed to lie fallow; similarly a fiftieth year of jubilee subject to the same restriction. All of this was part of the Law Covenant under which Moses pledged Israel to God as a separated and holy nation, and God undertook their support during these "sabbath" years. The Law Covenant is not applicable to Christians, for Christ made an end of it, "nailing it to his cross" as Paul said to the Colossians. The ethical principles of the Ten Commandments are certainly binding upon Christians, in even higher degree than Israel of old, as Jesus explained on more than one occasion, but the ceremonial and ritual provisions are not, and the sabbath was part of the ceremonial law. The principle of the sabbath, however, the practice of periodic laying aside the interests and occupations of daily life that worship and praise might be given to God for his goodness and provision, is obviously as appropriate for Christians as for Jews, the difference being that whereas to Israel under the Law Covenant the observance was a ceremonial matter to be fulfilled according to the letter, to the Christian it is an act of worship offered spontaneously and not of obligation. Any day of the week is appropriate for such an offering and in fact even more than one day in the week if the heart so prompts. It has been truly said that to the Christian every day is a sabbath.

It is evident that the Apostolic Church recognised this fact and quite naturally adopted the first day of the week, the day of the Resurrection, for their weekly gathering together for worship and fellowship. To what extent the social customs of the times permitted this to be a day of rest is not now accurately known. The Greeks and Romans had no weekly day of general cessation of labour as did the Jews and many of the Gentile Christians

were slaves anyway. There is no doubt, however, from the evidence of early Church writers as well as the New Testament that the Christians did gather on the first day of the week to celebrate the resurrection of their Lord, to pray and worship and receive the ministry of the Word and hold their "love feasts". Only gradually did changing social conditions permit anything like the Jewish "day of rest" to become a feature of the Greek and Roman communities. It was not until the Fourth Century that Constantine the Christian Emperor of Rome legalised the weekly day of rest, on the first day of the week, throughout the Empire, and so Sunday became a day given over to worship and religious exercises unhindered by the claims of daily labour. In this way the Christian Sunday became the equivalent of the Jewish Saturday.

There would seem therefore to be no ground for insisting that Christians must observe the seventh day as the Sabbath merely because that was the day imposed upon Israel by their Law Covenant. Christians are not under that Covenant and they are free to set aside for rest and worship whichever day they feel appropriate. There is nothing to forbid the adoption of Saturday for the purpose if that should seem desirable and proper to some. But the Western nations have grown and developed out of the Roman empire and spread their culture and customs over much of the world during the past thousand years and in consequence Sunday is firmly established as the normal weekly holiday (holy-day); because this institution is of such inestimable value to all Christians in facilitating worship and evangelism we do well to uphold and retain it. There are plenty of forces in the earth today seeking to undermine the day and make it as any other day of the week. That would be bad, not only spiritually, but physically; not only for Christians, but for all men, and we do right to resist those forces with whatever powers we have. It was on the first day of the week, when the risen Lord left the garden tomb and "*rose in the power of an endless life*" that the Christian faith began and Judaism ended. It is that, above all things, that we celebrate when we come together on the first day of the week.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

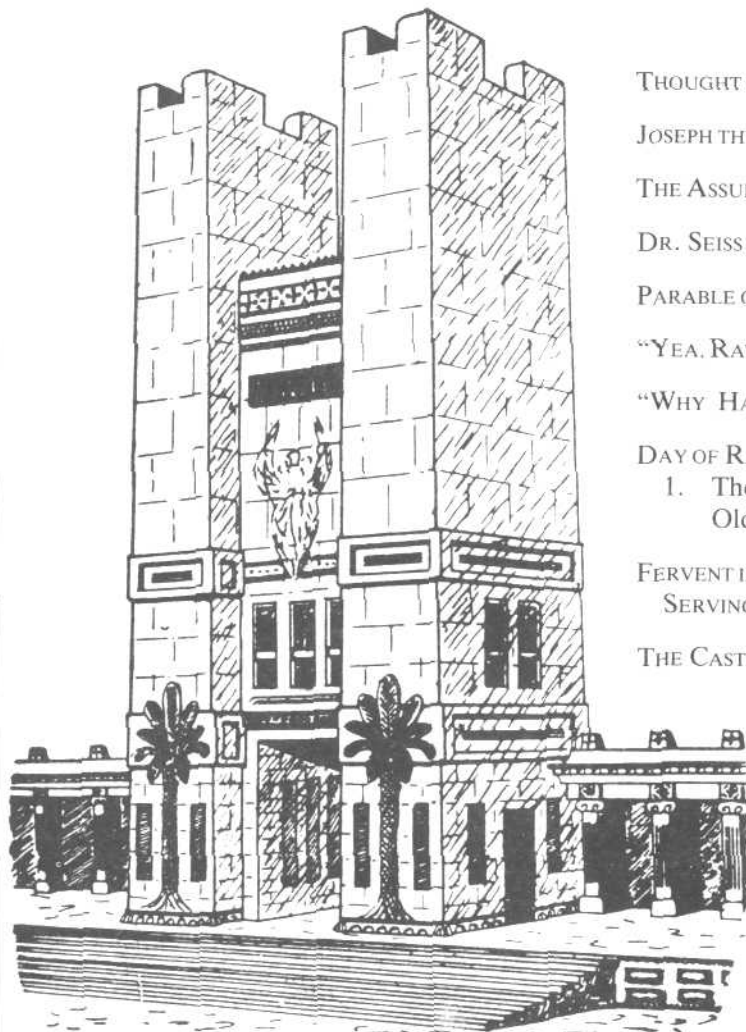
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace" (Jer. 30. 5).

Words that speak of a great obstacle to Christian progress! Fear is a boggy which gibbers in front of every Christian who has not sufficient confidence in his calling to continue in belief that his mistakes and errors of judgment will be used in the Divine economy to effect some good thing in himself or in fellow-members in due course. To be an alert and zealous disciple demands full assurance of faith and confidence in the overruling power of God in our affairs. *"He hath opened mine eyes, and I have seen the Holy One. His angel hath touched my lips with the live coal from the altar; and I have heard his voice saying, 'Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?'"* If in our later days we can summon to our side the same devoted spirit which at the first prompted us to say *"Here am I, send me"*, then indeed the spirit of fear will find no lodgment. In these days, when the lamp is burning low in the Temple of God, there is need not only for clarity of vision and depth of spiritual insight, but also for purpose and determination. That is the antidote to the apathy and lethargy which oft settles upon those who have begun to lose the freshness and zeal of their earlier days. Such times of depression come to all. The toils of the way, strife and schism caused by false brethren, the apparent failure of fond and perhaps long cherished hopes, cause us like Hezekiah to want to go softly all our years. Would that we could be equally appreciative, as was that good king, when a term of years is added to our time, and go forward with face upraised, remembering that we are now and for all time his witnesses, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

BOOK REVIEW

"The Word made New" Gordon Moyes. 214 pp 7" x 4½". Fowler Wright Books, Burgess Street, Leominster, HR6 8DE. 1990. ISBN 0 85244 1 66 5. Paperback £4.95 ISBN 0 85244 167 3. Hardback £6.95.

A rather unique book taking the words of Jesus in each of the Four Gospels as rendered in the New International Version and setting them out in readable form without any of the narrative

material, with the object of providing a tool for the preparation of discourses or for group discussion. The omission of all extraneous material certainly does set out the actual words of He who "spake as never man spake" in sharp focus and the book may well find its place in the sphere suggested. An eleven page subject index is an added attraction. The typescript is bold and clear and on this account suitable for elderly persons whose sight is not as good as of yore. (Quotation of the ISBN number is sufficient when ordering from a bookseller, either in UK or overseas.) Not available from BFU at Hounslow.

NOTICES

Christian African Relief Trust. There has come to hand the first issue of a Newsletter outlining the purpose and activities of this Trust, which came into existence in a small way several years ago and is now going from strength to strength, organising, collecting and despatching boxes of food and clothing to needy Christians and others in some of the African countries most affected by world conditions such as Ghana, Malawi, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Cameroon. Initially commenced by a group of Bible Students, a number of churches in the North Midlands are now co-operating in packing and despatching, and various churches and Pastors in the recipient countries are taking care that the goods are conscientiously and carefully distributed. Well over a thousand boxes went out in 1989, and by June of this present year this figure had already been exceeded. All workers engaged in this project are voluntary, giving their services without cost.

The Trust is registered Charity 328186. Readers feeling led to take an interest in this work, which specialises in the collection of food and used clothing (some churches have donated their harvest festival fruits etc. to this purpose), may have the Newsletter sent to them, or may join in the work in such ways as they are able, on application to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. G. G. Tompkins, "White Gates", Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield, HD8 0CR.

Possible wrong issue. We have cause to suspect that certain sets of BSM back numbers for 1989 sent by request to a few readers during April last contained the March/April 1988 issue by mistake. If anyone who received such sets recently find this to be the case and will drop us a note to that effect, a correct March/April 1989 issue will be sent to correct the error. Most of these requests were from U.S.A. readers.

Renewal of readership entry. Readers whose address labels bear serial numbers in the 5,000 and 9,000 ranges will find a pink renewal form inside this issue, unless they have signified their desire for continuance during the last few months. It will be appreciated if such will return the form as soon as possible; whilst we are happy to continue sending whether the request is accompanied by a donation or not, provided the reader is sincerely interested in the publication, we do not wish to do so if that interest has ceased. In such case it is appreciated if the form is returned marked "do not continue".

JOSEPH THE CARPENTER

Tantalising in its brevity is that which the Gospels have to say about Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus. Responsible for the care and nurture of our Lord from birth to manhood, practically nothing concerning him has survived on record. The little that is said is confined to Jesus' infancy and boyhood, and the later life and the death of Joseph are veiled in obscurity. It is almost as if the writers of the four Gospels realised that the human family into which Jesus was born was nothing more than a means to an end, the avenue by which, coming from God, He entered the world of men. That purpose achieved, the affairs of the family were of no relevance to the object of the Gospel story and were allowed to lapse into oblivion. Just a few brief glimpses of his character are vouchsafed, almost like asides in the narrative, and it is worth while putting these together to form some kind of picture of the man to whose paternal care Jesus must have owed a great deal. He appears as a man of quiet faith and implicit trust in God and there is not much doubt that he was a chosen vessel just as much as was Mary for the great purpose which so soon overspread their young lives.

Popular impression, aided by religious art, usually has it that Joseph was a very old man at the time of his marriage to Mary but this impression is definitely and certainly wrong. It had its origin in certain apocryphal Christian books of the Fourth Century, notably the "*Gospel of pseudo-Matthew*", the "*Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*" and the "*History of Joseph the Carpenter*". These works, examples of the "Christian fiction" of the period, were written to support a growing spirit of asceticism in the Church by which Mary was presented as eternally virgin and unconnected with man. To this end these and similar legends asserted that Mary had lived in the Temple under the care of the priests until twelve or fourteen years of age, and the priests then secured a Divine indication that this very old man Joseph, a widower of ninety, should marry and care for Mary and her child Jesus in complete celibacy. The four brothers and two sisters of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels were held to have been the children of Joseph by a former and now deceased wife. These books are of no historical value and it is not difficult when reading them to detect various errors which reveal that the writers were not so accurately informed on the history of the First Century as we are today, and certainly not thoroughly familiar with the Gospels. All that is definitely known about Joseph is drawn from the Gospels.

Mary must have been very young at the time, probably no more than eighteen. This is implied

by the fact that she seems to have died at Ephesus in the care of John after A.D.65 or so, by which time she would be between eighty and ninety. Joseph might have been as much as thirty, but hardly any older; his betrothal to Mary seems to have been a perfectly ordinary affair and no reason exists for thinking they were other than a normal young couple pledging themselves and their lives to each other. Despite all that the apocryphal books above-mentioned say to the contrary, the New Testament is quite explicit that, after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had four sons and at least two daughters. This is another evidence that their father was relatively young at marriage, as is also the story of the flight into Egypt. A senile old man would hardly be physically capable of a successful two hundred mile flight from the wrath of King Herod; neither is it feasible that he could still work at his trade as the Gospels make plain he did. That he was a poor man is evident from the fact that when Mary presented herself at the Temple, as required by the ceremonial law, to be pronounced ritually clean after the birth of her first-born, the offering she brought was not the usual lamb, but two young pigeons, the concession made to the poor (Luke 2. 24, Lev. 12. 8).

Despite his poverty, Joseph, like Mary his wife, was of royal lineage, descended from David the famous king of Israel. Their pedigrees both came through Zerubbabel, the representative of the kingly line at the Return from Babylon, but Zerubbabel was the son of a "Levirate marriage" and although legally he was counted as the grandson of Jehoiachin the king, his blood descent was not from the kings of Judah through Solomon, but from Nathan, another son of David. Legally and officially, though, Joseph was of the royal line through Solomon and Jehoiachin on this account and this is the genealogy of Joseph given by Matthew; literally both were of David through Nathan and Neri and this is the genealogy of Mary given by Luke. It would appear that Joseph's line was senior to that of Mary from about the eighth generation below Zerubbabel, (about 400 B.C.), so that the royal rights of Jesus came to him through Joseph. This is why the angel addressed Joseph in Matt. 1.20 as "*thou son of David*", and Luke calls him "*Joseph, of the house of David*" (Luke 1. 27).

The first sidelight on Joseph's character is revealed when he discovers that his affianced wife is to become a mother. Jewish custom of the time required an espousal period of twelve months preceding the actual marriage, but the espousal was an equally binding contract. Matt. 1. 18 shows that it was during this period that Joseph made the

discovery. His first impulse was to have the contract of marriage annulled on the ground of unfaithfulness, but quietly and privately to avoid public scandal out of consideration for his intended wife. Mary must have told him the truth of the matter as it is related by St. Luke (Luke 1. 26-36), that an angel had visited her and told her that she was to become the mother of the Messiah by an act of God without human aid or intervention. Whether Joseph believed her is another matter. Many Jewish women hoped they would be chosen to be the mother of the Messiah but no one ever expected him to be born in any other than the customary manner; the Divine promise that He would be the lawful heir of David's throne demanded that in some valid way He must derive his descent from David. It is stated that Joseph was a righteous man; he was evidently devout and well grounded in the Faith and he was not going to take a decision until he had given the matter careful thought (Matt. 1. 20). He might not have been altogether surprised therefore when the angel of the Lord appeared to him also and confirmed Mary's story, telling him to name the coming child Jesus (Saviour or deliverer) "*for he shall save his people from their sins*". Joseph hesitated no longer; the decisiveness which seems to have been an element of his character came to the top, and apparently without further delay he completed the marriage formalities—which included the wedding feast—and with his newly-married wife settled down to await the coming event.

All this of course pre-supposes the truth of what is called by theologians "the doctrine of the Virgin birth". All kinds of objections to this are raised nowadays, and there is increasing disbelief that Jesus of Nazareth entered this world in any other than the usual manner. The only authority on the subject of Jesus' birth, however, is the New Testament and that is perfectly clear on the matter. And so was Joseph; much more so than many in later times who take leave to know better than those who were there. Joseph is presented in the narrative as knowing that the coming child was not his; he accepted the heavenly assurance that no human father was involved and that here was an instance of the operation of the Holy Spirit. He knew that such things could be so, because God was all-powerful, and he was content as well as believing. It is noteworthy that in the Gospel narratives of the life of Jesus on only three occasions is Joseph referred to as the father of Jesus, twice by the villagers and once by Mary (Jno. 6. 42, Luke 4. 22, Luke 2. 48) where the apparent earthly relationship would make it the natural thing to say. Jesus never acknowledged Joseph as his father; He did use the expression "my Father" in reference to God some hundred times. Mary is described as the mother of

Jesus some twenty-three times. The phrase "Joseph and his mother" occurs twice. This quite evident exclusion of Joseph from the intrinsic fatherhood of Jesus is all the more noteworthy when it is realised that Jesus' legal right to the throne of David, a fundamental factor in his Messiahship, came to him through Joseph; had these narratives been fictional or in any way "dressed up" to prove Jesus the Messiah the writers would surely have made Joseph his natural father.

There was probably very little time for philosophical reflections, however, for Joseph had his living to earn and the responsibilities of married life. Whether he was a carpenter in timber or a metal worker or blacksmith—the Greek *tektan* means any of these although it is most often used for a carpenter in timber—is immaterial; he probably did all such work for the village and his living, although modest, was secure. But within a few weeks of settling down he was uprooted; by reason of a decree of Augustus Cæsar, the current Emperor, there was to be a general census of the people, and the effect of this upon Joseph and his wife was that they must appear before the enrolment officials in the recognised family district of their fathers. That district was Bethlehem, the birthplace of David their ancestor and of his fathers back to Boaz and Salmon of the time Israel settled the land. So Joseph and Mary set out on the eighty mile journey and almost immediately upon their arrival Jesus was born.

The details of that event are well known. The first visitors to the child were the shepherds from nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night just as David his illustrious ancestor had done a thousand years previously. Joseph was there but in the background; he is mentioned, but only just mentioned. This was true humility; he, as the surviving member of David's line, could surely expect some acknowledgement of seniority, at least until the child should have attained its majority. But no; Joseph knew that here he was standing face to face with the workings of God, that the child thus placed in his paternal care was not only David's son but also David's Lord (Matt. 22. 42-46). He was content to play the part allotted to him and discharge the duty assigned to him. In him resided the spirit of true consecration; "*I come . . . to do thy will, O God*".

The shepherds went their way and a month later the child was taken to the Temple and formally dedicated to the service of God. Again Joseph played a passive part. He was there, but that is all we know about it. He, together with Mary, "*wondered*" at the glowing words of Simeon the aged prophet foretelling the future glories to come by means of the child; "*light to lighten the nations, and the glory of thy people Israel*" (Luke 2. 32). A

great honour for a humble village carpenter, Joseph must have thought as they made their way out of the Temple courts and home to Nazareth (Luke 2. 39). But he was not even then to be left in peace to ply his craft. Before long King Herod had heard of the wondrous event and was sending his soldiers to find and slay this one who in his ignorance he feared as a threat to his own position. The child was a year old by now; the family's presence at Bethlehem shows that the time was one of the periodic feasts at which pious folk like Joseph and Mary would "go up to Jerusalem" for the occasion, and since their ancestral home was Bethlehem it is understandable that there they would lodge. Instructed by the angel, Joseph took his wife and child out of the town and made his way two hundred miles to Egypt where they would be beyond the King's jurisdiction; "and was there until the death of Herod" (Matt. 2. 15). Herod died early in the following year so the stay in Egypt was less than six months, during which time no doubt Joseph supported the family by his trade; then the voice of the angel came again, telling of the king's death and instructing him to return to the land of Israel. It seems that his intention was to settle in Bethlehem; he probably felt that the future mission of Jesus would demand close proximity to the capital city Jerusalem and he was prepared to subordinate his own life's plans and wishes to what appeared to be the Divine will, but he found that Herod's son Archelaus was now reigning and he was nearly as much a menace as the old king. Again, it seems, he sought Divine guidance, and following the response he sought went on into Galilee and settled in his old home town of Nazareth, outside Archelaus' jurisdiction. So, for a few years at least, he found peace and quietness in which to nurture his wife's firstborn son.

Only one recorded incident breaks the silence of the next thirty years. Every year Joseph and Mary travelled to Jerusalem—in common with many others—to observe the Feast of the Passover. In Jesus' twelfth year, as they set out to return to Nazareth, somehow they lost him. A day out on the journey they discovered that He was not with the company and they returned to Jerusalem to find him. After three days search He was discovered in the Temple courts, listening to and questioning the venerable Doctors of the Law, the theologians of the day. Said Mary to him, probably reproachfully, "thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" but already the active mind of the lad was reaching out towards his life's mission. "Do you not understand" He told them gently "that I must be in my Father's courts?" But they did not understand; "they understood not the saying which he spake unto them" (Luke 2. 50). They were

already beginning to lose him, as was ordained. He remained a dutiful son; "he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart". It is not said that Joseph did likewise. It might well be that from this point Joseph became increasingly unable to realise the nature of Jesus' mission and destiny. His mother did. Joseph was called to be a physical protector and provider for the period Jesus needed material protection and provision and when the lad attained man's estate Joseph's work was done. Quietly and unobtrusively he served as he was bidden while the need existed, and when the service was finished and no longer any need he slips silently out of the picture and is seen no more. But in the records of Heaven the consecrated life and selfless devotion of Joseph, the village carpenter of Nazareth, is surely inscribed in letters of gold for ever.

We hear no more of Joseph. We know from the Gospels that he and Mary had four sons—James, Joses, Jude, Simon—and at least two daughters, all younger than Jesus, so that they must have had a reasonably long married life together. His death is not recorded; from the fact that Jesus commended his mother to the care of the Apostle John, the son of Zededeo and Salome, at the Crucifixion, it would appear that he died before that event. The casual remarks of the villagers in Luke 4. 22 and Jno. 6. 42 "Is not this Joseph's son?" and "Is not this the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" would seem to infer that he was alive at those times, approximately summer of A.D. 30 and spring of A.D. 31 respectively. Matt. 13. 55 might imply the same conclusion as to the autumn of A.D. 30. There are some indications that Mary and the family at least made their home in Capernaum during the early part of our Lord's ministry. He himself never went back to Nazareth after the villagers' rejection of him at the beginning—and Jesus did visit Capernaum some ten times during the first two years, but never after the summer of A.D. 31. Soon after that time comes his first recorded visit to the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary at Bethany which seems to have been the nearest approach to a home He possessed towards the end. From all of this it might be inferred that Joseph died, perhaps at Capernaum, about the middle of A.D. 31, nearly two years before the Crucifixion, at which time he might well have been sixty years of age, a not uncommon life span in those days. The rest of the family would have been young men and women, some already married, but from Jno. 7. 5 it is known that none of them were in sympathy with Jesus so that after Joseph's death Mary might have attached herself to the other women, her sister Mary the wife of Cleophas, Mary of Magdala, Salome and Joanna, who were

disciples of Jesus, instead of making her home with any of her own children. That would explain why Jesus, on the Cross, placed her in John's care although she had children living. Later on, after the Resurrection, James and Jude became converts; possibly one or more of the others did also. At any rate Acts 1. 14 makes it clear that at the first complete assembly of believers after the Ascension both Mary and either some or else all of his brothers were present. Among the arguments for the truth of the Resurrection that are advanced it is not often remarked that Jesus' brothers, who had formerly disbelieved, became believers in the light of the things that had happened; where they had failed to be convinced by his life they were convinced by his death and resurrection.

Joseph, his life's work done, passed quietly and silently from the scene. It may seem a hard and somewhat callous way in which to treat a faithful servant of God who had discharged his commission faithfully throughout life but it is not really so, and Joseph was not the only one. Moses, the greatest man in Israel's history, died alone and unseen amid the fastnesses of Mount Nebo "*and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day*"; Samuel, whose wise administration and sterling worth converted an undisciplined rabble of warring tribes into a God-fearing nation, died an old man, bereft

of power and authority, in a country village surrounded only by a few student lads; Elijah, who challenged and overthrew idolatry in Israel, went out alone into the wilderness beyond Jordan and was caught away by a whirlwind and never seen again; Daniel who for more than seventy years held up the banner of the faith in idolatrous Babylon and kept alive the national hope of eventual deliverance, saw the fulfilment of the promise and the triumphant departure of the people of Judah, but was too old to share in the deliverance himself, and he died unrecorded in Babylon. God attaches no importance to the earthly body and the earthly life once his purpose with the individual is achieved. The body goes to the dust; that which is preserved in the strong hands of God comes forth to a new life in a new environment, resplendent in a glory which is enhanced by the merit of the former life's work well done.

So, among that noble company of old time stalwarts of faith who are to take a leading part in the conversion of all the world in the Age yet to come, not the least in high honour will be that gentle and courageous man of faith who had, more than any other man, to do with the nurture and care of the Son of God come to earth, the man who was called, in his own village and by his own neighbours, just simply, Joseph the carpenter.

THE ASSURANCE OF THE ASCENSION

*A study on
Acts 1. 11*

All that is known of the incidents surrounding the Ascension depends on the historical records of St. Luke. Second only in importance to the story of the Crucifixion, nothing whatever as to its nature and details would have come down to us had it not been for his stories of the event, both in his Gospel and in the Book of Acts. From both these narratives it is known that some forty days after his resurrection Jesus took his disciples to a spot on the Mount of Olives and there visibly ascended into the skies in their presence. After that they saw him no more. Thus convinced that He had indeed returned to his Father in heaven, they returned to Jerusalem with joy, and a few days later underwent the profound emotional experience of Pentecost which launched them upon their life's work and resulted in the establishment of the Christian Church.

It is noticeable that the account in Acts is fuller and more detailed than that in Luke's Gospel. It would seem that during the ten years or so which elapsed between the writing of these two books Luke must have obtained more information relative to the event; had he possessed the full story when writing his Gospel it is unlikely that he would have refrained from including it since this is the

natural climax to the Gospel. As it is, Acts virtually overlaps the Gospel insofar as the story of the Ascension is concerned and the combination of the two accounts enables a very full picture to be drawn.

It would seem that Jesus took the entire eleven disciples with him on this last journey. He led them, says the Gospel (Luke 24.50) as far as Bethany, and then lifting up his hands and blessing them, He was carried away into heaven and they saw him no more. Acts adds the detail that a cloud received him out of their sight. A minor apparent discrepancy arises from the statement in Acts that they returned from Olivet "*which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey*". This distance, the most that an orthodox Jew could travel from his home on the Sabbath, was, according to Josephus, a little under a mile, whereas Bethany is a mile and three-quarters from the city walls. It is not likely though that Jesus made his ascent from the middle of the village in full view of the townsfolk; the story has the atmosphere of a quiet leavetaking in a secluded spot. More probably, Jesus halted his little party whilst still on the slopes of the Mount, with Bethany perhaps coming into sight in the distance, maybe no more than a

mile away, so that Luke's earlier account could still be reasonably correct. In fact the western slopes of Olivet are only about half a mile or less from the city.

The last time they had followed Jesus along this road it had been to Gethsemane and death; after that they had believed all was over and there was no hope. Now they followed him with quiet joy, past the Garden with its tragic memories and out on the open road as it traversed the southern slopes of the Mount where the sun shone brightly down. He was alive, and death could have no more dominion over him; all that the prophets had spoken would now surely come to pass.

So they stood to receive his blessing, and then in wonder watched his form ascend steadily into the blue sky above their heads. It was all so very clear now. During the past forty days He had appeared and disappeared time after time, convincing them that He was truly alive, risen from the dead, and with them still, not yet ascended to his Father. But this was different. They knew, now, that they would see him no more. As they "*looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up*" they realised, as no other situation could make them realise, that He had returned to the Father in heaven as He always said He would. The receding form vanished into a cloud passing across the sky, and that was the end. Thoughtfully they made their way back to the city and their waiting friends, conscious only of a great joy in their hearts.

Now we know that that body of flesh, with its enshrouding garments, did not continue its upward levitation onward from the cloud, through the earth's atmosphere, out into the vastness of space and so to the portals of the celestial land. We know that because we know it to be impossible for flesh and blood to enter the heavenly world and appear in the presence of God. When our risen Lord, to use the language of Hebrews "*appeared in the presence of God for us*" He did so, no longer as man nor manifest in the accoutrements of humanity fitted only for this earthly world, but in the spiritual glory of his Divinity. Now was his dying prayer fulfilled; He returned to his own place invested with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (Jno. 17.5). We know so little of that mystic relationship which exists eternally between the Father and the Son; all our illustrations and definitions are inadequate to convey to our minds a truth which must lie fundamentally outside the range of human intellect: but it were a grave indignity to the One in whom all things subsist to think of his Person as eternally manifested within the compass and lineaments of a terrestrial human being, a tiny creature designed for and fitted to the physical conditions of a minute speck of matter in the vast creation of which He is Lord and Head.

We know all that, but the disciples did not. Their day and age was by no means ready for such an appreciation of the majesty and mystery of God and so it must have been that as they wended their way back to the city they were conscious only of the simple realisation that their Master had returned to his Father in heaven and of that they were sure because they had seen him go.

There was another assurance too and one that accounted for the unmixed joy which filled their hearts. One day He would come back to them; they had not lost him for ever. One day He would come back in glory and power to establish the Kingdom He had so often talked to them about, and then they would be in his company for all time. All their hopes and desires would then be satisfied. All that the prophets of old had predicted would be fulfilled. Jesus himself had told them all that, during the life they had shared with him, but not only so, even now, before they left the scene of the event they had just witnessed, two messengers of God, two angels, had appeared to them and repeated the promise, "*Ye men of Galilee*", they had said to them, "*Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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).

The full force of the assurance is lost in the English translation. All too commonly it is assumed that the angels indicated that Jesus would return in exactly the same physical state and environment as He went away, that just as He had ascended visibly into the cloud, so He would one day descend visibly from a cloud, in a human body like that of his Ascension, arrayed in clothing like that in which the disciples saw him go, setting foot again upon the Mount of Olives amid a circle of watching and waiting believers. This is not really what the angels meant; the expression "in like manner" in this verse has a deeper and, to the disciples, an infinitely more assuring significance. The comparison denoted by the Greek expression behind the translation was not so much that of the similarity of action or condition between the going and the coming but the equivalent certainty of the two factors. "As surely as ye have seen him go, so surely will he return."

This is nowhere better illustrated than by another occurrence of the same expression in Acts. During the narrative of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27 there comes a point where Paul in a dream received Divine assurance of safety and deliverance for the whole of the ship's company with instructions for their action. In recounting all this to his fellows Paul says (vs. 25) "*I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*" "Even as" here is the same word, "*hon tropon*", as "in like manner" in Acts 1.11. In Paul's word it denotes the certainty

of fulfilment; the coming deliverance was as real and assured as the fact that God had spoken to him. Upon Olivet the promised return was as real and certain as the obvious fact that they had seen him go. It was this certainty which sent them back to Jerusalem "what great joy."

For the more studious, the basic idea behind the expression "*hon tropon*" is that of the regular duplication of similar events, of one following the other in automatic and assured sequence. It is derived from *trope*, a turning around or about, referring primarily to the regular and predictable motion and return of the heavenly bodies in their seasons, as the sun in its course along the ecliptic or the planets in their orbits. In the circuit of the year the sun travels first to the north of the Equator and then to the south, returning at the end to the position from which it started. (Hence our word "tropics", which comes from "*trope*".) Hence it came to mean an orderly way or succession, the certainty of an expected future event compared with the acknowledged certainty of a known past event of the same class. Whilst the expression "like manner" can express this idea fairly well, the rendering "as—so" is much more forceful and accurate and this is how "*tropon*" is usually translated in the A.V. Just a few examples from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint Old Testament, and one from the Apocrypha, will suffice to illustrate this. The italicised words are the A.V. renderings of "*hon tropon*" or "*tropon*".

- Acts 27.25. "I believe God, that it shall be *even as* it was told me"
- Acts 15.11. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, *even as* they"
- 2 Tim. 3.8. "Now *as* Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these resist the truth"
- Gen. 26.29. "That thou wilt do us no hurt—*as* we have done unto thee nothing but good"
- Deut. 11-25. "The Lord your God shall lay the fear of you upon all the land . . . *as* he hath said unto you."
- Exod. 14.13. "For *whereas* ye have seen the Egyptians to-day, ye shall see them no more for ever."
- Obad 16. "*As* ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall the heathen drink continually."
- Psa. 42.1. "*As* the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

2 Macc. 15.39. "As wine mingled with water is pleasant . . . even so speech finely framed delighteth the ears of them that read the story".

It can be argued that if one thing is "even as" another it can be said to be "in like manner", similar in manner, and this is true enough provided the basic meaning behind the expression is kept in mind, that it is the assured recurrence of the relevant events, the fact that they stand together as related matters equally certain of realisation. As *this* is true, so *that* is true. As *this* has happened, so *that* will happen. When "manner" in the ordinary sense of the word, as custom, action, fashion, is concerned the word "*ethos*" is employed, as in Jno. 19.40, Acts 15.1 and 25.16, Heb. 10.25; sometimes it is "*houtos*", which latter can be roughly rendered thuswise or accordingly, as in Mark 13.39 "So ye, in like manner, when ye see these things" and 1 Pet. 3.5 "For after this manner in the old time holy women also" or Rev. 11.5 "He must in this manner be killed".

Coming back for a moment to Acts 27.25, the expression in the Greek text is identical—save for the verb concerned—as in Acts 1.11. Here is the comparison.

- Acts 1.11. Thus (*houtos*) he-will-come even as (*hon tropon*) ye-are-seeing him go-away into the heaven.
- Acts 27.25. Thus (*houtos*) it-shall-be even as (*hon tropon*) it-has-been-told-to-me.

Small wonder then that with this note of certainty ringing in their ears the predominant feeling in the hearts of the disciples as they returned to Jerusalem was one of "great joy", so much so that this was the salient feature of the story as it was afterwards received by St. Luke and incorporated in his Gospel. The sad and anxious enquiry "*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" was swallowed up and forgotten in the face of this heavenly assurance of the certainty of his return. He had only gone away for a time; He would surely come again. In the meantime they could with good heart execute his commission to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth, firmly persuaded that, even as He had gone away, so surely would He come back.

So it is with us, who two thousand years later wait still for the fulfilment of the angelic assurance. It is of little importance in our Christian lives that we know the time of his coming—and no man knows, or ever can know, the time anyway. It is more important that we have as clear an understanding as we can gain from the Scriptures of the manner of his coming, that we be not deceived

either by false Christs or false expectations. It is greatly important that we understand very distinctly the purpose of his coming, for without that knowledge we are as servants who know not what their Lord doeth and are unready to enter into his higher service when He does come. But most important of all is the firm and fixed conviction, which nothing can shake, that He most certainly returns at the pre-ordained appointed time, and

sets in motion that chain of events which characterises the Days of the Son of Man, without delay, without failure, unaffected and uninfluenced by whatever of opposition on the part of his enemies or apathy and lack of comprehension on the part of his followers He may find. When the Clock of the Ages points to the hour already set for the Advent, He comes. So surely as He went away, so surely He comes again.

DR. SEISS ON THE MILLENNIUM

Dr. Joseph A. Seiss, well-known Lutheran minister of Philadelphia, U.S.A. latter part of 19th century. Editor of "Prophetic Times" and author many books on Biblical matters. Convinced pre-millennialist.

* * *

"The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews introduces three points in which the superangelic dignity is shown. The first is that Christ is assigned a higher name than the angels. The second is that he is clothed with a sublimer honour than the angels, and the third is that Christ is invested with a sublimer office than the angels, they being only ministering spirits, while He is spoken of as a Divine King, whose throne is forever and ever, and the sceptre of whose Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. The princely investiture and reign of the Messiah is thus distinctly deduced from the Old Testament, and used by the Apostle as the sublimest demonstration of the Saviour's personal dignity. And this Messianic dominion he applies particularly to what is hereafter to grow out of the Gospel economy. He tells us that it is peculiarly "the world to come" over which the Messiah's reign is to be exercised. "*For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak*", thus proceeding upon the implied assumption that it has been by promise put into subjection to Christ, and that all those allusions to the Saviour as a King have their chief application and ultimate fulfilment in that "world to come". The Messiah's reign and this "world to come" accordingly belong together and coexist in the same period and locality. By determination, then, what is meant by this "world to come", we may form an idea of what is included in the Messianic Kingdom; or, if we already know what the consummated Messianic reign is, and where it is to be, we have it already decided what we are to understand by this "world to come".

"If any stress is, therefore, to be laid upon this conclusion, there is no alternative left but to understand this "world to come" as the Millennial World, or the world as it shall be when Christ shall have entered upon his glorious dominion as the

Sovereign of the nations and Lord of the whole earth. And to this agrees exactly the original word, *oikoumene*, which means the habitable earth—the domiciliated globe on which we dwell—and not some remote supernal region. The world to come, then, is nothing more nor less than this self-same world of ours in its final or Millennial condition. The earth is not to be annihilated. God never obliterates his own creations. The dissolving fires of which Peter speaks are for "the perdition of ungodly men", and not for the utter depopulation and destruction of the whole world; men and nations will survive them and still continue to live in the flesh. The earth is to be renovated and restored from its present depression and dilapidation, and thus become "the new earth" of which the Bible speaks. It is to pass through a "regeneration" analogous to that through which a man must pass to see the Kingdom of God; but there will be a continuity of its elements and existence, just as a regenerated man is constitutionally the same being that he was before his renewal. It will not be another earth, but the same earth under another condition of things. It is now labouring under the curse; but then the curse will have been lifted off and all its wounds healed. At present, it is hardly habitable—no one being able to live in it longer than a few brief years; but then men shall dwell in it forever without knowing what death is. It is now the home of rebellion, injustice and guilt; it will then be the home of righteousness. It is now under the domination of Satan; it will then come under the blessed rule of the Prince of Peace. Such, at any rate, is the hope set before us in the Word of God, and this I hold to be "the world to come", of which the text speaks. It cannot be anything else. It cannot be what is commonly called heaven, for the word *oikoumene* cannot apply to heaven. It is everywhere else used exclusively with reference to our world. Neither can it be the present Gospel dispensation, for that began long before this epistle was written and could not, therefore, have been spoken of by Paul as yet "to come". We are consequently compelled to understand it to mean our own habitable world in its Millennial glory. And as

the prophecies concerning the Messiah's eternal kingship are here referred to as having their fulfilment in the subjection of the Millennial world to his dominion, we are furnished with another powerful argument of Scripture in favour of the doctrine of Christ's personal reign as a great Prince in this world. Indeed, the Bible is so full of this subject, and its inspired writers are so constantly and enthusiastically alluding to it that I am amazed to find so many pious and Bible-loving people entirely losing sight of it. Ever and anon the Scriptures return to it as the great and animating hope of the Church in all her adversities and depressions, and it does seem to me that we are depriving ourselves of much true Christian comfort by the manner in which we have been neglecting and thrusting aside that glorious doctrine. My present object is to show, from the Scriptures, and by just inferences from them, what sort of a world this "world to come" is, and to describe, as far as I can, what we are to look for when once this earth has been fully subjected to that Divine King whose throne is forever and ever, and the sceptre of whose Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness.

"That "the world to come" is a highly blessed world, and a vast improvement upon the present scene of things, will be inferred on all hands without argument. It could not be a subject of hope if it were not. The Saviour himself exhibited a model of it when in the Mount of Transfiguration—from which, perhaps, we may obtain as deep an insight of its glories as from any other portion of Scripture. That He designed that scene as a miniature model of what his future coming and Kingdom is to be, is obvious. A week before it occurred he told his disciples that "the Son of man shall come in the glory

of the Father, with his angels or messengers with him"; and that there were some standing there when He made the declaration who should not taste of death till they saw the Son of man coming in his Kingdom. This coming in his Kingdom, which some of the disciples were to live and see, is not the final Advent, for the disciples are all dead, and the final Advent is still future. Neither is it the destruction of Jerusalem, for but one of the apostles lived to see that catastrophe, and the Son of man did not then come in his Kingdom. And yet some of the apostles were to have ocular demonstration of the Son of man's coming in his Kingdom before tasting of death. Search through apostolic history as we will we shall find nothing but the Transfiguration, to which the Saviour's words will apply. That, then, was in some sense the coming of the Son of man in his Kingdom. It was not, indeed, the coming itself, but it was an earnest and picture of it. Peter says: "*The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" are not "*cunningly devised fables*". He declares that he was certified of their reality by the testimony of his own senses. We were "*eye-witnesses*", says he, "*when we were with him in the holy mount*". We thus have clear, inspired testimony that the scene of the Transfiguration was a demonstrative exhibition of the coming of Jesus in his Kingdom. Hence, whatever we find in the descriptions of that scene, we may confidently expect to be realised in that "world to come whereof we speak". As He was then personally present as the Son of man, so He will be personally present in the Millennial Kingdom. And as He was there attended by different classes of persons, so will his glorious Kingdom consist of similar classes.

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was a famous German astronomer and a devout Christian. His discoveries in relation to the solar system earned him opposition and persecution from the Church and some of his writings were banned and suppressed. He used to say that one day men would build ships to sail the ocean of space, words that are coming true in this present day. His scientific achievements were great but perhaps his finest epitaph is the prayer he composed and which he made peculiarly his own:

"Dear Lord, Who has guided us to the light of thy glory by the light of Nature, thanks be to Thee. Behold, I have completed the work to which Thou hast called me, and I rejoice in Thy creation, whose wonders Thou hast given me to reveal unto men.

Amen".

Bunyan was the supreme example of the forceful Christian. Simple, direct, he spoke as he thought, and the positiveness of his expressions bespoke a firm and unyielding conviction of a righteous cause. Hear him on the subject of sectarianism. "Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian. And for those factious titles of Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Antioch nor from Jerusalem, but from Hell and Babylon, for they tend to divisions; you may know them by their fruits."

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

Luke 18. 1-8

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

A good many have asked why this particularly unpleasant individual should be used by Jesus to illustrate our Father's attitude to the prayers of his disciples. Surely, say some, a better simile could have been found. It might be said in reply that the fact that Jesus did use this picture to point the lesson is sufficient basis to expect some very definite truth embedded therein, for which we do well to seek, and having found, to consider. It is clear that, as in other certain parables, Jesus is teaching by contrast. If this admittedly unrighteous judge is found rousing himself at last to do his duty in consequence of the appellant's importunity, then *how much more* will God, who is not unrighteous, and unlike this judge, is actively working to give sin-sick humanity the relief they crave, ready to grant deliverance to those who come to him. There is a supplementary question which follows hard on the heels of this answer; if God is indeed so solicitous to save, why is He so long in doing it? That question, and its answer, is also in this parable, but has to be considered in its right place, at the conclusion of the story.

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

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

"*Continuing instant in prayer*" says the Apostle in Rom. 12. 12. That expression "continuing instant" has the meaning of dogged perseverance, a tenacious grasp of the thing desired which will not be loosed. Strong, steadfast, immovable. Rotherham translates the first verse of this parable "*as to its being needful for men always to pray and not be faint-hearted*". The essential nature of prayer is communion with God. We commune with God not because of the things we want of him, but because we want to be one with him; in common-union. We desire oneness with God because we have entered into full heart sympathy with his guiding principles for all creation. We, like God, desire above all things to see righteousness universal and evil eliminated, and our desire is because we have come to realise that condition of things to be the only possible basis of enduring life. Therefore "Thy Kingdom Come" is the most

fundamental prayer of all and the essence of all prayer. It is because we believe and are persuaded that this ardently desired consummation to the Divine Plan will surely come to pass that we continue in prayer before God. We know in whom we have believed and are persuaded that he is able. Our constantly reiterated prayers serve to strengthen and crystallise our conviction that these things will surely come to pass, just as with the litigant widow the more she pressed for justice the more sure she became that it would be hers eventually.

This is where the other question has to be answered—Why is God so tardy in replying? We know why the widow had to wait so long, but we cannot give that reason in the case of the reality which the parable illustrates. There is no unrighteousness with God, and he is diligent to oversee the interests of the disciples. *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry"* (Psa. 34. 15). Why then the apparent delay? Perhaps Rotherham's comment on verse 7 is enlightening on this aspect of the parable. *"Slow to smite his foes, he seems also slow to save his friends"*. Rotherham's own translation of verse 7 gives a new slant to Jesus' words "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them?" where Rotherham has it "though he bear long with regard to them". Here we come up against that longsuffering of God, his patience and forbearance with sinful man so often exemplified in history. He would have spared Sodom if so few as ten righteous men could have been found there (Gen. 18. 32). He gave the Ninevites every opportunity and spared them when they repented at the eleventh hour. Even though it means prolonging the reign of evil, and of human misery and death, he defers his arising in judgment until in his wisdom He sees that the iniquity of man is come to the full. So he "bears long" with regard to the cry of his faithful servants because He is working in his own inscrutable way for the salvation of "whosoever will" among his rebellious creatures. That is why there is apparent delay. And that is why faith tends to die. Jesus knew that too. Even although God will avenge, and the faith of those who have waited will be abundantly justified, Jesus knew, as He told his disciples later on, *"because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"* (Matt. 24. 12). So here, at the close of the parable, He gave voice to the sad question *"Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* (vs. 8). We need not deduce from these words that Jesus doubted whether at his Return there would be any at all holding still to the faith; the whole tenor of his teaching implies his knowledge that

there would be the faithful watching ones ardently waiting for his appearance, not taken by surprise when the event occurred, and ready in every sense of the word to be "changed" in a moment (1 Cor. 15. 51-52) and so associated with him to all eternity. What Jesus did foresee was that in the Time of the End faith in the world at large would be at a very low ebb precisely because of the apparent victory of evil and impotence of righteousness. In the days of the First Advent everybody believed in God, even though in many cases their lives bore little evidence of any real endeavour to walk in his ways. In the days before the First Advent everybody believed in God; and so did nearly all men subsequently until the approach of relatively modern times. Of all ages in world history the last two or three centuries have been by far the most agnostic and atheistic. Faith in God is to-day rapidly vanishing from the earth and from the human standpoint it would almost seem as if the Christian cause is lost. Materialistic writers already talk of the need of a new religion founded on modern knowledge and devised to suit modern needs, to replace Christianity which in their view is archaic and out-worn. Vast sections of the earth's surface are ruled by political systems which have no use for God and openly say as much; by their actions most of the remaining governing powers, whilst still paying lip service, show that they too have little intention of upholding the principles of Divine rule which God originally instilled in the heart of man. So men conclude that God, if He exists, is either impotent or indifferent.

It is at such a time that God acts. *"I tell you"* said Jesus *"that he will avenge them speedily"*. When the iniquity of the nations has at length come to the full; when the great Clock of the Ages strikes the hour fore-ordained of God and the time of his Kingdom has come, the prayers of the faithful will be answered, in that revelation of the Son of Man in the glory of his power which will at one and the same time overthrow the powers of evil and introduce all men to the beneficent rule of the Messianic Kingdom. *"Every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"* (Isa. 40. 4-5). This is the thing that must be, that shall be, because it is the right thing, and because evil is inherently unstable and must one day consume away by its own corruption.

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

“YEA, RATHER”

*A discourse on
Rom. 8. 34*

It is not always the biggest words of a text, nor even the centrally positioned ones in a paragraph that will carry most weight in the argument. Sometimes words of two letters, by their comparative values, such as “as” and “so”, will open wide the door of argument, or close it shut, leaving no doubt in the reader’s mind what the writer’s meaning was. For instance, “*As in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive*” (1 Cor. 15. 22). Whatever may be the full scope of this Scripture its argument turns upon two small words.

The two words of our text also institute a comparison, but throw the balance of importance upon the statement next following. They add emphasis to the assertion that follows them, and increase its importance greatly when compared with the one that precedes them. Paul could have made use of the facts regarding the life and death of Jesus without using these two words. He could have written: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, and it is Christ that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God . . .” He would thus have been stating the two great facts of Jesus’ life as unassailable facts, but, stated thus they would be “in parallel” with each other, and of equal value for the purpose of an argument. But that was not his intention here. Apparently he did not desire them to be of equal value in their application to the main point of his discussion. He was not, at this point, basing his claim to freedom from condemnation on a dead Christ—however acceptable that death of Christ may be—but upon a living and exalted Christ, who had passed beyond the reach of death, and was present at God’s right hand to represent Paul and all his brethren there.

Already he had shown the vital necessity of the death of Christ as one of the great essential factors in the work of Atonement and Reconciliation (chap. 3. 25; 5. 6, 12-19; 8. 32), and here (as always, elsewhere) Paul did not underrate or undervalue the worth of that Redemption Sacrifice. Always in presence of either friend or foe he gloried in the Cross of Christ, and declared it the one foundation upon which all future hope must be based. It had done for men what no other work had ever done. Jesus by his death had done what no man, or men could ever do. Alexander the Great had overrun the world while still little more than a youth—a feat almost without parallel in the annals of time, up to Paul’s day—yet what had the conquest accomplished for men? Even among his own people there was none to compare with Paul’s gracious Lord. Moses had been God’s instrument in giving to the fathers the Law. David and Solomon had given of their great wealth to build

God a house, and had employed tongue and pen to sing the goodness of the Lord, and while they had given much to benefit those who loved the Holy Name, what had they given that could be compared with that great price Jesus gave for man’s release? Not all the feats of arms; not all the bright gold dug from the earth, nor all the erected temples upon the earth could compare in its effects upon men with the effects of that dark tragedy on Calvary. That, to Paul’s persuaded mind, was the one event that transcended every other event throughout the world, throughout all time.

Yet it was only the first chapter of a great story. It was a chapter gloriously true, but it was not the whole story. It was a truth—a pure unadulterated truth—yet not the whole truth—there was something more! Here, in the argument he was now presenting, it was as the wicket-door leading into a larger auditorium. It was a case of passing through that to this, and it was “this” that really mattered most!

He was writing of God’s Elect! He was writing to God’s Elect—of those and to those whom God’s Love had won over from the ranks of evil and wickedness. They had forsaken the ways of sin, and Satan, and turned with all their hearts to God, in order to serve him, and live in accord with his great purposes toward men. But they found to their great sorrow that the fallen flesh of men (which they still shared with other men—other fallen men) was no fitting instrument through which to serve the living God. Try as they would, and even with the best intent, they could not always do the things they would have loved to do, or say the things they would have preferred to say. They found that even their best attempts came short of the perfect standard, and how often they had cause to groan and pour out their sense of unworthiness in sighs and sobs! Would God condemn them for these deficiencies and ineffective attempts? Would Jesus chide and rebuke them because they so often missed the mark? Would anyone condemn them and point the scornful finger at their vain attempts to measure up to righteousness? Yes, there were some who could scoff and scorn and ridicule and condemn! One “accuser of the brethren” always stood ready to heap condemnation on their heads. Along with him was a whole host of wickedness in exalted position, ready to hinder and oppose, to dishearten and condemn, when frailty and wickedness marred their best endeavours. But (and this is what matters most to Paul and his believing friends) these accusers and opponents had no right of entrance to the Divine Court where all these actions—these

efforts to please God—were assessed and judged. That Court of assessment was in heaven, at the very Throne of God. Satan and his hosts had no right of entrance there. They had no standing as “the prosecutor-at-the-bar”. They had no power of attorney in that Supreme Court. Therefore, though they might shriek their condemnation above the raging voice of the gale, it had no relevance to the “case” in hand. “Who is he that condemneth?” asks Paul. None!—there is no prosecutor in the case.

Would Jesus condemn? Nay, He had died for them! But more than that, He was now living for them, and serving their need more than before. Would God from his Throne condemn? Nay, He had already issued his writ of acquittal! He had already declared the decree of his Court, freely justifying the believer from his sins and weaknesses. The verdict of the Court was favourable to the Advocate and his earthly companions, so that in heaven there was none to condemn. Other accusers mattered not, let them shout their impeachments loud and long! So long, therefore, as their name and credit stood unimpaired in the one place, and at the one “Bar” that really mattered, all was well with them. And that it stood well in that one place was sure beyond all further question because their Advocate was so fully acceptable to the Judge, who alone was qualified to judge and justify, that He was keeping the Advocate at his own right hand—to remain there throughout the Age, till the whole company for whom He had appeared had achieved the object for which they had been justified.

It is no dead Christ that occupies the centre of God’s Plan. It is a living Christ—a Christ over whom death has no dominion or power—a Christ, eternal, immortal and all powerful, who ever liveth to help each generation of his struggling followers along and up the heights to heavenly glory. “*I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore*” are the words of assurance sent down from heaven to earth, to stand as guarantee that no struggling follower can ever pass from the sight of his watchful loving Eye.

Some of the reputed followers of the Lord make their boast in a Christ who died, and carry a crucifix as token of that death. That is something, but it is not enough. It is not enough that a sacrifice should have been made, or that a Cross and a tomb should be the symbol of Divine Redemption. That alone could not have secured the blotting out of sin. The “Bar-of-all-Authority” was not in session

on Calvary’s hill, or Gethsemane’s tomb, but had placed its throne in the highest heaven. Divine Justice had instituted its own Court, and thither must the “case” of all believers be carried for adjudication.

We may truly rejoice with any or all who rejoice in the great Sacrifice of the Man of Sorrows, but that would be ending the great story in the opening chapter. With Paul we might announce to heaven and earth that all our glory is in the Cross, but we must complete the great account by proclaiming to all our “*Yea rather*”. “Christ died, *yea rather* . . . was raised from the dead” is the vital energising fact at the heart of God’s purpose.

Much is made to-day over the radio of “the historic Christ”, and men are asked to make their decisions concerning righteousness on the basis of the teachings of a good man who lived nineteen centuries ago and taught a new way of life. No wonder the world looks coldly on while only one here and there responds to the Great Voice from the past. It needs more than the historic Christ to energise a cold world into life. The rating of Jesus as “the historic Christ” places him but little in advance of the founders of any other religion or “way of life”. The “historic” advocates make the plea that “the Christ” is “God”, and argue therefore that his words should be heard, heeded and followed. Still the world looks coldly on. It cannot understand even that assertion, for it lacks the living power to grip the vital strings of the heart of men in these tumultuous days. Not a “dead Christ”, nor yet a “historic” Christ, but a “Living Christ”, who has learned compassion for the suffering generations of men, is the one theme, the only theme, that can strike home, arrest and rivet the attention and expectation of the perplexed and doubting hosts of men, bewildered and lost in the mazes of modern thought. But who shall tell them of that Living Christ? And the answer surely comes, only they who can say: “*Yea rather, Christ has risen from the dead.*” Our two little words then contain volumes of sacrificial and dispensational fact, and stand as an expression of conviction that, great and vital as the death of Christ most surely was, his resurrection is more vital still, to those who now follow in his steps.

Lives there one child of God to-day, who, knowing and experiencing the care of the great Shepherd of the flock, whose heart will not rise up in gratitude and appreciation before God for the great facts covered by our little text—“*yea rather*”?

This soul of ours hath love, and cannot but love some fair one. Put the beauty of ten thousand worlds of paradises like the Garden of Eden in one; put all trees, all flowers, all sweet smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all love-

liness, in one. What a fair thing that would be! and yet it would be less to that Well-beloved Christ than one drop of rain to the seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths.

(Samuel Rutherford).

“WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

Perhaps the most puzzling words of Jesus are those embodied in his cry when on the Cross and at the point of death “*My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Matt. 27. 46 Mark 15, 34). The idea that Jesus should think that He had been abandoned by the Father at his hour of severest trial seems difficult to accept; the celebrated writer H. G. Wells in the early 20th century referred to it in one of his books as “that eternal enigma to the faithful” and an enigma it has proved to be. What inspired our Lord to utter the words and what was in his mind when He spoke them?

An explanation favoured by commentators is that since Jesus is said to have taken the sinner's place, and sinners by reason of their sin are separated from God, it was necessary that Jesus should, if only for a moment, feel that his Father had turned away from him. Otherwise, it is argued, He could not properly be said to have taken the sinner's place. It is possible that this argument has not been properly thought out. In the first place it is unthinkable that the Father should actually abandon and turn away from the Son at the culminating point of his life, when from the human standpoint He stood in greatest need of assurance from above. Jesus claimed that He was always and at all times in complete communion and unity with the Father. The oneness with the Father which He declared did subsist, however we understand that oneness, forbids the idea that there could ever be a rift between the eternal unity and mutual understanding between the Father and the Son. The wonderful words of Jesus spoken only a few hours previously and recorded in Jno. 16 & 17 can hardly be reconciled with the idea of a break, even a momentary break, in that relationship. “*I came forth from the Father, and go to the Father*”; “*I am not alone, because the Father is with me*”; “*Now, O Father glorify me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*”; “*Now I am no more in the world, and I come to thee*”; “*Thou, Father art in me, and I in thee*”. If, a few hours later, Jesus could be conceived as having renounced that confidence to the extent that He thought the Father had deserted him, that could only mean that for a moment He himself had lost faith, that his death after all was in vain. Such conclusion is inconceivable—many a Christian martyr in past ages has gone to his death amid excruciating torments without losing faith, and it is impossible for the servant to be greater than his Lord. Whatever the explanation of this admittedly, on the surface, puzzling phrase, it can hardly be that.

Reference back to the Old Testament suggests another and much more rational explanation, one which bears witness to the unswerving faith of

Jesus and his sense of unity with the Father throughout his ordeal. These identical words appear in the first verse of Psalm 22. Now Psalm 22 is a very significant Psalm. Written by David, probably at the time of his flight from Saul, it contains a number of allusions which were definitely not true of David himself. He was never without friends and helpers, contrary to verse 11. Verses 7-8, 17-18 cannot be applied to David although reminiscent of the experiences of Christ. The conclusion reached by most scholars is that the Psalm is a foreview of the experiences of Christ dictated to David by the Holy Spirit and set against the background of his own experiences. Several allusions in the New Testament bear this out. And the remarkable thing about the Psalm is that although it commences on a note of apparent despair at the seeming failure of God to deliver, it closes on the opposite note of certain triumph because God has in fact delivered. Verses 1-19 tell of the anguish of the sufferer, his imminent certain death at the hands of his enemies with God apparently unheeding. But in verse 19 there is a change of tone, a plea to God to come to his help; “*Be not thou far from me, Lord, Haste thee to help me*” leading on to the cry of certainty in vs. 22 “*I will declare thy name unto my brethren*” and to verse 24 “*He hath not . . . hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard*”. So to the climactic end in vs. 31, where all is well, for the kingdom is the Lord's and all men declare his righteousness.

It is said that during the savage persecutions of the Jews by the Greeks and later by the Romans in the immediate centuries before Christ it was the custom for Jewish warriors, hemmed in by their enemies and knowing they were doomed to certain death, to shout out, as they died, the opening words of this Psalm as indication of their faith that they would rise again and stand before God triumphant at the Last Day. Utterance of the first verse was a symbol of the entire Psalm and implied faith that God had not abandoned them and that triumphant life was to follow apparently hopeless death. Hence the cry did not signify loss of faith or separation from God, it did on the contrary signify faith that all was well and God would certainly deliver.

Was this our Lord's motive when He uttered the same cry? Was it his last message to the bystanders and witnesses at the Cross that although He was going into death He would surely rise again and all would be well. Did his hearers interpret his words, not as a personal cry of entreaty to the Father, but a reminder to them of their own Psalm and what it meant?

There are several indications that this may well have been the case. Verse 24 of the Psalm contains

the phrase, referring to the Father, "neither hath He hid his face from him". That expression alone invalidates the suggestion that the Father did for a space hide his face from the Son and so provoke the cry. And there are considerations arising from a critical examination of the New Testament text itself.

The "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" of both Matthew's and Mark's versions are in the Aramaic language and it would seem that Jesus uttered the words in that tongue. (Aramaic was the language evolved from the fusion of Hebrew with other tongues which the Jews developed during the Babylonian captivity; after their return from Babylon Hebrew became a dead language so far as the ordinary people were concerned). Both Matthew and Mark say that "some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias" (Elijah). Native Jews standing by would not have made that mistake; they knew the Aramaic word for God. But there were also the Roman soldiers attendant on the Crucifixion, and these, drafted in from other parts of the Empire to serve a spell of duty in Judea, would be familiar only with the common Greek of the day and their own Latin tongue. It seems evident that these are the "some of them that stood by" who offered Jesus the "sponge filled with vinegar" (old wine) and this would certainly have been one of the soldiers who alone had the authority to approach the Cross.

John was the only one of the twelve disciples to have been at the Cross. The others had gone into hiding. John does not record the saying, although he does the later word "I thirst". At least three of the women were there, perhaps more of them. And Mark the son of one of the other Marys, a teenager at the time, was almost certainly there, just as he was probably the "young man in a linen

garment" present in Gethsemane at the time of Jesus' arrest. Matthew probably got his account from Mark. But there is a significant difference in their respective accounts. Whereas Matthew gives in his translation the literal Greek "why hast thou forsaken me" Mark gives the Greek for "to what hast thou forsaken" (or abandoned) "me". This is the Targum rendering of Psalm 22.1. (The Targum was the Aramaic version of the Old Testament in general use at the time and the one normally read in the synagogues on the Sabbath day.) Mark, most likely unable to read Hebrew, would know the Psalm only in its Aramaic version. Although he heard and recorded the Hebrew word "lama" actually used by Jesus, his familiarity with the Targum of Psa. 22 led him to use the Greek equivalent *eis ti* (to what) instead of *hinati* (why) as used by Matthew. The logical inference is that both Matthew and Mark recognised that Jesus was actually quoting the 22nd Psalm, the one from his knowledge of the original Hebrew, and the other from his familiarity with the Targum.

If this supports the conclusion that both these writers understood the cry to be, not a personal appeal to the Father by Jesus, but Israel's traditional cry of faith and triumph in the face of inevitable death, there is good ground for concluding that Jesus entertained no thought that the Father had forsaken him. He was, on the contrary, telling the observers at the Cross, and all who heard or read of the story afterwards, that in his now certain and imminent death he had in fact triumphed over his enemies and would certainly rise again from the dead "in the power of an endless life". As with those valiant warriors of Israel in times of old, that cry and those words betokened faith that the moment of death was the moment of triumph.

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." (Psa. 119. 15-16.)

Here is the secret of a pure and noble life, acceptable to God. It is to be attained, not merely by prayers and righteous resolutions, but in addition to these by careful painstaking heed, by systematic and diligent effort in self-cultivation of pure, benevolent and noble thoughts, and by nipping in the bud the weeds of perversity before they bring forth their hasty harvest of sinful words and deeds. If we make the Word of God the theme of our constant meditation, its principles will soon be assimilated and become part of our mental make-up, making our characters more beautiful and commendable both to God and to our fellowmen, and in harmony with this habit of the mind the acts

of life will speak.

"If my word abide in you." For God's Word to abide in us implies that we have a knowledge of God's Word. This necessitates the studying of the Word of God, that we may know what to pray for. We should not hasten to offer our petitions and make a great mistake, and then say, "I have made a mistake, and have asked for the wrong things." We should consider what the Word of God teaches on this subject, and if anyone has become well acquainted with the Word of God, he should know whether or not he has met the conditions which will sanctify his prayer. It is only after he has come to this position that he may continue to make his request nothing doubting. But very likely he will find that he has not a very large list of petitions that he can present.

DAY OF REST

*A two-part essay
on Sabbath and Sunday*

Part 1. The Sabbath in the Old Testament

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

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

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

The custom of observing this weekly rest from the normal occupations of life did not begin with the giving of the Fourth Commandment. That law only stated in formal terms what men had known and practised from much earlier times. Long before Israel existed as a nation the peoples of Sumer and Akkad, the lands which afterwards became Babylonia and Assyria, had incorporated Sabbath observance into their national life. The earliest record of its observance now extant dates back to the days of Sargon of Agade, a ruler whose kingdom extended over the lands bordering the Tigris and Euphrates five or six hundred years before Abraham. In a calendar of the period the word *"Sabbattu"*, as the day was called, is explained as meaning "completion of work, a day of rest for the soul," and this day was to be observed five times in each month, viz., the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st and 28th days. On these days it was unlawful to transact business, labour for gain, cook

food, or conduct civil, political and military functions. The whole life of the community came to a stop, just as did that of Israel in the wilderness many centuries later.

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

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

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

The meaning of the term "Sabbath"—Hebrew *"Sha-bath"*—is that of ceasing or resting from activity or labour, to observe as a day of rest. It is used in the Bible not only in respect of men, but also of beasts and the land. The ground itself, which is made to bring forth food for man, must have its periodic times of rest, during which it may recover strength and fertility. This is the basic principle behind the observance of one day in seven as a day of rest and worship. Man, no less than the land from which he draws life, needs a periodic cessation from the daily round, that his physical and mental vitality may be recuperated. Without this recuperation he cannot continue to function at normal efficiency, and this fact is well known to medical men and to industrial leaders. A seven-

day working week has been proven impracticable, and eventually leads to breakdown.

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

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

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

It appears that some of the Israelites did go out on the sabbath to gather, and found none (vs. 27), and in consequence the Lord's words came to Israel through Moses: "*How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*" This, be it noted, was before the Law was given at Sinai. It seems clear, therefore, that Israel already regarded the sabbath as a Divine institution, and the Law at Sinai merely confirmed the rule.

Perhaps the great feature of the Fourth Commandment given at Sinai was the revelation of a relationship between the sabbath ordinance and God's own work in creation. Exod. 20, 8-10 bade the people of God not only to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, but told them that "*in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and*

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

The institution of the sabbath, then, lies back in the mists of pre-history. We do not know when it originated. It may have been with Adam in Eden. If its observance is a fundamental requirement of human nature it probably did originate in Eden, and was observed more or less sincerely in the centuries following. The earliest knowledge we have of its national observance dates back several centuries before Abraham, and even then its institution is accredited to God. The Israelites were sabbath-keepers when they came out of Egypt, and had doubtless inherited the ordinance from their ancestors. At Sinai, the rule was elaborated into a code with minute details of its application to the affairs of Israel's national life.

Briefly stated, the Mosaic laws provided for:—

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

(d) A special sabbath for man, for beast and for the land on the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25. 6-12).

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

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

There is remarkably little said about the sabbath in Israel's early years. Apart from a few casual allusions the word is not so much as mentioned until the times of the later Kings. This very silence is eloquent; it seems to indicate that as an institution the sabbath system was a normal custom calling for no special mention for quite a few centuries after the entrance to Canaan. We read in Num. 15. 32-36 of the man who was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day, and of his fate; but that was in the wilderness, and thence forward throughout the time of the Judges and until the days of David there is no intimation whatever of the manner in which the sabbath was observed. After this, however, there are one or two allusions which go to show that it was regarded as a settled institution. 1 Chron. 23. 31 mentions the sabbaths in connection with David's ordering of the priestly

courses, whilst 2 Chron. 2. 4 and 8. 13 give evidence of the same in Solomon's time. The exquisite picture of the Shunamite woman in II Kings 4. 23-26 reveals a sincere sabbath keeping, the woman's husband puzzled at his wife's sudden decision to go to the man of God, seeing that it was "neither new moon, nor sabbath." Evidently the Shunamite was a faithful adherent to the law of Moses, and probably many in Israel shared her faithfulness. At much the same time the sabbath was a sufficiently marked day to become the occasion for periodical changing of the Temple guard (2 Kings 11. 4-11 and 2 Chron. 23. 4-11).

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

The earliest of such denunciations in the Old Testament is that of Isaiah, who commenced to prophesy in the reign of Uzziah, about six hundred and fifty years after the Exodus. By this time Solomon had been dead for many years, but the taste for luxuriance, ease and other fruits of commercialism, introduced by him, had remained, and Israel was well on the way to becoming the nation of traders it has been ever since. Isaiah shows (1. 13) that in his days the sabbaths had become a mere formality; they were an abomination in the sight of God, and He would no longer accept them. Later on in Isaiah's life (56. 2 and 58. 13-14), in greater maturity, he called Israel to come back to their original sincerity and zeal in sabbath-keeping. "*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight . . .*" etc. At a later time Jeremiah exhorted the people to cease from desecrating the sabbath (Jer. 17. 19-27). Ezekiel felt the same burden, as recorded in the 20th, 22nd and 23rd chapters of his prophecy, whilst Amos, contemporary with Isaiah's early days, has preserved for us a vivid picture of the Israelites chafing under the sabbath law, and mentions the very thing which led to their rejection of the sabbath, their greed for gain. "*When will the new moon be gone, that we*

may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit" (Amos 8. 4-7). It seems clear that in the days of Amos and Isaiah, when King Uzziah was reigning, the sabbath was still observed, but in a perfunctory, formal manner. Men were impatient for its passing that they might turn again to the buying and selling which was rapidly creating in their midst an economic system of the same kind that has produced such evil results in the world today.

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

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

when ye dwelt upon it" (Lev. 26. 27-43).

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

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

(To be concluded)

The Greeks used the word *euphoria* to express an immense sense of well being. The true *euphoria* is seen in a puppy which rolls over on the ground for the very joy of being alive; in the lambs gambolling in the fields, in a colt galloping along beside its mother; and in children who skip, dance and run because they cannot keep still. This is the true *euphoria*; and, we believe should be the portion of those filled with all the fulness of God. Old age comes on far too speedily. The radiant morn of life is the continuous possession of those who are Spirit-filled.

Beneath us is a fair meadow, through which the pure River of the Water of Life is winding its way; on either side of it stand the Trees of Life, with twelve manner of fruits and beautiful leaves for the healing of the nations. In the distance, high on the summit of the everlasting hills, the city of God, bathed in light and glory—the New Jerusalem, the city that needs no sun, no moon, "for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof".

FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1-27).

It was Paul's custom on arrival in any city to visit the synagogue of his Jewish brethren, and to reason with them out of their Scriptures (Acts 17. 2). Strange to say there is no record of a synagogue at Philippi. If that was so, he would be forcibly reminded that he was in Gentile land and that his special mission to Gentiles had begun in earnest. No doubt each of us on arrival in some strange city would seek fellowship with those of like faith, and failing that, to join with our countrymen, perchance to hear of some gathering "where prayer was wont to be made", and where we would find an ear for the truth. And if, after a few days, we heard of such a meeting down by the riverside, our feet would soon take us there. This is just what Paul did, and it was the women there that Paul spoke to with joy. Could it have been that no men had arranged a service of worship and that the believing women had made their own service arrangements? Had there been a synagogue, the men would have been in charge. Whatever the answer be to the question, it must be noted that women first responded to the message of truth in Europe, and the woman specially referred to in the narrative was *Lydia of Thyatira*. But *Thyatira* was in Asia, the very region where Paul had recently served the faith. Perhaps she had heard of Paul's work there; perhaps she had told the women at the riverside; perhaps it was due to them and in answer to their prayers that the vision was given to Paul "to come over and help us". No doubt the Apostle was gratified by this response and in that response was the answer why he had been hindered from going into Asia to preach.

That was the commencement of Paul's European service and from that small riverside prayer meeting grew the Church which Paul loved so much. And so, when writing later to them, he would affectionately speak of the fellowship in the Gospel he had had with them "from the first day until now"—the first day he came to the riverside. (Phil. 1.5). Later in the epistle his regard and love for them prompts him to refer to them as "my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown" (4. 1). Paul proceeded from Philippi to other Grecian cities, and then sailed for Ephesus on his way back to Jerusalem where he was arrested and, after tedious waiting, sent to Rome for trial. In Rome at last, with his liberty somewhat restricted, but dwelling in his own hired house (Acts 28. 30), what more likely that that he would recall his brethren in other lands and decide to

write them, exhort them, and hope to hear in return of their steadfastness. And to encourage them, he told them how he himself had fared in the faith and how he still served; his example adding point to his exhortation when, in our text, he urged them to stand and serve. Though hindered from travelling to other cities and lands as previously, he found willing ears right in Caesar's Praetorium (1. 12-13).

The following verses speak of his bonds and tell of his life devoted to the Gospel even to the point of death, which he does not fear. Yet while he personally longs for the return of Christ and the consummation of the Church's hope, he knows that to abide in the flesh and continue in service is needful for the Philippian and other ecclesias, though he could not be sure that he would ever see them again in the flesh. Verses 25, 26 express the hope that he would see them again, and some say that upon acquittal in his first trial he revisited this and other churches. But whether he see them or not, he hopes to hear two things of them. And now we have come to the words in our opening text.

Verse 27 urges that our conversation be worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Other versions remind us that the word rendered "conversation" is better thought of as "citizenship", yet we need not fly to the correct translation of the Greek as though the A.V. had no useful instruction for us. The translators again render "*politeuma*" as "conversation" in Phil. 3. 20; hence we must conclude that they had some good purpose in so doing. By one's speech we learn what country or district a man hails from, and by his conversation we know what his interests are. Conversation includes fellowship and discussion; and probably the translators are using the word in this good sense. (And we may be sure that if men hear us converse on Scriptural themes, at least they will judge that we belong to no earthly country.) And so it is but a short step from conversation to citizenship. Further, when in the Apostle Peter's writings we read "conversation" the thought behind the word is "behaviour"—another trait of character which reveals citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven; our conversation reveals this; and our behaviour agrees with this also. Our citizenship is in heaven because we are "risen with Christ and seek those things which are above" (Col. 3. 1-3) and having found them, "set our affections" on them, for "where our treasure is there will our heart be also".

Citizenship carries privileges which we may humbly claim. The Apostle Paul himself furnishes us a good example of this during his last visit to Jerusalem. Asian Jews stirred up the people, saying that Paul had polluted the temple, and the

Captain of the guard intervened to stop the Jews who were beating Paul, and he took him under guard to the castle. Upon Paul asking permission to speak, the Captain replied, "Canst thou speak Greek? Art thou not that Egyptian, etc. . . . ?" Paul replied that he was a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city; and receiving permission to speak to the people, he spoke in the Hebrew tongue. This temporarily silenced the mob (Acts 22. 2) and Paul gave a spirited defence of life and Christian mission until the uproar began again. Then the Chief Captain ordered Paul to be examined by scourging, whereupon Paul immediately claimed that he was a Roman citizen. On learning this, the Captain feared to hurt him, and loosed him from his bonds commanding the council to give Paul a hearing. Thus did Paul use his Hebrew speech, his Tarsus citizenship, and also his Roman, to obtain freedom to defend himself.

Paul began his defence before the council by saying, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day". The word translated "lived" is the same as that in Phil. 1. 27 rendered "conversation". Citizenship, behaviour, and living are all in this word "conversation". Who better than Paul could write on this subject?

But citizenship carries responsibilities as well as privileges—the responsibility to uphold the dignity of the country we claim. If the citizen of another country living among us claims special privileges and dignity, we may find that he is also an ambassador to us. He represents the king and country from which he came, and if ever questioned on his actions would claim his rights and the protection of his own country. Another visiting citizen claiming special rights while among us might be the king's son. Surely we may claim all of these; so that we may read in Phil. 1. 27 conversation, behaviour, citizenship, ambassadorship, or sonship without destroying the sense of the verse.

The Apostle hopes to hear of the Philippian brethren (whether present or absent) that their conversation becometh the Gospel, and that they stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. These two injunctions to stand and to strive appear at first sight to be the reverse of each other, for one speaks of holding on while the other tells of activity. One assumes work done; the other, work still to be done. The first belongs to the internal life of the Church, the latter to the Church's outside activities. The first assumes the Philippian Ecclesia to be convinced and confident, the other, that they defend what they believe. These two phases of Christian life assist each other, for he who stands fast is well suited to defend the faith, and he who defends the faith will increase his own steadfastness.

The first injunction is that they and we stand fast

in one spirit. There are other exhortations in Paul's writings to stand fast—"stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"; "stand fast and hold the traditions ye have been taught"; "stand fast in the Lord"; and that one which above all others exhorts us "having done all, to stand".

In what spirit should we stand fast? When used by man, the word spirit may mean intellect, disposition, or courage, but these do not seem to be included in this advice. The Greek word here (*pneuma*) has many shades of meaning, but always has some connection with its root meaning, "breath"—that is, the breath of life. James, speaking about another matter, voiced the accepted truth that the body without the spirit is dead. The spirit, the breath, is the universally acknowledged sign of life, and as the breath is the sign of life in the human body, so is the Holy Spirit the sign of life in the body of Christ, for by one spirit are we all baptised into one body. Further, the Holy Spirit is that gift from God which distinguishes the Church from other human beings, making them in fact New Creatures with heavenly hopes. Again the Holy Spirit makes us, and is personal proof to us, that we are sons of God. So we may read Paul's words as "stand fast in the Holy Spirit which has made us New Creatures and Sons of God".

The second injunction is that they should be "with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel", just as Paul himself was doing at that very time. This word "mind" like "spirit" is used by men to include thoughts of intellect, disposition, and courage. But again, are these ideas the ones Paul would intend to convey in this verse? Here the Greek word is "*psuche*" (thus we have the two Greek words associated with life, "*pneuma*" and "*psuche*" in one verse) and is used of active life, whereas "*pneuma*" is used of the life within. "*Psuche*" is used here as though we are alive, active, with one soul, one being, one corporate body standing shoulder to shoulder defending the faith. This "*psuche*" life is that which others will see by our striving; the "*pneuma*" life is that internal and eternal life which proves to ourselves how and where we stand.

And so, Paul's words summarised seem to mean—let your citizenship be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that you are firm in your sonship and active in your service. Once again we have the thoughts coupled elsewhere in the Scripture that we are sons and yet servants. We serve because we are sons. The advice in Phil. 1. 27 is repeated in Phil. 2. 15, 16, "That ye may be blameless and harmless [good citizens, in fact], sons of God, not meriting rebuke, in the midst of a crooked nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (in other words striving for the faith of the Gospel). When Paul heard

of the Philippian steadfastness in these respects, he would know that he had not laboured in vain there, and the Macedonian vision would again be con-

firmed; and he again would say "We live if ye stand fast in the Lord"—(1 Thess. 3. 8).

BJD, from "Herald of Christ's Kingdom"

THE CASTING OUT OF FEAR

"*Stop the world; I want to get off!*" The sentiment is understandable when one considers the nightmarish course of this "present evil world". Since Adam left Eden for the valley of the shadow, man has had to cope with trouble in many forms. Truly he has been "*born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*". But by the outworking of evil man's need of God and his righteousness is made very clear. Against the peace and balance of Eden, the fretful perversity of disobedience under the Usurper is made manifest as unprofitable, evil and vain. Truly God knew the end from the beginning; his love and wisdom is behind it all. He did not place Adam in a perfect world but only in a perfect garden, and when Adam left the garden God said "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*". At this end of the Age we see wickedness coming to the full; we also see people turning to the Gospel, seeking to "*wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb*", and looking for the coming of Christ. God be praised!

Those who have believed in God through the Word, and are "*looking unto Jesus*", must still cope with fears in the flesh. There is no truce. On the contrary, by acknowledging the Prince of Peace the special attention of the Prince of Darkness is invoked. He is the opposer of the brethren of Christ. As sons of God, citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we are in enemy territory. Comfortingly, a very much beloved Brother reminds us that "*our minds may be troubled . . . our hearts, never*". "*The Father Himself loveth you!*" We are provided for, as God provided for the Israelites, of which provision not the least marvellous was the "just sufficient" provision of manna, given day by day, whatever their position or condition, for forty years in the desert. Our inner man is renewed day by day just as surely.

When the first exciting contact with their Messiah had been made and the disciples were all gathered, there began for them a period of very intensive training. They were with the Lord, and saw wonderful demonstrations of his heavenly power. They lived, and sang, and prayed with him, and doubtless they thought the solution of all things was near to come. There were times when the draught blew in, the cold wind of opposing forces, as when Jesus visited his home country and could do "*few miracles there, because of their unbelief*". The time, after the disciples had been empowered to heal, that they failed to cast out the deaf and dumb demon, must have been a shaking

experience for them, full of doubts and arguments (Mark 9. 14-15). There were those fearful journeys across the Sea of Galilee, when the breakers loomed larger than the knowledge of the keeping power of God, even though his Son was with them. There were the much deeper feelings of uneasiness that came to them before their Lord left them for the last time. That last journey to Jerusalem was full of foreboding. With Jesus they could do all things, but where would they be if He left them? To see him so sorrowful was a dreadful experience. No wonder "*they followed, afraid*" (Mark 10. 32).

By the disciples' experiences we may see the magnitude of God's tremendous work in creating his sons from mortal men. Twelve different men, an apprenticeship with the Master of only three years; how intensive that period! They got much more than they could digest or retain. Afterwards they needed the Holy Spirit of truth to bring all things to their remembrance. We can imagine the first joyful realisation "*We have found the Messiah!*" and then, how they must have striven to bring their own souls into alignment with him. We have the story of Peter to illustrate the watchcare of our Lord over them in this personal aspect. He was a good shepherd. Apart from his wonderful public ministry, He maintained a special attitude of mind towards the Father, a pattern of prayer, thanksgiving and praise, a faith supreme and confident. So He weaned them away from superficial traditional worship, from all worldly ways of thought, to KNOW God as Father, speaking to him, trusting him as such, in sincerity and truth. "*The Father himself loveth you*" He said, "*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart—and you will find your souls refreshed*". This is a principle in the lives of all God's people. "Prayer brings victory." "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.*" "*In everything, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus.*" "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in God.*" "Always to pray—and not to faint."

Fear is a part of the present world. In the Kingdom, with life and health and peace assured for men of goodwill, the only fear will be that of not gaining God's full approval. We are working towards being approved of God now, as his sons, his firstfruits in Jesus, to be all with him. But the

element of mortal fear is with us, as one of the weaknesses of our "earthen vessels", and one of the weapons of Satan. If faith and the heavenly armour in themselves were sufficient for our safety, then there would be no need to "watch and fight and pray". We must exercise and build up our "most holy faith", keep our heavenly armour on, and fight "not as beating the air". Many times in the Word fear is recognised as part of the fight. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, angels and our Lord himself found it necessary to give reassurance. Paul admits to "fears in my own mind" and as his never untroubled life unwound, it is plain that with each painful or tormenting experience came a greater measure of confidence, a deeper involvement with the Lord, an increasing sense of joy in victory—a rest in the outcome. God's purpose cannot fail, nor his watchcare and support for those upon whom it rests. This is made manifest for us in the Way as we go on, trusting more in his strength. We are on the winning side, against evil and for our God of Love; we each have a "comforter" with us, a personal messenger of the Holy Spirit, and God has not given us a cowardly spirit again to fear, but in truth, as will be proved—one of power, and

love, and of a sound mind. Each trial, bringing firmer joy and confidence in victory through Christ, must needs increase our gratitude and love for God. ". . . and the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned." Indeed, Paul manifests the truth of this by his last letter to Timothy, writing "I have maintained the good contest, I have finished the race, I have guarded the faith. It remains that there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day . . . and to all . . . who have loved his appearing". May we all go on, ever growing in grace and knowledge, and in the power of using that life-force that is within us, which is greater than "that which is in the world". So shall we cast out fear, again and again, and find ourselves ever strong in him who strengthens us, coming to the end of the race with the same tested-and-proved confidence of Paul. "Now to him who is able to guard you from falling, and to place you blameless in the presence of his glory with great joy, to God alone our Saviour through Christ Jesus our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority, both now and throughout the ages. Amen."

The interpretation of prophecy

It may be opportune to refer to the principles underlying serious interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies. All too often there is a manifest tendency to accept the written word as a strictly literal forecast of destined future events without any regard to the contemporary background of the writer, the limitations imposed by his day and age, or the fact that as often as not he is laying down, in symbol and metaphor, the principles of the event that is to be, leaving the generation experiencing that event to perceive the aptness of his analogy in the current signs of the times. Symbol, poetry, metaphor, analogy, play a large part in the construction of the prophetic Scriptures and a frequently stressed fact is repeated here when it is said that the Old Testament prophets were not primarily foretellers of future events but exponents of the consequences following upon either the violation or the upholding of Divine law. Such expositions had to be framed in the language and knowledge of the prophet's own day, using symbols drawn from the everyday life with which he was acquainted. But because, in the foreknowledge of God, the inevitable consequences, at the end of the Age, of the general course of mankind

throughout history is accurately foreknown, the Holy Spirit through the agency of the prophet and within the limits of his language and vision has provided us in the prophetic writings with delineations of things to come in the terms and pictures of long ago, which can be recognised by the serious student as they come upon the stage of world history. When the prophet says the Lord will turn the earth upside down he does not mean to infer that this planet is to be inverted on its axis; he does mean that the world social order is to be overturned. The sword with which the Heavenly Rider comes to smite the nations is not a material offensive weapon but the Word of God, which is capable of an equally devastating effect against evil things but in a different sphere. Ezekiel's own vision of the whole world arrayed against Israel is much more understandable when a glance at the map shows how little of the earth's surface was known to, and constituted "all the world" to, Ezekiel and his fellows, and how fully the few nations he names represented that world. It is along these lines that the study of prophecy can be made to yield its most rewarding fruits.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

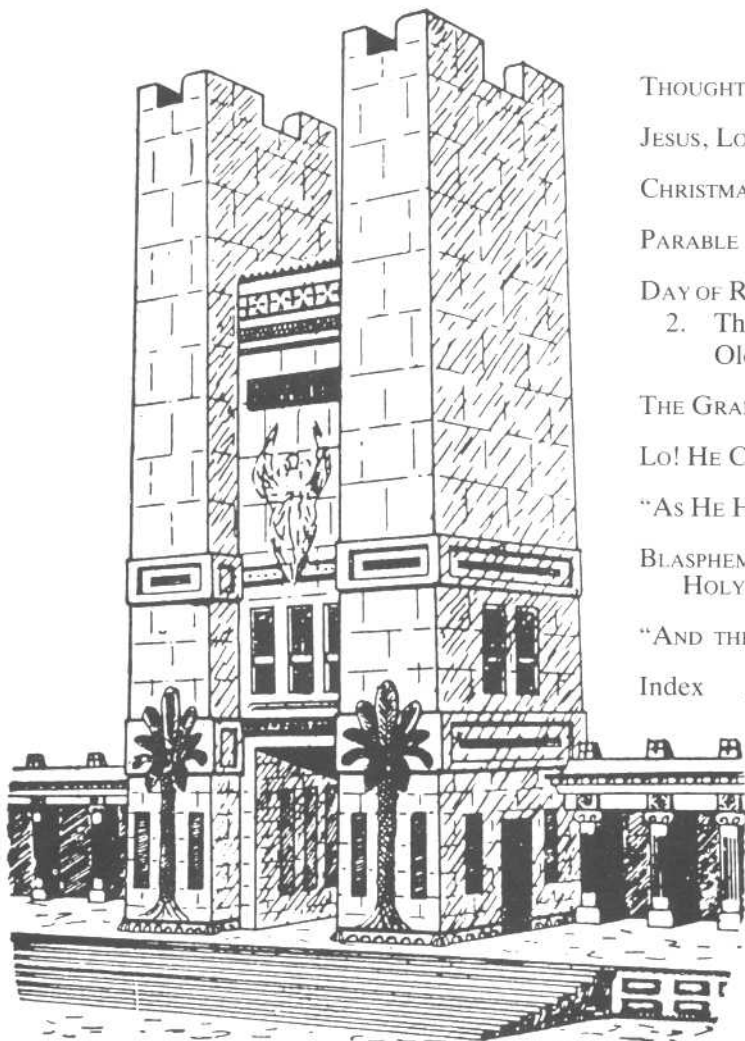
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 14).

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

NOTICES

Request for fellowship. A reader in Preston would much like to be put in touch with any other readers in that area who would appreciate the opportunity of fellowship and discussion with other local readers who feel likewise. It is our unvarying practice not to reveal names and addresses of our readers to other parties, but if anyone in that district would like to avail themselves of this invitation and will drop us a note to that effect we will gladly pass on their letters to our correspondent and leave him to make the necessary contact.

* * *

Christian African Relief Fund—a correction. Our last issue contained a notice respecting the work of the above Trust in sending supplies of food and clothing to needy Christians and others in African countries. Unfortunately there was a mistake in the post code of the Secretary's address—it should have been HD8 0LR instead of HD8 0CR as stated. Will those interested in this work please note the full correct address is: Mr. G. G. Tompkins, "White Gates", Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield, HD8 0LR.

* * *

Receipts for gifts. There was an error in the notice under above heading in the July/August issue. Will readers please note that receipts are sent for all gifts save those below £5 in UK or 10 dollars overseas, although lesser gifts are appreciated just as much.

Gone from us

— ❖ —

Sis. Betty Batcheller (*London*)
Bro. Percy Morte (*Barnsley*)
Bro. Clarence Oughton (*Barnsley*)
Sis. Lena Sutcliffe (*London*)
Bro. Norman Wood (*Rugby*)
Bro. Arthur Woolgar (*Birchington*)

— ❖ —

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

JESUS, LORD, SAVIOUR

A Christmas message

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2.11)."

Perhaps one of the most familiar stories of the Bible is this one of the Judean shepherds camped out with their flocks at night, to whom the angels appeared with the thrilling news that the Saviour was born. Although it is generally admitted nowadays that the true date of Christ's birth was in October and not in December the story will never lose its association with Christmas and the end of the year. Here in the darkest hour before dawn, the depth of the world's winter, came that radiance from heaven which betokened the sunrise. *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined"* (Isa. 9.2). Messiah had come, and now everything was going to be alright.

The shepherds must have wondered, though, when they found the babe in the humble surroundings of a wayside inn, and not even the inn proper at that. The Lord's Messiah, lying in the animal's food trough surrounded by bullocks and camels! This was not the way men would have ordered it had men invented the story. The Wise Men from the East, when they came to worship the Christ later on, went automatically to the palace of King Herod first, never dreaming but that there was the place to find the Messiah. The shepherds would feel more at home in the humble surroundings of the village inn. There is a tremendous contrast between the story of the Babe of Bethlehem and the awe-inspiring description of the Lord Christ given by the writer to the Hebrews *"the effulgence of God's glory and the exact impress of his Person"*. (Heb. 1.3). The infant child of a village maiden, almost unnoticed in the rush and bustle of a wayside inn, completely unknown to the rich and influential of the day, the priests and the princes and the kings, yet addressed by God the Father, Maker of Heaven and earth, in tones of majesty *"thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"* (Heb. 1.8). If there existed no other evidence of the truth of the Virgin Birth this first chapter of Hebrews should be sufficient. How else could the Divine Son come into the world of men if not by the life from above uniting with the clay of the earth and in that manner partake of man's nature and man's environment and become subject to man's limitations whilst yet remaining, as He so often said, "of the Father"? Adam received the primal human life from God and that was transmitted through successive generations, but it is unthinkable that the life of the Son who is of the

Father should come into the body which Mary gave him, through the medium of a multitude of sons of Adam as would be the case were Joseph his natural father. Scripture tells us that He laid aside the glory He had with the Father before the world was and took hold of human nature for the suffering of death, after that returning to the Father, where He ever liveth, supreme over all creation. *"The word was made flesh"* says John *"and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only-begotten of the Father"* (Jno. 1. 14). And it was in order that God might manifest himself to man that the Son came thus.

This is a most important principle. When Philip said to Jesus *"Show us the Father and it sufficeth us"* and Jesus replied *"Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (Jno. 14. 8-9), that principle was clearly declared. St. Paul talked about it when he referred to *"the mystery of Deity—God manifest in the flesh"* (1 Tim. 3.16). When one comes to think about it, this is the only way in which the Father can manifest himself to man, in the frame and lineaments of man like ourselves, yet not of us, not of our race. True, the ancients thought of God as a venerable King of majestic mien and superlative wisdom and power, seated upon a magnificent throne somewhere in the upper heavens, but basically having the form of man as we know man. Nowadays and with our greater knowledge of the vastness of his creation we realise that God is far beyond our powers of either understanding or imagination. We know He is there but how to describe him we do not know. We can only repeat Paul's own words *"dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see"* (1 Tim. 6.16.). Therefore in the person of Jesus Christ God reveals himself to men in a form and in a language they can understand. And while thus in the flesh and subject in many respects to the requirements and limitations of human nature our Lord was always in possession of the Divine power which made him one with the Father, as He declares *"whatsoever things He"* (the Father) *"doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"*. (Jno. 5.12).

But He is not only Christ the Lord, He is also Jesus the Saviour. *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins"* said the angel to Joseph (Matt. 1.21). Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua or Jehoshua, the meaning of which is "God saves", and a popular name among the Israelites on that account. *"The Son of Man"* said Jesus of himself *"is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19.10).

There is an active element in the redemption which is sometimes not stressed as it should be. All too often the emphasis is laid upon the virtue of belief in Jesus Christ, who is prepared to accept the burden of human sin, as though the sinner thus relieved is at once fit to be ushered into the Divine Presence whereas in point of fact he certainly is not. The heart and the mind and the character that has been sullied and distorted by sin must be reshaped and made fit for the society of the blessed, and for whatever place in his purpose God has for that individual, before the work of redemption is complete. Repentance and acceptance of Christ and the consequent removal and non-imputation of past sin is the first step, but cleansing from the defiling and destructive effects of sin and the implantation of Divine character-likeness must follow before the work of grace is done, and all this is implicit in the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus. And so throughout life it is necessary to continue "in Christ," making continual progress toward the Christian ideal which is set before us in the New Testament. None of the exhortations to Christian living appearing so frequently throughout the Gospels and the Epistles would be necessary if the mere formal profession of belief in Christ and of faith that He takes away our sins were all that is necessary to ensure eternal salvation. Having once become Christ's men, unfit for his purposes though we are, despite our faith, we have then to submit to his disciplines that at the last we may attain to what St. Paul in Eph. 4.13 calls the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

To be saved from sin in the sense intended by Jesus does not mean merely a forgiveness for the past, a wiping the slate clean, so to speak, without consideration for what in everyday language would be called the rehabilitation of the sinner. It also involves that rehabilitation, the undoing of all that sin has done to the individual, so transforming his character that he can stand before God. In this Age, during which the Christian church is being "called out", this is described as being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12.2), and, in the next, when God turns to the conversion of the world, He says "I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their hearts." (Jer. 31.33).

The work of Christ in the heart and life of the individual who has already believed upon him and accepted him as personal Saviour is of supreme importance. God made man for a purpose and that purpose is intimately associated with the development and progress of his creatures. For much too long has the idea prevailed that this present life is merely an essential and rather tiresome preliminary to an entry into heavenly joys, consisting mainly of everlasting choral praises to God without

purpose or action. That is not the Scriptural outlook. "This sore travail" said the wise man "hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith" (Eccl. 1.13). There is a reason for the permission of evil; the long history of the human race has demonstrated and is demonstrating the fact that inharmony with Divine Law cannot co-exist with an orderly creation. This corner of God's creation, our earth with all its affairs, is out of order; it is under the dominion of sin. Christ came to show mankind the way out from under that dominion, to lead them into the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8.21). But man is a creature of free-will, a quality implanted by his Creator, and he cannot be compelled into the good life, only persuaded. So repentance and conversion is essential before any man can make a start on the road to his goal. Thus Christ came, first to call men to repentance and acceptance of him as the channel of enduring life, and secondly, to a life devoted to his image. When in the execution of his inscrutable purpose God has ended the dominion of evil in the earth and introduced the Messianic Kingdom of everlasting righteousness, man will enter into the sphere for which all this training has been intended. Life is the glory of Divine creation; intelligent living creatures, entirely and irrevocably in harmony with the Will of God and the laws of creation of his devising, will play their part to all eternity in a ceaselessly active and continually developing and widening existence. "And still new beauties do we see, and still increasing light."

This is the salvation which Jesus brought to man and this the purpose of his coming. "God made man upright" says the Wise Man again "but they have sought out many villainies" (Eccl. 7.29.F.F.). In the love and wisdom of God the villainies will be overcome and done away with, and man saved from their power and effect, so that these wonderful beings, compounded from clay and the spirit of Divine life, may take up those duties in God's creation for which they have been designed. Upon this earth, in the heavens, in some distant sphere of life the conditions of which imagination at this present cannot even conceive, we may not know. What we do know is, that, as so movingly expressed by the Quaker poet John G. Whittier,

"I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air.
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

Wherever and under whatever conditions our eternal future is to be spent it will always be true that God is there and that in the glory of his presence, and the power of his Spirit, we shall live, and learn, and serve, without sin and without evil, in an environment which meets our every need and desire, into infinity. That was the vision which

inspired another poet to write:

*"These things shall be: a loftier race
Than e're the world hath known shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.*

*"They shall be gentle, brave and strong
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that shall plant man's lordship firm
On earth, and sky, and sea, and air.*

*"New arts shall bloom, of loftier mould,
And mightier music thrill the skies,
And every life shall be a song
When all the earth is paradise."*

Thus, at last, it will be true that He whose name was called Jesus will have saved his people from their sins.

Wesley on Christian Unity

"Although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these small differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and good works . . . I dare not presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical. But my belief is no rule for another. I ask not therefore of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you my Church? Of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God? I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord, in the same manner and posture as I do? Nor, whether in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in

admitting sureties for the baptised, in the manner of administering it, or the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind) whether you allow baptism or the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them if need be, at a more convenient season. My only question at present is, Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thy hand. I do not mean, Be of my opinion. You need not. I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, I will be of your opinion. I cannot. It does not depend on my choice: I can no more think than I can see or hear as I will. Keep you your opinion and I mine: and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and on the other. Only give me thy hand."

(John Wesley (1703-1791) from a sermon)

The way to the Kingdom

"If only humankind currently on earth would realise it, it is already within their grasp to help to bring to fruition and to enjoy God's planned Kingdom on earth. First and foremost we have to comply with his fundamental laws. God does not issue the edict "Unless you do what I ask you, you shall not have this desirable world." No, it is rather this; "I have made this world in such a way that it

will only work if you conform to essential, unalterable laws. I have given you the gift of free will. If you do not, or if you persistently refuse to work in accordance with these laws, the harmony in the world will automatically collapse and there will be no full life and no real happiness on earth".

(From recent sermon at English Presbyterian Church, Pwlllethi.)

If you are looking off unto Jesus, avoiding the call of the religious age you live in, and setting your heart on what He wants, on thinking on his line, you will be called unpractical and dreamy; but when He appears in the burden and the heat of the day, you will be the only one who is ready.

(Oswald Chambers)

The Apostle James says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations". He does not say, "Feel it all joy . . ." You cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, but you *can* rejoice in the Lord always. God may not change your circumstances, but He will change you, and give you victory in those circumstances.

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

He came to us; and He need not have come. He had the whole creation of angelic realms in which to find satisfaction if He wished, countless multitudes of sinless angelic beings to do him homage and with whom He could have fellowship; but He left them behind. This earth was a dark place, dark with sin and wretchedness, its inhabitants violent, lustful, cruel; and they hated him. Yet He came.

*"His Father's house of light,
His glory-circled throne,
He left, for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
He left it all for me—
Have I left aught for Thee?"*

That was why He came. He came for me that I might be delivered from this dark abyss of sin, and rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God. He came for my fellows, too, that they might be rescued in like fashion. He came to establish the Father's Kingdom here on earth, that Kingdom which is already supreme in every other sphere of the Father's creation. He came to afford all men a full, fair, free opportunity of eternal life.

*"He breaks the power of reigning sin
And sets the prisoner free.
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me."*

He came because He was the only one who could possibly come. He is the greatest in all creation and only the greatest can make the greatest sacrifice. And his sacrifice was the greatest. No creature in all heaven and all earth will ever be able to make so great a sacrifice. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich.

*"Man of sorrows! What a name
For the son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"*

He came to tell men of his plans for their future happiness, how that even their killing of him will not frustrate his hold over them. For He comes again to bring them all to himself, as many as have not utterly extinguished their own capacity for repentance. And as assurance of that restoration, He has left his followers behind to go on telling

men of the glorious Kingdom which will follow earth's dark night of sin, a Kingdom in which men will be drawn by every artifice in God's armoury to repentance and reconciliation with him, walking along the way of holiness to full acceptance of salvation in Christ. For unto him will every knee on earth bow, as now does every knee in heaven.

*"One offer of salvation
To all the world make known.
'Tis Jesus Christ, the First and Last;
He saves, and He alone."*

He came, and He comes again. Not now as a babe in a manger, but a glorious heavenly Lord, armed with all power in heaven and in earth. He comes to gather his Church to be with him, and only those who are watching for his appearing will share in that gathering. He comes revealed in the consuming fire of Divine judgment for the destruction of all those institutions of men which stand in the way of his incoming Kingdom. He comes in resplendent glory so that all men know that He has come, and at once begins to speak peace to the nations.

*"Down the minster aisles of splendour, from
betwixt the cherubim,
Through the wondering throng, with motion
strong and fleet.
Sounds his victor tread approaching, with a
music far and dim,
The music of the coming of his feet.
He is coming, O my spirit, with his everlasting
peace,
With his blessedness, immortal and complete.
He is coming, O my spirit, and his coming
brings release.
I listen for the coming of his feet."*

The angels are singing in the distance; there are just a few who can hear their song to-day. Later on all men will hear them and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, obtaining joy and gladness while sorrow and sighing flee away.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10. 30-37

"A certain man went down to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . ." (Luke 10. 30).

A simple story! The lawyer's verdict, given in response to Jesus' question, has been endorsed by countless voices throughout the age, so much so that the unknown benefactor has become the symbol of neighbourliness and disinterested kindness. Often is the phrase "good Samaritan" used by people who have no idea of its origin. Proof positive is this that deep down in every human heart there lies consciousness that the attitude taken by that traveller on the Jericho road represents the true duty of man.

Who is my neighbour? The story was given that the answer to that question might be thrown out in bold relief. It is the natural question of any man who wants to serve God in God's own way. It is a tacit admission that there is a "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" which ought to influence and guide all human relationships and actions. And this is a right feeling. The plans of God provide for a world in which all men are brothers and each willingly takes upon himself the responsibility of his brethren's welfare. The work of the Millennial Age is to lead men to this appreciation, and it will only be as a man comes willingly and intelligently into harmony with such attitude of mind that the old process of sin, working in his members, will be destroyed and he receive new, and everlasting, life. Speaking to the Athenians, St. Paul said of God *"In him we live, and move, and have our being"* and writing to the Christians at Rome he declared *"no man liveth to himself"*. Both these principles have been rejected by men to-day, and the measure of that rejection, both in the affairs of nations and the lives of individuals, is revealed by the chaotic state into which the world has fallen. Not until men live *in* God and *for* each other will they find peace, security or happiness. The attainment of those blessings demands the payment of a price, and that price is assessed in terms of service for one's fellowmen, and no one will find the rest for which his soul longs until he has come to that knowledge and paid that price.

Jesus was suddenly confronted with a "lawyer". We must not take the term to mean that this man was a kind of First Century practising solicitor or barrister, such as would be indicated by our present usage of the word "lawyer". It means that he held the position of a "Doctor of the Law", an ecclesiastical distinction which placed him upon a higher level than that of a Rabbi, and implied that he was qualified to pronounce with authority on matters concerning the laws of God. We are apt also to draw the wrong inference from the statement that he stood up and "tempted" Jesus unless

we remember that this word in the New Testament has the significance of "proving" or "testing". It is very clear that this man came forward with the express intention of putting the principles of Christ's teaching to the proof, or as we would say, applying the "acid test", of Mosaic Law, to these new and revolutionary tenets which were being advocated by the prophet of Nazareth.

The lawyer may or may not have been sincere in his interrogation; the narrative does not make that aspect of the matter very clear, but the fact that his further questions showed him to be a man amenable to reasonable argument may justify us in concluding that his attitude was that of an ordinarily honest and sincere man who had been brought up and indoctrinated in the elements of Mosaic law until that law had become the background of his mental processes. This new teaching, perhaps, intrigued and interested him; he was not at all sure how it would work out in practice but if it could be shown to be a logical development of the Mosaic code then he would be prepared to give it further consideration.

And Jesus shattered this whole meticulous intellectualism by returning an answer that compelled the lawyer to admit ignorance of one of the principal features of that law with which he, with others, imagined himself to be expertly familiar. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind"*, said Jesus, *"and thy neighbour as thyself"*. A most familiar passage and one that this Doctor of the Law must have expounded to others times without number. But under the keen gaze of those searching eyes he was compelled to admit his lack of real knowledge. His mind still bemused by the tortuous arguments with which his training had made him familiar, he tried to steer the conversation into more familiar channels of debate, and *"willing to justify himself"*, anxious to hold the advantage in argument with this unlearned Nazarene, put the supplementary question in appropriate form for argument. "Who is my neighbour?" he asked.

Jesus answered that question by telling a story. To what extent the lawyer benefited by this unorthodox method of teaching truth we do not know; certain it is that many of the bystanders, men and women in humbler walks of life, must have gained enlightenment and inspiration thereby. *"Truth, embodied in a tale, may enter in at lowly doors"*, wrote Tennyson; the profound wisdom of that remark is well worthy of serious consideration by those whose privilege and responsibility it is to teach Divine truth.

A certain man went down to Jericho. On the

lonely mountainous road which has only recently lost its dangers he was set upon by robbers who, from behind the rocky crags towering high above the winding track, descended silently upon him, robbed him of his possessions and clothes, beat him savagely into unconsciousness, and departed leaving him to die. Travellers were few and far between, and quite possibly before the next one came that way the vultures would have had their feast. But it was not so to be this time. By chance, said Jesus, while his listeners sat enthralled, there came a certain priest that way, who, when he saw him, passed by on the other side. The lawyer must have shifted uneasily at this. He was not himself a priest but his interests and theirs lay in the same direction and he was not certain just how far the implied rebuke was going to point to his own self. But he could not but listen as Jesus continued; and Jesus must have put much more detail into the story than is preserved for us in the Gospel narrative. The priest would of course justify himself in his action. The man was probably dead, and he, a priest, must not defile himself by touching a dead body. His consecration to God required that he keep himself ceremonially clean for the Divine service. And perhaps this man had committed some crime for which this was God's retribution, and he must beware lest by relieving the man's distress, he be found to fight against God. So he might have reasoned, as he hurried on his way, casting furtive glances at the beetling crags above him and trusting that the robbers were by now well away from the vicinity.

Not long, perhaps, after the figure of the priest had disappeared in the distance fresh footsteps sounded on the road. Another traveller appeared, a Levite, a man devoted to the service of God just as was the priest, but in matters which in everyday life did bring him into closer contact with ordinary people. He might quite possibly have been possessed of some degree of medical skill, for that was a not uncommon function of the Levites, and in any case his daily duties would have certainly given him many opportunities of relieving human suffering. At any rate, he did cross the road and look at the injured man. Here was clearly a case within his own province. The man was a son of Israel, he was afflicted and in distress, and the Levites' traditional duty was to succour and assist the people. His first impulse might have been to render first aid and do something to set the injured man on his journey again, but other and more selfish counsels came into his mind. The robbers might still be about and the longer he stayed in that place the greater was the risk of becoming another victim. He had a duty to his own people not to bring himself into a position where he might be rendered physically incapable of serving them on his return home; this man might be an Israelite, and in dis-

tress, but he was not of the Levite's own parish, and "charity begins at home". After all, the man should have taken precautions against robbery if he intended travelling with possessions in such a notorious place; he should have waited until he could join a company of travellers. A Levite whose profession forbade him to accumulate property could hardly be expected to defend the rights of property in others and the man had really only got what he deserved. So he might have thought, unctuously, as he left the unconscious man, with a couple of backward glances, and went his way.

We can be quite sure that the world has never known a better story-teller than Jesus of Nazareth. His listeners must have seen, quite plainly, that desolate road, the unfortunate traveller lying outstretched by the wayside, the pitiless heat of noonday pouring down on the sun-baked rocks, the still air hanging lifeless and heavy, high up in the blue sky, a pair of vultures hovering, waiting their time . . . and then, sharply, breaking the stillness, the "clip-clop" of a donkey picking its way among the stones of the road.

The vultures disappeared; the donkey and his rider came into sight. The newcomer betrayed, by the cast of his features, his non-Jewish blood. He was a Samaritan, a member of that mongrel race which had descended from the Assyrians and Babylonians with which Samaria had been colonised in the days of Sennacherib, the apostate Israelites, the Phoenicians and the Canaanites who had occupied the land during the time of the great captivities. As Jesus came to this part of his story, more than one of his listeners would turn and spit on the ground in disgust at the mention of the hated name; but they turned back to listen again.

The stranger took in the situation at a glance. Without hesitation he stopped his beast, alighted and went across to the injured man. With a dexterity that betrayed complete familiarity with this kind of thing, he bound up the man's wounds, set him upon his own beast, and, supporting him thus as he himself walked beside the donkey, took him to the *khan*, the wayside rest-house halfway between Jerusalem and Jericho. There his interest might well have ended; the man would be safe, and would recover in a few days, and could reasonably be expected to arrange for his own welfare; but no, the Samaritan produced money from his own pocket—the "two pence" were two *denarii*, adequate for several days board and lodging—and gave assurance that he would be responsible for whatever further expenditure was necessary to restore the man to health. He was not one of the Lord's chosen people; he was not a member of the consecrated nation; he was a man of the world, a Samaritan!

And this man, says Jesus, is the man who has kept the commandments and is worthy of eternal life. We

miss the point of the story if we take it as merely a commendation of the man who does do good works. The lawyer wanted to know what he must do to gain eternal life; what was the commandment that really mattered; what obligation did this new teaching that Jesus brought propose to lay upon man. The story was the reply, and the lawyer readily saw, as Jesus meant him to see, that the Samaritan was the one who had rightly interpreted every man's duty to his fellowmen and to his God. The men whom Jesus wanted for followers and disciples were to be as this Samaritan—prepared to demonstrate their essential harmony with God Who "so loved the world that He gave" by rendering such service as they are able to a world in distress, instead of, like the Priest and the Levite, making excuse to avert their heads and pass by on the other side. The Samaritan did not stay with the man; having done what he could, he proceeded upon his own business, but he had challenged, and overcome, the powers of evil in the world by working some positive good.

This is the issue before us, Christians of to-day. It is so easy to close our eyes to human distress and take refuge behind the knowledge that God has provided the Millennial Age to "wipe away tears from off all faces". We know quite certainly that in no event shall we be able to effect any substantial improvement in the world's affairs, and that time and energy spent in the endeavour is worse than wasted. The Scriptures are definite, and so, too, are the signs of the times, that this world is incapable of self-reformation and that its only hope lies in the coming—and the speedy coming—of that Kingdom whose interests we serve and to whose Ruler we are consecrated. But when we have admitted and said all this, there remains the fact, the solid, inescapable fact, that it was the Samaritan, and not the Priest, who was the true son of God. And we as Christians have to find the way, as the Samaritan found the way, of continuing the work our Lord did on earth, by "doing good to all men as we have opportunity", interweaving this

with our supreme mission of undergoing training and preparation both by study and experience for our future commission of world conversion in the days of the Kingdom.

The Samaritan was able to render this good deed and still go about his business. We can do the same, and in the effort find that our sympathetic outlook upon human distress, our closer contact with the infirmities and failings and sorrows of suffering humanity, will of itself shape our characters surely and definitely into the likeness that God desires for us. It is not given to all to expound from the platform, to speak with ready tongue to those who as yet "know not God", to spread abroad the knowledge of the Divine Plan. It is possible for each of us to perform little deeds of kindness, unselfish acts, to be known as one who, being a Christian interprets that Christianity as did its Founder, in "going about doing good", and so bring glory to his Name more certainly than any amount of platform intellectualism can do.

The "Inn of the Good Samaritan" is still there, on that road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Travellers still stop there in passing. Scholars say that there is every reason for thinking that the present inn stands on the site of the one that existed in the time of our Lord, and must have been well known to the men and women who listened to his story. *The inn is still there*; is it a witness and a reminder? There is no sepulchre of Jesus with marbled or crystal coffin containing his remains to which people may make pilgrimage, and before which they can adore. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem almost certainly is not the true site of the garden tomb. Jesus our Lord desires no empty homage of that nature. But the Inn of the Good Samaritan is still there, a building and a courtyard upon which men may gaze, and, gazing, remember the story of old that enshrined the whole teaching of Jesus regarding the duty of his disciples to their fellowmen. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me."

The Soul

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2. 7). The Hebrew *nephesh* has the primary significance of "breath" and points back to the account of man's first appearance on earth as a creature dependent on breathing in order to continue life. The use of *nephesh*, translated "soul", as a word descriptive of a living creature, is constant throughout the Old Testament. Animals are described as souls in Num. 31. 28. Souls are said to eat (Lev. 17. 18) to eat blood (Lev. 17. 12) to eat dead bodies (Lev. 17. 15) and to have a longing to eat flesh (Deut. 12. 20). They can be thirsty (Prov. 25. 25) and have a longing for strong drink (Deut. 26. 16). They may on the other hand have an abhorrence for meat (Job 33. 10). It is conceivable for souls to swear or

to touch unclean things (Lev. 5. 2. and 4) and although all these operations denote life and that the soul is a living entity, it is also possible for the soul to be smitten by enemies (Josh. 11) and to die (Ezek. 18. 4 and 20). References such as these can be found scattered all through the Old Testament. The word occurs seven hundred times and is translated "soul" 471 times, "life" or "living" 150 times, and also by such words as man, person, self, they, me, him, any one, breath, heart, mind, appetite, this body, lust, creature, and beast. Twenty-eight times is the word applied to the lower animals. The New Testament word corresponding to the Hebrew *nephesh* is *psuche* and this is translated "soul" 59 times, "life" 40 times, as well as mind, us, you, heart, and heartily, occurring one hundred and fifty times altogether of which two references are to the lower animals.

DAY OF REST

*A two-part essay
on Sabbath and Sunday*

Part 2. The Lord's Day in the New Testament

The first Jewish converts to Christianity—the Apostolic Church—were scrupulous sabbath keepers. The New Testament shows that if they erred at all it was on the side of extremism in this respect, and several times they are counselled not to regard the keeping of new moons and sabbaths as ends in themselves, but only as means of grace. To this observance of the seventh day, however, the early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, speedily added the special observance of another—the first.

It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. So great an impression was made upon the minds of the first believers by that great happening, the event which changed their lives, that from the beginning they developed the custom of setting aside the first day of the week for assembly together, the breaking of bread or the sharing of a common meal, preaching, prayer and worship. This was quite a different thing from the Jewish sabbath, and was not intended to supplant that institution. It was additional, to commemorate something of an entirely different nature. Traces of this custom are to be found in Acts 20. 7, telling of Paul's visit to Troas, where the first day of the week was evidently the usual meeting day, and in 1 Cor. 16. 2. For the first three centuries both days were kept by the Christian church, the seventh as a sabbath rest, and the first for assembly and worship. Doubtless, those Christians whose lives were spent in agricultural pursuits and in the country found the ideal more easy of attainment than those who laboured in the cities in one or another aspect of the then industrial system; but the consistent stand made by these early believers for their "first day" of assembly and worship had its reward when the Emperor Constantine by an Imperial Edict in A.D. 321 made the observance of Sunday, and the cessation of business and trade on that day, obligation upon all dwellers in cities and towns. We literally owe our Sunday to Constantine!

Shortly afterwards, A.D. 366, the Council of Laodicea formally released all Christians from any obligation to observe the Jewish sabbath—the seventh day. *Quite naturally, therefore, the first day of the week became the day of rest and cessation from work, the day of prayer and worship, and of assembling together with those "of like precious faith."*

Who can doubt that the secret of much of the power inherent in the early Church, enabling them to "go forth conquering, and to conquer," resided in this sincere and faithful allegiance to the principles underlying the Fourth Commandment? That day spent in communion with God and with

each other; that simple ritual of sharing with one's fellows; that pouring out of the heart and soul in an ecstasy of praise and worship before the Throne of the Most High, must surely have inspired them with new courage and fresh strength, and enabled them to withstand with serene confidence the ragings of the pagan power using its cruellest artifices to force from them a denial of their faith. As with Israel, so with the Christian Church, her best days and her happiest days were those during which the sabbath was observed, and when the blessed day fell into disuse and disrepute the virtue went out of communal spiritual life.

The Catholic Church during the Middle Ages maintained this early insistence upon the cessation of business and labour upon Sunday, exhorting to worship and religious devotion, and holding the day as set apart, in addition, to rest and recreation. This latter aspect was not prominent before, but a little reflection will show that innocent recreation is but the logical extension of rest and relaxation. It has been a great tragedy that the original recreation endorsed by the Church has developed into organised amusement, which is quite a different thing, leading to the evils of what is called the "Continental Sunday". It was probably at least partly in reaction to this that the Puritans during the time of Cromwell (sixteenth century) forced the observance of Sunday into the narrow grooves for which it has become proverbial. Every form of recreation was forbidden: Sunday was made to be a day of religious devotion without exception, and severe penalties were laid upon those who contravened the law. This bigoted intolerance was repeated a century or so later in America where the first colonists, seeking to escape from the religious tyranny of the Mother Country, became just as intolerant themselves. In both lands Sunday observance was quite as circumscribed with ritual and ordinance as was the sabbath in Judea at the time of the First Advent.

The history of this Age, then, depicts three phases in the keeping of the sabbath. The early Church maintained the Divine principle of rest and worship inviolate, gradually transferring the seventh day rest to the first day, until by the end of the fourth century Sunday was firmly established. For the next twelve hundred years the Catholic Church insisted upon the weekly day of rest and recreation, this being followed in the English-speaking countries—not elsewhere—by a Puritan phase in which all the evils of Rabbinic sabbath legislation were repeated. A reaction was bound to come, and the Industrial Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the consequent growth of big towns and cities, and, later, the

increase in travel and amusement facilities gave that reaction its chance. Men and women, herded together in factories and workshops, oft-times compelled by the new commercialism to spend long days on monotonous or irksome tasks, hailed the weekly break as a means of indulging in diversions denied them during the week. Declining religious faith—and, within the past century, the spread of Darwinism and Rationalism—coupled with the virtual end of the “hell-fire” bogey, cast down the last barriers, and people who had never been given any conception of Sunday other than that of a rather gloomy period of religious devotion turned right about and made it their weekly day of amusement and entertainment.

Commercial interests have been quick to exploit this reaction. Each year witnesses an increase in the number of men and women who must labour on Sunday to provide their fellows, not with necessities, but with luxuries and entertainment. Church congregations dwindle whilst cinema queues lengthen. Not a little of the nervous strain of modern times, and the evils attendant thereon, must be attributed to the frantic rush for amusement and diversion, the excessive travel and holiday-making, so characteristic of our Sundays today. Men do not realise that in their failure to observe the Divine rule of a periodic slowing down of the tempo of daily life, a short breathing space wherein the physical frame can recover its vitality and the mind be refreshed by its dwelling on things higher than of this earth, they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

So the desecration of the sabbath goes on. Gone, in the towns; fast going, in the countryside, are those quiet, peaceful days when the factories and mills were silent, the shops closed, and the people “walked to the House of God in company”. The present generation is largely oblivious to any special significance attached to the day. They know nothing of its past history; they know only that it is the day when they may cast aside the responsibilities and obligations of the week and expend their energy in every form of diversion the day can be made to hold. The sign of Noah is fulfilled in the land. “*They knew not, until the Flood came, and took them all away.*”

One aspect of the Christian witness to-day, therefore, is a showing forth, by example and precept, of the Divine Will regarding the observance of the day. At a time when the gospel of humanism is preached in active opposition to the gospel of Christ there is need for practical demonstration that the ways of God, which were made for the benefit of man, are eminently practicable, and in the long run the only ways which will ensure to man the full and free development of the wondrous possibilities latent in his nature.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words—I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.” (Isa. 58. 13-14).

Profound truth is enshrined in those words of Isaiah! Conscientious and reverent observance of Nature’s weekly rest day results in physical and mental wellbeing of an order which cannot be attained in any other way. The believer who spends his Sunday thus will find that he takes up his normal routine on Monday morning feeling, as the common saying has it, “on top of the world”. This modern expression is the literal counterpart of the Hebrew idiom which is translated “to ride on the high places of the earth”, and the thought which Isaiah tried to express was precisely that which is conveyed by our everyday allusion. It may be fitting, therefore, to suggest a few of the considerations that determine happy and satisfactory sabbath-keeping.

There are three foundation principles which may be taken into consideration. Sunday is, firstly, a day of *rest*; secondly, a day of *service*, and thirdly, a day of *worship*. Rest, service, worship; these are the essential characteristics of the day which God has ordained for human wellbeing.

It will be noticed how aptly this compares with the Divine commission originally given to man. That also could be summed up in three words—Labour, Service, Worship. *Labour*, to make use of the earth’s resources and products for the sustenance and enrichment of human life; *service* in the brotherhood of man, a state of society in which every man is his brother’s keeper; *worship*, expressed in the whole-hearted allegiance of every man to God the Father of all, Who has created us to have dominion over this material creation. That ideal will be fully realised when the Divine Plan is complete and evil has been driven from the hearts of men. In that fair land which Isaiah saw in vision, when sorrow and sighing will have fled away, the threefold commission will be fully observed. Men will labour, serve and worship God six days in the week, and on the seventh they will hold holy convocation to him in Sabbaths more glorious than anything the world has ever, as yet, experienced.

The Sunday rest enjoined upon Christians is not merely an arbitrary cessation of labour, an enforced inactivity in a world which was made for activity. The essential characteristic about Sunday is, rather, that there should be a cessation of the daily routine involved in gaining a living. In Israel’s day the gathering of manna was suspended during the seventh day. The equivalent of that today is the abandonment of the daily struggle to live, and a

resting upon that which has been gained during the six days. It is often argued that such a course is not practicable under conditions of life to-day. Public services must be maintained; water, electricity, transport, must be provided. Such arguments are often put forward by those who have personal interests militating against the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. There can be no doubt that in a Christian state of society a much higher degree of cessation could be obtained than does exist. The cancellation of unnecessary activities, including those forms of daily labour not essential to the life of the community, such as closing of shops and places of amusement, would effect a vast change in the amount of labour which "must be done" on Sunday.

Many years ago Lord Macaulay told the British Parliament "We are not poorer in England, but richer, because we have, through many ages, rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost; while industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrows, while the Exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machinery, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labour on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed corporal vigour". Unhappily the picture drawn by the noble lord is not true of England to-day.

Now how should this time, if thus redeemed from the workaday world, be utilised? Not in sloth and inactivity, for that is quite out of accord with the Divine way. True, the haste and stress of weekdays can be absent and all actions performed with a leisureliness that is rarely possible on any other day, yet activity of some sort there ought to be. Such activity divides itself naturally into three aspects.

First comes that recuperation which is a necessary component of the weekly rest. As a general principle it may be concluded that any form of activity which is so dissimilar from the normal weekday occupation of the particular individual concerned as to constitute mental and physical relaxation, and to be recuperative in its effect, can be legitimately regarded as a factor making for "sabbath rest". William Wilberforce, the man who did more than any other to abolish slavery, once declared that man's power of mental endurance could only be conserved by this proper treatment of the Sabbath. He had seen men of mighty intellect whose keen minds had failed them prematurely, and he was satisfied that in every such case the cause was neglect of this Divine law. It is good, surely, to give serious thought to this aspect of the

subject, and with clear knowledge of all its implications, to include in every Sunday as it comes, that variety of rest, relaxation, recuperation—physical or mental, or both—which is necessary and desirable in the particular case. In this, as in so many things, the needs of individuals will vary, and no man may judge his brother. Sufficient is it if we use our sanctified judgment to do what seems to us to be the acceptable will of God.

The second aspect of "restful activity" is well summed up in the term "good works". Our Lord performed works of healing on the sabbath as on any day; the care with which it is pointed out in several instances that the day concerned was the sabbath seems to indicate that especial attention was desired to be directed to this fact. We can manifest the same desire to assist suffering humanity and carry out such works of mercy as are within our powers. Thus Sunday becomes peculiarly a day in which we may find time to render services to those in need or in distress, to visit the sick, to set hands to works of kindness. In ways which will present themselves in their variety to the sincere Christian it is possible to devote part of the day of rest to the service of one's fellows, freely giving even as we have freely received.

Last, but by no means least, comes the supreme purpose of the day—corporate worship. It is true that those whose lives are completely and utterly devoted to the Divine service endeavour to maintain the attitude of personal worship and communion with their Heavenly Father throughout all the hours of every day. Nevertheless this privileged condition is largely individual; there is a virtue and power in corporate worship, the joining together with one's fellows in audible praise and united prayer, that is very helpful to the full development of Christian character. Whenever the possibility exists, therefore, there should be an "assembling of yourselves together" and an ascending before God of praise, prayer and thought in company together.

The radio service is no substitute for corporate worship. For the aged, infirm and isolated unable to reach a place of worship, the radio service is a boon; but no Christian who has the opportunity to meet and worship with others of like faith is justified in choosing the comfort of the home and the armchair instead. Perhaps those who indulge themselves in this manner do not stop to reflect that it is a sign of disrespect to the Almighty and betokens a lack of reverence for Him.

Rest—Service—Worship. Let these be the ideals we set before us in our endeavour to discern and do our Father's will, and then in our doing we shall be richly blessed. By these things shall we derive, week by week, spiritual strength to serve in good stead when the dark and evil days come down.

(Conclusion)

THE GRANDSON OF MOSES

*The story of
the first apostasy*

The name of Moses stands out in Israel's history as that of the man who welded twelve unorganised tribes into a nation, brought that nation into covenant relationship with God, and throughout a long life stood firmly in his allegiance to the God of Israel and carried the nation with him in that allegiance. Israel never forgot him. Fourteen hundred years later, in the days of Christ, the words and commands of Moses were still regarded as law. No greater man had ever lived or would ever live, said every pious man of Israel. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34. 10) was the comment of the ancient chronicler who closed the story of Moses' life. He was a mighty man and a stalwart for the righteousness of God. "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day" was his final exhortation to the nation just before his death "which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life; and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land" (Deut. 32. 46-47). All the greater tragedy, therefore, that Moses' own grandson and his descendants for six centuries were apostates from the worship of God, serving an idol altar throughout the entire time of Israel's occupancy of the land.

Moses had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, both born to him before the Exodus, during the period of his exile in Midian. One son at least was still a child at the time of the Exodus and they both entered the Promised Land. Neither of them appear to have inherited the outstanding characteristics of their celebrated father and they seem to have been undistinguished members of the Levites, an office theirs by right of descent from Moses, and probably served as such in some community in Israel. They are not mentioned in the historical narratives and it is evident that no particular honour was paid them in respect of their relationship to the great deliverer of the nation. In the early days we read of stalwart men who rose up to defend and lead the people struggling to consolidate their hold on the land—Joshua, Caleb, Othniel, Ehud, but not Gershom or Eliezer. The mantle of Moses did not fall on his sons; it passed to others.

Four centuries later, in the days of David, there is a brief reminder of these two. David, forbidden of God to build the Temple, was nevertheless commanded to erect an altar to the Lord in Jerusalem and this he did on the summit of Mount Moriah where Solomon's Temple afterwards stood. (1 Chron. 22. 18-26). To this "house of the Lord" as David termed it, he gathered all the sacred

treasures, spoils of war dedicated to the Lord and so on, and placed them under the supervision of Shebuel, descendant of Gershom, and Shelomith, descendant of Eliezer. A few scattered allusions in 1 Chron. 23. 14-17; 24. 20; 26. 24-25 tell us this much and preserve a few names and that is all. These two were evidently men of God and honoured with a share in the sacred duties.

The darker side of the picture is displayed in the story of one other member of the family, Jonathan the son of Gershom and therefore grandson of Moses. This Jonathan, born in the land in the very early days of the settlement, occupied a very minor office as a Levite attached to the tribe of Judah in Bethlehem (Judges chap. 18). Apparently discontented with his lot, he made his way northward into the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, seeking to better himself, as we might say. There he encountered an Ephraimite named Micah, who, himself infected with the prevalent idolatry of Canaan, had made himself idols graven images, and set them up in his house. He invited Jonathan to enter his service as a kind of domestic priest, to attend upon idols and conduct religious observances on behalf of the family. The terms: board and lodging, necessary officiating robes, and ten silver shekels per year, which since ordinary labourer's wages at the time ranged between thirty and fifty shekels a year was not a very princely sum for a grandson of Moses the conqueror. But he accepted it and entered upon his duties as apostate priest to an idolator. The depths of ignorance into which Israelites like Micah had fallen is well illustrated by his comment upon the situation. "Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing that I have a Levite to my priest". . . .

His complacency was rudely disturbed. A roving party of men from the tribe of Dan, migrating northward to seek more suitable territory for themselves, came upon Micah's house and found the idol installation complete with priest. Heedless of any rights Micah may have had in the matter, they took forcible possession of the idols and made a proposition to Jonathan. "Is it better for thee" they suggested "to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?". Jonathan saw the point and accepted the offer with alacrity; he journeyed with them to the north, where they found a fertile country, inhabited only by a peaceful and defenceless people whom they unceremoniously slaughtered and established themselves in their place.

So it was that Jonathan the grandson of Moses became the first High Priest of the first organised system of idolatry to be established in Israel. There in the town of Dan, centre of the northern ter-

ritory of the tribe of Dan, most northerly point of the land of Israel and not far from modern Damascus, he administered the ceremonies of a pagan faith, he and his sons after him, seven hundred years until the Assyrians came and took Israel away into captivity. During all that time these sons of Moses stood for all that their illustrious forebear had so consistently and sternly condemned.

The story is told in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Judges. It must have taken place during the first century in the land. At the same time that Jonathan was leaving Bethlehem for a life of infamy in the north, Ruth the Moabitess was coming into Bethlehem to yield her life in devotion to Israel's God, joining in association with Boaz the God-fearing Israelite to forge another link in the line which led to Christ, the greater Prophet of whom Moses spake. The line of Jonathan ended in captivity and ruin and is now lost in obscurity; that of Ruth and Boaz is immortalised by the event which happened later at Bethlehem when the angels sang "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men*".

The story was set down faithfully in the Book of Judges but in later manuscripts the transcribers, reluctant to perpetuate the association of their great Lawgiver's name with that of his apostate grandson, added the letter n to the name in Judges 18. 30 thus making it Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, instead of Moses. This is the A.V. rendering; in the Hebrew text the n is above the line, indicating that the original reading is Moses. Most modern translations, including RSV and NEB, render it Moses.

Four centuries later Jeroboam, the first king of the Ten Tribes, installed two golden calves as objects of worship, one at Bethel and the other at Dan (1 Kings 12. 25-33). At Bethel he created an order of non-Levite priests; of Dan nothing is said and it is obvious on the strength of Judges 18. 30-31 that the sons of Jonathan continued to serve that sanctuary with the golden calf added to the original idols. Jehu, another two centuries on, destroyed Baal worship out of Israel but left the golden calves and their worship untouched (2 Kings 10. 29) and this for a definite reason. These golden calves, like their prototype at the time of Sinai, were visible emblems of the God of Israel. Oft-times in the O.T. God was likened to the wild ox on account of its strength and irresistible power. Heedless of the

commandment against making graven images of God and bowing down and worshipping such images, these golden calves, which were likenesses of the wild ox, were set up in the sight of Israel so that they could worship God in the same way as other nations worshipped their gods, before a visible object made according to their own ideas. Hence Jehu, whose object was to destroy idol worship and preserve the worship of Jehovah, in his ignorance left the golden calves intact, and the result was that Bethel and Dan remained centres of idolatry throughout the whole of Israel's national existence, ending only with the great Captivities which cured Israel of that particular sin for all time.

In much of their idolatry the Israelites believed they were worshipping the true God, the one whom Moses had revealed to them, when all the time they were worshipping false conceptions of God. In the final analysis all idolatry comes down to that. Christians, Jews and Moslems worship and serve the same God, but under so widely differing views of his character and attributes that there can be little or no reconciliation. Christians, in their various outlooks, see God sometimes like Moloch, demanding human sacrifice by fire for his appeasement, sometimes like Baal, the impersonal force of Nature to which man is subject, sometimes like Ashtaroath, permitting every self indulgence and gratification of animal passions without thought of higher things, sometimes like the Hebrew wild ox, merciless to his enemies and a fierce partisan to his own people. All these false gods are found amongst us today, even within communes of Christians; so many have failed to realise the depths of meaning in Jesus' words to the woman at the well "*they that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth*". Not for nothing was Israel forbidden to make graven images of God; we in our own minds are apt to set up such graven images and, like Jonathan the grandson of Moses, worship them under the impression that we are worshipping the God of our fathers when in reality we are doing nothing of the sort. The Apostle John was aware of that when he said "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*" (1 John 3. 21). Only in constant heed to the words of Jesus and realisation of our union through him with the Father, he tells us, can we really know God. "*We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true. This is the true God, and eternal life.*"

Who, of experience, does not know how great a matter a little fire may kindle; how much evil may be started by the fire of the tongue; how many unkind thoughts, evil suspicions, surmises, how much envy, malice, hatred and strife may be started by a mere insinuation? Since the Lord

declares, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,*" it follows that the hearts and lips, from which emanate these evil influences, are not controlled by the wisdom that cometh from above, though they be in some measure consecrated to the Lord.

LO, HE COMES!

From time to time a voice is raised questioning the verity of that view of the Advent which pictures it as commencing with the unseen presence of the Lord intervening in world affairs and gathering his Church, unknown to mankind at large, only later to be manifested with his Church to the entire world in the glory and power of his earthly Kingdom. To some extent this questioning is in consequence of the 19th century tendency to ally the expectation with Bible chronology, oblivious to the repeated failure of dates set for the event. Whatever the reason, it might be useful to reiterate the basis upon which the modern view is based.

Contrary to a very common opinion, belief in an initial unseen period of the Advent goes back to the beginning of the 19th century. One effect of the disturbance in Europe at that time following the French Revolution was to stimulate interest in and expectation of a speedy end to this present world-age and the imminence of the Second Advent. In general the thinking was along orthodox lines, the Advent being pictured, as it had been for fifteen centuries past, a sudden and catastrophic appearance of the Lord, descending from the upper skies with attendant angels, to conduct a twenty-four hour Day of Judgment and the eventual burning up of the earth and everything upon it. But now a new conception was to emerge, the beginning of a new and more rational view of the nature of the Advent. An annual Second Advent Conference, beginning in 1826, had been convened by the Christian philosopher and writer Henry Drummond at his home at Albury Park, Sussex (now held by the National Trust). Many ministers including some then well-known names were there. Among the theses presented was one which claimed that the Advent would consist of two phases, first, an unseen arrival of the Lord for the primary purpose of gathering his Church—for which reason it was called the "secret rapture" thesis—a period which for reasons satisfactory to the proposers was to occupy seven years; second, at the end of the seven years the Lord to appear visibly to the world and institute the orthodox twenty-four hour Day of Judgment, with its usual implications for the righteous and the wicked. An advocate of the new belief was Edward Irving, later to be the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, joined by an appreciable number of other influential ministers. Albury continued annually for five years and was then followed, at more frequent intervals, by the Powerscourt Conference in Ireland for several more years, the thesis developing into what became known as the "pre-tribulation rapture", which pictured the entire Church being resurrected to heavenly conditions before

the final cataclysm of trouble denoted the full end of the Age, the restored nation of Israel being regathered into the Holy Land in the meantime. A notable convert to the new view at this time was J. N. Darby, co-founder of the Christian community officially known as the "Brethren" (sometimes rather irreverently dubbed in the outside world "Plymouth Brethren"). During this period six British journals existed devoted to "Advent Truth"; during the century some sixty books were published devoted to the subject. So the "secret rapture" teaching became well known, adopted by some and rejected by others.

By now the Second Advent movement in U.S.A., headed by the Baptist minister William Miller was getting under way, and although Miller, a stalwart traditionalist, would have nothing to do with it, some of his leading supporters did. Particularly was this the case after their 1844 disappointment, when their hopes of witnessing the visible and rather lurid appearance of their Lord from Heaven were grievously disappointed—not the first disappointment suffered by those who based their expectations upon various calculations of Bible chronology, nor yet the last. The result was a swing to the secret rapture belief and reasons were found for extending the period of the unseen presence from seven to thirty years; the argument was that the Lord had indeed come as predicted, but unseen, having come to judge and gather his Church, that He had taken his throne "spiritually" prior to his visible manifestation, and that finally in the year 1874 the visible Advent would take place.

A notable protagonist at this time was Dr. Joseph Seiss, a celebrated Lutheran minister of Philadelphia, editor of the American "*Prophetic Times*" and an ardent pre-millennialist. Writing in 1956 he declared his belief that the first phase of the Second Advent would be invisible to mankind in general, that the Church would be gathered without beholding her Lord with the natural eyesight, and that not until Christ with his Church is revealed in glory to the world will mankind realise that anything unusual is afoot. "*He comes as a thief*" he said, "*and a thief comes stealthily before we are aware of his presence. Christ will be here, judging the nations before they know it. The nations shall be undergoing their judgment, the sainted dead shall be raised, the sainted living shall be translated, and the whole earth shall heave with the throes of judgment already present; and yet multitudes will go on as before, and refuse to believe what is transpiring All these things prove that the Day of Judgment will come upon the world unknown except to the devoutest and most watchful of the children of men*"

The time had now come for an important advance in the understanding of the Advent—the discarding of the purely material aspect. An early exponent in this direction was Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey, who in 1855 voiced his belief that our Lord at his resurrection returned to the Father, not in a fleshly, human body, but in a spiritual body adapted to the spiritual world. Logically, then, He returns in his spiritual body. This did not meet with general acceptance—after all, in the mid-19th century, Heaven was still, in the minds of most, on a golden floor not very far up in the “bright blue sky”. It did show though which way the Spirit was leading. And the same development was taking place among some of the disappointed Adventists on the American continent. At least one of the groups into which the movement had divided after 1844—the “Advent Christians”, had adopted this view and from about 1850 were explaining this as the reason for the 1844 failure. The period of the unseen Presence was visualised as subsisting between 1844 and 1874 and at this latter date the second stage of the Advent, the revelation to the world (then styled the *epiphania*, the forth-shining, just as the first stage was termed the *parousia*, the Presence,) would commence. But with this was associated another development of thought, the realisation that this second stage was not to constitute merely a twenty-four hour “Day of Judgment” in which the righteous were to be taken to Heaven and the remainder sentenced to eternal doom, but a thousand-year era, the Millennium, in which Christ would reign as King with his Church, and all men live in peace and righteousness until the Day of Judgment at its close. These “Advent Christians” had already rejected the dogma of eternal torment and were beginning to see a purpose in the Advent which had not been realised before.

It was through this channel that the connection of the unseen Presence with the essential principles of the coming Millennium began to take shape. In the United States men like George Storrs, a Methodist minister who had been William Miller’s right hand man in earlier years, Nelson Barbour and William Paton, editors of an Adventist journal, besides perceiving a Divine purpose for the Church of this Age as distinct from the general work of world conversion in the next, had also grasped the principles of the distinction between human and spiritual natures and of the essentially Divine and celestial, therefore non-human, nature of the resurrected Christ, like Dean Stanley of London twenty years earlier. On this basis so late as 1870 they were expecting the unseen phase to end and the revelation to all men in 1874, still relying on the old Adventist chronology.

When 1874 passed without the expected event

materialising, reasons were found for postponing it to 1878 and later to 1881. In the meantime they had been joined, in 1876, by Charles T. Russell, destined later to found the worldwide Bible Students movement for which his name is widely known. He shared their view of the invisible Advent but also saw clearly that the ultimate purpose of the Advent was more than the institution of a thousand years of peace for the living nations; it was in fact for the conversion to Christ and reconciliation with God of all from amongst mankind from the start who could thus be persuaded to accept the conditions of eternal life. This had to involve the dead as well as the living, for many had died without ever having heard of the “only Name”. So the Millennium itself becomes a period of instruction, conversion and trial, and the judgment at its end only when every human being in a position knowledgeably able to accept Christ, or reject. This doctrine of future probation had been known in the Church since the beginning of the Age, submerged during the Middle Ages and now coming to the surface again. Charles Russell had commenced his Christian life in the Congregational church; he lived at a time when that Church in America was in the throes of an internal upheaval on this subject. Several leading theologians were involved in what was known at the time as the “Andover thesis”, one of its leading protagonists being associated with Andover Theological Seminary. The outcome became the key which harmonised the varied views of the past. The purpose of the *parousia*, the Presence, was to gather the last members of the Church to celestial life in readiness for their eventual manifestation to all men with their Lord, to gather the destined earthly “servant nation” of Israel to its own land in readiness for its spectacular deliverance at the full end of the Age and entry upon its destiny to declare God’s salvation to the ends of the earth, as Isaiah has it, and finally so to overrule and manipulate the movements of men and nations, the political, ecclesiastical, financial and social powers of the world so that all the disruptive forces of modern times come to a climax together, and so give way to the righteous administration of the Lord. That event marks the end of the *parousia*.

But 19th century thinking was subject to one significant weakness, the endeavour to fix the precise date of the event by means of Bible chronology. And Bible chronology is a notoriously imperfect instrument. Many investigators have endeavoured to calculate the tale of years from creation to the present and many differing resultant dates have been announced. Taking as a basis the fact that Jewish tradition declared that Messiah would appear at the expiry of six thousand years from creation a variety of dates for the Advent

have emerged, extending from A.D. 350 by the early Church and A.D. 500 by early notabilities like Hippolytus, Lactantius and Montanus in the 2nd to 4th centuries, then on to A.D. 1260 by the renowned Abbot Joachim, A.D. 1653 Christopher Columbus, 1817 Martin Luther, 1836 John Wesley, and so into the modern Age with Bishop Latimer who in 1520 predicted 1983, and two whose calculations have yet to be disproved or vindicated, Robert Fleming in 1700 and Dr. Adam Clarke in 1800, both of whom declared the set time to be A.D. 2000. And—except for the two latter—their prognostications all failed of fulfilment, as did those of the several hundred others who in past times have set their hands to this matter. The fact that all calculations up to the A.D. 500 date were based on the pre-Christian Hebrew text as preserved in the Greek Septuagint, and those for the later dates on the 9th century Masoretic Hebrew text, which differ by approximately 1400 years, introduces another element of confusion to an already confusing subject.

One important factor may possibly have been overlooked. The disciples, accepting at last the inevitability of their Master's imminent death without having set up the Kingdom they looked for and expected, and having his promise that He would return one day to achieve that end, asked him "What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the Age?" (Matt. 24. 3). When would they, or their successors, know that the expected event was at hand? Many to-day, as through the Age, appear to have overlooked the substance of his reply.

How simple, if the methods of the chronologists had been the way, to say to them "Add up the time periods of the Scriptures, the lives of the patriarchs, the period in Egypt, the days of the Judges and Kings, and so on, and count six thousand years from the beginning, and then the Son of Man will appear". He did not. He told them to discern the period of the Advent by certain signs, the "signs of the times". They, and their successors, were to watch world events and the gradual disintegration of man's ability to govern himself, and then, when a certain stage had been reached and certain concrete events in history taken place, that would be the time.

In his own masterly way Jesus took the question of his arrival out of the realm of date-fixing and an identifiable point in time and made it a period, a period which He called "The days"—note the plural—"of the Son of Man". When the "watchers"—his own faithful ones—realise that the world has got to the point where it cannot possibly survive, where by its own folly and neglect of Divine law it has got to the end and there is no salvation by the power of man, then that is the time. In the

period during which the world is fast going down the slope into disaster the returned Lord is there, unseen and unknown to any but his own, bringing into play the forces which are going to redeem the world and save it from itself. As the present Age is declining to its close the new Age is coming in.

Is this why this text uses the word *parousia*, a being present, presence, instead of *erchomai*, the act of arriving, arrival, coming. Did He mean to infer that throughout the period of the "signs" He recounted, the time of wars, revolutions and world anarchy, the famines, pestilences, cosmic catastrophes, the culmination of Gospel preaching into the farthest corners of the earth on the one hand and the decline of religious faith on the other, the gathering into their own land of his ancient people Israel on the one hand and the breaking down of the orderly structure of the nations on the other, that He would be there, so manipulating, diverting and controlling the actions of men and nations and overruling the interweaving of the political, religious, military, financial and social elements of the world order so that they all come to a climax of destruction together at the appointed time of his outward manifestation to the world, a time which marks the end of the *parousia*, the presence, and the beginning of the *epiphania*, the forth-shining, and the *apokalupsis*, the open manifestation? Is this an intimation that the watching believers are not intended to know the date of his Advent, but realise, from their observation of the condition of the world in which they live, that He has come, and is moving the characters into position for the final transfer of sovereignty from the powers of this world to the sovereignty of Christ? Is this the meaning of the cryptic and rather terrifying phrase in the Book of Revelation "He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue *Armageddon*", and its equal in Joel "I will gather all nations, and bring them down into the Valley of *Jehoshaphat*" and that in Zephaniah "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them my indignation"? The Scriptures are full of pen-pictures of a day, the ending of this Age, when the Almighty through his Messiah is actively intruding into world affairs to prepare the way for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom in power. Only when that process is completed will the returned Lord, with his resurrected and glorified Church, be revealed to all men in a manner so convincing that there can be no doubt about it in any mind. Only then, and not until then, will men shout, as Isaiah said they will shout "This is the Lord; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

This, then, must be the reality behind the

Second Presence, the period of time during which the faithful can enthuse over the manifest fulfilment of his promise "I will come again" in a manner denied to all who look for his Coming as a future event. And the evident degeneration of the world, not only in its political, religious, social and even financial aspects, but also in its ecology, with universal pollution, "greenhouse effect", and so on, all due to human greed and mismanagement, amply justifies the conclusion that this Twentieth century is in deed and in fact the period of the Second Presence, the "Days of the Son of Man", which are immediately to precede the open manifestation to all the world. In no previous century has the world been in such a parlous state; as Jesus predicted *"there shall be upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things coming upon the earth"*. Perhaps the celebrated London Anglican minister Robert Fleming, who in 1696 predicted that 1793 would see a great Revolu-

tion in France which would change the face of Europe, and 1848 the loss of temporal power by the Papacy, and was right each time, may yet be found to be not far out when in the same book (*"Rise and Fall of the Papacy"*) he said the Second Advent and the commencement of the Millennium would be in A.D. 2000.

So, it may be, the partial views of what was called the "two-stage Advent" in the 19th century have been crystallised and immeasurably enhanced by the clearer light of the 20th century in the realisation that those who now live are in fact and in truth witnessing the events of the "Days of the Son of Man", the days of the Second Presence, and in that confidence look forward with keen anticipation to the promised "cutting short of the days" (Matt. 24, 22) when our Lord has brought the entire world to the point where the cry is raised, as He said it would be raised, *"Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord"*.

"AS HE HAD SAID"

There is something very helpful when the words of a friend prove true in emergency. When we can look back along the way and say events have come to pass even as he said, it deepens and establishes our confidence in our adviser. We feel we have found a friend indeed whose word can well be relied upon.

In these few words the disciples put on record both their amazement and their satisfaction that their Master's words had been so amply verified. Along with him they had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast—a feast which was to remain the most momentous of all their lives. When the day for removing all leaven from their dwellings had come, Jesus selected Peter and John to go on a little in advance, to make ready the place where He purposed to bring his little band, so that, in its quiet seclusion, He and they could commemorate that never-to-be-forgotten night in Egypt. *"Go and make ready for us the passover, that we may eat,"* said Jesus to the chosen two. "But where shall we go, Master—from whom shall we make enquiry, concerning both chamber and food?" *"Behold,"* said Jesus, *"when ye have entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house whereinto he goeth. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house. 'Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he shall show you a large upper room furnished, there make ready."*

To the uninformed disciples this instruction may have appeared a most haphazard affair—a kind of indefinite goose-chase; a situation which might not

come to pass. Only time could determine whether they were undertaking a fruitless journey and quest. But they had learned to have some respect for Jesus' word, and in obedience to the command the two selected disciples went on their quest. Arriving at and entering within the city gates, one of the first objects to attract their attention was a man bearing on his head a pitcher of water. Thus was the first stage of their instruction verified. Here, indeed, whether coincidental or accidental, was a man bearing a pitcher of water as Jesus had said.

Gathering confidence from this first verification of their Master's words, they followed the pitcher-bearer into the house. Explaining this unusual procedure, they told the master of the house that the *"didaskalos"* (master) had sent them to enquire: *"Where is the guest-chamber where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?"* Instead of meeting with rebuke for their unbidden entry, the goodman immediately led them up a flight of stairs, and showed them a large upper room furnished with couches, tables, ewers, bowls, which needed only to be set into position for the number expected to gather there. Again the Master's prescient words were fully verified, for here was indeed a room placed at their disposal, without restriction or impediment, and there they were able to "make ready", as Jesus had instructed them. Evidently also, provision was made for their eating too, for "making ready" implied more than the arrangement of the room.

This sequence of connected events made a deep impression on their minds. Most certainly, Peter

felt the influence of the dovetailing stages of the event, sufficient to relate in later days the story to the Church as proof of his Master's Messiahship, so that from his lips, Luke, the writer of the narrative, obtained an unmistakable insight into the reaction on the hearts of Peter and John which the clear fulfilment of Jesus' words had produced. "They went, and found even as He had said unto them." "*Even as He had said!*" The words may be Luke's, but the amazement and satisfaction was Peter's.

Something similar had occurred a few days previously, when Jesus and his little band were wending their journey to Jerusalem. "*Go your way into the village over against you, in the which, as ye enter, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat, loose him and bring him. And if anyone ask you, 'Why do ye loose him?' thus shall ye say, 'The Lord hath need of him'.*" (Luke 19. 29-31). The deputed messengers went over to the village, found the colt there, heard the very question, and were able to make the actual reply given to them by their Master. ". . . *they that were sent, went away, and found even as He had said unto them*".

Just how Jesus came to possess this foreknowledge it is not our purpose to discuss. It is the fact that events did come to pass even as He said they would that is of vital interest to us, just as it was to those early disciples, his words came true. They were fulfilled accurately and precisely. Men's actions and responses occurred in distant places, in full accord with what He said. It was this amazing fact that came to be noted with great satisfaction by the observant little band.

But there was motive and purpose in all these little episodes of life. Jesus was teaching them to believe on him; to take him at his word. He had said many other arresting things to them relating to future days. He had promised them a share with himself in Kingdom honours, and that, if they proved faithful under trial and test, they should be with him when He returned to restore Israel to their place in God's purposes. He had spoken of things associated with the "regeneration", when the Son of Man should sit on the Throne of his Glory (Matt. 19. 28), and the blessedness of those who should be accounted worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead. These were tremendous things for them to learn, and they were intended to incite the little band to faithfulness and constancy. But these things lay some way ahead along the stream of time, and, as there was a dark future to intervene, the faith and confidence of even the best of them would be tried to the extreme.

They had great need to learn the lesson of trust and confidence in his spoken word. It was necessary to inspire in them the same kind of confidence

concerning the bigger things, which they were showing in the smaller things. "*Lord, increase our faith*" was once their plea, and in these little episodes their Master was making his response to their prayer. He wanted them to accept and believe his words as words of authority and truth; hence, by act and voice He sought to teach them the elements of true faith. Little by little, in this experience and then in that, He laboured to create in them a deepening certainty that He himself knew fully the verity of those great things of which He spoke.

It was no easy thing to bring forth in these simple hearts the depths of faith commensurate with those eventful days. The nation from which they sprang had failed to appreciate the visit of the Dayspring from on high, and the prevailing unbelief could have been a stumbling block for this chosen few. Events were at hand which would strain their slender faith to the utmost extent. Jesus had said that "*heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away,*" yet within a few days they were to see him pass away, and heaven and earth and all his enemies remain.

To find things taking place "even as He had said", therefore, was valuable tuition as they neared the fateful hour when their Master was to be slain. This tuition may be classed as of elementary type, but it was intended to be introductory to the upperstandard stage. "Go into the city, and ye shall find a room furnished" may be instruction of a kindergarten kind, but the simple and immediate was intended to lead on to the distant and profound. The same instructive principle was employed when He foretold the "kindly host" and "the waiting ass" as when speaking of the Kingdom day. "*Ye believe in God; believe also in Me,*" He said, in that upper room, even after the shadow of death had fallen across the path. "*Believe in Me . . . believe in Me, for the works I have done, even if not for the words I have spoken,*" was frequently the theme of his utterances.

Shortly after listening to their Master's solicitous words the little group fell into deep perplexity and distress. Their Lord and Master was put to death. Their hopes were rudely dashed. "*We trusted that He should have redeemed Israel,*" was their downcast reply. "We trusted!" That slender trust lay crushed and withered, though not quite dead! But when He came triumphant from the tomb they called to mind what He had said before He died. They remembered that He had said He would rise again from the dead. And then, when they beheld him, even as He had said they would, the good seed He had sown in their simple hearts sprang forth to rich fruitage of confidence and trust. From that time forward they had no further doubts or unmaturing faith. They believed him now, and in

their hearts that deep deposit of faith was laid which has grown into the unwavering confidence and trust of the Christian Church. From their inspired and inspiring words believers of many generations since have learned to take the words of the Blessed One "*even as He said*".

There are many ways to-day in which we may take these simple words and apply them to our own estate. The blessed lips spake many things of this our day; of things about to come to pass, of wars and sorrows and distress; of signs and tokens marking an old world's death, and telling of a new world's birth. His words may seem to us hard to place and difficult to understand, but He wants his waiting people to believe that all these words will surely be fulfilled, "*even as He had said*". The important feature of such belief lies in the fact that when He comes again there would be but little true faith in the earth (Luke 18. 8). Many hearts, once believing, will have grown cold and apathetic towards the Lord and towards the brethren everywhere (Matt. 24. 12). Disbelief, not faith, will characterise the day of his return, hence but few will be able to appreciate his words and expect them to be fulfilled even as He said. For some, the non-fulfilment of former expectations will prove a severe test to faith. The lengthening time of tarrying here, when all had expected long ago to be gathered to the Lord may be a matter difficult to understand. Disappointment over the protracted delay may be a handicap to faith, but through it all, the Overseer of our lives desires us to take it all on trust. He wants us to believe that the sequence of "*Parousia*" events will come to pass even as He said, and that if our expectations have not been in full harmony with what He said, by re-attention to his words He wants us to understand that events will come to pass "*even as He had said*". Such re-scrutiny of his words will result, not in loss of faith, but in its increase. Come to pass they will, and no power on earth can stay their coming for a single day. Some great event, at an appropriate time, will bring the key to unlock the mystery, and as we pass within the portals of that event, we shall then stand in holy awe and reverent appreciation of all that He has said. We shall then learn that what He has said was sure and true.

Meantime, to keep our faith alive, and help us wait in patience for the consummation of our desires, our Lord said He would be with his people to the end of the Age. Some have lost faith in this providential presence of their Lord. The chilling influence of dispensational disappointment has damped the warmth and enthusiasm of many hearts, and with this damping down has gone, in many cases, the quick responsiveness to the shepherd care of the Lord. The disturbed state of mind has led to a disturbed state of heart, which, in its turn, has led to a less reverential and worshipful attitude before the Lord. And thus the many tokens of the loving Shepherd's care are overlooked and become, in time, no longer expected or desired. In this refrigerated state of heart, the little tender endearments of the Lord produce no salutary effect, and joy and happy praise then very quickly decay.

If we had continued to believe that the Christian life would be "*just as He had said*" it would, this sad consequence could not have come about. We begin the sad decline by forgetting what He has said along pastoral lines, concentrating more upon what He spake along dispensational lines. Then when our incorrectly drawn conclusions fail to correspond with the drift of dispensational events, the balance in our hearts is gone. Longing for his appearing has out-weighed the longing for his caress, and when the tokens of his "*Parousia*" are slow to materialise, the tokens of his shepherding become less apparent too.

The ripened faith that can trust under darkening skies is not of mushroom growth. It does not grow, like Jonah's gourd, in a single night. It is a balanced thing—a deep assurance that can feed as well on the shepherd care as on the dispensational event. It accepts fully all that He has said about the pastoral care as about the "*Parousia*" event. This balanced faith is the most desirable thing in the Christian heart, for when the dispensational fulfilment seems slow to come, it still can feed on the lush grass beside the gently flowing waters of his Providence, knowing throughout that the Shepherd still is near. It is better to walk in the dark with him, than to go alone in the light.

When we would think on the purest of things we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible, and, as nearly as we may be able, discern the loveliness of the perfect character of

God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and proportionately the loveliness manifested in one or another of the followers of Jesus, who walk closely in his footsteps.

Preachers without spiritual illumination are like sundials in a cloudy day—they exhibit certain external marks the design for which they are

formed, but are of no use till the Sun of righteousness arises and shines upon them.

BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

"All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and blasphemies wherewithsoever they blaspheme, but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3, 28-29. See also Matt. 12, 31-32 and Luke 12, 10).

So what is this heinous sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which alone would appear to earn a penalty greater than other sins? Matthew and Luke, recording the same incident, extend the range of forgiveness to those who *"speak a word against the Son of Man"* so that the Holy Spirit appears to be exalted to a position superior to that of our Lord himself. That is so obviously an unacceptable position that we are justified in looking at all three texts a little more closely.

First of all, the text in Mark 3.28. All kinds of sin and blasphemies shall be forgiven to men, without qualification. Since it is fundamental that repentance is an essential pre-requisite to forgiveness, it has to be concluded that this fact is included and implied even though not mentioned. Matthew says the same, but adds that whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, that too shall be forgiven. Luke confirms this latter proviso without mentioning the former proviso. It might well be taken therefore that so far as this part of Jesus' words are concerned there is no degree of sin which is not capable of forgiveness, if the condition of repentance is fulfilled. So far as this is concerned, there is no such thing as the unforgivable sin.

Mark 3, 29, is more difficult because it appears to contradict this. He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. This last word is from the Greek *kriseus* which does not mean condemnation in the sense of passing sentence—that is the companion word *krima*—but denotes a process of investigation, of distinguishing or separating, preliminary to passing judgment (so W. E. Vine). Likewise "eternal" (*aiton*) does not necessarily convey the idea of perpetuity, but of an Age or an era of indefinite but long duration. "Eternal Damnation" here is, literally, an era of investigation culminating in a judgment which may conceivably go either way.

But here comes a query. The use of the word "damnation" in the A.V. comes from the Alexandrian MSS and has been superseded in later years by the R.V. and most modern versions by the word "sin" which has the authority of the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS with one or two lesser ones, so that these versions make the blasphemy *"guilty of an eternal sin"*. A literal rendering of the Greek would probably be something like "is not having remis-

sion (or release) unto (or until) the Age, but is held in (or obligated to) the sin (or in the original reading, the judgment) of the Age".

Matthew is more severe. He says (12.32) that this offender will not be forgiven, neither (not even) in this Age, neither (not even) in that to come (the Millennial Age, the day of our Lord's Advent for the salvation of "whosoever will"). Luke (12.10) only says that such an one "shall not be forgiven" and leaves it at that.

Which of these three versions can be taken as most accurately representing the actual words of Jesus? Matthew was almost certainly present; Mark, as a lad, probably so. Luke had his account from others, perhaps eye-witnesses, perhaps not. His account is not very full. He does repeat Matthew's statement about speaking a word against the Son of Man and this might only imply that Jesus himself did not regard unthinking opposition to him and his teachings in a very serious light; He knew that they were all under the blinding and deceptive power of the Devil anyway.

We are then left with two definite statements. The first is that provision is made in the Divine Plan for the forgiveness of sin in a general sense on the basis that all men are in bondage to the Evil One and in any case there is always an element of ignorance and weakness in their shortcomings which will all be done away with when they come into the Millennial reign of Christ in the next Age, free from the influence of Satan (Rev. 20.1) so that, faced with the challenge of the Gospel and able eventually to measure up to its demands, they may, through the channels of repentance, conversion and dedication of life to Christ, if they will, obtain forgiveness and enter into everlasting life. Secondly, there is the case of those, like these scribes and Pharisees, who knew perfectly well that the work our Lord was doing was a good work and of God, but because of their antipathy to Jesus and resolve to fight against him, deliberately asserted that He was doing it by the power of the Devil, knowing full well that they were lying. This, said Jesus, put them in a different category. They were speaking against full knowledge and this Jesus defines as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, against full light and knowledge of the facts. And this, He went on, meant that their sin would not be repented of in this life and would come up for adjudication in the next. That does not imply irrevocable condemnation, for the fixed rule of the next Age is that *"they that shall hear shall live"*. There is, under the Gospel appeal of that Age, at least the possibility that some of them will see the light, and repent, and be reconciled, and live. Few would deny that Caiaphas, the High Priest who

condemned Jesus, was the most culpable of them all; yet Jesus at his trial did tell Caiaphas that he would one day see Christ in the power of his kingdom and glory. That implied that Caiaphas would certainly be raised from the dead "in that day" to fulfill the prediction and if thus raised from the dead it must be that he then has the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, if he will.

The logical inference from Jesus' words on this occasion must then be that there are some who, like those Pharisees, are so obdurately set in opposition to all that is good and holy and true, that nothing in this life will ever change them. They

are not susceptible to the forgiveness which comes at this present time to even the grossest sinner who repents, and they are therefore "held over" to the next Age when the question of remission or condemnation will be decided. For there can be no escape in that Age from the principles of repentance, conversion and acceptance of Christ, if there is to be entry into lasting life. As Dr. Paterson Smyth said many years ago in his *"Gospel of the Hereafter"*, "no man can be eternally lost until the Lord has put his arms around him and looked into his eyes with his own eyes of ineffable love, and been rejected".

Note on the "Sign of the Son of Man"

The words rendered "sign" or "ensign" (Greek *semeion* and Hebrew *oth*) have the parallel meanings of signal, token or miracle and are rendered by all these terms elsewhere in the Scriptures. The sense, both in Matthew and Isaiah, is that of a signal. In each case the "sign" heralds a noteworthy event in history—so far as this Age is concerned the most noteworthy event of the entire twenty centuries. The ending of Armageddon is the signal for the manifestation of earth's new King to the world and the "de facto" establishment of his ruling power. The quotations from Isaiah associate this sign or signal with the emergence of evangelists from Israel, the Holy Nation, to declare God's glory, and this poses the question; what does the "sign of the Son of Man" mean to the observers on earth, expressed in concrete terms?

A pointer to the answer is provided by our Lord's words on the same subject to men of his own generation. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to him on one occasion, desiring him "that he would shew them a sign from heaven" (Matt. 16, 1-4) something they could see with their natural eyes to convince them of his Messianicship. Jesus refused. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. . . . Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" In this incident Jesus established the principle that the proofs of his authority

and his mission resided not in the creation of a visible apparition in the sky, but in an intelligent appraisal of the significance of current events, "discerning the signs of the times". In Jonah's case the force of the "sign" resided in the witness that was given afterwards. Jonah's preaching after his deliverance was a signal to Nineveh that God was coming into their affairs, to judgment; the record says that they repented. The corresponding sign at the First Advent was the Holy Spirit's power with which the Apostle preached Christ in Jerusalem after his resurrection; not until then were fulfilled Jesus' words "For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke 11, 30). It is fitting therefore that at the Second Advent also the "sign of the Son of Man" should be associated with an even greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is to energise that world evangelism which immediately follows the full end of "this present evil world". "Except ye see signs and wonders" said Jesus when he healed the son of the Capernaum nobleman "ye will not believe" (John 4, 48). From all of this it is evident that the "sign of the Son of Man in heaven" is not going to be a visible appearance of glory in the sky, but a momentous happening or combination of happenings upon earth, of such a nature that men will have no alternative to accepting the fact that, at last, the Lord Christ has taken to himself his great power and commenced his reign.

For the production of one single ear of corn we should need the same sun, the same sky, the same earth, and the same conditions as is needed for all the harvests of the world. If only one soul were to be redeemed, the same propitiation would be

needed as is demanded by the entire population of a lost world. The sacrifice of Christ removes from the mind of God every hindrance of the pardon, the restoration, and the justification of every sinner.

Remember the twofold limitation of our spiritual vision. "Through a mirror in a riddle" (1 Cor. 13, 12). We do not look upon the heavenly

truths themselves but upon a reflection of them; and that which we see itself needs interpretation. (Westcott)

“AND THE PRISONERS HEARD THEM”

*Comment on
Acts 16. 25*

What an artlessly simple statement Luke makes in these few words, and yet how full of significance. Of course, all the prisoners would know what had happened earlier in the day, when the two special prisoners in the inner ward had been brought into custody. Every one of them would know that when the Roman lictors had done their work the two prisoners' backs would be a complete mass of bleeding wounds and discoloured bruises. And if any articulate sounds did pass the sufferers' lips, they would expect only groans and curses. Most men the world over, when every moment caused pain, would give vent to their resentment with such groans, even if it did not constrain them to call down imprecations of woe upon their torturers. And then, added to the physical injuries, and swollen sores, they were thrust into the stocks, so that little or no movement of the extremities was possible to them. At the very best, their position was as undesirable as could well be. Added to this physical distress would be the darkness and the darkness of their cell. Scarce a breath of air and not one single ray of light would tend to lighten the damp musty odour of the cell. When the two prisoners' position is summarised thus, it would seem that this wicked old earth had only one penalty more severe it could inflict. Short of depriving them of life, the passions and inhumanity of man had heaped upon them an avalanche of sorrows and woes. To the spite of foes had been added the injury of an unjust trial, against which most men would have severely chafed. Thus, to the physical distress must be added the possible sufferings of the mind.

What a conquest of mind over matter, of the spirit over the body, of faith over actual reality occurred in that inner prison cell that night! Like others of the same little band, they counted it a privilege to suffer for the Name of the Lord, for they knew that in this suffering they were “filling up the measure” of suffering allotted to the Christ of God. There is indeed the “filling” of a cup, as there is also the “drinking” of a cup; and in the Way of God they who drink from the one, contribute a little quota to the filling of the other. Hence, there was no room for vain regrets or groans or maledictions in that little cell. “Paul and Silas prayed”, then, when the voice of prayer came to an end, the accents of praise to God swept through the confines of the cell, and out into the larger outer ward. “And the prisoners heard them.” What would they think of such men? Perhaps first feelings would be of annoyance if the singing had roused them from their slumbers, but soon they

had reason enough to listen and hear.

The prison itself began to shake; the doors were flung widely ajar, and even their own chains fell off! What a night that was, as Heaven answered both prayer and praise! The fortitude of two stout hearts, rising up above dismal circumstances set in motion the wheels of Providence, and great things ensued.

From this episode sprang the nucleus of the Philippian Church—perhaps the dearest church of all to one of our prisoners in the stocks! Truly it was a mysterious way in which Divine Providence that night performed its wonderful work. It planted its footsteps in the quaking earth, and rode upon the repentant attitudes of men, because two valiant followers of the Lamb had risen up superior to their woeful circumstances.

What lesson can we learn from this episode?

First, let us be reminded that the God of Paul and Silas is our God too. He knew full well, even though midnight darkness lay around, where his faithful children were confined. No darkness could hide them from his sight. In our nights of sorrow or alarm, that is a great thought to take to heart. No curtain of night can intrude and hide God's child from God's watchful eye. The darkness is as the light to him, and cannot intercept his view of those on whom He has set his Love. When terror stalks the night sky or dangers multiply, it would be far more to the glory of God if the neighbours hear of our peace of heart and our trust in God, than if we moan and grumble and lament. The difference between the two sets of prisoners that night lay in this: Paul and Silas knew the way of God, the others did not! That knowledge was a strong controlling power which conquered human fear and fancy, and helped to transmute suffering into Christ-like fortitude. It helped the followers of the Lord to take the episode in the curriculum of the school of Christ, and to make the members of the body the servant of the new mind. This is the fibre martyrs are made of, when it has been sublimated by fire and ordeal. And it is in the little hole-in-the-corner episodes of life where it is done—in the darkness of our prison cells.

The best commentary upon the power of God in the heart is a calm, cool deportment in face of danger, which rises from the assurance that God is our Father, and that we are his children and that we are being kept in the hollow of his hand. We may not all be able to sing praises in the dead of night, but we can all pray, and let the knowledge thus go forth that we have been with Jesus and learned of him. Other prisoners will then also hear.

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