



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 1

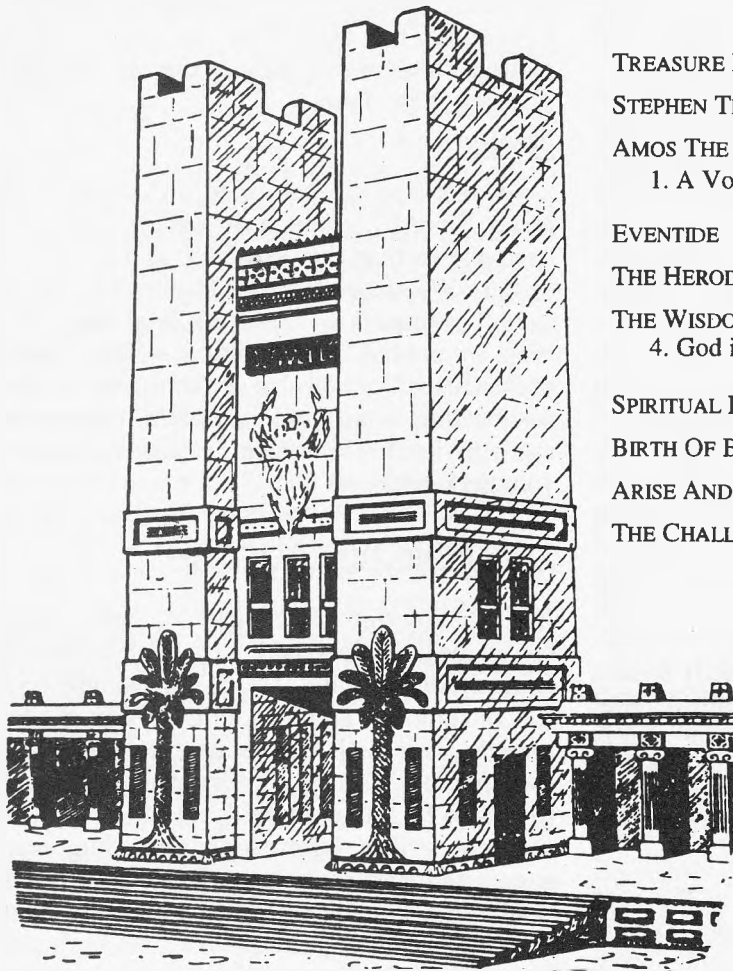
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

Published January 1st

Next issue March 1st

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

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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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Thought for the Month

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, shall not cease" (Gen 8. 22).

At the dawn of a New Year God's promise to Noah comes with significant emphasis. The cycle of Nature has repeated itself many thousands of times since that word was uttered but its validity extends into the infinite future. It remains as an expression of the Divine determination that there shall be a family of ever-living creatures, earth-born yet also sons of God, who will live their lives to all eternity in an environment created for them and suited to the conditions of their existence, an environment in which the ever repeating cycle of Nature's processes will produce all that man will ever need and provide also that continual variety of outward things which is so characteristic of all that God creates. No dead, dull uniformity such as man's own creations tend to produce; no growing of trees and plants in regular straight lines in which each several one is the exact replica of its fellow. No mountains built in the form of exactly square cubic blocks or rivers constricted within parallel straight banks. The world God designs for man is one which, like the tree of knowledge in Eden, is good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and greatly to be desired to make one wise, but unlike the initial effect of that tree, bringing nothing but beneficent results to those who inhabit it. Hence as this year opens we can step out into the unknown experiences and circumstances which it will surely bring in the certain knowledge that despite the fear and turmoil, the apprehension and foreboding of the day in which we live, we are that much nearer the time of light and gladness when under the Divine

rule of the coming Age, all the strife and suffering and death of the present will be gone, and the time of man's final period of training for eternity will have come. It is because of our certainty that this glorious future awaits all men that we can truly say A Happy New Year!

A. O. H.

Notice

A year ago we published an article – "Good News for All". We now expect to have that available early in the New Year as a 6-page folder leaflet. We are grateful for those who have made useful comments to create its final text. In this issue we publish another article – "The Challenge of the Gospel" which also could be used as a leaflet for handing to a friend. Readers' comments are again invited. This article is aimed at somewhat younger readers.

Data Protection Act, 1984

Bible Fellowship Union uses computer files, to record the names and addresses of all readers of the Bible Study Monthly. This is done simply because it is the quickest and most reliable way of keeping records. This method saves us many hours of work each month. The only information kept on those files is to be found on the label of each magazine sent out. This information, including readers' names and addresses, is confidential to the Bible Fellowship Union and is never passed to any other organisation. If any reader objects to his/her name and address being recorded in this way, will he/she please write to us or mention it on their renewal form. Such a reader would still be able to receive the Bible Study Monthly regularly with their records kept manually.

A. O. Hudson

TREASURE IN HEAVEN*The way to lasting wealth*

“Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.” (Matt. 6. 19-21).

This laying up of treasure is for a purpose. It is not just an idle storing up of something that is valuable and is not to be touched or used again. It is not a mere amassing of wealth for the sake of possessing wealth, or for the self-satisfaction that misers feel in the knowledge of their riches. There is no place in heaven where goods may be stored up for possible use in a future “rainy day”, neither are there any strong-rooms devoted to the custody of possessions not at once required by the owner but the benefit or use of which he will not allow to others. Everything in Heaven is live, virile, dynamic, and neither idle beings nor idle forces can be found in all its wide realm. Whatsoever therefore is laid up in Heaven is serving God’s ever-working purpose even in the time of its laying-up.

Neither is the laying up of treasure in heaven merely a kind of insurance whereby a seat in the realms of celestial bliss is guaranteed the depositor when at length he must depart this life. There are politicians, business men and others who realise that for various reasons a day will come when they must flee the country of their residence and end their lives in a foreign land. In order to make preparation for the event they take care to invest their money in the land of their choice, and acquire the title to property there, so that when at length they land on its shores they will have the wherewithal to live and eat. “Salting it away,” the process is called, in the expressive language of our times. But if anyone should think that God will sit on the throne of His holiness accepting the offerings of His people for no other purpose than that, he must needs think again. The Most High is not so short of resources, nor yet so niggardly, that He will not make abundant provision for the future lives and activities of those whom He eventually receives into the glory of His presence. Jesus has already gone to prepare places for His disciples in the heavenly mansions. And what God will have

ready for the entrants into heaven will far transcend anything that we weak, puny mortals could hope to “lay up” for ourselves by way of fruit of our own efforts. *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1. Cor. 2.9).*

We who are Christ’s have given our lives to Him for purposes of training. Christians today are in training for a great future work, the work of reconciling the world to God. It is not going to be an easy work: the habits of sin and the effects of sin have become deeply ingrained in the human character. Even although men and women will rise from the dead in the Age to come with new and perfect bodies, their minds and characters, carried over and reproduced from the old life, will still be imperfect and need regeneration. That work will not be done as it were miraculously, at the wave of a magic wand or in obedience to some potent word from the Almighty. Had it been so, the story of sin and death need never have been enacted and the Fall would not have occurred. Men and women in the next age will need to be converted and induced to accept Christ, so becoming reconciled to God, just as truly as is the case in this Age. And they will need, in their endeavours to obtain human perfection, the assistance and guidance of those who know and understand the difficulties in the way because they themselves have faced the same difficulties and found the way to overcome them. It is the ability thus to be “merciful and faithful priests”, “ministers of reconciliation”, in that Age, that constitutes the “treasure in heaven” which we are bidden to lay up in full confidence that it will not fail us when the time for its use has come.

Knowledge – experience – character – ability; these are the things which we shall never lose, once we have acquired them. They will all be laid up in the memory and power of the Father, and when the call comes, and we divest ourselves of this earthly frame and appear before Him in all the glory of the spiritual body, we shall receive all these things back in full measure, and go out from the Divine presence fully equipped to save the world. But not unless we have gained them first and so entrusted them to the Divine keeping!

In this there is a place for all, and none need feel discouraged or doubtful because another appears to have greater ability, deeper strength of character, wider experience, or more accurate knowledge. The same variety which characterises God's earthly creation must be manifest in His spiritual creation also, and just as now, in the flesh there are "differences of administration, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12.5) so it will be then. Each one of the glorified New Creation will assume quite happily and willingly the place that God has marked out, working in harmonious co-operation with his fellows in the ministry, knowing that it is of the Father, who doeth all things well. The restricted experience and lesser knowledge of a faithful soul whose opportunities in life have not been great will without doubt be just the "treasure" that the Father requires to fit into a certain place that could not be so well fitted by anyone else. There is the same spirit of service in the heart and it is that which is of importance.

It is this spirit of service for others, this willingness to become the servants of men for their salvation, and to use one's own powers and possessions to that end, that is the real lesson behind the story of the man who had such increase of goods that he had to pull down his barns to build greater. "Soul," he said to himself, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Eat, take thine ease and be merry" (Luke 12. 15-21). The sin lay not in acquiring great wealth, providing that he came by it honestly, and there is nothing in the story to suggest that he did not. Neither was there anything immoral in his enjoying greater wealth than his neighbours and in being rich beyond them all. His offence lay in that, having the command of all these material advantages, he proposed to reserve them entirely to his own selfish enjoyment instead of using them, the bounty of God, in the service of and for the benefit of God's creatures. His sin was self-sufficiency. He asked nothing of God nor of any man; he proposed to give nothing to God nor to any man. His riches were the increase from that which God must have given in the first place, for God made all things, but this man owed no obligation on that account and made no acknowledgment thereof. His motto was "What I have I hold" and in his own strength he proposed to stand.

Now the law of God which is at the same time the law of creation declares that no man liveth unto himself. We are all members one of another, and that is as true in the natural realm as in the spiritual. In God's Kingdom the man who does not take his rightful place in the community and assume his rightful obligations as a member of the human family will die; there is no alternative. He either fits into his destined place or he is wastage – a castaway. It is not surprising therefore that in the story Divine judgment follows immediately upon the impious man's bold declaration. "Thou fool" came the stern, scornful words "this night shall thy soul be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be in which thou hast trusted?"

The spirit of service and sacrifice, then, is essential if we are effectively to lay up treasure in heaven. Our Lord exemplified this in the highest degree when He gave Himself on the cross for the sin of man, and undertook all that He did in order that He might be able to lead men back to God. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points proved like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). Jesus himself said "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22. 27). "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8. 9). That is the very negation of the attitude displayed by the man who built bigger barns in order to keep his riches.

All the same, service for one's fellows is not enough. So many Christians have made the mistake of thinking that it is, and have devoted their lives and all their powers to doing good for their neighbours and to all men, believing – and believing rightly – that the Christian commission is made up in large part of this very doing good unto all. "As we have therefore opportunity" writes the inspired Apostle "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6.10). "Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1. 27). All this is right and proper, and to the extent that we ignore the injunction to go about doing good, as Jesus went about doing good, to that extent we shall find leanness to our souls. But that

is not all, and the reason why it is not all is revealed to us in the story of the rich young ruler.

He was a likeable youth, this rich young ruler. Brought up, probably, in a comfortable and cultured home, he had all the refinements of speech and bearing which the education befitting such an upbringing would involve. Jesus, looking upon him, loved him. There is a world of significance in that remark. Jesus loved all men, and because of that love He was in the world to save them: for the chronicler to record especially that Jesus loved this one it must have been evident that there was something in his freshness and sincerity that made a special appeal to the Saviour.

"All these things have I kept from my youth up!" There is no mistaking his honesty. So far as he himself could see, he had performed very faithfully all the commandments of Moses. He had been a true son of Israel, and he looked for the reward of the covenant - eternal life. Yet it was denied him, and he wanted to know why.

There were two reasons, said Jesus, two reasons which were really one. "*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*" - that was one reason. "*Come, take up thy cross and follow me.*" That was the other: and at that the young man went away grieved, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10. 21).

Must we of necessity assume that the young ruler's stumbling block was the exhortation to give of his possessions to the poor? It has often been so suggested. But if this man had indeed been as scrupulous about keeping the law as he himself had averred - and Jesus did not deny the validity of his claim - he surely must already have done something for the poor, for that was enjoined in the law of Moses. Is it not much more likely that it was the second injunction that found him wanting? Whilst he could retain his comfortable home and respected station in the midst of his neighbours, dispensing his benevolence in such fashion as not to cause him any personal inconvenience or any appreciable financial loss or sacrifice, then indeed he could with clear conscience claim to have kept all these things from his youth up, and still enjoy to the full those good things of this life that were in his possession. To take up the cross was a very different proposition. He looked around at the intently listening circle of dusty, travel-stained disciples. He noted their rough clothing, their tanned faces. He knew

they led a life of labour and discomfort, scorned and derided and even persecuted by those to whom they would minister. Was it *that* from which he shrank, and the prospect of a life of sacrifice and suffering that caused him to bite his lip, and draw back from the kindly gaze of Jesus to reflect awhile, and then in sadness and disappointment of heart to turn and go away sorrowing? Jesus' words to the disciples, as his figure retreated into the distance, seem to suggest as much. "*Children, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!*" The rich young ruler could have sold possessions, and given to the poor, without entering into the Kingdom of God; he could by no means enter into the Kingdom of God without he first took up his cross and followed Christ. And that, it was plain, he was not willing to do.

There is the lesson for us! Our laying up of treasure in heaven can only be if we have added to our good works the taking up of our cross to follow Christ. That means nothing less than the full and wholehearted consecration of our lives, our possessions, our talents, our abilities, all, to the service of God to be disposed in accordance with His will. Thus, and thus alone, may we rely upon the safe storage of all that we commit to God, that it may be ours again in that day when we shall need it wherewith to give life to the world. The experience we have gained and lessons we have learned, the abilities we have developed and the talents we have improved, all will be of inestimable value to us in that day when it shall be the privilege of each one of us to carry the word of life to a sin-sick but hopeful world. It will only be by what we have developed in this Age that we shall be qualified to deal with man in the next; that which we develop now of knowledge and experience, of love and mercy, of patience and hope, of righteousness and justice, of faith in the goodness of God and understanding of the wisdom of God, all is being stored up for us, treasure in Heaven that can never be corrupted or stolen. And the power of these things will be bestowed upon us in the great Day of revealing when the kingdoms of this world have passed away, and the time has come that "the saints possess the Kingdom," and those who have this treasure laid up for them will "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father" for the deliverance of all mankind.

D. Nadal

Stephen - the Deacon

A character study from Acts 6 - 7

We first meet Stephen in Acts 6 where the early Christian church in Jerusalem had run into some difficulties of administration. The Twelve Apostles had found they had much more than enough to do as thousands joined their congregation. Firstly, the 'Twelve' were needed in the work of teaching, spiritual counselling and leading the outreach to unconverted Jews. Secondly, the Christian community, like the Jewish people from which it sprang, was divided into Hebrew and Greek Jews. The Hebrew Jews tended to have strong ties with Judea, they spoke Hebrew as a first language and were more careful to keep the Law of Moses. Greek-speaking Jews were less attached to Jerusalem often being born in Gentile lands. They were part of the dispersion across the Roman empire. They or their immediate ancestors had been carried away into exile during recent wars. Greek was their everyday language and they were less conscious of the detailed interpretation of the Law. The early disciples were sharing their worldly wealth and building up a pool of material things. The Church needed a system for re-distributing these things according to need. The Hellenists or Greek-speaking Jews within the church felt that the poor in their group were not getting a fair share of food and clothing and they began to make their feelings known. The Apostles, were spiritually awake and guided by the Holy Spirit, readily saw the dangers of division ahead. They immediately put into effect a plan to avoid a feud within the community. They told the members of the Church to select seven men from among themselves who could be trusted, operate wisely and were full of the Holy Spirit. These would oversee the practical needs of the Church. It worked; the church chose seven men, all of whom appear to have come from the Greek-speaking section. As was customary in the early Church, they prayed about the matter, the Apostles gave their approval and authority to the new arrangement and the Christian community continued to flourish.

Among those seven men was one who had the qualities of a leader. It is clear that God led

Stephen to do far more than was originally planned for the 'deacons'. Since the Greek words from which our word deacon comes mean a servant or a minister and are used in the Acts of the Apostles for one doing spiritual or practical service, Stephen was soon involved in the same kinds of activities as the Apostles, doing wonderful signs and defending the faith. Another of the 'seven' was Philip, not of the 'twelve' but an evangelist whose exploits we read about in Acts 8. Stephen too did the work of an evangelist. The Spirit was not quenched by arrogant leaders who kept everyone in their place.

As we read through chapters 6 and 7 of Acts, there emerges a picture of a man who had listened to Jesus more carefully than some of his brethren. Perhaps because of his background, perhaps because he had a mind free from the traditions and restrictions of the 'elite' Jews, Stephen realised that the Gospel was not to be confined to Israel. He had noted what Jesus had said about a widow in Sidon and an army officer in Damascus (Luke 4). He heard the words of commendation for the Canaanite mother (Matt. 15. 28) and the Roman centurion (Matt. 8. 10-12) and it all began to add up to something which the Jewish apostles found hard to accept. If the establishment refuses to move when God moves, then He will find someone other than the leadership to open up new channels of blessing.

Stephen also had a skill which the others may not have had, and which through the power of the Spirit he was able to use in preaching the Gospel. He was an able public debater and he could argue his case with the leading thinkers of his day. Now it may not always be a good thing to spend time debating the teachings of Christianity. Not everyone possesses the skill to do so. But there are times and places when the well educated and trained thinker is very valuable. The Christian faith is essentially based on a logical framework of established facts and ideas. The early leaders knew about Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They were familiar with the Hebrew history, the rules laid down by Moses and the teachings of the

prophets. They were not able to use that unique basis of thought to demonstrate to the clever men of their day that Jesus was the saviour of all peoples of the Earth - and that this teaching of salvation for all was clearly taught in the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament. Stephen's message was a continuation of the faith from Abraham through the patriarchs and prophets, which Jesus had made so clear to those with eyes to see.

Interestingly enough it was unbelieving Greek speaking Jews who whipped up fury against Stephen. Broader minded than their Hebrew counterparts they might have been, but when it came to anything which jeopardised their religious traditions about the Law and the Temple, they were prepared to cause trouble. Years later it was the Jews from Asia who incited the crowds in Jerusalem to try to lynch Paul as recorded in Acts 21.7. These Jews of the Dispersion had much to lose in the other parts of the Roman Empire where they felt Christians were making it too easy for Gentiles to approach God, side stepping their ritual and legal details. It was they who heard Stephen dismiss the man-made trapping of religion and the barriers between peoples as being irrelevant to the worship of God. So they arraigned him before the Sanhedrin on charges not dissimilar to those brought against Jesus, based on 'evidence' of false witnesses. Undoubtedly some of those present remembered the fake trial of Jesus of Nazareth and also the bold speeches of Peter and his companions immediately after Pentecost.

Stephen addressed the council in the way that Rabbis were used to hearing, about God who was directly involved in history. Thereafter follows a unique record of a history lesson. From the accounts of Israel's history, Stephen drew quite remarkable lessons. It all began, not in the land of Israel, but in Chaldea when God first spoke to Abraham, and straightaway the hearers were directed to the unpalatable fact that God is at work outside the Promised Land. Stephen then moved the story not so much to Canaan as to Egypt, because their fathers had cruelly dealt with Joseph. This brother whom they rejected became their saviour and benefactor and it was all under the mighty power of God. In a foreign land God first

moved their great law giver Moses to consider leading Israel to freedom. He was fitted for the task firstly by being educated as a prince in the wisdom of Egypt and then maturing as he cared for the sheep in Midian. And all the way from that first early awakening when he killed an Egyptian to the end of his life at the border of Canaan, Moses suffered repeated rejection by his countrymen. He who had given up so much as a prince in Egypt was unwanted by those to whom God had sent him, to save them from slavery. Stephen showed that throughout their national life their worship was misdirected and their loyalty was based on superficial piety. Too often they had turned away from God to worship idols with all the disgusting consequences in moral corruption. Even when they turned to the one true God, their interest was in physical and superficial things centred in the Temple which were much more important to them than the presence of the Almighty Creator. Stephen showed clearly that the revelation of God did not start in the land of Israel nor did worship of God begin with the building of Solomon's Temple. It was God who had so often turned their tragic rejection into His triumphant salvation.

Never once did Stephen speak against the Law and the Holy Place. In spite of the false charges brought against him, Stephen was the advocate of the true faith of Israel, demonstrating that the Jewish leaders and their forebears had always tried to destroy the true people of God. Israel had always been rebellious and unresponsive to the work of the Holy Spirit and now they had killed their Messiah.

The history lesson was over and Stephen now charged the leaders and people of Israel of always opposing true faith in God and even of breaking His law. How would they react? They had no authority to punish by death. Only Rome's representatives could do that. But then Stephen broke in with a revelation that they could not ignore. He uttered that fateful declaration of how he was seeing Jesus, the Son of man, standing at the right side of the glory of God." Stephen had used the title of Jesus which the Master had so much loved. To his accusers it was the most

dreadful blasphemy and they vented their full fury upon their victim. No matter how much he had tried to explain the certainty of their failure, their minds were blind to the conviction of truth. To have admitted otherwise would have condemned all their words and actions against Jesus and His disciples. Who exactly was responsible for Stephen's death is not clear. It is unlikely to have been Pharisees and law experts. The manner in which the death penalty was carried out was illegal according to Israel's law as well as Roman. But they could not wait to go through the detailed confession of the law. It was the practice to throw the prisoner from a height and if that did not kill him they hurled large rocks at him.

As we look at Stephen in the moment of his departure from this life, he seems, amid all the turmoil and confusion of his enemies to have a peace and love like that of his Master. Like Him he prayed for forgiveness for those violent men. Just as Jesus had commended His spirit to the Father, so now Stephen asks Jesus to receive His spirit. For any witnesses of that occasion who had anything of the spirit of God in their hearts it must have been a most moving spectacle. There were now so many disciples in Jerusalem that some of them must have been present and heard Stephen's witness to the Divine revelation. One was there for whom the death of Stephen signalled the beginning of a great internal struggle. Saul of Tarsus was an associate of Stephen's murderers. How long did the sight and sounds of the awful scene roll round and round in the conscience of that leader of the Pharisees? Try as he would he could not escape the terrifying events of that day.

The reason that some of the leaders of the early church, paid the ultimate price for their faith so

early in their Christian walk is impossible to fathom. One thing is sure, such men as Stephen and James proved their faithfulness and matured as Christlike followers of the Master in a very short time while others toiled and suffered for many long years. But Stephen had fulfilled his task in the purposes of God and had opened the eyes of Christian believers and unbelievers alike, to the universality of the Gospel. The Church had settled in its tracks and was beginning to have a cosy existence as just one more sect of Judaism. But there was no compromise with evil, whether it was dressed starkly as paganism or more subtly as Judaism. Stephen's death brought a crisis for the Church for immediately afterward it came under persecution. Members of the Christian community had to disperse and in that movement away from Jerusalem and Judea, the early disciples began to be obedient to the words of Jesus, for they were witnesses '*...throughout all Judaea and Samaria and even in the farthest corners of the earth.*' (Acts 1. 8 REB) They no longer had to ask the question "Shall we go?" but rather "now that we've moved, shall we get on with the task of evangelism – telling the Gospel to all?"

Stephen had gone but had left behind an example of true witness to the Gospel. He was the first of a long line of faithful men and women who were to die for their faith in Jesus Christ. As it had been with Stephen, so in coming centuries those who had only 'superficial religion' put martyrs to death, even from among 'their own brethren'. Religious leaders find it a hard lesson to learn. Christian believers all over the world still die with the same peace and love in their hearts as Stephen experienced as he laid down his life for his Master.

"No cross, no crown" is a famous saying of William Penn, the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania. It is illustrated by the experience of Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled by the Roman soldiers to bear Jesus' cross. Simon had come from North Africa to attend the Passover, and his feelings can be better imagined than described on that day when his fate befell him. He had doubtless made his own plans for the day, but

these were upset by this unexpected incident. Believers are always encountering experiences of that type, and they are always finding the abundant blessings into which the Cyrenian Jew stumbled. One was immortality. Wherever the Gospel is preached his name will be honoured to the end of the age. Another appears to have been eternal life, for Mark writes of him as the father of two well known Christians, Alexander and Rufus.

A. O. Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

I. A Voice from Zion

He was born and brought up a simple peasant, earning his bread by the tending of cattle belonging to one of the wealthy farmers of Judah. He supplemented his meagre wages by gathering wild figs as he followed his charges over the rough hillside country of Tekoa, a few miles to the south of Bethlehem. He was probably of the royal tribe, the tribe of Judah, maybe even distantly related to the royal family, the house of David, but, if so, a very humble and undistinguished member of that house. In outward appearance no different from his fellow workers, he was an ordinary labouring man having no access to the privileges of the wealthy and the powerful. At the end of the day he returned to his primitive cottage in the village and emerged again in the morning to take up his task as he had done all his life and his father had before him.

In one respect Amos was different. Outwardly a labouring peasant, inwardly he burned with zeal for the laws and the ways of God. Judah and Israel had relapsed into almost complete idolatry and Amos was one of the few far-sighted men who realised that the consequence could not fail to be utter disaster. Under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant Israel was guaranteed security and prosperity all the time that they adhered to the Covenant and loyalty to God. Failure so to do, apostasy from the true faith, the going after false gods, would, conversely, bring invasion, adversity and disaster. Israel in general in the days of Amos did not really believe that disaster would come. They were prosperous and for the time being had the whiphand over their enemies. Even though their own histories told them of past times when the penalty of the broken Covenant had been exacted from their forefathers they did not believe that it would happen to them. They were prosperous; they had been prosperous for a long time. They worshipped false gods; they had worshipped false gods for a long time. Nothing adverse had happened; nothing adverse would happen. So they continued in their way, confident.

But Amos knew that disaster would come; moreover, that it was imminent. He knew that God

was long-suffering towards His errant people and would wait a long time before inflicting judgment. But that judgment would eventually come he was certain. And in his fervent zeal and burning desire, not only for the honour of God's Name, but also for the welfare and happiness of his nation, he had to speak out. The inspiration of the prophet came upon him and he left his cattle and his country home and made his way to the cities where his voice could be heard.

The king of Judah, the two-tribe nation, was Uzziah. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel was ruled by Jeroboam II, who was probably the most able king the northern kingdom ever had. In the first place he had cultivated friendly relations with Uzziah of Judah and so made himself safe from attack from that quarter. He conquered his eastern neighbours, Moab and Ammon, making them subject to Israel, under native rulers appointed by him. Edom was a friendly ally. The traditional enemy of Israel, Syria, was invaded by Jeroboam and conquered. His sway extended from the borders of Edom in the south to Hamath in the north of Syria virtually as far as the original empire of Solomon. Concurrently with this, the greatest foe of all the middle Eastern countries, Assyria, was experiencing serious internal trouble under a succession of undistinguished kings, and had no time or resources for foreign conquest. The Assyrian armies were needed at Nineveh. A generation or so ago the prophet Jonah had foretold the coming destruction of Nineveh, and since the same prophet had also foretold the career of conquest of King Jeroboam before it happened (2 Kings 14.25) his stock was high in Israel and the general feeling was that Assyria need not be feared again. And few in Israel stopped to reflect that perhaps the Lord was giving them this time of freedom from enemies that they might return in faith and loyalty before He invoked the penalty of continued unbelief, just as He so recently had done with the Ninevites who had repented at the preaching of Jonah so that the Lord in His turn "*repented of the evil that he said he would do unto*

them, and he did it not" (Jon. 3.10). A parenthesis in the history of Jeroboam's predecessors who were in subjection to Syria confirms that the Lord did do just this in the days of Jeroboam: *"And the Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians, and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents (houses) as aforetime. Nevertheless they departed not from their sins. . . . and there remained the idol shrine in Samaria" (2 Kings 13.5-6).* That saviour was Jeroboam, who despite that the hand of the Lord was with him to deliver Israel from Syria as He had been besought by King Jehoahaz his grandfather, continued still to *"do evil in the sight of the Lord"* (2 Kings 14. 24). The goodness of the Lord brought no response.

The consequence of this period of peace was material prosperity. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel was more wealthy than it had ever been before or was again. Spoil taken from their vanquished enemies and the profits from commerce and trade created a class of rich Israelites who lived in magnificent houses lined inside with paintings and frescoes, and in some cases panels of ivory brought from Africa (Amos 3.15). The interiors boasted elaborate and artistic furniture. Gardens and vineyards, summerhouses and shady courts, surrounded them. The occupants gave themselves over to feasting and luxurious living, with no thought for the morrow and no care for the needs of the poor. For there were poor as well. In every such society, as the rich grow richer, so the poor become poorer. Outside the cities of grand houses were the mean dwellings of the peasantry. But all, rich and poor alike, had forsaken God and turned to the false gods of Canaan. In the capital of Samaria, and at the tribal centre of Gilgal where the Tabernacle had rested awhile when Joshua and his hosts invaded the land, there stood images of the bull-god for worship (Hos. 8.5 & 10.5). The original place of idolatrous worship set up at Dan in the days of the judges (Jud. 18. 30-31) was still there, served by an apostate priesthood. At Bethel there was a great temple, where the king and his court came to worship Baal (Amos 7.13). Altars to false gods abounded all over the country (Amos 2.8). The

shrine sacred to the idol goddess which Jehu had built in Samaria remained and was still a centre of worship (2 Kings 13.6). The time had come which is spoken of in 2 Chron. 36. 15-16 where it is recorded *"that the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending: because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy"*.

There was less than half a century to go before the judgment came, and the end of the Kingdom of Israel. Within that half century king and people had one last chance, the final opportunity of deliverance. God sent them the prophet Amos.

Amos was probably a young man when the Lord called him. There is an impetuous ring about his repeated expression "Thus hath the Lord showed me" which breathes a spirit of haste and urgency more in keeping with the impatience of youth than the calm mellowness of middle age. Peasant though he was, he was well informed both as to Israel's own corruption and decadence, and that of the surrounding nations with whom Israel had so much to do and from whom she had drawn so much of that corruption. His prophecy commences, not with the declaration of imminent judgment upon Israel which would normally be expected, and which in any case does form the main burden of his prophecy, but with the Lord's condemnation of those same surrounding nations for their oppression of Israel. Maybe there was good psychology here, a mode of approach dictated by the indwelling Spirit of God by which he was inspired. Maybe his hearers would listen more intently if the message of judgment related to peoples other than themselves, peoples for whom in the main they harboured thoughts of enmity. It is significant that after the judgments upon the six alien nations his next message is directed against Judah, the southern kingdom. Only after that does he turn his attention to Israel, but when he does so it is evident who is the real object of his denunciation.

Amos received his call to the service of God, according to his own statement *"in the days of*

Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake” (Amos 1.1). This precision avails little since we do not know the date of the earthquake. It is established that Uzziah reigned from 791 to 739 BC, and Jeroboam II from 793 to 753, so that it was between 791 and 753 when Amos executed his mission. A closer approximation may be possible. Uzziah’s leprosy was the result of his presumption in attempting to usurp the priest’s prerogatives in the Temple. (2 Chron. 26. 16-21). In consequence he was barred from contact with his fellows and Jotham his son acted as regent until his death. The most likely reconciliation of the chronology of the period shows that this regency commenced in the 41st year of Uzziah’s reign, 751 BC so that this was probably the time of Uzziah’s sin. Now Josephus in his history of Israel says that at the moment of Uzziah’s refusal to heed the High Priest a great earthquake shook the city and rent the Temple roof so that the sunlight streamed through and fell upon the king’s face, revealing the sudden infliction of leprosy (*Jos. Ant.* 9.10.4). The source from which Josephus took this is not known; it may be from the variant Hebrew version of the Old Testament which he is known to have had, but if there is any substance in this, the mission of Amos would have been in 753 BC, the year of Jeroboam’s death.

So the fervent voice of the youthful prophet burst upon the complacency of King Jeroboam and his court as they paid their devotions to the idol god of Bethel. *“The Lord shall roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem”* (Amos 1.2). That, for a start, was an unwelcome reminder to the hearers that the true sovereignty of Israel was at Jerusalem, kings of the line of David, sitting upon the throne of the Lord, and that there was the Temple of the true God of Israel where men ought to worship. *“The pastures of the shepherds mourn and the top of Carmel withers”*. Northern Israel

was pre-eminently the land of lush pastures, suitable for many flocks, and well furnished with trees – trees of the forest and fruit trees. “The top of Carmel” is equally accurately translated “the trees of the fruitful places” and this is more likely to be Amos’ meaning. Compared with the more arid highlands of Judah, the pastures and forests of the northern kingdom, in which they took such pride and from which they drew much of their wealth, were to wither and be destroyed. But having attracted the attention of the people to whom he had been sent – and from chap. 7 it is evident that he had made his way from Tekoa straight to the pagan sanctuary at Bethel and there announced his mission in the hearing at least of the idolatrous High Priest if not of the king himself – having thus attracted the attention of the people, he turns aside from the real subjects of his condemnation and commences by declaring what the Lord is shortly going to do to the nations round about. Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Moab, Ammon; all these have incurred the Divine wrath and must enter into judgment. These have first to be considered and after this the guilty nation must listen to the declaration of its own faithlessness to God and the judgment that must inevitably follow, except they repent.

In point of fact, they did not repent. And not many decades later the Assyrians came and destroyed their cities and their land and took them all away to die as captives in a strange land. The final penalty of the broken covenant had been exacted.

So Amos, the herdsman, stood there in the sanctuary of the idol, facing an apostate king and an apostate priesthood, telling them of the doom that must surely come. In a very real sense Amos was the Herald of the Captivity.

(To be continued.)

“It is only through labour and prayerful effort, grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things.”

(J. F. Willfing, missionary and martyr.)

Spurgeon once said, “We should be as familiar with the Bible as the housewife with her needle, as the merchant with his ledger, as the mariner with his ship”.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE*Reflections on the walk to Emmaus**"Abide with us . . . for the day is far spent."*

What a change that Stranger's conversation had made in the demeanour of those two down-cast men who had left Jerusalem for the quieter scenes of their village home. Hopes dead, faith shattered, expectations gone – a melancholy state of heart and mind indeed! "We trusted" – despondent words! not "we trust"! "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24. 21). And now all the fair hopes of Israel's redemption lay dragged in the dust, decayed, withered, dead! The glorious dawn, at one time deemed so near at hand, was now enshrouded in deepest midnight gloom, and none could give assurance that Israel should at any time be redeemed. And if He, of all the sons of Israel, had failed to bring deliverance, who, among her waiting hosts could hope to break the foreign yoke?

He in whom they had trusted had been laid away in a borrowed tomb, and there their shrivelled hopes lay too. Even the excited words of some womenfolk in Jerusalem (that they had seen Him alive again) had not re-kindled the spark of expectancy and hope – for them the disappointing affair was over and done with, once, and for all!

With an Eastern freedom and courtesy the Stranger had joined Himself to their company, and for a while had listened silently to their tale of woe. Then in a quiet re-assuring way He infiltrated into the conversation to make their grief shocked minds begin to work again. Slowly His "Whys" and "Ought nots", interspersed with reasoned explanations, began to take effect, as emotion and understanding began to "burn" within. As He walked and talked with them along the way the miles rolled by and their journey was all but at an end. At the fork of the road that lay just ahead He would bid them a friendly adieu, and go on alone, for "He made as though He would go further".

Had they tired of His company? Had His searching words probed too deeply and left a wound, or a sting? Had He dominated them too long? No! not a bit of it. The burning fires within their souls had kindled goodwill to such a traveller and made them long for more such conversation. Would He come in and stay the night with them?

At least He should not go forward without an invitation to their abode!

He *did* go in with them to their quiet home – then came the Revelation – and He was gone! Withered hopes revived again, a new joy gripped their hearts, as their travel-stained feet began the journey back to Jerusalem again. Wonderful journey – and yet more wonderful Guest!

Not alone on life's pilgrim journey was that walk from Jerusalem. We too have had our melancholy walks. We too have felt the chill of withered hopes, of disappointing expectations, and of over-powering frustration. And there may be amongst us some who made as if to withdraw to some distant "Emmaus" home, and let the whole thing go by. It is so easy to go aside, like some wounded animal, and there in loneliness lie down and die.

But we were precious in His sight. He, "watching over Israel", saw our melancholy plight, and came out upon our outward way to revive our withered hopes, to fan anew our flickering love, and to make our hearts burn within us by the way. How? By some word spoken to us in loving confidence, by some good word in a re-assuring article, or by some sincere warm-hearted clasp of a welcome hand. Some dear servant of the Lord, himself at rest in God, walked out on His behalf and talked with us, and that was all! But it was enough. And then the invitation went forth again – "Come in to me, dear Lord. Abide with me, as the evening shadows fall." Let the sweet-voiced poet give tongue to our desire:-

*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide,
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh abide with me."*

In the maturing experience of every true child of God there comes at last – sometimes earlier – sometimes late – a deepening sense of Christ-consciousness. It is the expression of a deep in-born desire for Someone on whom to rest implicitly and with confidence. In the earlier years of life, when one's mental powers are at their prime, the need for this harbour of repose may not be so

keenly realised. It is only when the brain with its reflective and retentive faculties – begins to fail, and to function less capably, that the desire for something that is central to every element of truth begins to assert itself. It is then that the maturing saint begins to feel his need of the abiding presence of the Lord. Thenceforth the need is more for ‘Him’ than ‘it’. The constant prayer of such a heart will be:

“I need Thy presence every passing hour;

*What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.”*

And as the last shadows of the eventide begin to fall across the way, surely he can sing:

*“I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness,
Where is death’s sting? Where grave thy victory
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me”*

– be that our ‘evening’ prayer.

D. Nadal

The Herod Family

Further Studies in History

There were so many members of the family of Herod the Great that it’s not surprising that occasionally someone gets a little confused as to who they are. Four sons are mentioned in the New Testament as well as two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. How much worse would be the confusion if all the family were mentioned. The only member of the family to achieve a good reputation in history was the child of Cleopatra, Herod Philip II who ruled in districts north of Galilee and received no mention at all in the Bible because his activities did not impinge on the lives of Jesus nor his disciples within the early Church. He was a quiet, peaceable man who sought to rule those in his domain with justice. He finally married his grand-niece, Salome, who had requested her step father to give her the head of John the Baptist on a dish.

After Herod the Great died, just after Jesus’ birth, his son Archelaus, whose mother was Malthrace, ruled Judaea and Samaria for ten years, which caused Matthew to record that Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Nazareth in Galilee (Matt.2. 22-23) He was the nastiest of the tribe, utterly dissipated and very cruel, even worse than his father. He was so bad that aristocrats in Judaea and Samaria waived their normal hostile attitude to each other and joined forces to get rid of him. A deputation was sent to Rome to complain of the dreadful things that were happening even by standards current in the first century. Archelaus was removed and Judaea was hence forth ruled by a prefect or procurator of whom one was Pontius Pilate. It was a mark of disrespect to be appointed

governor of Judaea, the province in constant ferment. Jesus told a parable recorded in Luke, 19. 11-27, in which there may have been a slight reference to the Archelaus problem in vs. 14.

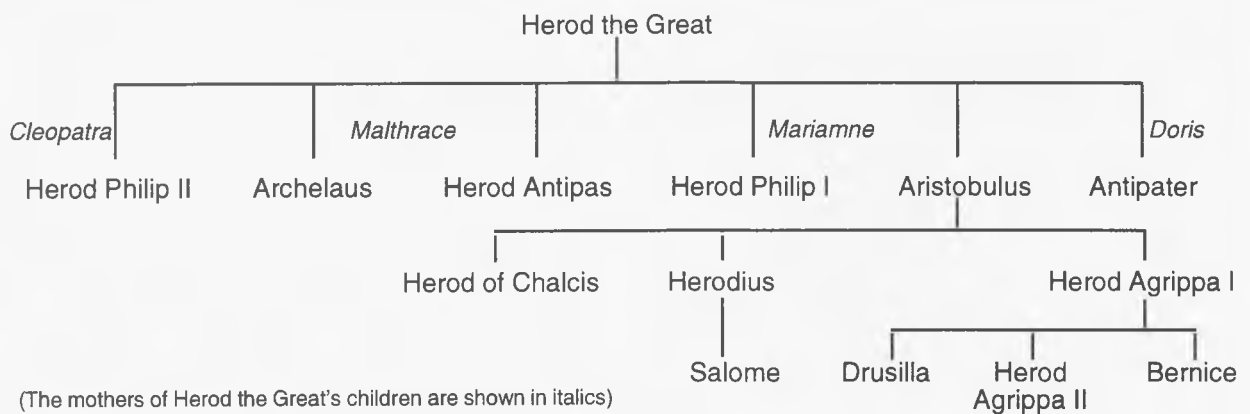
Another son by Malthrace (or Malthrake) was Herod Antipas. Originally he was to have been his father’s successor but Rome relegated him to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He married the divorced wife of his brother Philip. Herod Philip I was never a ruler and maybe the insatiable appetite for power and fame of Herodias caused her to change her affection from one uncle to the other, Antipas. Her ungovernable passion was the eventual downfall of this royal pair. Her bitter resentment to John the Baptist’s preaching against their unlawful marriage demonstrates what an unpleasant person she was. Antipas was a weaker character, riddled with superstition yet really unable to cope with the religious and philosophical problems into which he wanted to delve. This man hated John yet was afraid to destroy him. He believed Jesus was the resurrected John, yet only wanted to see him as a novelty. He had the privilege of coming face to face with the two greatest figures that ever moved across the world’s stage and he mishandled both occasions. What lost opportunities ! No wonder Jesus was silent before such moral and spiritual decadence. When the Pharisees warned Jesus about Herod’s desire to kill Him their motives for so doing are uncertain (Luke 13. 31-33). Did they want Jesus out of their sphere of influence, or did they seek to expose him as one who was afraid of Herod by His exit from Galilee? Or was it a gesture of good will? Our Lord’s reply

shows that like Nehemiah, centuries before, fear could not move him from doing God's will and completing the work which God had committed to Him, unafraid, totally dependent upon and fully trusting in His Father. This is an attitude which the Pharisees and Herod would not understand. Yet Antipas grew up with Manaen his foster brother who was destined to be a leader of the church at Antioch and from whom Luke would gather first hand information about the dissolute ruler (Acts 13. 1).

Little is known of Aristobulus who was the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne, descendant of the Maccabees. His noble ancestry was respected by the Jewish people so that Agrippa I and Agrippa II enjoyed their loyalty. Aristobulus' son, Agrippa I, ruled Judea for three years till his sudden death during a great gathering of AD 44. After his father's execution in 7BC he had been sent to Rome. He developed extravagant tastes and squandered his wealth. Only the kindness of relatives and friends in high places saved him from lasting disgrace. Eventually he ruled the territories of his grandfather, championed Jewish causes and prevented the emperor's statue being erected in the Temple. His persecution of Christians increased his popularity and his skill in manipulating power brought the whole populace to his feet during what may have been an athletic games. Luke briefly but graphically tells of his end (Acts 12. 23) and this is interestingly supplemented by Josephus, the Jewish historian.

Herod Agrippa I had three children. Drusilla, who became the wife of Felix, governor of Judea (Acts 24.24), Bernice and Agrippa II. These last two appear together in the account of Paul's final public hearing in Israel recorded in Acts 25 and 26. The royal pair entered the audience hall with much pomp. Neither Paul nor Luke comment on this immoral partnership. Agrippa II like his father, was very popular with the Jews. He had power to appoint the High Priest and it is evident that Paul respected his knowledge of Jewish Scriptures. He believed the prophets. How near did he come to believing the Gospel? Can anyone who gives him or herself unreservedly to the delicate balancing acts of politics also totally dedicate their life to the King of Kings? Are not the two incompatible? He strenuously sought to maintain the balance of power in Palestine and protect the Jews from war with Rome. But he was also a supporter of Caesar and his efforts at peace were in vain. It was he who supplied Josephus with much of the material about the Jewish war of AD 66-73. At the end of the first century, the last of this 'royal' family passed from the scene of world events and the remainder of the family into obscurity. In the hand of God's inscrutable providence, each had played a part in His purpose. In a manner which only He can understand, their apparent acts of free will, their moves across the giant chess board of human history, had also been like stepping stones for His people. His will had been done. Some day they, with us, will discover how.

Abbreviated Family Tree of the Herod Family



A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU*A study in Job 32 - 37***4. God is Just**

The thirty-fourth chapter of Job records Elihu's defence of the justice of God. Whatever may be the appearance of things; to whatever extent it may seem on the surface that Job's adversities were visited on him unjustly and that God is culpable in allowing them, it will yet be demonstrated that God is supremely just and that in the final outcome no man will be able to claim that he has been unfairly treated. Elihu is at pains to stress this fact, and rightly so, for it is of first rank importance that all who serve and honour God should have confidence in the justice of his dealings.

Elihu commences therefore by appealing for the close attention of his companions. *"Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear to me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good"* (34. 2-4). It is quite a masterly approach, giving no hint of the nature of his coming discourse, avoiding the mistake of plunging too soon into the crux of his argument, seeking first to arouse and fix his listeners' attention. There is stress laid also upon another most important factor, the natural dignity and responsibility of man. Although he is going to talk about the justness of God and the weakness of man in comparison, he starts off here by dwelling upon the duty of every man to make his own decisions according to his own lights, and act up to the knowledge and understanding he possesses, whether it be great or small. *"What is right let us choose for ourselves, let us know, among ourselves, what is good"*. That is how Rotherham translates verse 4. Elihu is encouraging and exhorting his companions to use their God-given powers of free-will and self-expression to consider right and wrong, truth and falsehood, judgment and indecision, and take a stand firmly and intelligently on the right side-on God's side. The Almighty did not create men to be weakwilled puppets, virtually incapable of aught save automatic responses to influences or stimuli imposed from above. He made men to be kings in their own right, lords of terrestrial creation, intelligently and consciously taking their intended places in God's creation and

espousing the right because of inward and understanding sympathy with that which is right.

Of course it is not possible fully to reach that ideal whilst still under the dominion of sin. Like Paul *"the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do"*. (Rom. 7. 19). But the effort is worthwhile and produces good fruits. The day will come when the power of inherited sin shall be broken and the Devil, who is the god of this world (2. Cor. 4.4) be bound that he may deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1-3). When that day comes every effort that any man has made in this present life to live nearer the standard God has set will have its reward in a position of closer approximation to the ultimate standard to which every man must attain before he can be adjudged worthy of everlasting life'.

So before talking to Eliphaz and the others about the manner in which Divine justice and judgment is displayed before men he tells them first that they themselves must use such powers as they may possess to reason for themselves concerning, and put into execution in their own lives, the principles of justice and judgment to the extent that they discern them and in accordance with the ability they possess. There is more than a modicum of truth in the old saying "the Lord helps those that help themselves" and although it is true that remission of sins and the blessing of salvation came through Christ and upon the basis of acceptance of Christ, every man is required and always will be required to testify the sincerity of his conversion and his allegiance by his endeavours to reach up to the standard which is set.

Now Elihu quotes Job's own words as basis for the development of his argument. *"For Job hath said, I am righteous; and God hath taken away my judgment...."* – perhaps Rotherham's rendering is better *"I am righteous, but God hath turned away my right, concerning mine own right shall I tell a falsehood? Incurable is my disease – not for any transgression"* (chapter 34.5-6). It is certainly true that Job did talk like this and chapter 9 records his words in this strain. Conscious – perhaps too conscious – of his own integrity and innocence, the

apparent unfairness of his affliction, he does seem to come perilously near to accusing God of injustice. And the younger man can see, what Job, with all his greater maturity of experience, evidently did not see, that the next step to harbouring thoughts against God is receptiveness to evil men's accusations against God.

So Elihu proceeds "*What man is like Job? He drinketh in scoffing like water and is on the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity and to walk with lawless men*". (34. 7-8 Rotherham). That was a pretty serious charge to lay at the door of Job, who held so high a reputation amongst men for his godliness and uprightness. It only goes to show how narrow is the dividing line between the outward aspect of a righteous and honourable life and the secret corrupting influences which can so easily and quickly destroy such a life. Here is Job, without doubt a righteous, clean-living, godly man, becoming so steadily broken down by his misfortunes that whilst he does not swerve one iota from his allegiance to God and his loyalty as God's servant, he does begin to doubt the inherent and absolute justice of God's dealings. And in so doing he fails to realise that that very doubt could be the first step towards sympathy with the ungodly and unregenerate.

"*On the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity*". It is a fine phrase but a terrifying one. Not yet a worker of iniquity; not yet disloyal to God; not yet keeping company with God's enemies, — but because of that nagging doubt, he is "on the way" so to do. "*For he hath said*" Elihu goes on "*it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*". (34.9). Although those precise words do not occur in any of the recorded sayings of Job they are implicit in much that he does say, particularly in his wonderful impassioned final speech which occupies chapters 26 to 31 of the Book. It was not that Job accused God, not that he entered any kind of complaint against him; it was only that he registered his conclusion that God did not necessarily reward the righteous with felicity and the unrighteous with misery; as often as not it was the other way round, and he as a servant of God must accept the position even although every instinct cried out that it was wrong.

That is where the situation comes home to us today with such force, for even now the same phenomena is observed and the same conclusion is drawn and voiced. Because oft times the righteous do suffer, because oft times the unrighteous do not reap retribution for their deeds, it is said that God is at best heedless and even some who are the servants of God feel sadly that they do not understand His ways. And all the time the only answer is that, despite all appearances and our own failure to perceive or understand the outworking of Divine dealings with man, God is just and God does, at the last, see to it that in every case, righteous and unrighteous alike, man reaps what he sows. The Almighty is inherently just; there cannot be unrighteousness with God.

That is the tremendous truth which Elihu now proclaims with all the emphasis he can muster. Neither Job nor his three friends had reached this level of understanding and Elihu means to impress it upon them. "*Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding; far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity*", and then, as Rotherham has it "*For whatever any son of earth doeth, he repayeth him, and according to every man's course he causeth him to find*" (Ferrar Fenton has it "But man's actions return on himself, and the tracks of a man find him out") "*Nay verify, God will not condemn unjustly, nor the Almighty pervert justice*" (34. 10-12). Again and again does Elihu insist that God is just, inherently and absolutely just, and that no matter what the apparent injustice of any possible earthly situation or circumstance, we must still take our stand upon the justice of God and wait with patience until in due time the apparent anomaly is explained. His words reveal another facet of this truth also; that our own instinctive demand that righteousness shall reap the reward of eternal felicity, and sin be eventually eternally condemned, is a right instinct and a true instinct, and is well-founded in the basic constitution of the human mind, implanted at the first by God. "*I know*" says Solomon "*that it shall be well with them that fear God*", (Eccl. 8. 12). That knowledge rides high above all the philosophic debates and the endless arguments

over the permission of evil and the effectiveness of Divine power over the Devil. It stands as a basic principle which can never be challenged or overthrown: *"It shall be well with them that fear God"*.

Now to buttress his argument Elihu interjects a word respecting the supremacy of God. The One whom he puts forward as the very embodiment of Justice, rewarding every man according to his deeds, from whose sight no good deed and no evil deed can possibly be hid, is the One who created all things and in whom all things subsist, the One without whom all things would cease to be. *"Who set him in charge of the earth?"* asks Elihu in rhetorical vein: *"Who appointed him the whole world?"* (34. 13 Rotherham). He waits not for the answer, for of course only one answer is possible, and so he goes on to the omnipotent power of the One whom he is eulogising. *"If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust, (34. 14-15).* Here we

have the three elements of God's terrestrial creation, the three things which make man – the dust of the ground which constitutes his body, the animal breath, *nephesh*, which makes him a breathing, sentient creature, and the Spirit of God which is the vehicle of life, the channel of the Divine gift of life to man, and the power by which man lives. God has only to withdraw the life which only He can give, and the man returns to dust. God has only to withdraw the Divine energy which has made this world what it is, and this whole terrestrial creation returns to its original chaos. The whole of creation depends on God, says Elihu, and its continued sustenance is only by the power of God. It goes on its orderly way and man goes through his predestined course of development, attaining at last, if he will, and if he profits aright by his experience, the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is in God that we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28). How can we then charge injustice to God?

(To be continued)

T. Holmes

SPIRITUAL DROUGHT *A lesson from the life of David*

According to the heading in the A.V., the fifty-first Psalm is the expression of David's sorrow and penitence after his double sin of adultery and murder. In trying to arrive at a proper understanding of this penitential Psalm, we should not forget that prior to writing it David had been in an impatient attitude for many months. It was after the prophet Nathan's visit and the enormity of his guilt had been brought home to him that his pent up, deliberately repressed feelings found vent in this spate of self-condemnatory words – words which have been the medium of repentance for countless thousands of men and women, in more recent times, when throwing themselves upon the mercy of Almighty God.

This black spot, the blackest spot in his whole life, shows that David was a man of like passions with other men; that in unguarded moments the black depths of his heart showed how even the best of human kind is fallen in sin. It shows the truth of Paul's dictum "there is none righteous". The inclusion of such a story in Holy Writ shows that

the Divine Author has drawn a true picture of man when He said that the heart of man was desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. It is included, not because God approved of the sin, but for the very opposite reason, because He disapproved and strongly condemned it, and that it might serve as a model of His clemency and grace to the thousands who should repent and confess their weaknesses and shortcomings. It stands on record as a permanent testimony that man's life is barren and cheerless when earth-born clouds intervene between God and His earthly creatures, and illustrates the truth of Jesus' words that "man does not live by bread alone" but only when in touch with the words of the Lord.

It was after the birth of Bathsheba's child that Nathan came to David to tell him that the death of the child was to be part of the punishment for his sin. The better part of a year must therefore have elapsed between the sin and the deep repentance for it of which this Psalm is the expression. What had been going on during this time? What had

David been doing all this while? The Scriptures do not say directly, but certain hints are given which help somewhat. We may form some conception from our own particular experiences of sin not immediately repented of – of sin never honestly faced, never dragged out into the light of God's presence and there confessed. David was trifling with his better self; playing tricks with his conscience. He was substituting diligence in his duties as king and magistrate – his duty to man – for his duty to God. He heard and settled the disputes and grievances which came before him as Israel's chief judge (as did Solomon later when asked by the two women to decide whose child was living and whose dead); he received petitions addressed to the throne; he went up to the house of God to worship; he endeavoured, no doubt, to conform to and administer the law with even greater diligence. This we realise from his hot anger against the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb to feed his visitor, as Nathan unfolded the parable.

It is likely that he had reasoned within himself again and again that he had done nothing more than eastern monarchs did at any time they pleased. Was it not the commonest thing for an Oriental despot (and was not David such a despot) to send for any woman he pleased to become a member of his harem, and to get rid of any man who stood in his way either by violence or strategy or both? "What more have I done than is done every day by my fellow sovereigns?" David might say and think, and would he not make recompense for it by more attention to the administration of the law in coming days, throwing his protection over the weak and oppressed; the rich man should smart for his theft of the ewe lamb when brought before his tribunal!

David had lulled his conscience to sleep so much that he did not recognise his own portrait in the parable of the prophet while it was being narrated to him. Not for an instant did he realise that his own conduct had been much more reprehensible, wicked and hardhearted than the rich man. All these months he had been hushing up his sin, trying to silence his conscience by his activities (his war with the Ammonites for instance) until the Spirit of God winged those four

words, "*Thou art the man*" to his guilty, restless heart. It was with David as it must be with all who leave their misdeeds unconfessed, he was restless and wretched. Listen to his own words in Psalm 32. 3 and 4, written also about this time, "*When I kept silence my bones waxed old ... Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is like the drought in summer.*" There was such a hard, dry, stiff, formal life all these months, so unlike the constant play and uprush of spiritual emotions in his earlier and happier days. His conscience was asleep, his soul was in chains, his creative genius was stifled, his life was like a summer's drought.

Oh! how many others, like David, have played tricks with their conscience over some unconfessed sin or weakness, and have carried their burden for days and weeks and months until the drought of summer has come over them too. All the joy of the Truth has gradually disappeared; all the gladness of soul has evaporated, the songs have turned to sighs and perhaps an attempt has been made to substitute service for repentance, and the longer the fight has been attempted against the voice of the Lord within, the cooler the Altar fires have become until love has waxed cold.

You who read this, if the joys of the Lord which once you knew have been lost; if your soul is in chains, will you not ask yourself the reason why? Is there some dread spectre in your life, some weakness unconfessed, unrepented of? Is there some earthborn cloud intercepting a Father's smile and blotting out the sunshine of His love?

Read the story of David, and profit thereby, for God was very gracious to him though He left him not unpunished. It is not necessary that there should have been anything so flagrant as David's sin to shut the windows of heaven over one. Spiritual dryness and lethargy can come about by sheer neglect, or it can be the result of some little "incident" where we could not have our own way, and hence we have failed to assemble together, and slowly the drought has crept over our souls. No stimulus from fellowship, no iron sharpening iron, no occasional songs of praise to lighten the load on one's shoulders, and later on, no joy of exultation in the morning and evening prayer, till we shrink

from the bending of the knee – and then, all the little weaknesses unconfessed and unforgiven. Then the heaven becomes as brass and there is no rain for us. So David's experience became our experience. Spiritual dryness, spiritual lethargy, spiritual deadness, the loss of "the first love," the loss of the response to the things that once stirred

the soul. How tragically sad and how prevalent!

God grant to all such a message from some faithful Nathan, which may start the tears of repentance flowing and bring down the showers of blessing to end the drought and cause the blooms and fragrance of restored verdure to shoot forth again in the heart.

A. O. Hudson

BIRTH OF BIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY

The light now shining upon Bible records from the inscriptions and relics of ancient nations began just two centuries ago. One after another, discoveries are announced today shedding further light upon the Scriptures and confirming to an increasing degree the truth of their statements. It is not that Christians need any such confirmation to buttress their faith; our confidence in the Word of God is rooted in experience, experience of the Father's care and faithfulness, experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and the shepherd-guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ; experience of the adequacy of the Divine Word both in the affairs of daily life and that "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work". We do not need further confirmation for ourselves. But we do find use for this additional testimony when it comes to expounding the Book to others. And much of what is being discovered today does illuminate and explain the historical portions of the Bible in a manner that would be impossible otherwise. The labours of archaeologists and historians are really of great value to us and we do well to hold them in esteem for their work's sake and to make use of what is discovered, to our own progress in knowledge.

The history of modern archaeological research in its relation to the Bible may very fairly be said to have commenced with two important discoveries in the Middle East. One was the discovery of the "Rosetta stone" in 1798 and the other the decipherment of the "Behistun inscription" in 1847. The one yielded the key to the understanding of the ancient Egyptian records and the other to those of Babylonia, Assyria and eventually ancient Sumer, the principal lands with which the Hebrews were concerned and with which Old Testament

history is principally involved.

Towards the end of the year 1798 the French Emperor Napoleon was campaigning in Egypt, having just been defeated by the British Fleet under Nelson. There was nothing very creditable in Napoleon's presence there; he was unashamedly out for conquest, and he failed. But the wrath of man was made to praise God in a very remarkable way. One of Napoleon's artillery officers named Bousard was stationed at a place called Rosetta, near one of the western mouths of the Nile. Whilst there he discovered an inscribed slab of black basalt four feet long by two feet wide, bearing an inscription in three languages. The attention of Napoleon was directed to this "find". Now Napoleon, unlike many of his modern emulators, possessed a healthy respect for scientific research and knowledge. He had the inscription copied and the copies sent to various universities and learned societies in Europe. The scholars got busy.

One of the languages on the tablet was already well known and understood – it was Greek. Another was known as the everyday language of Egypt in olden times, the "demotic" or popular writing of the people. But the third was written in the mysterious hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt, the language in which so many records had already been discovered and could not be interpreted because no man living understood the characters in which that language was written. The last writers of hieroglyphics lived in the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian, about A.D. 290, and soon after the end of the third A.D. century the last man who knew how to read that strange writing of pictures and symbols, of crowns and little birds and mystic signs, had gone to be with his fathers and the secret was lost to mankind.

The fact that this one stone bore a threefold

inscription, in three languages, at once inspired the thought that the record might be the same in all three; it was in fact a "trilingual" inscription. The first task was to translate the Greek text, a matter of no difficulty; this was accomplished by several experts during the next few years, working more or less independently. It was found that the inscription was the record of a decree issued by priests of Egypt about two hundred years before Christ to commemorate the accession to the throne of Ptolemy V Epiphanes. It now remained to apply this translation to the hitherto incomprehensible hieroglyphics with the object of discovering the meaning of each different sign and so constructing an alphabet, the first step to achieving an understanding of the language. This was a work of great difficulty and it was not until about twenty years later that Prof. Young in England and Prof. Champollion in France succeeded in deciphering the majority of the signs and so laying the foundation of modern Egyptology.

The knowledge thus gained gave indirect testimony to the truth of the Scriptures. It was found, as years passed by, that the latter part of the Book of Genesis, and the other books of Moses, abound in Egyptian words, allusions and phrases. This fact helped to refute the assertion increasingly being made by critics that these books had not been written until the time of the Babylonian Captivity. The expressions used are such as would naturally be employed by a man brought up and living a great part of his life in Egyptian surroundings, as was Moses. The study of ancient chronology was greatly illuminated by the deciphering of the hieroglyphics of the Rosetta stone; it became possible to read what are known as the Turin Papyrus and the Abydos Tablets, records of Egypt's Pharaohs from the earliest times. For the first time the names of Pharaohs of Egypt familiar to Bible readers had their historic character revealed from sources outside the Bible. In a very real sense, therefore, the discovery of this unique tablet at Rosetta in 1798 has made its contribution to our knowledge of God's ways in ancient time.

A thousand miles east of Rosetta, on the ancient and still existing road which links Baghdad in Iraq with Teheran in Iran, there is a stupendous

precipice of rock, four thousand feet high – the blunt end of a range of hills. The rock is called Behistun, a name which means in the native tongue "the place of God" and from time immemorial it has been accounted holy. Babylonian, Persian and Greek armies have passed and repassed that sheer cliff on their missions of conquest or in hasty retreat. Merchants from days when the world was young have pitched their camps at its foot. And about five hundred years before Christ the great Persian king Darius, the one who gave permission for the Temple building operations to be resumed in the days of the return from Babylon (Ezra 5. 1-17) caused a long inscription recounting his military victories to be chiselled upon the smooth face of the rock a hundred feet above the ground. He had the work executed with great care, for he wanted his inscription to endure for many years. The rock was carefully smoothed and polished, the lines of writing and the curving sculptures done by skilled craftsmen; then the finished work was painted over with a varnish so hard and enduring that it has protected the greater part of the inscription for over two thousand years, unto this day.

In the year 1835 Henry Rawlinson, a political assistant to the Governor of Kermanshah, a Persian town not far from Behistun, set to work to copy the inscription. The young enthusiast was destined to become one of the world's greatest archaeologists in after days, but the service he rendered the world in this, his first great achievement, is one of the most momentous in all the history of research in Eastern lands. Having climbed to the inscription, a matter of some difficulty, he found that it was written in three languages, like the Rosetta stone which had been discovered forty years earlier, but whereas that stone had been written in Greek and Egyptian and became the means of unlocking the secrets of Egyptian hieroglyphics to the modern world, this inscription at Behistun was written in Persian, Median and Babylonian. In 1835 only Persian was understood and that very imperfectly. The Babylonian inscriptions and tablets which were being found in such profusion in all the lands of the East were still completely unreadable; it was Rawlinson's work on that day that afforded the clues necessary to an understanding of the

Babylonian cuneiform alphabet and symbols and so made possible the facility with which those tablets are read today.

By the year 1847 the task of decipherment was complete and from then on the knowledge gained was applied to thousands of cuneiform tablets already existing in the world's museums and the collections of scholars. Progress was slow; the correct translation of many signs and terms has been arrived at only in quite recent years; but for a full century now it has been possible to read of the lives and achievements of the fellow citizens of Abraham, of Moses and of Daniel, for Babylonian cuneiform was the written language of all Western Asia for a span of two thousand years and the histories of the times were written down in those queer little wedge-shaped characters. It is certain that much of the early part of the book of Genesis was thus written, and when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees he would assuredly have taken many such tablets with him.

Rawlinson had to copy the inscription by hand, for photography had not been invented in his day. In 1904 two twentieth century archaeologists, R. Campbell Thompson and L. W. King, of the British Museum, climbed the rock and photographed the writing. They found remarkably few errors in Rawlinson's work of sixty years previously. In 1946 an American expedition revisited the place but added no further information to that already known. The Behistun inscription had done its work in making it possible for men to read the voluminous written records of Assyria and Babylonia which, recovered from the burning sands and ruined cities of Mesopotamia, have done so

much to make the Bible a living book to us.

Today we have the Babylonian stories of the Flood and of the Creation; the Assyrian record of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah; the invasion of Canaan by Joshua and the Israelites; Nebuchadnezzar's building of great Babylon, and many others, indelibly impressed on imperishable clay tablets, safely reposing in the world's museums and colleges, giving their testimony to the truth of the Bible story. And the Bible accounts stand as purer, nobler, and more exact and accurate, by contrast. Our knowledge of earth's history has been immeasurably extended until we can now trace the movements of the sons of Shem and Ham back to within a few centuries of the Flood. We can appreciate more vividly the atmosphere in which the lives of Abram, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther were spent. And this knowledge that has come to us had its beginning a hundred and forty years ago when young Rawlinson scaled that cliff out in Persia and copied the writing that had defied the wind and rain of twenty-four centuries.

Small wonder then that a nineteenth century writer, Dr. Samuel Kinns, wrote in 1891, "*There cannot be the least doubt that Sir Henry Rawlinson was raised up by the Almighty to be the pioneer in this great and glorious work, and was specially endowed with courage and wisdom for the undertaking, combined as they were with a belief that the Bible is a revelation from God to man*". That is an important point. Rawlinson was a Christian; what he did, he did to the glory of God, knowing that his work would make the Bible better understood, and God blessed his endeavours.

Travellers tell us that in the spring of the year large flocks of quail frequently cross the Arabian Gulf of the Red Sea. They come in great flocks, and, wearied with their long flight across the water, they fly low, so as to be easily within the reach of man. Tristram says, "I have myself found the ground in Algeria in the month of April covered with quail for an extent of many acres at daybreak, where on the preceding afternoon there had been none." The reading of Numbers 11:7 seems to imply that on this occasion the quail were nearly two cubits deep,

and infidels have pointed to the fact as an absurdity. It would be entirely possible, however, for us to understand the narrative to signify that the great quantities of quail flew low, even within two cubits of the ground, thus insuring a large catch on the part of flesh-hungry Israelites. The subsequent narrative indicates that the quail were not sent regularly, but only on rare occasions – so far as appears only here in the wilderness of Sinai and in the wilderness of Paran. – Numbers 11: 31-34.

A. O. Hudson

ARISE AND SHINE*Thoughts for the New Year*

"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)

As we enter another year it is painfully evident that people are still walking in darkness and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death. The great light which shined in the world when Christ came to earth with His message of hope has not yet penetrated all the recesses of terrestrial night. The world is a larger place than it was two thousand years ago and there is more darkness to be dispelled. The men and women of earlier centuries made more of the light that was shining because they realised their need more than does humanity today. Men are so clever now; so exultant at wresting from Nature her most cherished secrets. They can fly faster than sound, can descend into the depths of the seas; they can transmute the elements and measure the distant stars. Now they hope that the secrets of genetics will enable them to do better than Nature herself in the growth and production of plant life and food. Like Lucifer, they aspire to sit upon the sides of the north and be like the Most High. Poor deluded ones; like the antediluvians in the days of Noah, they know not that they walk in darkness and that the end of their godless ambitions and dreams is at hand.

But are all men like this? By no means! Those who proclaim abroad so blatantly the might and power of man, and decry man's need of God, and deny Him any place in human life, are in the minority. They represent numerically but a tiny fraction of earth's population. The fact that they enjoy control of the world's means of publicity – the press, the radio, the ear of governments, and so on, gives their utterances and pronouncements a semblance of solidity out of all proportion to their true magnitude. The rest of the people are waiting for what they know not. They only know that they walk in darkness and in the shadow of death, and that the light is a long time in coming. It ought not to be so, for although that Great Light moves visibly among men no more, there are many lights, shining by reflection, and they should by now be making some impression, for they have been a long time in the world. Perhaps they do not shine brightly enough, for if the reflecting surface is not

kept clean and polished it loses its capacity to reflect. Maybe some of the lights have been put under bushels and cannot be seen. And some have turned away from the Light and so cannot reflect, for the Light is not reaching them at all.

There was a book published many years ago called "*Efficiency in Hades*", in which an American production expert, visiting that mythical place of torment, and being conducted round by Lucifer, observed to his guide "It does seem uneconomic to burn all these sinners just to provide illumination for a few elect in Heaven!" whereupon Lucifer rejoined meditatively "Perhaps the elect wouldn't give a good enough light themselves." That is the world's condemnation, not of Christianity but of the failure of Christians. The question ought to be asked: Is it being said of us, as individuals or as a fellowship? It is so fatally easy to become satisfied with our own position before God, our own acceptance of His plans for human well-being, and the prospect of the promised future "reign with Christ". We forget that the validity of our belief in future things can only be attested by the degree to which we endeavour to practice them now. The very essentials of work in His Kingdom is service for one's fellows and a constant pointing and leading them to Christ and His way of life. We are failing in our duty and privilege if we do not take good heed of those around us who are submerged in darkness and in the shadow of death and do all that lies within our present power to lift them out of it. Neither is it enough to content ourselves with a vigorous campaign of preaching the coming Kingdom as God's panacea for all present human ills. True, we are called upon to herald that Kingdom consistently and persistently; but what is the practical use of saying to our starving brother "*Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled*" if we give him not those things whereby he may be warmed and filled? The words of James might very well be interpreted here to mean that we who have the knowledge and ability to show how the Kingdom is going to work should not content ourselves with just telling men what it is going to be like when it has come. We should show them what it is like, in our own fellowship and by our attitude toward them and our treatment of them. If we all make a sincere and honest-to-goodness attempt to regulate our own

daily life and actions toward each other and toward all, by the principles which we profess to believe are the Divine will, and are to regulate life in the Millennial Age, then we shall do more to shine light into the darkness wherein people walk, and dispel the shadow of death, than has been accomplished by all the academic arguments and philosophical discourses that have been delivered from the time of Origen until now.

Although that may not alter the Divine time-

table for the inauguration of the Kingdom, it will assuredly represent a most substantial contribution to the work of the Kingdom and make the impact of that epoch of justice and righteousness something less of a shock to those who at present understand precious little of either. There is a parable about going out into the highways and byways; without interpreting that injunction too literally, we might do well to think about it a little.

D. Nadal

The Challenge of the Gospel *An invitation to know Christ*

Jesus looked around at a crowd of ordinary folk and said *"Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest... because I am humble and gentle in spirit."* (Matt. 11.28,29). Jesus had a message for people which was simple and straightforward and which could be understood by anyone who wanted to understand it. It was 'good news' for poor and sick folk and good news for those who felt 'trodden on', for people who felt that life had given them a bad deal. Jesus reached out to those whose lives had been ruined by wrongdoing and 'inappropriate behaviour'. It is an invitation to share His life not so much because He needs us but primarily because we need Him. He rarely spent time in arguing about religion; He left that to others who thought they knew all the answers but only made understanding God more difficult. Those difficulties were the 'heavy load' that Jesus mentioned. Jesus did spend his life helping people as he lifted the burden from the back of the blind and the deaf, from the people who were unwanted because they had broken the law. Jesus found it more difficult to help people who thought they were good.

The people among whom Jesus lived had the best set of rules ever laid down in the ancient world. Those people knew the laws well and they knew the difference between right and wrong. The Jewish laws were the best guide to good behaviour that any country ever had. Their problem was how to keep those laws. They only made them feel defeated and confused. As He taught, Jesus began to unfold a picture of God which people had never really understood. Jesus called him 'Father' and told stories which showed that He was the most loving 'Daddy' that they could ever imagine. When His children did wrong He wasn't interested

in getting His own back by severe punishment but rather in showing them how to do what was right.

Jesus once told a story about a man who had two sons. One was a really good fellow; always did what was right and always obeyed his father's wishes. The other liked his own way, wanted the best of everything and ended up with nothing. He squandered his money in a foreign country. He had such a bad time that he realised his father's employees were a lot better off. He went back home hoping his father might give him a slave's job. Instead his father had been watching for his return and ran to meet him. The old man forgave his wasteful son and held a party in honour of his return. What a picture of what God is like! That is how He holds out his hand to us and wants us to return to him.

The good news is that God loved the world so much that He sent the only son He had into a world which He knew would not appreciate His kindness. They were so opposed to the teachings and way of life of that son that they crucified Him. Yet the very death which the world caused was the means of giving new life to all people. God gave Jesus new life and by sharing His life in a unique way, He can give everyone a new start, a fresh beginning. And that is what is meant by being a Christian.

Living Jesus' kind of life is not easy. The world didn't like what Jesus said and did, so it could not be expected to like the way his friends live. During the last two millennia many have suffered and died in following their Master. But it is the really great life; a life which conquers wrong, first within itself and then reaches out to help others do the same. It is the only truly loving life; love is uniquely a Christian word. Others have borrowed that word, adopted it into their vocabulary, even imitated the

way a loving person behaves. But in the end love is a characteristic of God; it describes Him and only He can show the way it works.

Is there an alternative way of life in this modern world, poised to rush into the twenty-first century? Surely, with all our recent advances in knowledge, our understanding of the universe, our clever thinkers can provide an easier way. There are many alternative ways of living – some of which appear to be good on the surface. Some have borrowed Christian ideas and ways of life. To some extent they appear to work. The astonishing thing is that with all the human progress during the last two centuries there is very little to show for it all in terms of happiness and peace. Some of the ideas of these clever people of the world have a lot to answer for in terms of human well-being. Small sections of the human family have enjoyed increased comfort and wealth but very largely at the expense of other people. That story is repeated right through human history. Human advances in technology still leave the nations misunderstanding each other. Advances in medicine leave the world with a problem of an exploding population. Increased understanding of the physical planet that we live on leave the human race with an environment which will barely be habitable in a few decades or so. It is not enough to be critical of what mankind has tried to do. But it is necessary to realise that human philosophy and the way people of Earth have tried to explain life and living is totally inadequate and that what is often thought to be progress is an illusion.

It is important to remember that God, in the Bible, has shown that He intends to put the world right and impose real *“justice by the man he has chosen. He has given proof of this by raising that man from death”*. When those words were first spoken in Athens, the centre of human knowledge and philosophy in the first century, the wise men of that time made fun of the ‘little apostle’ of Christianity. Many men and women since then have discovered the truth of those words, and that we really do live and move and have our being in God. Mostly they have not been the geniuses of this world but a few have, like Newton and Faraday, Schweitzer and Einstein.

Although the world is to be put right, and God has promised that tears shall be wiped away, there is a here and now to be lived to the full. The challenge of the Gospel is more than the mess of yesterday, and more than the promise of something

better in the future. Historians write about what went wrong in the years that have passed, politicians make promises about tomorrow. Jesus Christ solves the problems of today with the challenge of the Gospel. He did not go around Palestine demanding that people join a particular church. He did not demand of them to pass any exams or sign any documents. He simply invited them to follow Him – to do things the way He did them, to treat people in the way He treated them, to try to understand what God wanted and then do it with everything they’ve got.

Today, it generally means a good shake-up in our lives, not so much in terms of what we at once do but more in the orientation – the direction in which we are going. If life is lived for self – then being a Christian will mean a radical change. It means discovering what God wants us to do – by talking to Him and reading His Word. The best place to begin reading will always be in one of the Gospels. Jesus keeps it simple. Talking to God does not mean using long difficult words in 16th century language but chatting to Him in the intimate way we ought to talk to our human parents. He does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect or would like but He does most certainly answer prayer. God does not barge into our lives if we do not want Him but He most certainly moves towards us if we move toward Him. But it takes real humility – the willingness to admit failure and defeat. Human beings, individually and together, cannot go it alone forever. Alone or together, most seem destined to discover this fact after their world is shattered.

The Gospel is a real challenge - but it’s beyond no one. Those who have genuinely accepted the challenge also know that the results are worthwhile. However ‘good’ we’ve been, however much we’ve attained in terms of human knowledge and achievement, the gospel holds far more. It sets us on the road to discovering what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of Heaven – Eternal Life – the Light which lights every person who comes into this world. Nor is anyone too far down the road to ruin for Jesus to save. Those who accept the challenge of the Gospel also know at what tremendous cost it was secured – the cost of love to the uttermost – a love that came to Earth to give and give and give again and asked no return – save in accepting an invitation to follow Him. If you haven’t done that, why not do so now?



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 2

MARCH/APRIL 1999

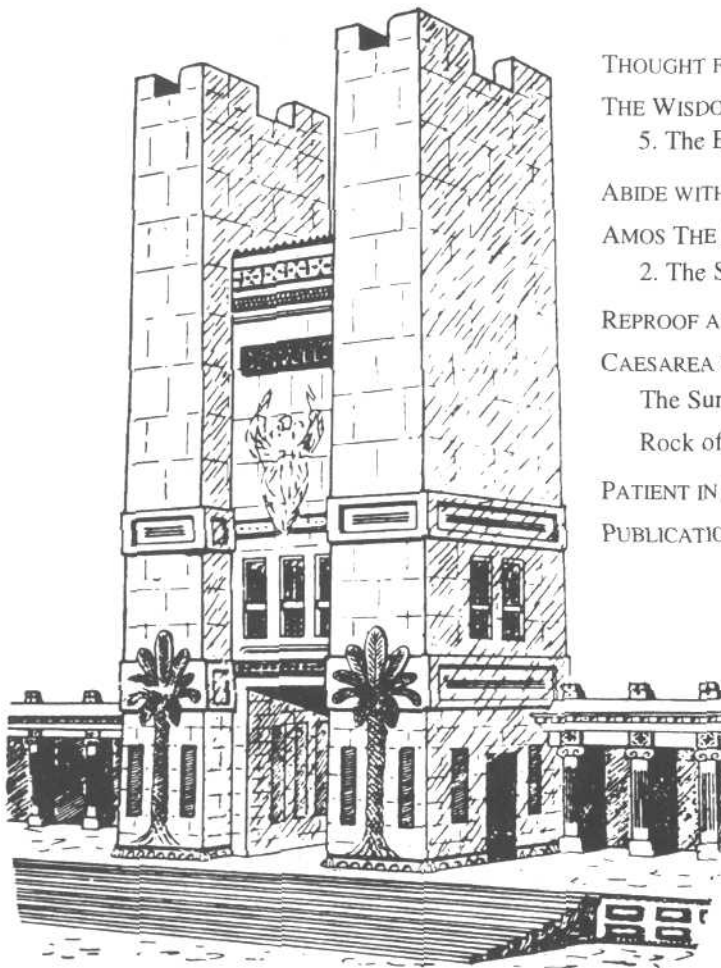
Published March 1st

Next issue May 1st

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.*

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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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Thought for the Month

"Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him."; Psalm 37.7 (RSV)

"For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him." Psa. 62.5

Is the exhortation from those lovely psalms, to wait and fret not, our experience? This is not an attitude normal to people as we know them in every day life. In modern western society patience has become 'conspicuous by its absence'. Everything is needed at once. How refreshing to meet a motorist who gently 'gives way' although not required to do so. How dangerous is the driver who impatiently forces his way forward regardless of others. Discourteous haste is not confined to travel and is all too apparent in trade and commerce. The skilled craftsman does not produce good workmanship if in a hurry. The surgeon does not complete a successful operation by 'cutting corners' and saving time. Impatience could never help a parent or teacher to produce good and lasting results in handling young folk. Competition may have its place on the sports field but it has less value in the 'work-place'.

We need to consider the environment in which we live. We are urged throughout the Bible 'to be patient - to be still - to wait' yet this is not our natural self. Too readily we are like the world in which we live; we fret and become anxious. We find it hard to wait for results; even more so we find it almost impossible at times to be what the Bible calls 'long-suffering'. The reason is simply that human nature rebels against a Creator whose laws demand patience. The wonderful environment in which we live cannot be hurried. Trees and plants grow slowly (as a rule) and the animal world works to a wonderful time mechanism. But man cannot stand the slow pace of nature and wants to speed

everything up. The cry for bigger, better and faster results are stimulated by the 'root of all evil', the love of money. Observe our Saviour at work. Jesus went about Israel with 'time for people' although the disciples found it hard to share that spirit. Our Heavenly Father has waited for a long time for mankind to learn the lessons He is teaching. Sometimes people are impatient for Him to do something about trouble in the world. The Bible attitude is patient obedience. DN

Notices

List of Publications appears on the back page of this issue.

The new 6-page leaflet 'GOOD NEWS FOR ALL' is available from Barnstone. It was written at the request of readers, to give clear scriptural evidence of belief in 'salvation for all'. It is necessarily brief but handy for passing to a friend. Please specify quantities required.

'Renewal Forms' have been inserted in recent issues of the BSM. We earnestly request readers to send their white or yellow forms to Barnstone if they have not 'renewed' in the past year. We want all who wish to receive the Bible Study Monthly to do so, irrespective of sending a gift. However, we do not wish to send copies of the magazine to places where they are not wanted. **Please send us your annual renewal.**

Gone from us



Sister Elsie Couling (*Northampton*)

Sister Ann Dippnall (*Manchester*)

Brother Joe Orr (*Lisburn, Co. Antrim*)

Sister Margaret Linford (*Tonbridge*)

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in Job 32 - 37

5. The Eyes of the Lord

The second part of chapter 34, whilst still maintaining the theme of Divine Justice, is devoted to showing that the administration of God's justice is ensured by the fact that He sees all things that are happening in the world of men. Elihu says in verse 21 "*his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*". The Wise Man knew that; he said "*the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*" (Prov. 15. 3) and so did the writer to the Hebrews; "*all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*" (Heb. 4.13). So Elihu here buttresses his assertion that God is inherently just with the fruits of his own observation of God's ways. The wickedness of the wicked shall by no means escape Divine scrutiny; the righteousness of the righteous will most certainly be recorded in God's Book of Remembrance.

"*Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?*" (34.17). The first phrase is not well rendered; a better expression of the thought is "*What, doth He, hating right, govern?*" to which can be added Leeser's "*or wilt thou condemn the righteous Mighty One?*" It is a rhetorical question. Is it conceivable, asks Elihu, that God can govern creation whilst hating righteousness and justice? The very idea is unthinkable. The very fact that God *is* ruling all creation is of itself a guarantee that He is inherently just. Job and his three friends must accept that, insists Elihu, or else they themselves will be guilty of condemning the righteous Mighty One. And he drives home his point by reminding them that they would not in the ordinary way have the courage or the conviction to accuse even an earthly King or potentate of iniquity or unjust administration; how much less then should they, even mentally, so accuse God? "*Is it fit to say to a King 'Thou art wicked?' and to princes 'Ye are ungodly?' How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?*" (34. 18-19) Rotherham has verse 18 "*Doth one say to a king 'Abandoned one' or 'Lawless one' to nobles?*" which is more expressive of the point which Elihu is making here. Kings and princes, even the best of them, are apt to allow

considerations other than those of absolute integrity and impartiality to becloud their judgment and influence their actions. Not so with God. He cannot be bribed or cajoled, flattered or blackmailed. If we are prepared to accept the endeavours of a good king as being right and proper in all the circumstances, and to feel that there is no cause for complaint, how much more should we accept the dealings of God as absolutely just and righteous, whether we understand those dealings or not, whether the present effect appears to be in line with His avowed character or the reverse. That is what Elihu is insisting here.

The kings, the princes; the rich, the poor; they are all the work of God's hands, and He has complete control over them. The hand of death, laid upon all men, ensures that the power of evil men can only extend thus far and then be cut short. "In a moment they die;" he says ("shall" ought to be omitted in verse 20) "at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand. For his eyes are upon the ways of a man and he sees all his steps. There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves" (34. 20-22 RSV). This is a vivid picture of the unceasing vigilance wherewith Heaven maintains its watch upon Earth and encompasses the operation of sin and evil by the restraints of the Divine purpose. Jesus spoke of the rich fool who prospered exceedingly in the good things of this world and said at last to himself "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat and be merry*". But that night God sent for him "*This night*" He said to him "*thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be that thou hast laid up?*" In a moment all was gone. In a moment he died. At midnight God came to him and he was taken away. That is how it is with all men, for the eyes of the Lord are always upon all their doings and there is nothing that can escape His keen scrutiny.

There is a fascinating vision in the Book of Zechariah in which Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the High Priest, picturing the secular and spiritual rulership of the nation restored from captivity and establishing itself in righteousness, discharge their administration in the presence of

seven eyes, "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (Zech. 4. 10). Israel of the Restoration never did reach up to that glowing picture painted by the prophet; the ultimate fulfilment of Zechariah's vision belongs to a time still future: but it is and always has been true that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere in the earth and nothing can escape the administration of His justice. "What a man soweth, that shall he reap" – in due time.

Perhaps one of the most eloquent passages in all the Bible describing how the all-seeing eye of God will seek out the evil-doer wherever he may go to escape the Divine Presence is in the 9th chapter of Amos. Elihu may well say, as he has done at this point "there is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves" in the light of those burning words from the lips of the Tekoan herdsman. "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up into heaven thence will I bring them down. Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them." (Amos 9. 2-3). Well might Elihu stress the fact that the evildoer and the transgressor can never hope to escape from God.

From verse 23 to the end of the chapter the text has given translators a great deal of trouble. Certain scholars whose work on the intricacies of the passage is admittedly authoritative have not hesitated to say that these verses are "unintelligible, ambiguous and insoluble," and "bear signs of considerable corruption of the text". Were this the work of Virgil or Homer or some other ancient secular writer the opinion of the experts might be accepted without question, but here we are dealing, not only with the work of a man named Elihu who lived about three and a half millenniums ago, but also with a work prepared under the supervision of the Holy Spirit of God for the instruction of all who in after ages would serve God and know of His ways. The use of terms such as the above to describe the work of the Holy Spirit is inadmissible; rather must we conclude that our understanding is defective and seek the better to discern the meaning behind the words. It is in such passages that comparison of the renderings of various translators is

often helpful towards an understanding of the text. For this reason the next few verses are taken mainly from Leeser's translation.

"For he need not direct his attention a long time upon man, that he should enter into judgment before God. He breaketh down mighty men without long searching, and placeth others in their stead, for the reason that he knoweth their deeds; therefore he overturneth them in the night, and they are crushed". (From here the Margolis translation is adopted) "He striketh them as wicked men, in the open sight of others; because they turned aside from following him, and would not have regard to any of his ways" (34. 23-27).

This remarkable passage reveals a fresh facet of the Divine character, to wit, the swiftness of Divine judgment when necessity so requires. God does not need to hold a protracted investigation into the merits and demerits of the case, or to stage a lengthy trial at which counsel for the prosecution and defence can each have their say before the final verdict is arrived at. God knows, at any time and at all times, the degree of culpability and of guilt in any matter which comes before Him for attention and He can render an infallible verdict in a moment of time. Says Elihu "he need not direct his attention a long time". Mighty men are broken down without a long investigation into their cases, and others appointed to their places without hesitation. Instances which come readily to mind are those of King Saul, given the sentence of deposition when as yet the smoke of his unlawful sacrifice had hardly died away; Ananias and Sapphira, within a few hours of their sin. It is not that execution of the judgment is necessarily immediate – Saul discharged the duties of King for years after Samuel conveyed the Divine decree against him – but Elihu's point is that judgment is immediate and just, because God is omniscient and infallible.

It is this distinction between the passing of sentence and the execution of that sentence which forms the basis of Elihu's argument. Men criticise the Almighty because they do not perceive the immediate punishment of the wicked and assume that God has therefore not even passed sentence and has in fact taken no notice of the evil-doer. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons

of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8.11). The Wise Man only put into words what a great many have thought at all ages in human history. "To every purpose" he says "there is time and judgment" (verse 6) and it is because men ignore the time element in God's plans they fail to appreciate that although the execution of the sentence may not follow immediately upon the passing of that sentence, it does not mean that God is either heedless or limited in power. It often means that God has a purpose in allowing the "wrath of man to praise him" as with Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. No matter how long drawn out and protracted may be the operation of Divine judgment, we must accept as fundamental and absolute the truth that God does bring His stroke upon the wicked "in the open sight of others", because they turn aside from Him and have no regard to His ways. "In the open sight of others" insists Elihu when all the time His critics' argument is that men do not see the judgment of God executed. Again there is only one answer to the enigma, and it is the answer already given us by the writer of Ecclesiastes. There is time and judgment; sentence against evil work is not necessarily executed speedily; but when it is so executed, it will certainly be "in the open sight of others".

There is something here that connects with the word of Jesus when he said that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10.26). In the resurrection, said the revealing angel to Daniel, there are some who come forth to enduring life, and some to shame and enduring contempt (Dan. 12. 2) and Jesus added a more solemn note to that when, speaking of the same great crisis in God's work with human kind, He said that some would come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to a resurrection of judgment (John 5. 29). All this will be in the plain sight of all men, and nothing that men will have done in their past life will escape being brought out into the light of day, revealed before the Father and the holy angels, and all mankind – verily God is just who judges in the earth.

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether unto a nation or unto mankind altogether, that impious men may not

reign nor be ensnarers of the people" (34. 29. 30). Two questions wherewith to round off the argument before Elihu taxes Job and his friends with the implication of all he has said in defence of Divine justice. The theme is still that God is omnipotent. If He gives quietness, peace, then obviously no one can make trouble. If He elects to hide His face, then obviously none can behold Him, and these things are true of a community or a nation just as they are true of mankind as a whole. There is none, of all the sons of men, individually or collectively, who can demand of God, "What doest thou?" And because of that inassailable fact men have no option but to accept and believe in the inherent justice of God.

Now Elihu turns round upon his four listeners with a challenge which brings all that he has said in chapter 34 to the forefront. Here is the practical application of his discourse in defence of the justice of God. "Truly it is only fitting to say unto God 'I bear cheerfully; I will not do any wrong. What I cannot see myself, do thou truly teach me, if I have done what is unjust, I will do so no more'. Should he then according to thy view send a recompense, because thou hast rejected him? – because thou must choose and not I – and what thou knowest do speak?" (34. 31-33 Leeser).

This is an exhortation to Job; the other three appear for the moment to be ignored. Elihu is telling Job, in brief, that in view of the admitted infallibility of the Divine character, God's perfection in justice and the certainty of His judgment for sin, it is only fitting for Job to admit to God his fault in his previous impatience, and undertake not so to offend in future. Job had previously demanded compensation, a recompense, from God because of his unmerited sufferings, but Elihu, more harsh perhaps in his condemnation than God would have been, accuses him of rejecting God because of that very demand. Should God grant Job a recompense? No! says Elihu, because Job had, at least in measure, rejected God; but he admits the responsibility lies with Job and the onus of decision whether or not to admit his fault to God lies with Job – "thou must choose, and not I" – and having decided, he tells Job, God must be told the decision. "What thou knowest, do speak". It seems almost like an admission on the part of the younger man that with all his reforming zeal and

all his clear insight into the ways of God and all his hortatory skill in showing Job where he had diverged from the Divine ways, the relationship between Job and his God could only be established and maintained by Job himself. No other man, not even Elihu, could act on Job's behalf in matters affecting Job's personal standing with God. Elihu might show the way, but in the end the decision rested with Job. That is something we all do well to remember as we endeavour to bring others to Christ. The type of high-pressure conversion where the subject is hurried along by intensive prayer and exhortation until he or she "accepts Christ", sometimes even in sheer self-defence, counts for little or nothing in the Master's sight. The final word to the would-be convert, when we have said all that we have to say, must always be "But thou must choose, and not I".

And so to the final word in this part of the discourse, as Elihu finishes his plea for the justice of God. *"Men of sense will say unto me, and every wise man who heareth me, that Job hath not spoken with knowledge, and that his words are without intelligence. Oh that Job may therefore be probed continually, in order to give answers against sinful men. For he addeth unto his sin transgression; among us he uttereth too many loud words, and multiplieth his speeches against God"* (34, 34-37 Leeser).

It is noteworthy that here, at the end of his second discourse, that concerning the justice of God, Elihu should find occasion to reprove Job just as at the end of his first discourse, that concerning the wisdom of God, he uttered an implied reproof. At that time he indicated that Job had no effective reply to his representations (ch. 33, 31-33). Now he speaks more strongly. Job has impugned the wisdom of God and Elihu in his vehemence claims that *any man of discretion and wisdom will agree with him*, in his assertion that Job has acted in an exceedingly unwise manner. He has spoken without knowledge and without intelligence, claims the younger man. For that reason it is Elihu's prayer

that Job may be led through still further crucial experiences - *"probed continually"* is his expression - that he might eventually come to the understanding which is already so crystal clear to Elihu, in order that, like Elihu, he may be able to give the true answers to the irreverent and agnostic queries of unbelieving men. It is not that Elihu bears any animosity against Job; his whole demeanour towards the older man throughout all these long discussions evidences that; it is only that he is so sure himself of the vision he has seen, so zealous for the honour of the God he serves, that he desperately wants Job to see the same things and voice the same confidence. There is a reflection here of the attitude of God Himself to the fallen human race; He does not want to condemn and punish; He wants to see the barrier between creature and Creator broken down so that in the light of the glory of God the man who is at heart God's man may rise to the apex of his privilege and speak for God in the hearing of those who decry God. Job has not yet attained to that position, in the opinion of Elihu. He has yet to learn in quietness and meditation on his sufferings instead of declaiming aloud his innocence of any crime deserving them. *"He uttereth too many loud words"* comments Elihu, rather scornfully it would appear *"and multiplieth his speeches against God"*. For one who himself has had a great deal to say it seems a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but the difference is that the whole of Elihu's speech is an impassioned defence of the supreme wisdom, justice, love and power of God, whereas the words of Job are devoted very largely to self-justification in consciousness of his own integrity, with the underlying implication that God is afflicting him unjustly. So the second discourse ends, as did the first, with an exhortation to Job to consider afresh his position before God. Elihu turns then to introduce his third thesis, the overwhelming evidence for the third of the Divine attributes, the Love of God.

To be continued.

Beware how you regard as trifling, faults which appear of but little consequence. You weigh them, and think them nothing; but count them, and you would be frightened at their number.

St. Augustine

"Remember Alice in Wonderland, saying one of the wisest things she ever said. 'The best way,' said Alice, 'to explain it would be to do it.' In every realm that's true, and not least of all in Christianity."

(Dr. Harry E. Fosdick)

ABIDE WITH US

The Unknown Guest

Luke 24:28,29: *And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.*

Two interesting characters come before us as we consider one of the most inspiring lessons of the New Testament. The sacred narrative is of two men who journeyed from Jerusalem to a little sub-urban village on the day of the Saviour's resurrection, and were overtaken by Jesus on the way. These two men, who are they? The name of one of them is Cleopas. Of his history we know nothing further. The name of the other is not given, nor anything more by which we can certainly identify him. Apparently neither of them belonged to the college of the Apostles; for when they returned to Jerusalem "they found the eleven gathered together." They were therefore not of the eleven.

During the days which parallel the days following our Saviour's resurrection, it is eminently fitting that we dwell much on those lessons coming from the various revelations of our risen Lord. One of the most thrilling and soul stirring impressive manifestations is noted in the sacred narrative of Jesus joining the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. There is but a single record of it in the Scriptures, but it is a blessed and comforting record, filled with deep interest, pathos and spiritual instruction. Though it has been much expounded, it is ever fresh; and the variety of topics which it suggests is almost inexhaustible. Much of Christian life and Christian doctrine seem to cluster around it. Faith with all its trials, and hope with all its fears and triumphs; discipleship in its burdens of soul and heart-questionings and its illuminating converse and glad experiences; the feebleness of earthly nature, and the heavenly strength which accompanies it - all are beautifully introduced in connection with this evening walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Unquestionably, devout men were these two Jews. It is of course a reasonable supposition that they had been in the Holy City observing the Passover as commanded by Moses. They had remained in quietness during the Sabbath, as

devout keepers of the law; and they were disciples of Jesus. They had been taught to look for the coming of the Messiah, and they *did look and they saw*. How they first came in contact with the Saviour, we know not. It was perhaps, with them, as with many others. They had heard John the Baptist preach, and had had their attention directed to Jesus by *his* testimony. Hearing the Master's instructions and witnessing His miracles, they believed in Him as the promised Messiah. But now they were in great perplexity and trouble of heart. Their faith had received a blow under which it greatly staggered. He whom they had taken as their Lord had been crucified and slain. That Prophet, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, and in whom they had fondly trusted as the Redeemer of Israel, had fallen a victim to the malice of His foes, and been ignominiously put to death. All their hopes had been thrown into confusion, and their souls were filled with gloomy doubts.

Most interesting must have been the conversation of these two men; but reason was too weak an instrument to give them relief. Merely *earthly* reason, when it comes to matters of faith and salvation, can do very little for us. It may serve to set us in controversy with each other, and bring on all sorts of disturbing debate, as in this instance; but it can give us no satisfactory light, and no peace of mind.

They were moving through one of the most interesting and beautiful districts. Their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus lay by the tombs of ancient Judges, by the old dwelling-place of Samuel, and through mountainous scenery as attractive as any in the Holy Land. But no charms of nature, however intermingled with sacred story, could soothe the trouble that was upon their souls. Those scenes of blood and murder that had been enacted at Jerusalem, and the sore disappointment which those scenes had entailed upon their most precious hopes, followed them, and clung to them, in spite of all the things around them. *Nature in all its loveliness, cannot supply the place of Christ*, or give comfort to the soul that has lost Him. They had heard of the resurrection of Christ, but even those precious tidings only added to their

astonishment, and bewildered their minds the more. They had been told of the angels the women saw at the tomb, and the words they uttered, that the crucified Jesus was alive again. But they had not yet come to faith in that fact, nor into a *right* comprehension of its meaning; and it only made their perplexities the worse.

How like this are the experiences of the Christian, in connection with one upheaval or another in life's pathway, and *sometimes amongst professing brethren!* Strange, unheard of and unexpected developments take place; and many important matters close to our hearts are thrown into chaos; hopes seem shattered and expectations vanish. Then we struggle to assemble faith and courage to journey on in the shadowy way. Or the case may be one in which our own relationship to the Lord, and the hope of joint-heirship with Him may be rudely called in question; disturbing elements enter in rapid succession; doubts and grievous fears may seem to overwhelm us, and those very things in which the only relief and comfort can be found, are of such an extraordinary character, that faith is afraid to accept them. *We hesitate and are afraid to believe; and we go walking in sorrow,* with loads of unsolved questions burdening down our souls.

The Saviour was with these sorrowing pilgrims, *unknown to themselves.* As they were conversing together, and discussing these beclouded and beclouding events, "Jesus Himself drew near, and journeyed with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." In the form of a common traveller, journeying the same way, and after the same manner with themselves, He overtook them, and made one in their little company. *There are many ways in which He comes to His people.* He comes to them sometimes in the form of a plain gardener, or a servant. He comes sometimes in the form of a fellow-traveller. He comes sometimes in the form of a poor beggar. It may be that He will overtake us in some distinct act of providence, entailing some deep humiliation or afflictive sorrow. But, in some shape or other, *He is never far from those who are in spiritual earnest,* and devoutly struggling for the light.

In our earthly way of looking at things, we do not always recognise the presence of our Saviour, and our eyes are holden that we do not know Him.

How often He comes to us in disguise! When that friend, brother or sister spoke to us words which uncovered and dealt with some indiscretion, or spiritual defection, and made us see ourselves, our want, and our Saviour, as we never saw them before, we thought we were listening to a mere fellow-human. We did not once suspect, that it was Jesus who was thus addressing us. That stranger who accidentally crossed our path, or whom we met in one of our journeys, who told us things of God, and imparting illuminating truths, we may have taken to be an erring fellow-mortal. Never once did we suspect that it was *Jesus Himself conducting the conversation.* That poor child of suffering at whose side in the sick-chamber we sat, and looked, and wondered, till our hearts softened, and our thoughts were warmly drawn out on topics which we never realised till then, we took to be only a frail human being, laboring with the disease and death. We did not even dream that it was Jesus addressing Himself to us for better instruction, and our improvement in saving wisdom. We never thought that it was the dear Saviour endeavouring to bring us blessed communion with Himself. But, *in all such varied forms, does the crucified but risen Lord appear now to His tried disciples,* to draw them out, and exercise their hearts, and build up their faith, and gain entry for His heavenly consolations into their troubled and anxious souls.

It is the fault of our feeble faith, that we only think of Christ as far away - as hidden in the grave - or in some remote world to which the grave is the mysterious doorway. Hence so much of our trouble and doubtfulness. But it is an erroneous way of thinking of Him. He is not in the grave. He is not far off in some realm which separates Him forever from all connection with this present world. He is risen! *He is not far from every one of us.* Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is! By His almightiness, and by His command of unnamed forces and agencies, He can cause His presence to be felt in the city, in the country; yea, in the remotest locality. He is in our assemblies for devotion, and He journeys with us in our travels. *Often is He with us, and speaking to us,* even when we do not at all suspect that it is He!

"Not in the grave, not in the grave, O man,
Believe thy Saviour now to be;
But in the lonely hour,

And in the evening walk,
Think that He companies thy solitude."

He "*drew near, and went with them.*" It is the Will of our gracious Saviour to be near us, and to have us near Him. Two things particularly seem to have drawn Him into the company of these disciples. They were filled with real soul-trouble. They were earnest, honest, and devout men, sincere in their faith, but now in distress and confusion of mind from which they could not extricate themselves. This attracted interest.

JESUS SHARES SORROWS

"*We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*" (Heb 4:15.) When grief and trouble are upon His disciples, He takes it to heart, and is drawn toward them in loving sympathy. Likewise when great gloom and sorrow come over us, we may be sure that He is not far off. In the ongoing of His great plan clouds and pains will *come upon the most earnest and devout* of God's children. But when those clouds and trials come, He also draws near, and walks with us. *Affliction never enters our circles, but He enters with it, or follows close upon it.* And when we are most hopelessly overwhelmed, then He is the nearest. We may not know Him, in the forms in which He comes, but we may be sure that He is at hand, that our sorrows are considered, and that what our necessities require He will supply.

But in addition to their mental troubles, these pilgrims on the way to Emmaus, were earnestly engaged with each other, trying to solve and master them. They were talking together about things which had happened, and were communing and reasoning with each other over them. Earnestness of spirit is never unnoticed by our heavenly Guide. Mutual consultation and honest effort to solve the problems which hinder and obscure our comfort and our faith, are never without divine aid. *People who do not have concern enough to talk about their spiritual interests are not likely to have the Master come very near them.* But where there is solemn concern about Him, and earnest exchange of thoughts and views to come to a right conclusion respecting Him, and warm communing one with another as to *what is to be thought and done*, thither Jesus is attracted, and there we may be sure that He

is near. If we come together with hearts anxious to know the truth, and solemnly purposed to learn of each other all we can, and moved in spirit to ascertain the true and saving faith, *we shall never fail to find Jesus in the company*, although we may not know Him at the time. In some form or other He will be near, and visible, and ready to help us to the solution of our doubts.

He questioned them as to their troubles and sadness. "*He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*" His inquiries are put in the character of a stranger; but, in substance, they convey an expression of the Lord. It was a call to review the character of their trouble, as the basis for the formation of a better judgement. They had not looked at matters rightly. They had not estimated them in their proper light. They had not gone deep enough into the facts for the proper conclusions. The cure for their disturbance was in the very things that disturbed them, if they would only learn to see them in their true respects and relations. Poor human nature worries itself with many things which ought to be its highest comfort; and *is troubled with what should give it peace*; and is sad and perplexed with what is *loaded, with the sublimest consolation.* Jesus dies, and their confidence dies with Him. Jesus rises from the dead, and their staggered hope transmutes the glorious tidings into an instrument of still greater stumbling. Let disturbed and desponding souls go back and consider what it is that distresses and disheartens them. Let them look again, and *see whether there is really reason* for all this perturbed feeling and this leaden sadness.

Did troubled brethren but view their anxieties aright, they would find in them cause for joy rather than discomfiture. In the worst that ever happens to them, they will yet have to pronounce against themselves as "fools and slow of heart", to have allowed themselves to regard any of it as other than blessed, necessary, and good. Be their situation what it may, let them fairly answer the Saviour's question, *why* they are so sad? and they will already be far on the way to have that sadness banished forever. Desponding soul, Jesus asks *thee, Why art thou sad? Canst thou give Him a reason* for thy disheartenment at what has happened? Review thy ground, and come to a

better mind.

HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES

Having drawn out their story, He directed them to the Divine Word, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." After all, there is nothing that can so settle, satisfy, and comfort our troubled hearts and anxious doubts, as the records of the holy Apostles and Prophets. *There the portrait of the Christ is fully drawn, and all that concerneth Him is amply disclosed.* There we will find the basis for understanding many mysteries of great import to us. From the Hebrew Prophets these disciples might have fortified themselves against all such sorrowful perplexities over their Master's death. The very first promise that was made of Him told of a suffering as well as a triumphing Saviour. He was to be bruised, as well as to bruise. All the appointments of the law pointed to death and bloodshedding, as the only possible way of remission of sins, or recovery from condemnation. All the types which prefigured Him, showed that He was to be a bearer of sin and shame. Isaiah had spoken of chastisements, stripes, smiting, and the making of His soul an offering for sin. The Psalmist had prophesied of reproach, of smiting, of spitting, of betrayal by His familiar friend, and of His being compassed about by all the power of darkness. And from one end of the Scriptures to the other, suffering, shame, and death *were inseparably linked* with the Messianic work. To all these the stranger pointed, and put it to the consciences of these perplexed pilgrims whether it could be otherwise than that the Christ should suffer these things, and through them enter into His glory. Oh, it was a fruitful text, a sublime Preacher, and a mighty sermon! We know not what words were used, but we do know they made the hearts of the bearers burn within them, and threw a light and power into their souls which charmed away their gloom and doubt beyond all that they supposed to be possible.

READY TO FALTER?

Precious, indeed, are these blessed Scriptures! Herein is light which giveth understanding to the simple and which maketh wise unto salvation. Herein is balm for the troubled heart more than Gilead can furnish. Are we shaken in faith, and disturbed in our hopes because many walk with us

no more? Jesus directs us to the Prophetic Word which has long ago *portrayed the days in which we live*, and has unmistakably outlined the apostasies and departures from the faith that are to be seen all about us. Are we oppressed with doubts which reason cannot solve, or ready to falter in our discipleship? Jesus bids us *look to what the Prophets of God have spoken*. Are we perplexed, befogged, and ready to let go our confidence because, in these days, the very atmosphere is charged with the smoke and dust of subterfuge, of deception, confusion and conflicting opinion? The risen Lord points out the remedy in the Holy Oracles of heaven. Earnestly searching these, we recognise that, true to our Master's promise, our hearts have been flooded with the light emanating from that dispensation of truth for the last days. Have we, in the depths of our hearts, absorbed the truth and the spirit of this great message? If so, then let it direct our conclusions and our course by what it reveals; and whatever is dark, will soon grow plain, and what is doubtful will become settled, luminous, and sure.

And having set these pilgrims to Emmaus right in their reading of the Scriptures, the Saviour yielded to their entreaties, entered with them into their home, and made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. They supposed that they were conversing with a stranger; but they had been so profited and comforted by His words, that they desired more of His company, and insisted that He should accept of their hospitality. *Those who love truth will be kindly disposed toward those who teach it; and those who admit Christ into their hearts, will be anxious also to have Him abide in their homes.* And those who in grateful consideration of His kindness, receive Him into their places of abode, though they should not yet know with whom they are dealing, will soon have Him disclosed to them in all the certainties of an unmistakable faith; for HE IS STILL KNOWN BY THE BREAKING OF BREAD - the spiritual food He serves.

Ah, yes, it is a great thing to have Christ fall in with us by the way! It is a great thing to tell Him our troubles, and to listen to His heart-warming words. But it is a greater thing to entreat Him to abide with us in our dwelling, and to sit down with us at our meals. Where He is earnestly invited,

there He will go; and there He will give His blessing to our bread, and show Himself our true and ever-living Lord. Walking with Christ and listening to Christ, we are on the way to dwell with Christ and to have our eyes opened to see and know Him as our Almighty Saviour and our glorified Redeemer-King.

How is it with us then? We are all on our journey home. Many also are the sorrows and anxieties that weigh upon our hearts. Often are we perplexed, and full of disappointment and sadness. Our faith is frequently sorely tried, and the questionings of our souls abound with anguish and unwilling misgivings. *There is but One who is able to help us!* Unknown to many others, He has long been following after us, and come to our side in loving sympathy with our sad estate. Often, and much, and in many forms, has He spoken to us, and inquired of our griefs, and proposed to us the remedy.

It is beyond all doubt that the pilgrimage of the Church is nearly at an end. The evening, yea, the night-time of the Age, "wherein no man can work," is *enfolding us*. But aside from that solemn viewpoint of the matter, *to many of us, our day of life is far spent*, and the evening thereof is drawing on. The shadows for some have already begun to fall, and the night is fast approaching. The question shall soon be settled *whether our final abode is to be with Jesus, and of His glorious Bride, or apart from them*. And what if that night should come upon us without His smile and blessed approval? And what if He should pass us by and we be at last excluded from all those untold riches and glories? But is such a sorrowful conclusion to our struggles possible to us? Indeed it is! - for, declares the Master, to many who shall be expecting entrance

into the state of the glorified, He will say, "I recognise you not - [as members of My Bride]." And, as *such*, at *that* time, see themselves as from the standpoint of Him "*Who hath eyes as a flame of fire*" they will realise the bitterest disappointment. - Luke 13:24-28.

But, blessed and happy thought, His dear voice still is sounding in our ears! Praise be to His name, He is yet within our reach! *He may now be entreated by our supplications, to come still closer to us, and to abide with us, as the night enfolds us*. Have we then given Him that place in our hearts and in our dwellings that He deserves? Have we asked Him to abide with us over the approaching night, which can never know a morning without Him? Has He not said and done enough for us already to deserve this at our hands? O thou weary and distressed pilgrim to the tomb, thou hast professed to be fulfilling thy covenant of sacrifice with Him; thy way is lonely, thy cross bears thee down; thou art in heaviness through manifold trials; constrain thy Master then to abide with thee! Suffer not such a friend and comforter to pass thee by. Ask Him into thy sorrowing heart, and thy humble abode. He will leave thee if thou entreat Him not to stay. Let thy earnest prayer go up to Him unceasingly, *that He may abide as thy guest*. Constrain Him, and His presence *will* go with thee, and thou shalt *know* Him, and thy dwelling shall glow with His blessing, and thy soul shall see thy risen Lord.

Jesus, Master,

Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Reprinted from the Peoples Paper - Australia

Christian African Relief Trust

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A. O. Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN*A study in Job 32 - 37*

2. The Six-fold Judgment

He stood there, this young prophet from Judea, in the court of the idol sanctuary at Bethel, in the presence of king Jeroboam II of Israel and the High Priest, burning with zeal to deliver his prophecy. The ten-tribe nation of Israel was the principal target of his denunciation although Judah also was to hear her condemnation from his lips. But first of all there were six neighbouring peoples destined to have their fates proclaimed, Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab; all had offended and all must pay the penalty. It is a remarkable thing that although each of these nations had been permitted by God to oppress and harry Israel as part of Israel's retribution for her apostasy from the Covenant, they must still pay the penalty for their unrighteous acts. "*The wrath of man shall praise thee*" sang the Psalmist (Psa. 76.10) and although there is a little doubt as to the precise meaning of that particular text, the principle behind the expression as it stands in the AV is certainly a sound one. God uses the wrath of man to work out His purposes just as He uses the cataclysms of Nature – volcanoes, lightning, monsoon rains, – to contribute to the well-being of the earth. But even so, the wrath of man must then bring its own retribution for "*whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6.7). So Amos commenced the discharge of his mission by pronouncing Divine judgment upon Israel's guilty neighbours.

Six such nations are involved; Syria (Damascus), the Philistines (Gaza), Tyrus (the Phoenicians), Edom, Ammon and Moab, encompassing Israel on the north, west and south. Their crimes and resultant judgments are described in the beginning of the prophecy from chaps. 1.3 to 2.3.

"*Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron*" (chap. 1.3). Damascus was the capital city of Syria, and the Syrians were almost constantly at war with Israel. Gilead, one of the most fertile and prosperous areas in Israel territory, was particularly vulnerable to their attacks, and it was because of the Syrians' ferocity towards the peaceable

Israelites of Gilead that the penalty was declared, a penalty that would not be revoked. "*For crime after crime of Damascus I will grant them no reprieve*" is how the NEB puts it and this is the meaning of the term "for three transgressions, and for four" which appears in the AV, as prelude of the judgment passed on each of these six nations. "*I will send a fire into the house of Hazael*" (king of Syria at the time of Amos) "*which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad*" (the preceding king; see 2 Kings 6.8). "*I will crush the great men of Damascus, and wipe out those who live in the vale of Aven, and the sceptred, ruler of Beth-Eden – and the people of Syria shall go into captivity to Kir, saith the Lord*" (ch. 1.5 part NEB).

Aven was the district in the mountains well north of Damascus, and Beth-Eden the extreme eastern part of Syria on the Euphrates. The whole of the Syrian people were to be exiled to Kir. The prediction was fulfilled not more than some fifteen years later when Tigiath-Pileser II of Assyria subjugated Syria and took the entire population away for resettlement in the land of Kir (2 Kings 16.9) the location of which is in some doubt but in all probability in the area nowadays known as Kurdistan.

Now comes the sentence upon the Philistines. These people were settled on the sea-coast of Canaan as far back as the time of Abraham. From the days of Joshua to those of David they were oppressors of Israel and although David broke their power they were still a thorn in Israel's side until the Babylonian captivity. Gaza was one of their principal cities, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron three of the others. "*For crime after crime of Gaza, I will grant them no reprieve, because they deported a whole band of exiles and delivered them up to Edom*". The land of Edom lay on the trade-route which came up from southwestern Arabia (Sheba) to Tyre, from whence the merchant vessels of Tyre sailed to the countries of Europe. The Edomites therefore had become a nation of traders. Slaves were always a profitable line of merchandise, and here it would seem that prisoners taken by the Philistines on their forays into Israel were sold to the Edomites and ended up perhaps thousands of

miles from their native land. Judgment is given. "I will send a fire" – the symbol of invasion and war – "on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces; and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and the prince from Ashkelon, and turn my hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish" (ch.1.7-8). The sentence began to be executed thirty years or so after Amos when Sennacherib the Assyrian ravaged their land; successive invaders decimated the Philistines until Alexander the Great four centuries later obliterated them as a nation from the earth. "The remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord."

Next is the turn of Tyre, the notable trading people known as the Phoenicians. From their stronghold on the sea coast north of Israel their ships went to every part of the known world and even to the American continent; this latter fact they kept a jealously guarded secret from all the other Mediterranean nations. At the first Tyre and Israel were firm friends, linked by a treaty of friendship. Hirani, king of Tyre was "ever a lover of David" and much of the material for Solomon's Temple was provided by the Tyrians. After Solomon's death the friendship cooled and the marriage of Ahab, king of the ten-tribes, to Jezebel, daughter of the then king of Tyre, with the gross idolatry which she introduced into Israel, only served to widen the breach. They too were guilty of selling Israelite slaves to Edom, despite the long-standing treaty, the "brotherly covenant", of ch.1.9, and they too incurred the same sentence of war and destruction. "For crime after crime of Tyre I will grant them no reprieve, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, which shall destroy the palaces."

The sentence was not executed at once. The Tyrians successfully withstood the Assyrians and the Babylonians for something like four hundred years but were finally conquered and the city completely destroyed by Alexander in 332 BC. The one-time greatest merchant city in the world became a mere fishing village, a "place for the spreading of nets" as Ezekiel scornfully predicted (Ezek. 26.5) and never rose again.

"For crime after crime of Edom" announced the prophet "I will grant no reprieve, because, sword in hand, they hunted their kinsmen down,

stifling their natural affections. Their anger raged unceasing, their fury stormed unchecked. Therefore will I send fire upon Teman, fire that shall consume the palaces of Bozrah" (ch.1.11-12 NEB). The antagonism of Edom to Israel is evident throughout the Old Testament. Esau himself lived in peace with his brother Jacob, but after Jacob's descendants returned from Egypt the brother-nation was hostile. On the way to the Promised Land Israel was refused passage through Edom and had to go another way. David subdued them and added Edom to his empire but two hundred years later they revolted and remained independent until Roman times. At the time of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem the Edomites actively assisted the Babylonians in the looting and depopulation of Judea but after that the fortunes of war gradually reduced their power until by the time of the First Advent what was left of them became absorbed into the Jewish nation and Edom was no more. Teman and Bozrah, cities of Edom, had long since disappeared.

Another of Israel's brother-nations next hears the burning words of Amos. Ammon, descended from the patriarch Lot, brother-in-law of Abraham, possessed the rich grazing lands east of the Jordan, but not content with a peaceable pastoral life they were from earliest times continually in conflict with Israel. Their great crime was the invasion and annexing of Israel's own rich lands east of Jordan. "For crime after crime of the Ammonites I will grant them no reprieve, because in their greed for land they invaded the ploughlands of Gilead". (This is the meaning of the metaphorical expression "ripped up their women with child" in the AV, alluding to the rounded pasture hills of Gilead) "Therefore will I set fire to the walls of Rabbah," (their capital city) "fire that shall consume its palaces, amid warcries on the day of battle, with a whirlwind on the day of tempest; then their king shall be carried into exile, he and his officers with him" (ch.1. 13-15 NEB).

As with the Philistines and the Phoenicians, the national existence of the Ammonites was brought to an end by Alexander four centuries after Amos' day.

The last of the six judgments is that of Moab, perhaps the bitterest enemy of them all. "For crime after crime of Moab I will grant them no reprieve,

because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. But I will send a fire upon Moab and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, and shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And I will cut off the judge ... and slay all the princes" (ch. 2. 1-3).

Moab, like Ammon, was descended from Lot and therefore racially akin to Israel. Nevertheless there was constant warfare between them, interspersed with occasional periods of friendship. Their influence on Israel was always bad and a source of the idolatry which constantly afflicted Israel. With all of this it is rather difficult to understand the reason given for the Divine condemnation of Moab, particularly since no other reference to such a proceeding is to be found in the Old Testament. No commentator seems to have made any valid suggestion beyond surmising that it may have something to do with the incident recorded in 2 Kings 3.21-27. On this occasion, some eighty years before the time of Amos, Jehoram of Israel with Jehoshaphat of Judah made common cause with the king of Edom to quell the rebellion of Moab, which at that time was subject to Israel. The Moabites were defeated and retreated to their well-nigh impregnable fortress town of Kirioth (now Kerak). Realising that total defeat awaited them, the king of Moab adopted the desperate expedient of sacrificing his eldest son, the heir to the throne, as a burnt offering to the Moabite god Chemosh, on the city wall in full sight of the besieging armies, in the hope that Chemosh would thus be placated and deliver his people. The horror aroused by this act was such that the Edomites and Israelites raised the siege and returned to their own lands.

This is not what is said in the present text of Amos; both Massoretic and Septuagint agree in the rendering as given in the AV. There is, however, one hypothesis which could make sense of the passage. It may be that half a dozen words in the relevant sentence have dropped out of the original text at a very early date, before Massoretic and Septuagint were differentiated. Such omissions do occur. If the expression originally read "because he burned the bones of his son in the sight of the king of Edom into lime" then Amos could very well have referred to the incident in 2 Kings 3 and this act on the part of the king of Moab be counted the

greatest sin laid to the charge of that nation. Nothing of what the Moabites had been guilty in the past could have equalled this and the Lord gave this instance to Amos as the supreme evidence of the depravity of Moab. Like their neighbour nation Ammon, they too fell victims to Alexander and were no more as a distinct people.

At this point there is a natural break in the thread of Amos' prophecy. Judgment had been pronounced on six nations and all of them were enemies of Israel; all of them had laid violent hands on the Lord's anointed. It can hardly be doubted that the listeners received the message with considerable satisfaction. That the foes of Israel were to be well and truly punished for their misdeeds was good news indeed. There was probably a swift reversal of feeling when Amos went on to decree judgment upon Judah and Israel for their own misdeeds. But for the present the emphasis is upon the six.

In history the predictions were fulfilled at various times during the ensuing seven centuries. Syria suffered first, at the hands of the Assyrians, barely a generation after Amos. Philistia, Tyre, Ammon, Moab, all came next, in the war between Alexander of Greece and Darius of Persia which led to the universal empire of Greece in 332 BC. Finally Edom disappeared under Rome shortly before the First Advent. By the time Jesus appeared in Judea and Galilee this part of the prophecy of Amos had been fulfilled.

There could, however, be a secondary fulfilment. Although the words of the Hebrew prophets almost always bore direct relation to the events of their own time and had to do with the failings and sins of their own people, the fact that these books have been preserved by the Holy Spirit for so many centuries for the instruction of the people of God in subsequent generations leads to the conclusion that they have a message for Christians just as vital as was the message to the prophet's own people. Usually the teaching is by way of analogy; there is a likeness between the position then and the words spoken then, and the position now and the fitness of the words to that position now. In this particular instance there can be traced a correspondence with the Divine judgments which at the end of this Age will surely come upon every aspect of this present world-order

which have been and still are the enemies of the Christian in his endeavour to maintain his loyalty and allegiance to Christ. Each of these six nations is characteristic of one particular aspect of "this present evil world". Thus Syria, more than any of them, was the war-like nation, continually sending in her troops to harass Israel, just as militarism in all modern nations, and particularly the despotic totalitarianism of some, results in the oppression of those who name the name of Christ. The Philistines were a cultured and artistic people; they came originally from Crete which up to the time of Moses possessed a unique civilisation of a high order, curiously reminiscent of our own twentieth century civilisation. Philistia could well picture the attraction and allure of the cultured and pleasant things of this world to the Christian. Tyre, the nation of merchants, is fittingly representative of the commercial powers of today, a threat to every Christian who allows himself to become entangled in the web of money-making for its own sake. Edom, the blood-brother of Israel, well prefigures the snare of the social life, whilst Ammon, the pastoral agricultural people, the appeal of the workaday world with all its interests and preoccupations and obligations. Finally comes Moab, the most intensely religious of all the six, but a religion which was focussed upon a false god, a god who demanded human sacrifice and whose

service involved debasing and degrading rituals. One of the greatest enemies of those who would know and serve Christ is presented in systems of false and debasing theology which present God in a guise far removed from His true character and inculcates standards far below those which are truly His.

So Amos may well have a message for our own day. Every aspect of every force and power in this world which is in opposition to the orderly development of the people God is training for His future purpose is to come before the bar of His justice and be condemned by His judgment. The nineteenth chapter of Revelation depicts the forces of evil in this world, whatever they may be, gathered together to oppose the One who sallies forth from heaven with the powers of heaven behind Him, and all those forces are defeated and liquidated. The fire of Divine judgment which Amos declared should come forth to devour those nations of his own day will be revealed a second time to devour all in this present world-age which has its prototypes in those people whom Amos denounced by name. In the days of Amos the judgment was long in coming, but it came at last. Likewise it may seem in these days of the ending of an Age, when the world seems ripe for judgment, that it is long in coming; come it will, and when it comes, it will be final.

(To be continued.)

Wonderful Hands

A jockey commenting upon the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem said what wonderful hands Jesus must have had. From long experience he knew what it takes to control a sensitive animal amid a shouting crowd. The hands of Jesus laid upon the neck of the donkey which carried Him were able to control the animal amid deafening noise, waving branches and the continuous movement of people around Him. And this colt was 'unbroken'. How did He do it? Those hands had developed in the carpenter's shop of Nazareth, cutting roof beams and shaping yokes. Those sensitive fingers had touched sightless eyes of the blind and the burning hand of Peter's mother-in-law. Those strong but tender hands had lifted a child for blessing. With those hands He had broken bread at the Supper with the disciples. The disciples had seen those hands, which had done so much for so many, torn

by cruel nails on the cross, so that we might be healed from our sin. It was for us that "He hung and suffered there."

Then on that resurrection day, the unbelieving disciples saw those hands again. In various ways He had made Himself known to His followers; in a familiar voice that called one by name, in the breaking of bread and in a miracle by Galilee Lake; but none could have been so charged with meaningful emotion as when in that upper room unbelieving eyes looked upon the nail pierced hands. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20.20) What joy thrilled their hearts as they saw those wonderful hands once more, lifted up in blessing His disciples at His departure on Olivet. Should we not greet each other as brothers and sisters did of old, "Hallelujah - the Lord is risen" - "The Lord is risen indeed"? DN

B. J. Drinkwater

REPROOF AND FORGIVENESS*An important problem
of Christian living*

"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." – Psa. 141. 5.

In the Scriptures, the word righteous is used in a two-fold sense. In one sense, *absolute righteousness* is referred to, as when we read, "There is none righteous, no, not one". In the text under consideration the intimation is given that our Lord Jesus is the Righteous One who smites. In this sense, of course, the chastisements would come from our Lord; and the one chastised would receive them with appreciation, knowing that the Wisdom, justice and Love of God are connected with such reproof. But there is a secondary use of the word righteous, applying to mankind. Various persons are spoken of in the Scriptures as being righteous, not because they were perfect, but because they were right-intentioned, right-willed, and manifested in their conduct the Spirit of God, the spirit of righteousness.

In this use of the word righteous, the text seems to imply that all who are the Lord's people should be able to give reproof and correction in righteousness in a manner that would be helpful to those corrected, and for their good; in a way that would bring a measure of comfort and blessing and refreshment; *in a manner that would be like excellent or fragrant oil, whose perfume would linger for hours.* With this thought before our minds, there is a valuable lesson here. First of all, *we should be of those who receive the corrections as of the Lord, and who are glad to be set right if we are wrong in any manner; secondly, we should be of those who recognise that if reproof be proper to give, it should be of a kind that would not be injurious, but such as would be spiritual, uplifting and refreshing.*

In order to accomplish this end a reproof should be *sympathetic.* We should remember that all of the Lord's people are fallen according to the flesh, but are New Creatures in Christ; and, if they be New Creatures in Christ, they have the mind of the Lord and desire to glorify Him. A Christian giving a reproof from this point of view would recognise that the person reproofed had not bad intentions, and would explain as gently and kindly as possible

what are the real facts. A reproof of this kind should not be given suddenly; the person reproofing should judge of the proper time, as of the Lord. Thus should any one that is righteous do in administering reproof to another. It should be done only after careful consideration and prayer, and after having arrived at the conclusion that this is the best possible way to help the brother or the sister. If all reproof were given under such conditions we may readily suppose that it would be much more helpful than is the usual reproof.

The expression, it "shall not break my head", would mean that a reproof should not be disastrous, not be crushing, but it should be an anointing or blessing. To crush the head would be to kill the person. The righteous are not in the world for the purpose of doing injury to others or of harming them, but for doing good in the world. Those who injure others are to that extent unrighteous. Those who use their criticism and reproof, etc., so as to exercise a crushing effect upon the reproofed are not righteous. Such should learn how to properly administer criticism. They should learn that the Apostle's statement, "reprove", "rebuke", etc., was not made to all of God's people, but to Timothy, who was an Elder. And only those should be chosen as Elders who are men of moderation, men of development, men who have learned to control their own lives and their own tongues, so that they would not crush, but that their rebuke would be helpful and intended to draw the person nearer to the Lord, and to be encouraging and helpful generally.

When St. Paul instructed Timothy not to rebuke an elder, but to entreat him as a father, the Apostle did not refer to an Elder of the congregation, but a person older than one's self. Do not rebuke a person older than yourself. Treat him as a father; likewise the elder women as mothers; and the younger men as brothers, and the younger women as sisters. In other words, an Elder is not appointed in the Church to brow-beat or to trample down the liberties of others. The spirit of kindness, gentleness, is the Holy Spirit. If an Elder rebukes in another spirit than this, he should remember that the person rebuked is not a child and should not be treated as a child – not reprimanded or denounced or told

"This is all wrong!". Such an unwise course in administering a rebuke is a fruitful cause of difficulty.

It would not be wise or kind or gentle for a younger person to lose patience with older people whom he feels should know about a matter and to say, "You ought to know all about this. I will give you a *lesson*". This kind of spirit has made difficulty in various places. Apparently the Apostle's remark is to the opposite of this course of conduct, and exhorts to kindness, gentleness, consideration of age and everything that might enter into the matter. It is very evident from different Scriptures that there was a family sympathy in olden times that we do not see exemplified today, as shown in the Apostle's statement: "*Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters*". 1 Tim. 5.1, 2.

In 2 Tim. 4.2 the Apostle, as a minister of the grace of God, explains that the declaration of the Gospel may include three features: (1) reproof; (2) rebuke; (3) exhortation. But it is safe to caution all of the Lord's people against too liberal use of the first two features. In order to reprove properly, the heart should be very full of love and sympathy; else the reproofs and rebukes might be sharp and possibly do more harm than good. Even with the heart full of love, it requires a head that is exceedingly well balanced to be able to make use of reproofs and rebukes to good advantage to those who really need them. And herein God's people are to be "wise as serpents, harmless as doves". Exhortation is the form of service which quite evidently can best be used by the majority of the Lord's people. And even this form, as well as the other efforts, should be characterised by patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness.

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17. 3, 4.)

God does not forgive our sins until we acknowledge them and ask His forgiveness. Our Lord expressly states the propriety of expecting those who trespass against us to make some acknowledgement of their fault before we express our full forgiveness. If he "*turn again to thee,*

saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him".

On the other side of the question, however, a caution is necessary. The Christian is to have the loving, generous disposition of heart, a copy of the Heavenly Father's disposition. In trivial affairs he is to have so much sympathy and love that he will take no notice of the little wrongs, just as God for Christ's sake deals with us, unless it represents knowledge and wilfulness. Such a rule operating amongst Christians – a determination not to recognise as offence anything that is not purposely done or intended as an offence – would be a great blessing to all, and the proper, God-like course. The transgressions to which our Lord refers are not trivial affairs, things of no consequence, are not evil surmisings or imaginings, are not fancied insults, but positive wrongs done us, which are susceptible of proofs and on account of which it is our duty, kindly and lovingly and wisely, to give some proper rebuke – some intimation that we recognise the wrong and that it has grieved us and hurt us. Then comes the Divine rule respecting the one and only proper manner of rebuke given by our Lord. (Matt. 18.15-17.) Our Lord intimates that disobedience of His commands evidences a lack in discipleship. Though He gave very few specific commandments, this command, which He carefully marked out as the one and only way of adjusting a grievance, is utterly ignored by many advanced Christians.

The disposition to forgive should be with us always, and should be manifested by us at all times. Our loving generosity and kindness and desire to think no evil – or as little as possible – should be shown in all the words and acts of life. This course is God-like. God had a kind, benevolent, generous sentiment toward us, even while we were yet sinners. Nor did He wait for the sinners to ask forgiveness, but promptly manifested His desire for harmony and His readiness to forgive. The whole Gospel message is to this effect: "Be ye reconciled to God." Our hearts should be so full of this disposition toward forgiveness that our faces would not have a hard look, nor our words of reproof a bitter sting. On the contrary, they should manifest the loving forgiveness that we should have in our hearts at all times.

Our Lord particularly called attention to the

difference between an outward and formal expression of forgiveness with smooth words, and the true forgiveness which is from the heart. The former, or outward forgiveness is only lip-deep, and means that a rankling of an evil, unforgiving spirit is within, and that it will be only a matter of time until the pent-up force of malice and hatred will break forth in words of slander. God reads the heart, and, whatever the lip-professions may be, He will not consider these unless the heart and the life correspond with them. It is vain therefore, that anyone should say, "I love my brother". and at the same time seek, either by word or act, to do him injury. All the evil-speaking, malice, hatred, envy, strife, proceed from evil in the heart; hence the necessity, on the part of all who desire to be of the Lord's "Body," that they "*purge out the old leaven of malice*" that they may be members indeed of the unleavened loaf – the Body of Christ.

Forgiveness, "in your hearts" is the condition which is always to obtain there. We should never harbour any other feeling than that of forgiveness and good-will toward all, no matter how seriously they may have trespassed against us. If this be the case, we shall be longing and anxious to exercise the forgiveness outwardly and to express it to the repentant ones. Hence we shall not seek to compel the most elaborate statement on the part of the penitent; but, like the father of the prodigal, to see the repentant one coming in an attitude of humility will touch our hearts and prompt us to go out part way to meet him, to forgive him, to greet him kindly and to put on the robe of fullest fellowship and brotherhood.

"*If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matt. 6. 15.)

Our earliest definition of "Injure not" would probably have been that we should not kill or wound our enemies physically; but as we look at the Teacher and heed His words we hear Him say, "*Learn of Me*" and we note with the Apostle that though He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet, "*When He was reviled He reviled not again [in return]; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously.*" (1 Pet. 2. 22, 23.)

If we are faithful pupils it will not be long until

we see that the perfect law of liberty, the law of Christ, is a discernor of the very thoughts and intents of the heart; and that while we must hate all sin, we cannot hate any sinner and yet have the love of God perfected in our hearts. We see that this means, not only that we must not retaliate and revile our foes, but that we must not even wish to do so. The evil wish must be conquered and the selfish conditions which gave it birth must be utterly destroyed and replaced with love – the Spirit of Christ.

We may learn a lesson from the fact that those two grand characters, John the Baptist and our Lord, each fulfilled his own mission, according to the Divine *arrangement*; but that they had different missions. John's mission was pre-eminently that of a reprover and reformer, and we are to understand that as a Prophet he was supernaturally guided in respect to the various features of the course he took. Our Lord's mission, on the contrary, was a different one; He was gathering to Himself those whom John's ministry served to arouse to righteousness and to zeal to know and to do the Lord's will.

We are to be *copies of God's dear Son*, our Lord, and not to be copies of John the Baptist. We are not to stir up strife by trying to mind other people's business, nor to seek to govern all the affairs of this world, reproving emperors, kings, or governors; but, on the contrary, we are exhorted by the Apostle to remember that what God sees fit to permit, we can see fit to endure. Even though we find many things which we cannot endorse, we may equally find ourselves able to avoid any special denunciation of them – especially of things which have no bearing whatever upon the proper understanding and fulfilling of the Lord's Word. The Apostle points out the proper position saying, "*As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" And our Lord emphasised the same thought, saying, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*" (Rom. 12. 18; Matt. 5. 9.)

Some of the holiest of the Lord's people err on this subject in their own families, and needlessly arouse prejudice and opposition, and make their homes unhappy, by continually finding fault with things which, though not up to the standard of saintliness and cross-bearing, are, nevertheless,

not immoral or wicked, even in tendency. Parents and guardians are surely to guard against all tendencies toward immorality, etc., but to find fault with those they love, merely because they are only outwardly Christian and have the spirit of worldliness, is certainly unwise. The general life of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit is the very best reproof of worldliness they can give, and the very best recommendation of the glorious Gospel they profess. This is the epistle that will be read, the light that will reprove darkness.

In other words, we must not expect from, nor try to force upon the unconverted the details of our own self-denials. We must wait until they shall see full consecration to be their "reasonable service" and present their bodies living sacrifices to God. Pastors and teachers, however, should seek to keep continually before the Lord's "flock" the high Scripture standard, realising that many influences are continually at work to lower the standard of

holiness and devotion.

How highly we, who belong to the God's people, should value privileges and opportunities, seeking to "*make our calling and election sure!*" (2 Pet. 1. 4-11.) If those who were called with an earthly calling, to be a "house of servants", rendered but a reasonable service when they engaged in the Lord's work zealously, as did John the Baptist, and were faithful, how much more zeal and energy ought we to put forth – we who have been favoured so much more highly? "*What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!*" (2 Pet. 3. 11.)

Let us remember that this "high-calling", this "heavenly calling", to joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom, is very special. In view of these things, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel, looking unto Jesus the author, until He shall have become the finisher, of our faith. (Heb. 12.1.)

CAESAREA PHILIPPI

Two articles are published below on the event recorded in Matt. 16.13-20; Mark 8.27-30 and Luke 9.18-21. They take slightly different viewpoints of an important occasion and are

printed here in the belief that they both may contribute to an understanding of what happened on that momentous day.

B. J. Drinkwater

THE SURNAMING OF PETER

*A significant point
in Jesus' ministry*

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16.18 RV)

Jesus it was who gave Peter the name by which he has always been known in history and literature. When first taken from his fishing to be a disciple of Jesus he was Simon son of Jonas. More than two years must have elapsed before the new name was conferred and it seems evident that it was upon the occasion of Peter's avowal of belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Although the new name is mentioned in Mark 3.16 and Luke 6.14 in connection with the original call of the twelve disciples, it is probable in both cases that the mention is by way of explanation and identification, not that Jesus conferred the name at that time. This conclusion emerges more clearly when the incident of the avowal is examined more closely. It is also significant that in the Gospel of Mark, which

besides being the earliest is also the most attentive to detail of all four Gospels, Mark calls him Simon five times before the avowal and never afterward, and Peter seventeen times afterward and only once before, with the one exception where he records Jesus' own use of the name Simon in the scene at Gethsemane (Mark 14.37). It is evident that Mark took the change of name very seriously.

The Lord had asked His disciples, first whom men in general thought Him to be, and second who they themselves thought Him to be. Peter came out at once with his own answer: "*thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*". Jesus had been observing Peter for two years or more and was evidently satisfied that, despite his several manifest shortcomings, he was the one best fitted to take the lead when He himself was no longer among them. "*Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonas*" He said "*and I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter*"

(*petros* – a small rock or boulder) “and upon this rock” (*petra* – a crag or cliff, or mass of rock in the sea) “I will build my church.” So Simon became known as Petros, the rock.

What did our Lord mean? An interpretation favoured by some commentators is that the shade of difference between the two Greek words in Matthew’s account indicates that the “rock” upon which the Lord was to build His Church is the “rock foundation” of Christ’s Messiahship so definitely stated at this moment by Peter and that the words do not convey any special primacy to this particular Apostle on this account. Whilst there is no doubt that the Christian Church is founded upon Christ, there does not seem to be any obvious link between “this rock” of vs.18 and Peter’s avowal of vs.16. Grammatically, there is no link at all, the “this rock” of vs.16 can only be the “rock” – *petros* – of the same verse. The AV is misleading here in rendering “Peter”. Where “*petros*” in the Gospels is a proper name, it is prefaced with the definite article “the” as with all names of persons in the Greek; in this verse there is no article and the word should properly be rendered “rock”. It is probably not wise to build too much upon this difference between “*petros*” and “*petra*”; our Lord would habitually talk to His disciples, not in Greek, but in their native Aramaic, this is confirmed by the fact that in John 1.42 Jesus used the Aramaic word for “rock” and John records it and gives the Greek equivalent, when Jesus says “*thou shalt be called Cephas*” (Aramaic *Kephas*, a stone or rock) “*which is by interpretation, a stone*” (*petros*). Paul used the name Cephas five times in his epistles which would seem to indicate that Peter was habitually known by his Greek and Aramaic names both meaning “rock”. At the time of the avowal, therefore, Jesus probably used “*kephas*” in both instances, and this would more or less clinch the case for concluding that Peter was indeed the “rock” on which He would build His church.

But what church? Instinctively one thinks of the

Christian Church as such and it is on this basis that Peter’s primacy has been claimed. But the Christian Church did not exist at the time of this incident; it could not, until after Pentecost. The word “church” here is *ekklesia*, and this means any kind of assembly or group. The riotous assembly in the theatre at Ephesus was an *ekklesia*, and so was the “church in the wilderness” of Acts 7.38. The “congregation” of Israel becomes “*ekklesia*” in the NT quotation in Heb. 2.12. The word “church” in both this incident and the admonition of Matt. 18. 17 “*if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church*”, refers to the community of Jesus’ followers at the time – an incipient Church, perhaps, but still not the Church in the true sense. It was this community of disciples and believers that was to be built upon the rock-like character Peter; he was appointed, not a kind of super-ruler over all the Church of all generations, – that office belongs to the Lord alone – but leader and inspiration to the growing company of believers that was to espouse the cause of Jesus both before and during the formative period following His death.

This is how things developed. Peter became the acknowledged leader of the twelve while Jesus lived; at Pentecost he was automatically recognised as such. He received the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, into the church. Paul, after his conversion, conferred first with Peter before taking up his own characteristic ministry. The first Christian community in Jerusalem was stamped with his personality. At a later date he is said to have ministered and led for a number of years at Antioch, the leading Gentile church. Finally he is supposed to have laboured, and died, at Rome. It might very reasonably be said that it was this building of the early believers’ fellowship, the commencement of that structure which later on became the world-wide Christian Church, that Jesus said was to be built on Peter. With his death the foundation had been well and truly laid and the intent of Jesus’ words amply fulfilled.

A. D Bensusan (South Africa)

ROCK OF SALVATION

*New thoughts on
Caesarea Philippi*

“*Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.*” (Matt.16.18)

Palestine is a mountainous country in which rocks and caves abound. Scripture records the rocks of Kadesh Barnea, Horeb, Adullam, Meribah

and others, but the rock face at Caesarea Philippi had special significance for Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God. Christ had gone out of His way to bring His disciples to that place and it was there that He chose to assure them that He was the

Messiah, for this was an area where Jewish groups expected the arrival of the age to come. It was also there that Jesus spoke words which, some centuries later, were construed by the Church of Rome as the sole and slender basis for their claim that the Pope is Christ's vicar on earth.

In many instances the Scriptures have applied the word 'rock' to God Himself. The Psalmist and book of Samuel refer to God as my rock and my fortress, and the book of Deuteronomy as the rock of our salvation. One therefore needs to examine Jesus' words at Caesarea Philippi in the context in which they were given. Of all the other rocky outcrops He has purposely chosen that particular site for His pronouncement that "*Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.*" What then was special about this particular rock? The site was on the northernmost borders of Israel and is mentioned in two of the gospels by name. Caesarea Philippi stands on the slopes of Mount Hermon and nearby is the spring which is the very source of the Jordan river. Consequently this spot was one of great natural beauty with snowcapped mountains on the East and the green plains leading down to the Mediterranean on the West. It was indeed a haven for travellers to and from Damascus.

The town was named after one of Herod's sons - Philip the Tetrarch - to distinguish it from the port of Caesarea. It was the ancient town of Baal-gad and later Greeks had a shrine and worshipped the fertility god Pan, and thus its name was changed to Panion (or Paneas).

A cave had been cut in the huge rocky face of the mountain, and a number of sanctuaries were at the base. Hence this shrine was of great significance because Pan was the god of fertility and had the religious significance of the 'all god'. Jesus and His disciples were now face to face with this enormous rock-front which towered above them - the holy shrine of Paganism with alcoves and statues of Pan and other gods right in front of their very eyes. Jesus posed the question "*Who do men say that the son of man is?*" The replies of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets indicated knowledge of Malachi's prophecy that Elijah would come again before the awesome day of the Lord, and John the Baptist had emphatically denied that he was Elijah. So Jesus put a further question to the disciples: - "*Who do you say that I am?*" So it happened that Peter was

quick to reply - he was the first to declare his personal discovery and conviction that Jesus was the Son of the living God. This revelation could only have been given him from a heavenly source by our Father. Jesus thereupon blessed Peter calling him by his full name Simon Bar-Jona(h). He later urged His disciples that they should reveal to no man that He was Jesus the Christ.

It is significant that Jesus used Peter's full family name, and then speaking to all His disciples He announced: - "*You are (Petros) and on this (Petra) I will build my church.*" Jesus did not suddenly change names from Simon Bar-Jona(h) to Peter, nor was this a play on words as so many have believed. That would have been completely out of character for Christ to play on words on a serious occasion such as this. Only once in the New Testament did Christ refer to Peter as Kephas, a proper name - which is interpreted as a stone.

What then was the reason for this, and how can one establish a meaning for these words? Christ's literal words to His disciples would indicate that they were all small rocks or stones (Petros) and on this rock face in front of them (the Petra) He would build His church and the gates of Hell would not overcome it. That literal meaning cannot easily be overlooked. However it is possible that Christ was speaking figuratively and using the simile of immobility and firmness, as He Himself was the rock and His disciples were little stones. Some may feel that He was speaking typologically and referring to the disciples as Christ's representatives on which to build His church, or even referring to Peter as the representative apostle of His community of believers. Christ did not say to Peter, "*You are the foundation rock on which I'll build my church*". That's the way Rome interprets it - Peter as the rock! The Greek word *petra* refers to a large rock of cliff or rocks, or rocky mountain chain or cragg, and this is quite distinct from the word *petros* which Christ has used, for this is a relatively small piece of rock or stone which could be thrown or moved. Whatever one's own particular interpretation of Christ's words may be, it is essential to seek the reason behind these words otherwise one would be guilty of avoiding the context and relying on the text alone.

It was now towards the end of Jesus' ministry, and at this singularly appropriate spot, He was explaining to His disciples that they would be

responsible for building the church when He had left them. He is indicating that the age of the Pagan gods is passing away - it will be all demolished. The very rock in front of them, symbolised the epitome of paganism itself and this would soon be overcome by the Christian faith. This is the same challenge for the Jews that their whole temple structure would be demolished in three days. Christianity would soon overcome all the paganism of the Greeks and all the temple sacrificial system of the Israelites and the gates of Hell could not prevent it.

The overcoming of both the Pagan deities and the Jewish religious system would constitute a complete transformation from the old to the new,

and all former vestiges would soon be wiped away. This is analogous to the individuals spiritual rebirth which Jesus had explained to Nicodemus. Power would be given to His disciples to resist all opposition from Pagan mythology - the time of the Pagan rock was finished! Jesus had challenged the whole polytheistic structure of the ancient Greek and Roman world and He chose to do so at this most significant site. Likewise He would later challenge the whole Jewish system in their spiritual home of the Jerusalem temple - the veil would soon be torn in two from top to bottom. And every single day since that time, Christ has continued to build His church, and the gates of Hell have not prevailed against it.

D Nadal

PATIENT IN SUFFERING

A short Bible Study

"Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles and pray at all times." Romans 12.12 (GNB) *"Love is patient and kind"* 1 Corinthians 13.4.

Patience is an interesting quality because of the various ways in which we express it. Some people find it easy to be patient in doing a job of work but would find it difficult to show patience towards people. Others are just reverse; they find it easy to be patient with troublesome people but readily become upset with mundane objects that appear to be difficult to handle. Perhaps it is as well that we are not all the same but in the end both types of 'patience' are necessary in the development of character if we are to follow the pattern of Jesus.

Interestingly, the old Authorised Version (King James Version) brings out the meaning of the well known passage in 1 Cor. 13 more accurately than most modern translations. The AV uses the word 'longsuffering', Weymouth translates "Love is forbearing"; many other translations give "Love is patient". The same kind of thing has occurred in translating the 'fruit of the spirit' in Galatians 5 but Moffatt and Rotherham show the distinction noted in the AV. Schonfield too shows the difference in the Greek from which the words are translated.

The two words occur in Col. 1.11 where the AV translates "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness*". Longsuffering is a characteristic of love or a fruit of the spirit and

concerns an attitude towards people. It is apparent when someone refrains from reprisal although hurt or offended. In a sense it is the opposite of retaliation and therefore is that perfection of character taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5.38-48) when He told His disciples to be like their Father in Heaven. It was a characteristic of His whole life and in particular on Calvary. It is the fruitage of our life when lived with Jesus, when filled with the Holy Spirit and after much prayer and devotion. It is not part of our human nature for we naturally want to 'hit back' whether in words or actions. The attitude of revenge is observable in every walk of human life and in every field of human activity. We do not like someone else to 'do us down', to get the better of us, to take unfair advantage and to appear to 'win'. So, human nature will employ whatever fair or unfair tricks it can adopt to restore its wounded pride. Not only is revenge ungodly, it is illogical and counter productive to all goodness, as is all sin.

William Barclay shows, in his book about Greek words, that this quality ran counter to moral thinking in the ancient world. The Greeks believed that it was wrong "to tolerate any insult or injury". Honour had to be satisfied. Not so with the Christian who must express patience with all people. He must learn to accept suffering and trouble from other people, even fellow Christians, without even wanting any kind of requital, but this is fruit of the spirit and it takes time to grow. This is

an aspect of the kind of love described by Paul in 1 Cor. 13 and by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is also the attitude of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son but not that of the older brother. We need to beware in pronouncing of 'judgment' for we hurt ourselves more than we hurt the one we judge.

Jesus warned His disciples about persecution. After His death and resurrection they experienced it because the world is opposed to the Gospel of love. It was in suffering and cruelty which Jesus and the early Church endured that long suffering matured but not in the fashionable church of later centuries except by the afflicted 'heretics'. Today, the temptation is sometimes more subtle. Human immoral influences seek to destroy Bible standards of behaviour. While it is right to witness in defence of Christian principles, the bitter attacks against Christians must be taken with 'longsuffering'. It is never right to try to defeat Satan's kingdom with Satan's methods. Violence in word or action is always wrong.

There is another kind of patience which is more directed towards things, events and happenings, rather than towards people. It has rather the sense of 'endurance' when things go wrong or take a long time to reach the results we so much want. It has been illustrated in scripture by the continuous effort of a long distance runner. This is certainly not a 'sit down and do nothing' attitude which accepts difficulty with insensitive submission hardly seeming to care. This is a waiting in hope, joyful hope, knowing that however long it takes for God's purposes to develop we must wait with unwavering trust, without complaint knowing that He does everything well – albeit slowly. Barclay writes of George Matheson who "stricken in blindness, disappointed in love, wrote a prayer in which he pleads that he might accept God's will 'not with dumb resignation, but with holy joy; not only with

the absence of murmur, but with a song of praise.'"

God waits to see these qualities of character mature in His people by the power of the Holy Spirit. The world doesn't understand them yet by its very attitude is helping the followers of Christ to become prepared for their work of restoring the image of the Creator in all humanity. We grow spiritually by imitating our Lord and avoiding the ways of the world. By this alone can we be ready to heal the nations.

New Testament use of the words described above are found in the following references.

Long suffering (Gr. Makrothumia)

Rom. 2.4; 9.22; 2 Cor. 6.6; Eph. 4.2; Col. 1.11; 3.12; 1 Tim. 1.16; 2 Tim. 3.10; Heb. 6.12; Jas. 5. 10; 1 Pet. 3.20

Patience (Gr. Hupomone)

Luke 8.15; 21.19; Rom. 2.7; 5.3,4; 8.25; 15. 4; 2 Cor. 1.6; 6.4; 12.12; Col. 1.11; 1 Thess. 1.3; 2 Thess. 1.4; 3.5; 1 Tim. 6.11; 2 Tim. 3.10; Tit. 2.2; Heb. 10.36; 12.1; Jas. 1.3,4; 5.11; 2 Pet. 1.6; Rev. 1.9; 2.2, 3,19; 3.10; 13.10; 14.12.

Useful study books:

New Testament Words – William Barclay (SCM 1992)

New Testament Synonyms – Richard Trench (Macmillan 1876)

Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Olphants 1952)

Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament (Bagster 1906)

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Printed by

Ian Loftus Printing • Unit 1 • Old Great North Road • Sutton-on-Trent • Newark • Notts • NG23 6QS
Telephone: (01636) 821510 • Facsimile: (01636) 821876



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 3

MAY/JUNE 1999

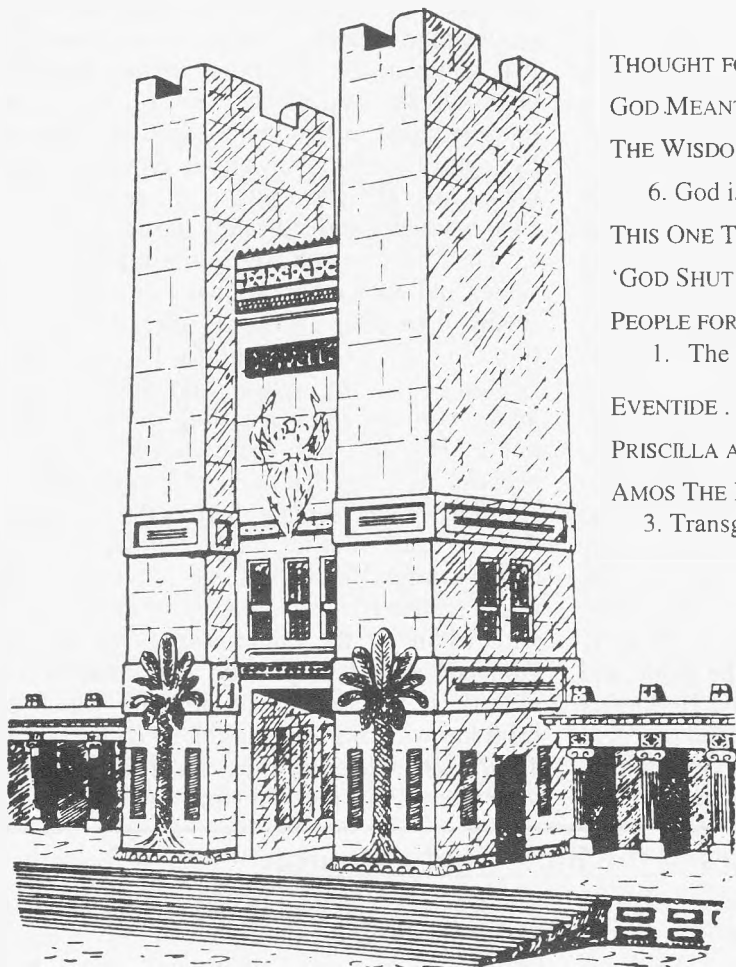
Published May 1st

Next issue July 1st

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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charge to all who are
genuinely interested, on
request renewable annually
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Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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Thought for the Month

"I will instruct and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa. 32.8).

There comes a happening in the life which disrupts the orderly course of events and nothing is ever the same again. And the immediate reaction is "Why has God permitted this?". It seemed so unnecessary, perhaps bringing grief and pain. Things may not have been perfect, but how much better if God had left them alone! And in all such reasoning we are forgetting that God is fashioning and directing all our lives for His purpose, controlling and ruling our affairs and circumstances to create in each one of us just that heart and character which will fit us for the place in His creation which we are due to occupy at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. He knows, so much better than do we, the extent to which we, each one, has become transformed into His likeness and so be ready for the call to higher service. He knows, so much better than do we, what in the way of our experiences and of other influences are necessary to us that we might be fully transformed. And all the time He is the guide and instructor. He knows what we need and He knows the way. It is for us to watch diligently and perceive His leading and follow His guidance. He is a true teacher and a sure guide: as He led Israel through

the wilderness and brought them safely at last to the Promised Land, so will He surely do with us. If He ushers us outside the door and closes it for the last time, He will open another door into which He would have us enter. If He closes one book because it is complete He will open another that we may begin afresh. And all the time He leads, like the guiding cloud in the daytime and the pillar of fire by night, His eye always upon us that we stumble not or miss the way, until at the last we cross the final boundary and are safely home.

There is so much we do not know, about ourselves and each other, so many reasons why what seems to be utter disaster is after all a manifestation of God's love and care for His children. "*The eternal God is thy refuge*" says the Psalmist "*and underneath are the everlasting arms.*" If He takes one of His own into those everlasting arms it is because He loves that one and knows what is best. And for we who remain there is the consciousness that He leads, that we might follow; He instructs, that we might learn; His eye is upon us that we might realise His watch-care over all our ways and with us in all the circumstances of life, giving guidance in our perplexity, and strength for our weakness, and that peace of mind which comes from knowing that His hand is in control of all our affairs and will bring them forth for good, all the time that we rest them in Him. AOH

Past Issues of the Bible Study Monthly

From time to time we hear of readers who no longer wish to keep their back numbers of the "Monthly". It usually occurs because as they get older some readers no longer have available space to store magazines. This we very well understand. Several in recent years have very kindly asked if we would like their old copies and we very gratefully received them. Each year brings a number of enquiries by readers, usually those who have been reading the magazine for a relatively short time,

whether BFU can supply past issues. This also we are glad to do if we possibly can. So please don't throw away your old 'Monthlies' – we will gladly store them here and when requested, we will readily pass them on. The older they are, the more valuable they become to us. We would reimburse postage where necessary. We should be glad to hear about other magazines surplus to requirements, (e.g. Forest Gate Church Bible Monthly).

A. Spain

GOD MEANT IT*Reflections from
the life of Joseph*

This title comes from Gen. 50.20 which reads "God meant it unto good", but, in order that the full import can strike us with maximum force, we will for a while put a full stop after the word "it". God meant it.

In the life of Joseph we have an illustration of how adversity has played a part in God's purposes. We see a pathway of sorrow trodden by our Lord, His people and the whole world of mankind, planned by One whose works are known unto Him from the beginning. To all these God meant it; He has been working out his designs. God long ago selected the life of Joseph as an illustration to give comfort to those who rely on his promises. A consideration will reveal (1) how God deals with individuals; (2) what Joseph had to experience and (3) the effect on the Egyptians and Joseph's brethren, portraying the experiences in the world of mankind and Israel which will bring about their salvation.

God gave the boy Joseph two dreams of glory but at that time he little thought what sufferings he would have to go through before they were fulfilled. He was just a lad when he was sold as a slave and thirty years old when he became ruler of Egypt. In our Lord's case it was different; He knew the cost of His glory and that it would be attained only by way of the cross. His followers also know that their crown is dependent on their carrying His cross.

Can we trace a correspondence between our experiences and those of Joseph? He was sent by his father to carry gifts to his brethren and bring back news of their welfare. He found them but was seized and bound. Their intention was to kill him but Reuben intervened and he was put into a pit where there was no water. Later his brethren said "we saw the anguish of his soul" (Gen. 42.21). If someone had said to Joseph when he was in that pit "God meant it" he would have said "Impossible"! Only when looking back after many years could he realise that God meant it, but this was just as true at the time he was suffering. There may be times in our lives when our well meant desires to bring blessings to others result in our motives being misconstrued, and sometimes we are restricted by circumstances, and at such times let us say "God meant it, not for punishment but for my good".

The brothers' plan to kill Joseph and Reuben's

desire to rescue him from the pit were changed by a band of Ishmaelites coming by, to whom he was sold. The brothers were quite confident that they would never see him again once he was sold into Egypt but God was in all this, first in Reuben preventing him from being slain and then in the arrival of the Ishmaelites. God meant him to go to Egypt. What were Joseph's feelings now, wrested from his father and faced with a life of slavery deprived of all rights? His was indeed a dismal prospect. One thing certainly would not enter his mind, that God meant it. At the time this would be unthinkable, yet it was the true position. If we look earnestly for our Father's hand we shall see Him tempering our experiences just as this was God's way of bringing Joseph to Egypt. In the experience of Paul he was taken to Rome, ostensibly as a prisoner of the Romans, but he said that he was the prisoner of Jesus. We too should learn, even when we cannot penetrate His dealings, to say "God meant it".

God's hand is revealed in Joseph's life when he was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard. He was not resentful but did his best in difficult circumstances and thus won the respect of his master. He could not know what would be the outcome but he acquiesced in the will of God. He became chief steward but his strict adherence to the principles of truth and righteousness brought him into conflict with Potiphar's wife and he was sent to prison. The ways of God were mysterious and beyond his comprehension and if he could have been told by an angel while he was in prison that God meant it his perplexity would have been increased. If he could have understood what God was doing how much easier it would have been, but he did not rebel against his hard lot and God gave him favour with the governor of the prison. So too God softens our experiences that we are not overwhelmed. Joseph's fellow prisoners, Pharaoh's butler and baker, had dreams which Joseph interpreted and the butler promised to remember him when he was released. Each day Joseph would expect a message of deliverance but days, weeks, months and years passed. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, yet God's purpose was still going on; even here God meant it.

At last Joseph was brought into the king's presence and he was raised to the highest exaltation in the land. We see the previous links in the chain; the pit, the slave traders, Potiphar, the prison dreams, Pharaoh's dreams which to the casual observer were just chance, but here was no luck or fate even as in our lives these things have no place. In each grief and each weary waiting God meant it, so to those who love God all things, without exception, work together for good. Jesus said (John 11.40) "*Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?*" If we belong to God, this is the sure outcome of every adversity or sorrow. God's hand is at work and if we believe we too shall see the glory of God. These light afflictions, lasting but for a moment, will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We must clarify this, for there is a difference between "God meant it" and "God caused it." God did not cause the spiteful brethren to seek to slay Joseph nor did he cause Potiphar's wife to act as she did, but God knew it would happen and if He had not meant it He could have prevented it. He knew these things would work out for Joseph's good.

In our Lord's experience we read in John 19. 10-11 that He said to Pilate "*Thou couldst have no Power at all against me except it were given thee from above, therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin*". In some respects this was true but God did not compel Pilate to pronounce the sentence of death; the rabble and the chief priests influenced him to pass this sentence and the responsibility rested upon them. Jesus knew that their wickedness could do only what the higher power would permit. They were responsible, but God allowed it and that He did so proves that God meant it. Acts 2.23 reads "*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*". God knew how the Jews would act and He overruled; He did not cause it but God meant it; their evil passions were made to work out the Divine purpose. They could do no more. God raised Him up, as verse 24 says; it was not possible that He should remain dead. Jesus said (John 18.1 1) "*The cup which my Father hath given me*" – my Father – not Judas or the rulers of the nation, but God had poured the cup.

Joseph was rejected by his brethren.

Jesus came to His own and His own received

him not.

Joseph was sold to the Gentiles.

Jesus was handed over to the Romans.

Joseph was sold for the price of a slave.

Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver.

Joseph was taken from prison and was made chief ruler.

Jesus was raised from the dead to the Father's right hand.

Joseph was able to save the Egyptians and give them bread to sustain life.

Jesus said "I am the bread of life".

Joseph said "God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45.5).

Jesus came into the world to become the life giver.

Joseph's brethren bowed before him and received forgiveness.

Jesus. Of Him it is written "*they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.*" (Zech. 12.10)

The unfolding pattern in both type and anti-type reveals that God meant it. In all the disciplines of life we must see God's hand overruling. If we think our troubles are due only to human malevolence we could become bitter but there is a truer perspective, for God is in control so that what comes through the malice of men only reaches us through the protective screen of God's will. We learn to rest in His will so that we can say "whate'er my Father doeth must be always best".

Today many ask Why, if God is love, does he permit so much cruelty? Much of this is due to man's inhumanity to man and they blame God for their own wrong doing and greed. Why does not God intervene, has He no interest in humanity? Without a knowledge of the future we would not understand. It was only later that Joseph could look back and say that God meant it. When mankind is restored they will understand and say "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him". Then only will men look back and realise that this was an education that they may inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the earth. As the Egyptians brought their wealth and themselves to Joseph to buy food so mankind will offer themselves to the antitypical Joseph and they will understand the lessons of life's experiences and never again depart from God's law.

Now take away the full-stop and complete the sentence. "God meant it unto good." God sent it – God meant it!

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in Job 32 - 37

6. God is Love

Elihu has completed his argument from the Wisdom of God and the Justice of God; he now takes his stand on the third of the four Divine attributes, the Love of God. The whole of chapter 35 and the first twenty one verses of chapter 36 are devoted to this theme. The Love of God, revealed in His attitude toward, and His care for, His creatures, is evidence that a Divine purpose lies behind Job's sufferings, and all the philosophical reasonings of Job's three friends pale into insignificance before that triumphant fact. God is Love; because that is so there can be no recriminations and no complaint against that which God has permitted. The outcome will show, what the circumstance itself is quite incapable of showing, that God's way is best.

"Do you say" he demands of Job "*It is my right before God that you ask 'what advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?'*" (35. 2-3 RSV). The Revised Standard Version poses the question so much more forcefully than the Authorised. And what an age-old question it is! So many have asked the same thing, querulously, cynically and, sometimes, despairingly. "I have always tried to do the right thing, and what good has it done me?" "He gave his life to God but God doesn't seem to have done much for him." That is the same short-sighted view which Elihu accuses Job of taking here. The life of righteousness is viewed in terms of reward, as though the creature would strike a bargain with the Creator and serve Him in return for an agreed wage. Unfortunately that is just the attitude which characterises so many who start out in the Christian way. They expect to draw dividends at once, and payable in local currency for immediate spending at that. The fact that the life of allegiance and dedication to God is the right and proper and normal condition of every man and woman, irrespective of reward or consideration, has not penetrated. Heaven is viewed as a kind of prize to be awarded to those who fulfil the required conditions, and the fact that God is the Lord of Creation is taken to be an assurance that those who render Him professed allegiance and service will get preferential treatment and freedom from adversity in this life here and now. That, of course, is by no means the

case. The Lord is not looking for a retinue of time-serving parasites who come to Him only on account of the loaves and fishes. He is seeking a body of earnest, devoted men and women who would serve and honour him because they know that to be the whole duty of man, because they know the vast majority of mankind to be pitifully remote from any such understanding and intention, and because they intend that they themselves at least will put themselves into position for use in God's creation in the manner He intended from the start. So they have no thought of price or reward and they have no expectation that any especial material privileges will be theirs in this life. They do expect that in the world to come there will be a place where they can continue to serve God, to a degree and with a power which is transcendently greater and more effective than anything they can be or do now. They know that their espousal of the ways of righteousness is more likely to bring deprivation and adversity than the reverse, but because this is the way God has indicated, because this is the way their Lord elected to tread when He Himself was upon earth, they are well content.

It is not likely that Elihu himself saw the matter as deeply as this. The problem of righteous suffering is a very mysterious one and we ourselves in our day cannot claim to possess a full understanding of its philosophy. But Elihu certainly did see one great truth and this is prominent throughout the whole of his discourse. God is too mighty and wise to be deflected from His course by any petty action of man. The righteousness of one individual and the wickedness of another is certainly recorded in the courts of Heaven but neither the tearful pleadings of the righteous nor the scornful antagonism of the wicked can divert for one instant of time the onward progression of the Divine purpose. Elihu is able to bear this knowledge with absolute confidence and content because he knows that God is not only wise, not only just, but God is also Love, and what He is doing is for the best interests of His creatures. So he replies to his own recapitulation of Job's complaint "*I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee*" (35. 4). "*I will truly reply unto thee*" is Leaser's rendering, and that phrase

brings out in striking relief the absolute conviction which inspires Elihu in all that he says.

"Look unto the heavens, and see, and behold the clouds above thee" (35. 5). That is the hallmark of the true teacher; he does not direct attention to himself, but to the skies above, beyond which is the dwelling-place of God. *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help from the Lord"* cried the Psalmist in a very similar frame of mind. Job's chief trouble was that he looked to the earth in his affliction and failed to see God. He admitted as much at the end of the story. Elihu bade him look up to the heavens and there he would see the vision which would bring enlightenment and peace. There he would, like Ezekiel in a later day, "see visions of God", and enter into the understanding his soul craved. The same precept holds good for every disciple of Jesus; *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen"* (2 Cor. 4. 17). It is only as we look at the unseen things, the things of the spirit, by what we must describe as our spiritual eyesight, that the afflictions and sufferings of life can be made to contribute to that "exceeding eternal glory" which awaits all who truly "endure to the end". That is just what Elihu is trying to tell Job; his sufferings could be made to contribute to his own development and growth in the likeness of God and his own attainment to the destiny God had planned for him, if only he would look up to the heavens instead of down to the earth.

"If thou sinnest, what dost thou effect against him? (Leeser) or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? (A.V.) and suppose that thou art righteous, what wilt thou give him? (LXX) or what receive he at thine hand? (A.V.). Unto a man like thyself might thy lawlessness reach, and unto a son of the earth-born thy righteousness" (Rotherham) (35. 6-8). A polyglot of several translators seems desirable in this particular passage in order to bring out the meaning. Suppose Job does backslide into sin on the ground that righteousness does not bring any specific reward, what effect does that have on the eternal purpose of God? Can Job hope thereby to coerce God into taking some action He would

not otherwise have taken in order to reclaim his erring one and calm his troubled mind? How can such a thing be postulated of the One *"with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (Jas. 1. 17). *"I am the Lord, I change not"* said God to Israel to His prophet (Mal. 3. 6). And suppose, on the other hand, that Job became a paragon of righteousness, upright and unswerving in his service for God. What then, even then, could he bring to God as a gift that would earn for him a position of high favour in the heavenly courts? What value in his righteousness that could entitle him to demand as of right a place of standing before the Most High? *"When ye have done all"* said Jesus *"then say, we are unprofitable servants"*. Something like that must have been in the mind of Elihu. He knew, what every instructed Christian today knows, that it is *"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3. 5) that we are at length ushered into the Divine Presence. The Lord of all cannot be moved by threats nor cajoled by bribes. His purpose moves steadily on, effecting the purpose He ordained before the world was. So it is other men, and not God, who are affected and influenced by a man's wickedness or righteousness. And that is quite a sobering thought; sobering for Job and sobering for all of us. *"Unto a man like thyself might thy lawlessness reach, and unto a son of the earth-born thy righteousness."* It is true that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, as Paul told the Athenians. We are all of us our brother's keeper and the lives we ourselves live, whether for good or ill, have their effect and repercussions on our fellows around us. That fact in itself effectively answers the primary question. If Job, or any man, enquires what merit resides in righteousness above iniquity; if righteousness seems to reap no immediate reward, the answer surely is that the life of righteousness cannot help but have some effect in influencing others to righteousness and thus contribute to the work of God in calling men back to Himself, whereas the life of iniquity must surely affect some among men in the direction of a wider separation from God.

It is these, men and women of the world, largely *"having no hope, and without God in the world"* (Eph. 2. 12) whom the servants of God can so

easily influence for good or ill, by the precept of their own lives, who now gain Elihu's attention. He is under no illusion as to the sorry state of mankind in general, oppressed and downtrodden by the mighty, unable to help themselves, and yet, strange paradox, quite unheeding of the help that could be theirs did they but turn to God who waits to save. Elihu has here a most eloquent picture of hopeless humanity in their distress and God waiting to bless if only they will open the door.

"By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (35. 9. 10). How true that is in all ages; men suffer and cry out because of their afflictions but will not call upon God for deliverance. They will try every possible human means of extricating themselves from their troubles but God is usually the last to be called upon, if indeed He is called upon at all. There is more than a modicum of truth in the story of the old lady who made her way to the captain of an Atlantic liner during a fierce storm, seeking re-assurance. The captain was not very comforting. "Worst storm I've ever seen" he said "We can do nothing now but trust to the mercy of God". "Good gracious, captain" exclaimed the old lady "Are things as bad as all that?" There were times in the history of Israel when matters came to that pass and Israel cried to God only after they had tried everything else and everything else had failed. *"Therefore he brought down their hearts with labour, they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death"* (Psa. 107. 12-14). How much better is it for Christians to go to the Lord for deliverance right at the outset instead of relying on the arm of flesh. There may be a seeming delay in delivering; it might appear that for the time being God has not heeded; but if so the answer can only be that in the Divine wisdom there is some good purpose involved in God's apparent failure to lift the burden. The truly consecrated child of God will in that case be content to leave the issue in those higher hands and believe that *"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be proved above that ye are able, but with the proving will also direct the issue, that ye may be able to bear it"*. (1

Cor. 10. 13. "Proving" is substituted for the archaic English "tempting" which has a different meaning today, and "direct the issue" is Wilson's Diaglott rendering for "make a way to escape" which seems a more fitting expression.)

A variant rendering of verse 10-11 in the Septuagint has it *"But none said, where is God that made me, who appoints the night watches, who makes us to differ from the four-footed beasts of the earth, and from the birds of the sky"*. Whether it is that God teaches men more than the brute creation, as in the A.V., or makes them to differ as above in the LXX, the appeal is the same. Man, of all the living creatures on the face of the earth, stands in a unique position before God. He has qualities of intelligence, reflection, reasoning, anticipation, not possessed by any other. He alone can lift his heart to God in adoration; he alone can appreciate God's purposes intellectually and enter into co-operation with God, if he will. And Elihu's complaint is that man does not remember this when in trouble. If only he did he would realise that God surely created man for some noble purpose, some destiny which sets him apart from all other terrestrial creatures, and this being so then all the troubles of man must be of concern to God; He cannot possibly remain idle in the face of such things. And if God does not act at once, if injustice and oppression seem to be retaining the mastery, it can only be because the outworking of the Divine purpose demands that temporary silence.

Verses 12 and 13 hint at the reason for such a silence. God has decreed that the evil which man chose at the beginning – a choice which most men repeat for themselves in daily life – must endure until, like Israel, men's hearts are broken down in labour and they realise there is truly none to help. And the righteous, the innocent, are involved in this; it could not be otherwise whilst all men inhabit one world. So Elihu says *"There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it"* (35. 12. 13). The unbelieving man cries for help but he gets no answer because his cry is addressed to a quarter which cannot save. "Vain is the help of man." And God, who is waiting to help, can take no notice of such a cry; He cannot give regard until the man in true humility and repentance comes to Him. When Israel went

for help to Baalim and Ashtaroth, God was silent; when they repented, and, putting away their false gods, cried to Him, He hastened to help them and save them.

So Elihu comes again to a climax in his argument. Of all that has gone before in this chapter verses 14-15 constitute the summing-up. Leeser's translation again puts his thoughts into cogent words. "*Although thou sayest, thou canst not see him; yet the decision is before him; and do thou wait for him. But now, because his anger has punished nothing, shall he not greatly take cognisance of the multitude of sins?*" (35. 14. 15). The whole of the discussion reduces to the one inescapable fact that man does not see what God is doing and draws the wrong conclusions therefore. Nevertheless, insists Elihu, God is a God of justice and judgment and has the situation well in hand and will act at the right time. "*The decision is before him*". It remains for Job, and for all men too, to do one thing. "*Do thou wait for Him*". Despite all the seeming inconsistencies of life, the apparent failure of God to judge and curb sin and the effects of sin, the lack of protection for the righteous, the long-drawn out delay in the execution of God's promise to bring this present evil world to an end and introduce a new one "wherein dwelleth righteousness", the injunction always is "Do thou wait for

Him". It was said first to Job, but it is intended for all of us. "*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord*". (Psa. 27. 14).

"*But Job openeth wide his mouth for nought; without knowledge he heapeth up words*" (35. 16). There is no doubt that Elihu feels very keenly Job's failure to realise things which seem so crystal clear to the younger man. The trouble, he says quite plainly, is that Job has relied too much upon philosophical argument and in this his other three friends have not helped. Between the four of them there has been a great deal of heaping up of words to the detriment of quiet thinking. It were much better, Elihu thinks, that Job went quietly to God and put the entire case in His strong hands, then sat down in silence to see what God would say to him. One might almost think that Elihu was being moved by the Holy Spirit to say a lot of things which might well have had a true and direct application to Job at that time, but which certainly were intended to come with considerable force upon all Christians in these later days, for these are just the short-comings with which we are all familiar. "*Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.*" (Psa. 37.5).

To be continued

DISCIPLESHIP

"Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

We who follow the Crucified are not here to make a pleasant thing of life; we are called to suffering for the sake of a suffering, sinful world. The Lord forgive us our shameful evasions and hesitations. His brow was crowned with thorns; do we seek rose-buds for our crowning? His hands were pierced with nails; are our hands ringed with jewels? His feet were bare and bound; do our feet walk delicately? What do we know of travail? of tears that scald before they fall? of heart-break? of being scorned? God forgive us our love of ease. God forgive us that so often we turn our faces from a life that is even remotely like His. Forgive us that we all but worship comfort, the delight of the

presence of loved ones, possessions, treasure on earth. Far, far from our prayers too often is any thought of prayer for a love which will lead us to give one whom we love to follow our Lord to Gethsemane, to Calvary – perhaps because we have never been there ourselves.

Lord, we kneel beside thee now, with hands folded between thy hands as a child's are folded in its mother's. We would follow the words of thy prayer, dimly understanding their meaning, but wanting to understand. . . . "*That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*" (selected).

*A Call to total Christian
Commitment*

T. Holmes

THIS ONE THING

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." (Phil. 3, 13)

It might be assumed, at first thought, that all who hear the gracious story of Love Divine, would want out of sheer gratitude, to make some slight return to God for such wonderful loving kindness to men. To learn that He gave His well-beloved Son to be the all-sufficient Redeemer for sinful men, ought to awaken in the depths of every soul, a responsive gratitude so deep and strong that every moment of our little lives would be taken up in seeking (if we could) to repay some little portion of the debt we owe to Him. But sad to say such is not the case with every one who hears. In every land and every church there are many who seek to pass themselves off as decent Christian folk, who are not so moved and actuated. The Gospel story does not touch life's deeper chords. If there is something to be gained or acquired, they are quite willing to be recipients and take the gracious gift, but as for giving anything to God, they are not anxious to do much of this themselves.

Perhaps the acceptance of the doctrine of 'Justification by Faith' may account for some of this reluctant attitude. Having learned that there is nothing they can do for themselves in the securing of redemption from sin and death, they then go on to think there is but little in any other sphere of Christian experience which they can do. Hearing from their teachers that salvation "*is not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph.2.9), and that it is "*the gift of God*", they have grown satisfied to take all they think that God has to give, and then refrain most carefully from doing the least thing that could be described as "works".

Those remarks are not intended to censure them for their readiness to accept the gifts of God. Indeed that is the right attitude for every child of God to adopt, not only at the onset of his Christian experience but throughout his whole Christian life. So far as our acquittal from condemnation and Adamic guilt is concerned, it must be accomplished by "*the free gift of God*", based upon the redemptive sacrifice of His well beloved Son. In this great acquittal there is not the least thing we can do. Indeed we are only asked to believe it as a fact, and take the offered gifts as one that is without money and without price.

Thousands of professing Christian folk claim to have gone as far as that, though at times they are

not really sure if they have actually gone as far as once they thought. Their lives are filled with doubts and fears, and they sometime say,

"Oft it causes anxious thought
Am I His or am I not."

These are Christians with too many interests in life. Jesus said that the deceitfulness of riches as well as the cares of this world choke the Word and it thus becomes unfruitful. To amass money or acquire other forms of wealth and luxury they are prepared to work long and late. Consequently they have too little time to attend the pursuit of truth or the means of grace. Others are too greatly involved in nursing and tending this present world. They want to heal all its troubles in these present days; hence they join in its political affairs or its humanitarian schemes, or else they give themselves to the cultivation of the arts or sciences to an almost exclusive degree, and find themselves with all too little time to spare for holy things.

Frequently they are just as ready to give a night to the arts or to sport as to Christ and thus amid the multitudes of clashing interests Christ Jesus becomes only one among many things. Too many rivals to Christ are allowed in their lives, hence the little deposit of the Word in their hearts gets crowded down. All they can spare for God and Christ is perhaps one day in seven, if they can spare so much, and thus their religious life is weak and sickly and unable to hold its own against the claims and enticements of the world. Little wonder that they ever find much in their lives for which to give God thanks! There is here no single-hearted consecration to the will of God; no devoting of the heart and mind and hand to the service of the Living God. There is no setting part of their little 'all' to the altar of sacrifice. They live for self and for this present world.

Now in saying all that we have no intention to find fault with such a mode of life. It is better far to live for these nobler things than for the vicious and unholy things around them. But such a life needs to be seen for what it is, for it is not a Christ-like life! And no life that is not a Christ-like life can be accounted as a really Christian life. In spite of the little interest in holy things that manifests itself from time to time, it cannot be accounted as a "following in His steps".

The life and service of Jesus was devoted always to the one end and purpose. He had no time or energy for others things. He had come down from

heaven to do His Father's will, and to that service He dedicated Himself exclusively. He knew the world was suffering in its sorrows and sins, yet He did not let that detract Him from His purpose. True, He healed some of these suffering souls, but there were many that He did not heal! His people sought and schemed for freedom from the Roman yoke but he did not lift a finger to help their schemes along! Certain Greeks seem to have invited him to leave the thankless Jews and withdraw to their more cultured land. (John 12.20) From the nature of His reply Jesus flatly refused to be drawn aside from the path of danger and sacrifice. He had come into the world for that very hour and that very sacrifice! That selfless, concentrated, unceasing devotion to the will of God is the standard and pattern of the Christian life. It is the model of 'the one thing' that every consecrated follower should emulate. He will thenceforth need to make it the 'one thing' of his life, if he is to remain secure in Christ. He cannot now pursue the many things as in his former days. There cannot now be pursuit of wealth, or even a nursing of this old world's cares. He can no longer devote himself to mere humanitarian reforms, nor engage in world politics henceforth. He must now be prepared to stand aside with Christ, and let the world, with its tinsel and its toys go by.

To become carnally minded now will lead towards 'new creature' death. Even the highest standards of a fleshly life and outlook can eventuate only in such a death. And if, as an unfruitful branch of the Vine, he is cut away from Christ, decay and destruction is sure to be his end, as the earthly horticulturalist could so easily testify. Carnal mindedness need not of necessity mean evil-mindedness. The best of men, not begotten by the spirit of God, are carnal men. 'Carnal' as a word, is the Latin form of the word 'flesh' and need not mean more than that a man lives according to the dictates of his five main senses. He may tend to lead his life on a higher moral plane, or wallow, otherwise in the mire; in either case, it is life on the fleshly plane. It is not possible for a spirit-begotten child of God to live his life on the plane of his five senses alone, even though he lives on the highest moral level. He has entered into life on another plane and must draw supplies of nourishment from another source. In the language of the ancient Tabernacle, he has been constituted an under-priest, with right of entry into the Holy Place. He may enjoy the illumination from the Golden Candlestick and partake of the 'Presence' Bread from the Holy Table of his God.

How improper it would be for him to live all his life in the Camp, eating, sleeping and working there every day and all the day! The purpose of his anointing and dedication to the holy service would be defeated and the divine intention altogether frustrated. Surely from such tokens as we have, divine recompense and wrath would most certainly overtake him for his waywardness.

Carnal-mindedness may be nothing more than service in the Camp by one whose person has been devoted to the Tabernacle. It may be even clean and helpful to the Camp, but that consideration alone does not make it the right thing to do. The Camp is not his proper sphere; his vocation lies in the holy things of God. Service to God was the 'one thing' of his life. His home relationships; wife, children, friends, were secondary to that.

The consecrated spirit-begotten child of God is likewise called to the service of God. That is the specific vocation of life. All other things are secondary to this, lesser occupations of the daily round and common task. Attention to the thing for which he has been apprehended of God must ever be the 'one thing' of his life. It must affect his working and his leisure time, it must control what he reads and what he says, as well as where he goes. It must be the regulator of his entire day, as also of his entire life.

Let us see how this works out. First, as concerns his time. As with the priest in Israel the Lord claims all his time, yet graciously allows him to use enough of this to win his daily bread. Should the bare winning of that bread take all his day, save only his sleeping time, then he must take the whole to 'provide' for his own. That is according to the will of God for him, provided only that in all he does, eating, drinking, working, he does it to the glory of God. But not all are situated like that. Many win their bread in fewer hours and thus have time to spare. What may such do with these leisure hours? These are not their own but God's. They must not forget their stewardship for these moments of time, but must utilise them as they who must answer for this their stewardship. Here the issue is not what they 'must' but what they 'may' do with their leisure hours. Shall they use them to rake together still more of this earth's golden dust? Shall they let them slip noiselessly and uselessly away or shall they turn their minds to holy things, to read, or write, or meditate with others of kindred mind? It is for each one to make his choice, but in arriving thereat each one is revealing the temper

and warmth of his heart, and of his sense of stewardship. Eternal issues hang upon these things. The tilt of the scales towards the carnal or spiritual things is revealed by zeal in what he 'may' or 'may not' do, not in what he "must". When he is quite as mindful of the glory of God in the things he 'may' do as in those that he 'must', then all is well with his soul.

What may he say? Again, the glory of God provides the test! Here the question of influence on other lives comes in. In apostolic days Pharisees and rulers took note of unschooled men that had *'been with Jesus and learned of him'*. There is no mistaking what they had said! There are always some things that 'must' be said, at home, at work, on the street, in the store, and elsewhere. All these things should be said to the glory of God. What are the things that 'may be' said? These are words of a special kind, and for special purposes – words in which a testimony to the grace of God may express itself. They may carry the blessing of a Providence to some lonely soul or some weary heart – a draught of life-giving water in some desert patch of life. More than any other, these words show the gracious temper of the inner life – the outflow of a spirit-filled personality.

In no place do these words show themselves so apt and helpful as in the assemblies of like precious faith. Too much careless conversation lacking point or purpose, can mar the life and fellowship of the church gatherings. And too much insistence on secondary themes can sap the warmth and enthusiasm of any body of Christian folk.

The Bible is a storehouse of many kinds of evidence, some of them less essential than others to the healthy growth and vigorous well-being of the child of God at this present time. Some of these things pertain to other times and other people at a later stage of the Divine Plan. Others have to do with the authenticity of the text – its structure and grammatical construction. Still others treat of things upon which conjecture and imagination can run riot - things difficult to prove in the last degree, and which leave the mind unsettled and confused.

To the plodding child of God, treading in the Saviour's footsteps, these many things are of secondary importance only. To all such, life and its experience has but one worth-while thing to offer, to all such the Word of God has but one sole objective to present, to make the calling and election sure! To learn ten thousand things and yet miss that one, will mean that all, so far as this

present Age with its heavenly call is concerned, has been lost! And if that is lost, what is all the knowledge in the world then worth to one whose eyes are fixed on that 'forever-with-the-Lord' association with the Altogether Lovely One?

The all-essential thing in our study of the Word is to put 'first things first,' and relegate all unessential things, no matter how intriguing they are, to a secondary place. The only thing that is important, with a really first-class degree of urgent importance, is to apprehend that relationship to Christ for which He has apprehended us. That is the *'one thing'* of the present Age – the one goal and objective that lies between Pentecost and glorification of the Gospel Church. Nothing else matters to the same degree; no acquisition of knowledge nor solutions of prophetic problems can compare with this. There are many things that matter only in small degree - this one matters to the absolute degree. On this account the words and utterances of the Elders and Teachers in the Church gatherings need to be directed expressly and with emphasis to that *'one thing'*. They, more than any other, can lead their Christian brethren's minds away from the contemplation of Christ-like growth and development, and blur the clear outline of the call to suffer with Him while following in His steps. Conversely they, more than all beside can be instrumental in holding that heavenly call before their brethren's minds with clarity and emphasis and with inborn earnestness themselves becoming examples to the flock. 'First things first' should be the motto of every instructor in the Church, other things may then be taken in their place without danger of detracting attention from the goal.

Never has it been so necessary as it is today to focus the attention of each and all, of both 'the teacher' and 'the taught', upon that goal. The day of opportunity is fleeting fast away; the 'appointed time' will soon be past, and with its passing the privilege of sharing in His sufferings will be gone – and if there is no suffering, there can be no reigning with the Lord!

Our way is still a 'narrow way' – our course is still to renounce the many things, and concentrate on the **'one'**. Our 'destination' (the predestined end of our course) is still our conformation *"to the image of His Son"*. Give all diligence then to the 'one thing' alone, beloved in the Lord, and let that be the motive and lodestar of your lives. May the Lord help us all so to do till 'the Image' is complete.

(From 'Herald of Christ's Kingdom')

D. Nadal

GOD SHUT THEM UP*A stimulus to study Paul's letter to the Romans*

".. my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would have none of me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels." (Psalm 81.11, 12) This was not an irritable and bad tempered rejection of a wayward people, as the last four verses of the psalm clearly show. God longed for His people to listen to Him and follow in His ways. He knew that this was the only possible way for them to enjoy peace and happiness. For long enough the prophets gave God's message which chided Israel for their unbelief and disobedience. From each one came a warning of the consequences of their disregard for the Law which God gave them through Moses. So strong was the impression of the failure of their ancestors to keep the Law, that the returning exiles from the Babylonian captivity determined that they would never again be sent into exile on that account. So those who taught the Jews in the centuries before Jesus came, built an elaborate code of rules which were intended to ensure that Israel kept the Law and did not break their covenant with God. The Talmud, however, was so complex that it obscured the very Scriptures that it was designed to explain. Traditions blinded the eyes of Jewish religious leaders so that they were unable to accept the One who fulfilled all the descriptions of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

It may seem incredible that this people who had been educated in an expectation of a 'prophet like Moses' should fail to recognize the One who was the embodiment of Mosaic Law. He who came to show them how to keep that Law and who was all good, was labelled by them as 'bad'. Against the One who showed them in every word and action how to love, they expressed the bitterest hatred. Why should this be so?

The rejection by Israel of their Messiah was not unexpected to those who read the prophets with unveiled eyes for one had written "*they look on him whom they have pierced,*" (Zech. 12.10 RSV). Jesus Himself declared to His accusers at His trial "*you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven,*" (Mark 14. 62). Whether these words through the prophet Zechariah and from our Lord Himself, are taken literally or metaphorically, they

have but one basic meaning and that is that the people who rejected their Messiah at His First Advent will some day be confronted with Him at His Second Advent.

In Romans chapters 10 and 11 Paul discusses something of this situation and how it was part of the plan of God for both Jews and Gentiles. The argument reaches a critical point in ch.11. 7 when he writes "**God gave them** a spirit of stupor." These chapters are part of a much bigger debate involving the teaching of 'predestination', in which the apostle discusses God's sovereignty and human free-will. God did not cause mankind to sin, yet in Romans 1 verses 24, 26 and 28 we have the bold declaration that man having sinned greatly, '**God gave them up**' to their longings and passions and improper conduct. Much later in this same letter Paul writes "*For in shutting all mankind in the prison of their disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind*" (Rom.11. 32 REV). Rotherham translated this verse in a similar way while William's translation is even stronger "*God has locked up all mankind in the prison of disobedience so as to have mercy on them all.*" Agar Beet one hundred years ago, wrote about this text, "He made temporary disobedience inevitable by closing every door by which man might escape from it. The same word is used in Gal.3.22,23 and Psa.31.8 LXX) with a similar meaning. In Luke 5. 6 the word is used to describe how the disciples 'enclosed' a great shoal of fish. Barrett too agrees with the translation "*God shut up all men*" and has an interesting point of view when he writes "God's rejections, punishments and abandonments are rightly understood as the foil for His mercy." Only sinners can be the object of his mercy, and only those who know that they are sinners can know that they are loved. The righteous 'need no repentance' (Luke 15.7) and cannot know what it is to be forgiven. Sin is of our human choosing. We may see it in every human child as it struggles with parental discipline. It can be seen too in the strivings of the leaders of mankind who may wish to do what is right and good but find the complexities of individuals and nations too tangled a web. Really the web is not tangled it is just not seen clearly enough.

As we try to follow the threads of Paul's argument through Romans, and it is worth following, we see the merciful love of God woven with justice and truth into the fabric of a wonderful plan which educates humanity to be the sinless society that God intended it should be. In the end, not a tear will have been shed, not a drop of blood spilt, that wasn't permitted by the sovereign will of

a loving God of whose wisdom we can barely touch the fringes. God has shut up the human race for just a few years so that in the endless life to follow they can understand His love. "In the last analysis it was not the wrath of God which was pursuing men, but the love of God which was tracking them down." - Barclay.

THE GOD OF HEAVEN – AND EARTH

We live in the days when astronauts are exploring extra-terrestrial space, when men are becoming increasingly concerned with what are known as "unidentified flying objects", and many people are anxious to learn what lies beyond the bounds of this planet. Astronauts are literally "sailors in space", and as such are breaking the bounds which until recently have limited men's movements. Their journeys take time, and plans for much longer excursions into space are conditioned by the fact that we humans age with the passage of time.

The activities of astronauts or cosmonauts bring into sharp focus two attributes of God which are closely related to one another. The term "omnipresence" is more or less self-explanatory, but "immanence" is more obscure, and when applied to God means "permanently pervading the universe".

The universe is sometimes referred to as a "cosmos", an orderly or systematic whole – as opposed to "chaos". The world, which is but a tiny speck in the universe, is under the influence of Satan who has been permitted to take control for a season; under his rule it is in a state of dreadful chaos which affects us all to a greater or lesser degree. However, it contrasts sharply with the rest of the cosmos which the Almighty Creator permanently pervades. All this provides the students of metaphysics with an abstraction about which they can theorise endlessly, but how does it help us poor humans to cope with the problems of everyday life?

God declares that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways and thoughts higher than ours; this world would seem to preclude any possibility of our probing the depths of His

omnipresence and immanence. However Isa. 57. 15 does just this. "*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit*". How can this be? According to John 1 Jesus was and is the *Logos*, the revealer, and He has given us an insight into the omnipresent and immanent God. Through Him we are able to approach God as our Father; not a remote God dwelling only in the heaven of heavens, but a God who loves His children to draw near to Him; not at a mercy-seat located in a tent and sanctified by the blood of a bullock, but by a new and living way consecrated with the blood of Jesus, and we are urged to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith.

Where, in the midst of all the chaos which threatens us, can we find that mercy-seat? The hymn writer reduces this profound truth to the simplest terms!

*Jesus where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found
And every place is hallowed ground
Could I be cast where Thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot,
But regions none remote I call,
Assured of finding Thee in all.*

God does not need to come down to us, for He pervades the universe, but if we would meet Him, we need to raise our minds and hearts above the chaos which surrounds us. And being contrite and humble in heart we can find peace and tranquillity in the presence of Him who is the God of heaven ... and earth.

F. A. Shuttleworth

A PEOPLE FOR A PURPOSE*Thoughts on the
Call of the Church***1. The Purpose**

“Ye are a chosen race, a Royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a People for a purpose; that ye may declare the perfections of Him who called you from darkness into His wonderful Light” (1 Pet. 2.9 Diag.).

Purpose, the dictionary defines as an end or aim in view; an intention or resolve.

Whatever has been built upon this planet has had a purpose. Whether it was the great tower of Babel, the pyramid of Gizeh, the fabulous palaces and temples of ancient kings and pagan gods, the stately cathedrals of the west, the halls of learning, the seats of government or the monuments erected to the memory of the famous, all were constructed according to a plan resolved upon by their builders. In every case they were first designed, the site chosen, suitable material gathered together, a foundation laid, work commenced and continued until there arose a complete architectural beauty which future generations have looked upon with admiration. In such a way God fashioned the earth according to His purpose. He had an aim, an end in view, all the details of which existed in His mind. When He was ready He carried out His resolve forming a temple in which man could worship Him in spirit and in truth.

This was not the whole of His design. The temple at Jerusalem, built by Solomon in seven years at great cost of treasure and labour was a structure of rare beauty designed to be the House of God, His dwelling place with men. At its dedication the glory of the Lord filled the whole house, a visible evidence of His acceptance and presence there. Neither the earth nor the temple made with hands were the ultimate aim of the Master-planner. Another building yet was a major part of His design, *“a building fitly framed together, growing into an holy temple in the Lord.”* (Eph. 2.21). Throughout the New Testament are scattered many references to this building, having foundation and chief corner-stones built up into it, each stone seemingly a pattern of the whole, formed to be a temple for the Spirit of God. This is described as *“the eternal Purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Eph. 3.11).

The real Plan of the Ages is quite evidently not the forming of a world or the building of temples of

stone but the forming of character, the building of lives into such beauty and service that each one is an individual temple. Joined together they form one glorious House of God, of which the temple of Solomon was only a picture. This temple has taken two thousand years for its construction. When it is complete and the glory of the Lord fills the whole House the Eternal Purpose of God will be complete. It will be the admiration of all beholders, not for an age, but through all the ages to come. That glory of the Divine character will shine through every stone of it. It will be more than the Light of the World, it will be the light of all worlds. The intention and aim of its Almighty Builder was an edifice that should glow with the radiance of His Spirit forever. Not only Divine power, wisdom and riches will be seen in its design and the precious treasure of its chief corner-stone but Divine love will shine with undimmed lustre through every immortal stone of its marvellous architecture.

God’s purpose is a building of life, a temple not made with hands but by the power of the Spirit. It is presented to intelligent human beings with the invitation to become co-workers with God in its erection, their individual willingness making them, not only labourers together with God but also, His workmanship, selected stones in the whole spiritual structure.

People with a purpose usually live tidy lives. In the social and business world, from early years, they know where they are going, what they are going to do with life and what they want from it. Their aims and ambitions may take some time to achieve but the determined keep right on until they have attained the desired end, allowing no obstacle to defeat or thwart them in what they have set out to do. These are the successful people who have used all their natural assets to the best advantage without waste of time or energy. Having fixed their goal they have gone straight toward it, using all circumstances to further their own ends. Such people are admired for their drive and initiative by the less resolute who falter in their course or allow themselves to become deflected from their purpose, or who through misfortune have their plans broken beyond repair. Yet others have no purpose whatever. Aimlessly they drift through life

wherever the tides and currents of circumstances may carry them. Like boats at sea, rudderless, chartless and pilotless they are at the mercy of all the elements, pathetic flotsam, engulfed at last in some fatal maelstrom or stranded upon a dead shore.

Of all these classes a poet has expressively written –

*“To every man there openeth a Way and ways
and a way.*

The high soul takes the high way,

The low soul takes the low,

While in between are the misty flats

Where the rest drift to and fro.”

A thousand choices offer themselves to the time and talent of man. Wealth, fame, honours, social position, prestige, business and scholastic success, are all within the scope of legitimate ambition and purpose. The pursuers of such have enriched the world as well as themselves. Death writes *Finis* to the most successful career, and the finest purpose is either ended or carried on by others in a way altogether different from that of its originator. No earthly purpose long outlasts its author. Some have had the joy of achievement after tempestuous efforts only to succumb to the rigours of its endurance. Others have passed away in a sorrowful sunset having seen their achievements out-dated or destroyed by the ruthlessness of progress. As Gray observed in his classic Elegy –

“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Heredity, home-life, environment, education, circumstances, all play a part in the prompting of a choice. Happy and blessed are they who because of the peculiarities of their share in these have heard with unmistakable clarity a Voice behind them saying, “this is the way, walk ye in it.” Happy and honoured are they, if so hearing, they have obeyed, allowing God’s choice of them to be their choice of Him. If they have entered upon the narrow way that leads to life they have become co-workers with God upon a purpose which far from ending at death, attains its grand completion. It will be understandable if partakers of weak flesh and blood should sometimes marvel, even doubt that co-operation, partnership with God in so mighty an enterprise could be the lot of any member of Adam’s race. There are no ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ about the Scriptures. With a simple directness the apostles

wrote convincingly what they believed to be the truth, the mysterious purpose of God, long hidden from the sons of men but since the advent of Jesus made manifest to those “*Beloved of God ... called to be saints*” (Eph. 3.4-5; Rom. 1.7).

In the temple of Jerusalem the court of the Gentiles kept other nationalities separated from the chosen Hebrew race as the court of the Women kept the sexes apart. The Apostle to the Gentiles was chosen to reveal to men that with the death and resurrection of Jesus all such barriers had been abolished. The despised Gentile was now fellow-heir with the favoured Jew; the inferior female was equal in status to the male, for nothing availed in that great temple design but a New-Creature. “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*” Baptism into Christ was to be clothed with Christ, to lose all natural distinctions. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ*” (Gal. 3.25-29). The purpose of God was and is that those whom He called should by his grace, so lose themselves in Christ, become so like him, that all merge together into one complete edifice, one in spirit, one in faith, hope and love.

Called to be a saint means more than to be separated from the spirit of the world. It means to live contrary to natural inclinations. They will be choice indeed who are exalted to that high position as living stones in that temple through which the Spirit of God is to shine for all eternity. Not only will they love and worship Him with their whole being; they will be pure in heart. They will, through a life-time of co-work with God have become like Him in character, re-created in His image, receiving from Him the light of holiness and the spirit of Divine love. Like bright jewels upon the dark back-cloth of the world’s sin and unbelief they will even now transmit the radiance of a godly character.

“Beautiful, holy souls, into whom in all ages entering, the Spirit of God hath made them friends of God and prophets. These are the joy of heaven, they are the salt of the earth. Everyone of us is better for them, as the dull clods of earth are better for the snowy hills whence the rivers flow, as the stagnant air is better for the pure winds which scatter the pestilences. What would the world be without them? A millionaire, though the world

crawl at his feet, is but as the small dust of the balance; but O God! O God! Give us saints! "

So, with impassioned earnestness, spoke a famous preacher in a famous church a hundred years ago.

The value of saints is still high. They are needed now as they have always been, as they always will be. To work with God on this great Purpose of fashioning living, saintly stones for an eternal temple of the Spirit is the only life that counts.

*"The life that counts must toil and fight
Must hate the wrong and love the right
Must stand for God by day and night
This is the life that counts.
The life that counts must holy be
In darkest night make melody
Must wait the dawn on bended knee
This is the life that counts."*

To be continued.

"GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER" (2 Cor. 9 .7)

"The liberal soul shall be made fat." This is one of the bountiful dispensations of Providence, that the more you give away, the more you have. The generous often find themselves richer rather than poorer while the grudging seem to lose what they so carefully hoard, seeing it dwindle in its usefulness.

Generosity is without doubt a God-like quality, a human likeness of the open-handedness of God whom the Psalmist describes as "opening his hand to satisfy the desire of every living creature". Those most conscious of the bounty of God in turn become bountiful. They are large-hearted, their own liberty brings them happiness and peace. There is nothing mean or petty about their dealings with any situation; nothing trivial in their outlook, in their way of life. It is not only material wealth in which the generous display their benevolence, but in sympathy, in interest and in practical kindness.

There are many people in distress who do not need money, who are much more in need of a kind word, of some cheerful company or useful deed to assist them in sadness or difficulties they often try to hide. All generous souls have not money to give. They give themselves, their time, their talent, their knowledge, their work, the love and compassion of their hearts, that others may be satisfied with strength, with revived hope, with new courage, or with assistance in periods of illness, or helplessness. Like the Apostles they say to the lame, "we have neither silver nor gold, but what we have, we give you". What they gave was power to

put a man back on his feet.

The widow casting her mite into the Temple treasury won the approval of Christ. He pointed out she had given all she had, which was an act of generosity surpassing those who gave of their abundance. They never missed what they gave. It did not cost them anything to give, but the poor woman had given her last penny to God. Giving to God is only giving back what is His own. Life and all its gains are God's gifts to men. The Christian pilgrim especially realises that he is merely the steward of God, that what he has received must be wisely used, that he must bring his accounts to the great day of reckoning.

"Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. With the same measure that you give shall it be given you again." This is the measure of God, a giving God who has supplied everyone with something they can do or give daily. The mean are warped characters but the generous, liberal givers are men and women made in the image of God. Satisfying the needs of others they are themselves more than satisfied.

*Were the whole realm of Nature mine
That were an offering far too small.
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all.*

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE*"So he bringeth them unto
their desired haven."*

Tomorrow! Oh, the bane of tomorrow, and the unrest it brings into our little day! It needed all the persuasive powers of our beloved Lord to dispel the spirit of disquiet from His disciples' minds and set their hearts at rest. Of course there seemed to be every reason in the world why they should think of their future days – were they not leaving everything to follow Him: to go without purse or scrip or other entangling impediment, with nothing more than a questionable hospitality awaiting them? If an hospitable host accepted them and welcomed them, then let them call down the blessing of the peace of God upon that house, but if no hospitable host awaited them – yes, that was just it! Supposing there was no such host in the whole city or countryside?

Assuring them that all their needs were known, and that He who clothed the lilies could find them clothes, and He who fed the sparrows find them food, the Lord advised them to leave their tomorrows alone. Oh yes! tomorrow would most certainly have its cares and perplexities; its refusals and rejections, but He would have them let tomorrow be anxious for itself. Then (in the lovely words of the RSV) Jesus said *"Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day"*. (Mat. 6.34) There was not always an overflowing purse for those first pioneers of our faith; sometimes they would have enough to "abound", at other times they knew what it was to be in "want". Contentment in every state was a lesson that needed to be learnt.

It is a perquisite of man's superior mind that he alone of the whole mundane creation can visualise tomorrow and its needs. The squirrel by inborn instinct may hoard up its nuts – a supply for a later day; but it is not within its power to wonder what will happen when the store is gone. Strange to say, it is the thrifty careful man who is likely to look through the bars of the morrow. The spend-thrift, careless, easy-come-easy-go type of man will often say "tomorrow never comes", or "let us eat and drink today, tomorrow we may die"!

Naturally the Christian believer will be of the thrifty rather than the spend-thrift type, and finds the natural propensities a handicap if not a hindrance to his rest of soul. And while there is no prohibition against a "proper thought" for coming

days, it is so easy to exceed the range of "proper thought", and expand it into anxious care. The dividing line between pleasure and pain is very thin; what may have been intended as a love-tap may reach its target as a hurtful blow. It is all a question of degree. So with the exercise of "proper thought".

With a big D.V. (Deo Volente) controlling it, the exercise of "proper thought" enables one to stand up to life's opportunities – and this is as true of Christian work as of the daily round. But without that submission to the *"If God Will"*, even the common round of this very day can abound with anxious care, while tomorrow will be full of ghosts and fearsome shapes. "One day at a time" is the Saviour's rule of life; it is still a "lesson" that must be learned. It reduces itself to a question of "faith" or "little faith" – of "trust" or "little trust", of the childlike dependence (or lack of it) in a loving Father's care. *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* Jesus said. Over against that "Sufficient" we should learn to place another: "My grace is sufficient for thee". Sufficient Grace will then cancel out "sufficient" evil.

Perhaps the poet was right when he said,

*You're groaning today 'neath a burden of care,
'Tis more than your sad fainting spirit can bear,
Don't seek from the future new trouble to borrow
But leave in Christ's hands the keys of tomorrow.
Your way may be clouded, your future concealed,
And scarcely the present is clearly revealed;
'Twill strengthen in weakness and comfort in sorrow
To leave in Christ's hands the keys of tomorrow.*

It is a big step forward in the Christian life when we have learned to sing.

*God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad.
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad.*

D. Nadal

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, had many friends among both Gentiles and Jews. His extensive travels brought him into contact with large numbers of people all over the Roman world. It was on his second missionary journey after he had been to Philippi and Athens that he finally arrived in Corinth for the first time. This was a city port famous for its wealth and trade. It was also notorious for its immorality and corruption. Here in this thriving metropolis Paul was going to establish one of the most remarkable Christian churches of all time. Out of his experience with those Christians he was going to set the pace and standards for the Christian church in the centuries to come. Quite early in his stay in that busy city Paul met a married couple who were to become a tremendous help in his work. The names of the husband and wife team were Aquila and Prisca. Luke must have known them personally very well for he uses Prisca's familiar or affectionate name Priscilla. He more readily wrote her name before her husband's which was unusual in those days. It may be that she was from a more distinctively aristocratic family than Aquila and there are romantic legends linking her with a noble family. Class distinction is a human failing, which the Christian church was beginning to cast off even in those early days. Perhaps Priscilla was the more dominant personality taking the lead and speaking up in public, for again the early Church was beginning to dispense with the time-honoured attitude of gender distinction.

The account in Acts 18.1,2 is simple yet full of meaning. *"After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome"*. Pontus, Aquila's homeland was on the southern shore of the Euxine Sea, which we now call the Black Sea in northern Turkey. It is close to Bithynia and Cappadocia, and is mentioned in Acts 2.9 where there is a list of places from which Jews had come to Jerusalem for that momentous Day of Pentecost. Did something of the Good News in Peter's speech go home to Aquila's friends and relatives so that his mind was turned towards Jesus. In actual fact there is really no evidence that Aquila and his wife were converts

to Christianity before they met Paul at Corinth. Possibly they saw him first in the synagogue and rapidly became acquainted with him. They shared the same means of livelihood, for they were 'tent makers'. Some commentators and translators suggest leather workers. Across the hills of Cilicia where Paul was brought up there roamed goats with long hair and floppy ears which had a special fleece. Basil Matthews in 'Paul the Dauntless' graphically describes the process of making cloth from this goat hair called 'cilicium'. In his commentary William Barclay endorses this description but in his translation he calls the three 'leather workers' and the IVP Bible Dictionary supports this suggestion. Perhaps they were expert in processing the skin into the leather as well as weaving the hair into cloth. Either way, this was valuable fabric for tents and clothes in lands that were notorious for dust and wind. Perhaps more important was the fact that these two men followed the practice of Jewish people in those days in having skills to earn their own living. Rabbis did not rely on others to pay them for their services.

Prisca and Aquila had left Rome at the time of Claudius because the emperor's edict expelled Jews from the capital of the empire. Anti-semitism was common in those days and Jews were often blamed for social problems for which they were in no way responsible. The Law became effective in 49AD and so it was about that time that Paul and Aquila must have met in Corinth. Two years later Claudius died and Nero allowed the law to lapse. Not for the first time, an order of Caesar served God's purpose for it brought these three together. They not only formed a good working team in their trade, but they seemed well matched in the work of the Church. From what Luke tells us in the Acts, Paul was a leader and evangelist while Priscilla and Aquila did the follow-up and pastoral work. Towards the end of chapter 18 we have the entry of Apollos who already had some knowledge of the Lord but had only progressed as far as repentance. Priscilla and Aquila taught him the full Gospel and did a great service to the Church for Apollos had skills in public speaking and debate and was able to silence the wrong ideas of Judaism. This is an example of how correct or adequate teaching can

affect a Christian's life and also the lives of others.

A year or so later Paul was writing from Ephesus to the Church in Corinth and ended his letter with greetings from the brethren including some from "*Aquila and Prisca together with the church in their house*" (1 Cor. 16. 18). A further witness to their hospitality and enthusiasm to build up the people of God. This was probably at the same time that Paul was busy talking to enquiring Gentiles and further debating with Jews about the Gospel in the Tyrannus Hall. They loved to be in the midst of the action and many Christians in Ephesus had reason to be grateful for their loving service. They were teachers at a time when the Church was young and in need of those who could plainly express ideas about the work of God in Christ. Hence several communities of the Lord's people needed their services and in a few years they found themselves back in the capital.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome and in that epic dissertation he still found time and space to send his greetings to Rome (Rom. 1.6. 3-5). To Priscilla and Aquila there is a special warmth as he remembers their willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ and for their fellow Christians. Their love was strong enough to make the ultimate sacrifice for the benefit of their Gentile brethren. Now back in Rome their home was still the centre of activity and again we have those words, "*the church in their house*". This was more than hospitality or even the willingness to use their home in the service of God and His children; this involved the hazard of persecution because the place of Christian worship

and fellowship might readily become the target for their enemies' attack.

As Paul's life drew to a close in a prison cell in Rome he addressed his last letter to Timothy. As he penned or dictated his final sentences his thoughts went to some of the greatest friends he had known and among them were Priscilla and Aquila. They were at Ephesus again by this time where Timothy was an elder. They too were a little older now than when they first met Paul at Corinth. With all their years of experience in 'the Way' what a tower of strength they must have been to the young leader. They had moved home a number of times and wherever they went they became the centre of Christian interest. Their home and their lives were being used up in the Gospel. They had been a wonderful couple; an example of what could be achieved if a marriage is built upon the sure foundation of the Christian Gospel. They were a source of strength to the leaders and elders, and a source of instruction to the newly converted.

O happy home where Thou art loved the dearest,
Thou loving Friend and Saviour of our race,
And where among the guests there never
cometh
One who can hold such high and honoured
place.

O happy home where each one serves Thee,
lowly,
Whatever his appointed work may be
Till every common task seems great and holy
When it is done, O Lord as unto Thee.

Internet

Currently we have no plans to put the BSM and other literature on 'internet' nor does BFU have an e-mail address. Several of our readers in the U.S.A. have written to say that they are interested in such a project and we know of a reader who is actually getting the 'Monthly' on to the world wide system of communication. We remain very interested and our computing systems could cope with it. However, our time schedule cannot as yet and we await the Lord's leading in this matter.

Talking Books

A number of our readers have only partial sight or none at all. Some have cancelled the BSM on this account. We are always very sad about this. However, during the last year we have considered the possibility of recording at least some articles so that our friends can hear them if they cannot read them. Again time is a problem. We wait for the Lord to lead us concerning such a project.

A. O. Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

Amos 2. 4-16

3. Transgressions of Israel

"For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." (Isa. 10.4) So did the prophet Isaiah, half a century after Amos, intone his lament over the inevitable fate of Israel, a fate which Amos was now about to declare in the ears of all Israel as he stood in the idol sanctuary at Bethel. He had just pronounced Divine judgment soon to fall upon the six neighbour nations; now it was the turn of Judah and Israel. The nation had dwelt in the Promised Land for something like seven hundred years and for the major part of that time they had served God either partially or not at all. At first they had leaders, "judges", in the main resolute, God-fearing men who did their best to guide their people in the right way; but in between consecutive judges there was almost always a "falling away" into godlessness. Later they had kings, men of the line of David who occupied the throne as the earthly representative of God, the true king of Israel. Sometimes they were righteous men, but mostly they were oppressive, grasping tyrants, who cared little for the welfare of the people they ruled and nothing for the laws of God. In not a few cases they led the people into open idolatry and flagrant violation of the Mosaic covenant. So God raised up prophets, men who were guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit to wean the people from their misdeeds and persuade them back to their true allegiance. Amos was one such, but by his time the rot had gone so far that it could not be remedied. He could only tell them of the coming disasters which they had brought upon themselves by their own heedless course.

He turned first to Judah, Judah the two-tribe kingdom which had received so much at the Lord's hands in being made the custodian of the Temple and its worship and the seat of royalty. Jerusalem the holy, the sacred city, the royal city, the city of peace, lay within its territory. Here, in those brief times when all Israel was united in sincere worship of God, all the tribes came to render homage and participate in the annual sacred feasts and ceremonies. Here, if anywhere, should it have been that God was worshipped continually in spirit and in truth. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed" sang the Psalmist "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee

shall all flesh come" (Psa. 65. 1-2). "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel." "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem ... whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel" (Psa. 76.1; 122.2-3). But all that was in the days of David when the kingship was new and the nation united and enthusiastic. The Lord had promised that David's throne would endure for ever and his people know only prosperity and well-being, but they ignored and forgot that all this was conditional upon their own allegiance to God and His laws. They forswore their allegiance and flouted the laws, and now, only two centuries after David, not more than seven or eight generations, they were to reap the consequences. So Amos declared the wrongdoing they had wrought and the penalty they must suffer.

The accusation was short and succinct. They had spurned the law of the Lord; they had failed to keep His commandments; they had allowed themselves to be led astray to the worship of false gods (ch. 2.4). The whole added up to apostasy, an apostasy which went right back to the beginning. Amos was not talking only to his own generation; his denunciation went back to include past generations, even to the times when Israel took possession of the land. The Old Testament includes sufficient detailed cases. Right at the beginning Jonathan the grandson of Moses allowed himself to be made the first High Priest of a renegade sanctuary in the territory of Dan (Jud. 18) where God was worshipped under the visible figure of a silver ox. (In later days the custodians of the oracles altered the name of Moses to Manasseh in Jud. 18.30 to avoid their revered leader being associated with so disgraceful a proceeding.) Then, not much later, Gideon, that great champion for God, instituted a centre of worship in his own tribal territory in competition with the national centre at Shiloh where stood the Mosaic Tabernacle. In the days of Rehoboam, successor of Solomon, the Israelites built "high places" in the land, ostensibly for the worship of God (1 Kings 14), but these degenerated quickly into idol shrines. Sometimes the kings were evil and sometimes they were good, but in both cases the high places remained, mute witnesses to national apostasy. Good king Josiah

destroyed them and endeavoured to bring his people back to God, but then it was too late. Less than thirty years was to run before the blow was to fall on Judah.

So Amos pronounced judgment. Because of this persistent unfaithfulness the penalty of the Covenant was to be enforced. *"I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour all the palaces of Jerusalem"* (ch. 2.5). It was the same judgment that came upon the entire six surrounding nations, but this time upon the people of the Lord. Chosen nation and unique people they might be, but they were not exempt from the consequences of sin on that account. In that respect they were no different from the nations round about, for *"there is no respect of persons with God"* (Rom. 2.11). And Judah had greater responsibility. The peoples round about were born and lived their lives in measurable ignorance of God; Judah and Israel were, between them, recipients and guardians of the oracles of God. They knew His Law and they had seen His miracles and experienced His power in deliverance. They had less excuse. And they suffered accordingly.

The "fire upon Judah" was, of course, war. The fulfilment began fifty years later when Sennacherib the Assyrian invaded Judah and took some two hundred thousand captive before the angel of the Lord, in response to the faith of king Hezekiah, intervened and destroyed the Assyrian army, thus saving Jerusalem. A last chance of repentance for Judah, perhaps? If so, it was of no avail. Hezekiah's next two successors on the throne were evil men and they led Judah into even grosser idolatry. Manasseh the king was taken captive into Babylon, but even this did not deter Amon his son from following the same evil way. Then came the Egyptians in the days of Josiah and Jehoahaz, and following them the Babylonians in those of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, a continual state of invasion and war desolating the land during the space of a hundred and twenty years, until finally Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian destroyed Jerusalem, its palaces and its Temple, just as Amos had foretold, and took the remaining people captive to Babylon. The land which nearly a thousand years earlier had seen the conquering hosts under Joshua entering and taking possession now saw the last pitiful remnants of the once proud

nation driven like beasts into hopeless servitude. *"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people"* lamented Jeremiah, the prophet who so vainly tried to avert the calamity by exhorting the people to repentance and faith; *"she that was great among the nations, how is she become a slave"* (Lam. 1.1).

Amos turns now to Israel, the ten-tribe nation. Her judgment was to be executed first, her land desolated and her captivity effected a century before that of Judah, but Amos leaves Israel to the last because it is against Israel that the main burden of his entire prophecy is directed and all that has gone heretofore has been by way of preliminary. Up to this point the men and women in that idol temple at Bethel would have listened smugly if not with secret satisfaction at the prospect of Divine chastisements shortly to fall upon all their enemies. Their complacent expressions were quickly swept from their faces when the youthful prophet faced them with the ominous words *"for crime after crime of Israel, I will grant them no reprieve"* (ch. 2.6). Amos laid three stated crimes to their charge, three headings under which could be included all the evil and apostasy of which they had been guilty. Here at this point the prophet declares each crime in turn.

"They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They grind the heads of the poor into the earth and thrust the humble out of their way" (ch. 2.6-7). The latter phrase is the N.E.B. rendering and is preferable. This is an allusion to that provision in the Law of Moses (Lev. 25) by which a debtor could be sold into slavery or a poor man sell himself, but the contract was only to last until the next year of Jubilee (the fiftieth year, when all lands and properties reverted to their original owners). The implication here is that a kind of trade had grown up, founded on this custom, whereby men and women in Israel had become objects of barter and sale for private profit, which was a long way from the original provision intended solely for the satisfaction of a debt. So the poor, the innocent, the humble had become the helpless prey of the soulless rich in complete negation of the original conception which viewed all Israelites as brothers. Here is to be seen all the elements of sordid commercialism and social injustice which is so fearfully rampant in the world

today.

"A man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name" (ch. 2.7). The reference here is to pagan ritual-worship of the most depraved kind. The word rendered "maid" in the A.V. is *kedeshah*, which denotes a priestess-prostitute attached to a pagan temple. The underlying principle was that the woman yielded what was most precious to her as a sacrifice to the god or goddess, and that by a kind of "sympathetic magic" the act would result in renewed fertility of crops and flocks and herds to the benefit of the community. A more accurate rendering of the sentence would be "Son and father resort to the same *kedeshah* to the profanation of my holy name". The practice was expressly forbidden the daughters of Israel (Deut. 23.17), nevertheless a burning passage in Hos. 4. 12-14 shows that this sin was rife in Israel. Thus did Amos seize upon the most degraded element in pagan ritual to condemn the whole system of pagan idolatry into which Israel had fallen.

"And they lie down beside the altar on garments seized in pledge, and drink wine at the expense of those they have fined in the house of their god". (ch. 2.8). This was the third charge. Again it relates to the oppression of the poor, and it introduces an element, of unctuous hypocrisy. The Law of Moses provided that if, as security for a loan, a poor man was required to surrender his warm outer garment, it was in any case to be returned to him when evening came; he would need it for warmth through the cold Eastern night (Exod. 22.25.27; Deut. 24. 10-13). Here was a condition in which the creditor not only failed to return the garment, but used it for his own comfort whilst performing his ritualistic observances at the idol altar – which may very well have included the sin just previously referred to. Not only so, but he caroused with intoxicants in that same temple on the usury he had extorted from those same poor debtors. The whole picture is that of the unprincipled exploiter of the poor, flaunting his ill-gotten gains and his own indulgence under the cloak of respectability in the temple where such things were the normal custom.

These three sins pictured the whole gamut of iniquities for which the Lord was about to pass judgment on Israel. But first He had something to

say.

"Yet I – even I – destroyed the Amorite before you, whose height was like the cedars... yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and ... for Nazarites. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying 'Prophecy not'" (ch. 2.8-12).

Against the three crimes of Israel for which they stood arraigned before Him the Lord set three great things He had done for them in times gone by. He had delivered the nation from Egypt in the time of Moses, led them for forty years through the wilderness and brought them to the borders of the Promised Land. He had eliminated the Amorite inhabitants of the land to the extent that Israel could enter and conquer. He had given them prophets to encourage them in the right ways and warned them against the wrong. He had played His part and fulfilled all His promises, had been a Father to them and treated them as His children. They had repaid Him with ingratitude, heedlessness and rebellion. They had refused to heed the counsel of His prophets, misused them and in many cases killed them. They had shamefully treated those among them who were of a different mind and had dedicated themselves to God – the Nazarites – and compelled them to forswear their vows of dedication. They had in every way proved themselves unworthy of all that God had done for them. And God had done all that could be done for an unresponsive people. Later on He was to say to Isaiah "*I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good ... a people that provoketh me to anger continually these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day ... when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear: but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not*" (Isa. 65.2-12). All that was true in the days of Amos also, so sadly true that the Lord had to express Himself as weighed down in spirit by the burden of their sins.

"Behold" He says "*I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*" (ch. 2. 13). There is some doubt respecting the grammatical

construction of the words. It is uncertain whether the meaning is that Israel is pressed down with the weight of sin like a harvest-wagon laden with sheaves of grain, or that God is burdened down in heaviness at the knowledge of their sin. The N.E.B. has it "*I groan under the burden of as you a wagon creaks under a full load*" and it is very possible that this is the true sense of the passage. God is not an angry, vengeful Deity, a savage "tribal god of the Hebrews" as some would have it. He is the contrary, a loving, tender and all-wise Father ever seeking the welfare and happiness of the creatures His hand has made. It is because sin and the way of sin can only lead to unhappiness and disaster for those creatures that He takes every step necessary to convince men of that fact; so it must be from time to time that a sharp lesson is necessary and men allowed to reap the consequences of their own folly. But even so He is ever ready to save and deliver before man has gone too far to be recovered. So in the fulness of time it became possible to inscribe on the pages of history the never-to-be-forgotten words "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3.16). After all those years of disobedience and disloyalty, rebellion against and renunciation of God, He was still conscious of the weight of an infinite sorrow that such things should be, and, too, without doubt, that He must inflict chastisement that men might ultimately be reclaimed. So, with heavy heart, speaking in human terms, and with sad reluctance, again speaking in human terms, He told them what must surely come to pass.

"Therefore flight shall not save the swift; the strong man shall not rally his strength; the warrior shall not save himself, the archer shall not stand his ground; the swift of foot shall not be saved; nor the horseman escape. On that day the bravest of warriors shall be stripped of his arms and run away."

"This is the very word of the Lord" (ch. 2. 14-16. N.E.B.).

That meant military defeat, total and complete. There had been a time when these things had been true of the people that invaded Israel and in their faith and trust in God the warriors of Israel had stood still and watched all these things happen to

the enemies who had come to despoil them. Not many generations previously good king Jehoshaphat had sallied forth with his army and his priests, singing the high praises of God, to face the invaders from Moab and Ammon and Edom. "*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle*" he told his people. "*The battle is not yours but God's. Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord*". And Israel stood still on the heights and watched, while the invaders fell out between themselves, and began to battle with each other until not one of them was left (2 Chron. 20). It could have been the same again, had there been the same faith. But times had changed; the people were of different mind, and when the Assyrians came upon them not many years later they found a nation defenceless and dispirited, trusting in gods which were unable to deliver, and so the Assyrians carried them all away.

What is the moral behind all this for today? The same basic sins are rife, much more exceedingly rife in modern society. Indifference to, and flagrant disobedience of, Divine law is a commonplace. In many quarters, and increasingly so, honesty and fair dealing, kindness, generosity and charity, are despised as signs of weakness. There are children who grow up not knowing, because they have never been taught, the meaning of the word honesty. With each succeeding generation the standards of Divine ethics recede farther into the background. The words of Amos 2.4 become increasingly true as time goes on. The second sin, soulless commercialism, which seeks to enrich the few at the expense of the many, is manifest today as never before. The masses are deluded into believing that things are being done for their welfare which in reality serve only to bring them more into bondage to the world system which is being created. The poor, whether of the "third world" or of the dominant nations, are pressed relentlessly into the dust as in the days of Amos, and none heed their cries except the God of all justice, who is by no means heedless, even although His plans for their eventual full salvation have yet a span of time to wait whilst the essential prior experience must work itself out. Then that against which Amos voiced his most trenchant condemnation, idolatry and idol worship, is rampant today as never before. Science, wealth,

power, pleasurable indulgence, permissiveness and depravity of every description, these are the gods and the worship of this present Age and these will bring this world to its end just so surely as the same things in principle but on a smaller scale brought Israel to its end in the days of Amos. As it was then, so it is now, there will be no escape. "The swift of foot shall not escape; the bravest of warriors shall be stripped of his arms and run away". The same principles in operation will bring about the same end. Thank God that the same is true of the eventual outcome. At the close of his prophecy Amos shows that at the end of time God will restore those victims of the judgment incurred by their own foolishness, that by reason of the lesson well learned they will enter into a blessed afterward in which they willingly and enthusiastically achieve a state of loyalty to, and co-operation with, God that will ensure their everlasting happiness. So too will it be with this modern world; the position is not really hopeless. After judgment comes blessing. The nations will, one day, eschew the immoral principles which govern human society today and embrace anew the life that is of God.

"The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35.10).

"This is the very word of the Lord" (ch. 2.16 NEB)

The grammatical case here indicates an extreme of emphasis – this is a very solemn utterance. All that has been said beforehand is spoken with a due consciousness of its gravity and import. The Lord has spoken and there can be no reversal. These things shall surely be.

This is the end of the first section of Amos' prophecy. Perhaps, at this point, he turned and walked out of the idol sanctuary at Bethel, leaving king, priest and people to ponder over the significance of his message. But he was to come back. Maybe before many days had passed his stalwart figure was to be seen again, his voice uttering the next of five more denunciations before at length the High Priest felt compelled to retaliate.

To be continued

CHRISTIAN AFRICAN RELIEF TRUST

The continued efforts of this registered charity which sends 20-foot containers to countries all over Africa are described in its most recent report. Many Schools and Churches are now contributing food, clothing, footwear and many household items for daily living. There are several collecting points in England from which the materials are conveyed to Huddersfield and then overseas. Brother Guildford Tompkins has a remarkable team of helpers who give of their time and skills to pack and load the gifts into boxes and the huge containers. As a result of all this labour of love wonderful testimonies come back from these countries which so desperately need help. Items such as soap and 'Aqua boxes' have greatly improved health in Ghana. Adults and children have benefited from receipt of reading and writing materials. In Cameroon there is a tremendous need for hospital supplies and personnel.

By sending such items as typewriters and sewing machines, some areas are able to develop 'self- help' schemes that enable people of Africa to

attain a measure of independence. Working together with another charity clothing suitable for Bosnia can be exchanged for garments more appropriate for a hot climate. Through all the reports and work done by CART there is reflected a very genuine need and a careful effort to see that what is sent to Africa is properly distributed.

CART is run on an entirely voluntary basis, **every penny donated is used to send relief supplies.** The Trust is very grateful for all the financial help that it receives, much of which is used for transport costs.

To contact CART for any reason at all, please write to - Mr.Guildford G.Tompkins 'White Gates' Tinker Lane Lepton Huddersfield HD8 0LR (cheques payable to 'CART')

Gone from us

Brother Jim Bignell (*West Wickham*)



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 4

JULY/AUGUST 1999

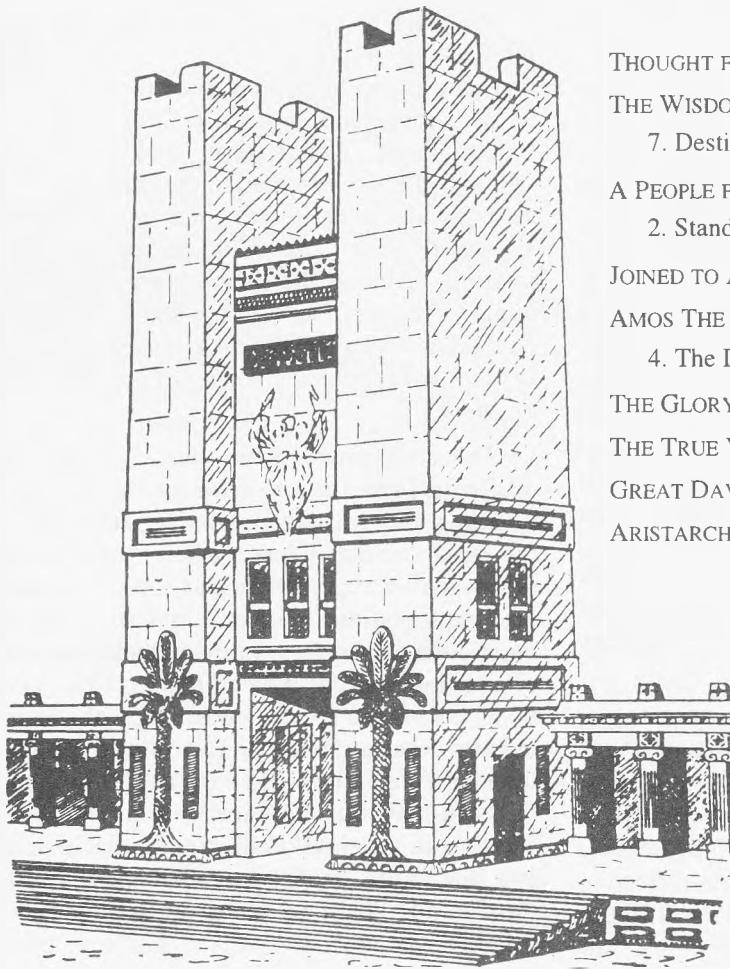
Published July 1st

Next issue September 1st

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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Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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Thought for the Month

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5. 16).

A recently discovered and hitherto unpublished sermon of an old-time famous preacher, Charles Simeon, has this passage: *"If your life be not as becometh the Gospel of Christ, the world will despise religion as a worthless unproductive thing, and those who profess godliness will be apt to catch the infection and to sink into lukewarmness."* Is this one reason for the loss of faith and zeal which many bemoan in these trying days? Is it that the world's unbelief and scorn as regards our message, reflected back to us, of itself induces a growing loss of zeal and even of conviction, resulting in a lack of enterprise and a resultant settling down in the social comfort of our fellowship and a waiting for the Lord to set up His Kingdom and take His Church to heavenly glory without being concerned any longer with the manifesting of the outward characteristics of the salt of the earth, lights in the world, and a city set on a hill?

It would seem so in some cases at least. Advancing age can justify some cessation of active service; the more strenuous and trying conditions of this distressful period involve a certain restriction of opportunity; the fact of decreasing numbers within the fellowship renders effective co-operation increasingly difficult. None of these things would be seriously argued by any of us if our Master plainly appeared before us to exhort us, as He did His own disciples, that we go on in life, in whatever circumstances and under whatever disadvantages we may be placed, *just showing how a Christian can live!* In so many connections we fail to manifest that in our day-to-day dealings with

our fellows. We fail often enough with our own brethren, and how much more with the world. And it brings leanness into the soul.

We tend to view our Christian life from too intellectual a viewpoint. Even our entrance thereinto is carefully prescribed for us in technical terms; repentance, justification, consecration, sanctification, glorification; and too often the whole matter is presented to the immature believer as though he is invited to enter into a commercial agreement with God. Cold as ice, and about as inviting! And all the time we are conscious – or ought to be conscious – of the warm, vibrant words *"sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . . a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."*

This is the source from which we must get the oil for the light, the virtue for the salt, the power to raise that city to its elevation on the hill; here, at the foot of the Cross, where repentance and determination, contrition and hope, renunciation and consecration, go hand in hand. Not in the emotionless formalism of the detached acceptance of a cold invitation "if ye do *this* . . . I will give you *that*" but in the spontaneous, eager realisation of tender, compassionate tones "My son, give me thine heart . . . who will go for us?", lies the power that will make us to "shine forth as the sun" here and now in the sight of all men. In that experience, and that alone, shall we realise what was in the mind of the "beloved physician", Luke, when he beheld the fellowship of the Early Church and wrote of *them*, *"praising God, and having favour with all the people: and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* Is it any accident that those two phrases are associated so intimately together?

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in Job 32 - 37

7. Destiny of the Wicked

Although chapter 35 is a wonderful exposition of the love of God, Elihu has more to say on this aspect of the Divine character before he passes on to the final one, the power of God. Here in the first twenty-one verses of chapter 36 he takes up the theme again; even although a kind of climax was reached at the end of chapter 35 with his reproof of Job's lack of spiritual insight into this matter, he returns to his discourse and now relates the love of God to the greatest mystery of all – the consequence and penalty of wilful, deliberate, incorrigible sin. The story of the Prodigal Son is sufficient to show that God will never shut the door against any whilst there is still hope of repentance and reconciliation; even though the prodigal be gone completely out of the life of his Father and his place be not known, and all his resources and possessions dissipated and vanished, so that he has nothing, he has but to say "I will arise and go to my Father" and put that resolve into execution, and the Father will go out to meet him. But even so, it remains that some may be found who resolutely reject all that God can do to bring them back to Himself, will deliberately turn away from the Saviour's appeal and elect wilfully and determinedly to continue in sin for sin's own sake. When, in the infinite wisdom of God, He sees that there is no possible hope, that the sinner has destroyed within himself his own capacity for repentance, that sin has become a fundamental part of his being, then, says Elihu, the love of God is manifested even here in withdrawing the life of which the recipient can make no proper use. There is no escape from the Divine law "the wages of sin is death", and that death, when the sinner is irreclaimable, means the absence of life – merciful oblivion.

"Suffer me a little" says Elihu "and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf" (36.2). Rotherham discerns something else in the Hebrew: he renders "I will show thee that yet – for God – there is justification". On either rendering the young man is God's champion: he maintains stoutly that God is right in what He does and it is the part of man quietly and reverently to observe His works and accept them in confidence of faith. In that settled conviction he still ascribes all that he

knows and can say, to God his maker, "*I will fetch my knowledge from afar;*" and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker: for truly my words shall not be false, one of competent knowledge is with thee" (36. 3. 4). The last half sentence is from Rotherham: the Authorised Version "*he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee*" does not convey the intention with the modern sense of "*perfect*" read into the verse. Once more Elihu stresses the fact that his words and his philosophy come, not from his own intellectual reasoning, but from a great distance away, from heaven where God dwells, and come clothed in the raiment of truth and righteousness. That, and that alone, is the reason he can claim so confidently that he is "*one with competent knowledge*". In that he joins hands with that whole gallery of Bible heroes who, each in his own day and circumstance, has spoken the message of God in full conviction and assurance, knowing of whom he has received it. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, knew the verity of the things he preached when as yet no outward evidence existed of the imminent, tremendous convulsion of Nature which ended the first great epoch of human history. Joseph and Daniel, each in the presence of human greatness in the persons of powerful monarchs, spoke forth with clarity and simplicity the unalterable decree of Almighty God. The Apostle Paul, renowned for his forthright, authoritative, almost dogmatic, ministry, declared the basis of his assurance at the last when he said "*I know Him whom I have believed, and am persuaded*" Every Christian ought to be like that, convinced in his own heart of the verity of the things he has accepted as truth. Whether there is power in the lips and tongue to make these things known or not is of lesser consequence. What is of importance is the being sure in one's own heart and holding on steadfastly throughout life to "*those things which are most surely believed among us.*"

"Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not (better, not to be despised) *mighty in strength and wisdom* (better, mighty in strength of wisdom) *He will not preserve the life of the wicked, but giveth right to the poor*" (36. 5-6). A quiet affirmation of confidence in the supremacy of God, that, coupled

with a simple expression of basic Divine law. The one is the guarantor of the other. Because God is omnipotent in both power and wisdom, that which He has ordained as the basic principle of this creation will surely stand. Evil will not continue for ever; the evil-doer must certainly come to an end. Righteousness will assuredly be exalted to its proper place; the righteous man is destined to enjoy life in God's creation forever. It may not be without reason that Elihu makes righteousness more or less synonymous with poverty; Jesus Himself said that the poor in spirit are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. It may well be that in both cases the idea of poverty is used more as an antithesis to the arrogance and pride of the wicked than as a reference to the paucity of material possessions – the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him.

There follows now a relatively lengthy passage, right down to verse 18, in which Elihu seems to be at pains to stress what he has already dwelt upon time and time again in his discourse, the mercy and favour of God showered in abundance upon those who have come into heart harmony with His righteousness and the inevitability of the judgment of death upon all who elect to continue in sin. He has said so much about this before that its repetition begins to seem almost wearisome; yet there must be a reason for the continued repetition of this one theme, this constant harking back to the relative destinies of saint and sinner. Perhaps it is not so very strange after all; even today the orthodox Christian evangelist is just as unwearied in constant appeal to his listeners to avoid the pitfalls of sin and come into a state of reconciliation with God. Elihu believed, no less than do the modern preachers, that the first essential for any man is to "get right with God" and to that end he was never tired of repeating his burden, the ultimate penalty of sin, the ultimate fruit of righteousness.

"He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous; but with kings are they on the throne; yea, He doth establish them forever, and they are exalted." (36.7). The instructed Christian cannot mistake the meaning of this allusion: kings, exalted and established for ever upon thrones; these can be none other than those who in the Book of Revelation are kings and priests unto God,

reigning with Christ a thousand years. The New Testament presentation of Christian discipleship is that of a steady progress out of the weakness and humiliation of the present to a future destiny which involves exaltation to the heavens, in association with Christ, to reign as kings over the world for the blessing of mankind. *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13.43) was the expression Jesus used to define that happy state. The disciples were promised that they would sit on twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19. 28). All the way through the New Testament this idea of a future reign of the Church over the nations, for the blessing of those nations, is stressed, and here in the Book of Job we have the first early glimmering of what afterwards blazed out as a shining truth. God, who turns His eyes away from the wicked and will not preserve their lives in perpetuity, does not so withdraw His eyes from the righteous. To the contrary, He sets them as kings on thrones; He exalts them to heavenly glory and establishes them forever. Some words spoken by the revealing angel to the aged Daniel, more than a thousand years after Elihu had gone to be with his fathers, are very apposite here. *"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."* (Dan. 7. 27). That kingdom is the Messianic Age of prophecy, and the "saints of the Most High" are the Christian Church, exalted forever to a perpetual kingdom which, as verse 14 of the same chapter states, is *"an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away; a kingdom that shall not be destroyed"*.

"But they that are bound in fetters shall be holden in cords of poverty. Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and" (as Rotherham puts it) *"breathe their last, no one knowing."* (36.8-12).

The first sentence in verse 8 is from the Septuagint, the "but" being more accurate than the Authorised Version "and if they be" which latter

rendering, grammatically, would identify the evil-doer of these verses with the righteous of verse 7, a palpable absurdity. The LXX rendering puts the evil-doers in contrast with the righteous and so brings to the forefront the second great phase of the Divine Plan. Whereas in verse 7 the Christian Church of this present Age is represented, and the promise given that they will reign as kings on thrones, verses 8-12 point to the remainder of mankind, the nations, over which the Church will reign during the thousand years of the Millennium. And the law of that Messianic era is here plainly stated. It could hardly be put more succinctly. First of all, those nations and all the individuals of those nations, in bondage still to sin, unreconciled to God, children of wrath, blinded by the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4. 4) are truly "bound in fetters" and therefore "holden in cords of poverty". That is their condition at the time the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11. 15) and the time of the fulfilment of Isaiah's glowing words "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prisonhouse," (Isa.42.7). According to the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation the Devil is to be bound for a thousand years "that he should deceive the nations no more". Then comes the time, the blessed reign of Christ and His Church, when God moves to the enlightenment and the education and the conversion of the nations. In Elihu's words, God "sheweth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline and commandeth that they return from iniquity". This is the whole principle of the Millennial Age; God will show mankind what a sorry mess they have made of the world during this whole long period during which they have had their way without interference. He will show them how that the blame for their failure is laid fairly and squarely against their sin – their transgression. Then He will bring them into what Ezekiel calls the "bond of the covenant" (Ezek. 20. 37), although that prophet's reference is to regathered Israel in the End Time rather than to the entire world in the Millennial Age. But the principle is the same; all mankind will be subject to the discipline of that Age, a discipline which encourages and urges their return from sin and

iniquity, their sincere repentance and conversion, and at the same time, by virtue of the absolute righteous and equitable rule of Christ and His Church, will demonstrate the blessings and benefits of righteousness. For the first time in the history of mankind, the righteous will flourish undisturbed by the machinations of the evilly disposed. The thirty-second chapter of Isaiah is only one of the many passages that describe the glories of that transcendent day; in that chapter Isaiah declares "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment ... and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever". This is the promise to those who respond to the Divine leading. "If they obey and serve Him" says Elihu "they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures". That is the blissful state of everlasting life in a state of sinlessness amid the glory of a perfect society, the society of the redeemed. "Come, ye blessed of my Father" invites the King when He has, at the end of that Age, separated the sheep from the goats "inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", (Matt. 25. 34). "The ransomed of the Lord shall return" sings Isaiah "and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away". (Isa. 35.10).

What if the man does not respond? The blessed destiny is for those who enter wholeheartedly into the Divine arrangement, who by the way of repentance, conversion, acceptance of Christ, reconciliation with God, turn their backs on sin and walk thereafter in the ways of God. Some there may be who will not repent. Elihu has a word for them also "But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and breathe their last, no one knowing". There is a terrible finality about those words. The sword of the Lord is swift and very powerful and descends unerringly to execute Divine judgment. There is a vivid picture in Rev. 19 of the final conflict at the end of this world when the rider on the White Horse descends from Heaven to overthrow all enemies and establish His Kingdom on earth. The name of that Rider, says the prophet with awe, is "The Word of God" and out of His mouth goes a sharp sword with which He is to smite all opposing forces – the wild beast,

the false prophet, the kings of the earth, and their armies; the victory is utter and complete. So with all who pit their evil against God's holiness. It is not that the Divine patience is exhausted; not that the Father of all has ceased to be merciful. It is that He perceives, in His infinite wisdom, that these particular recipients of His goodness can never make rightful use of the life He has given, can never take their place in His eternal creation or fulfil the function for which they were created. So life is withdrawn; quietly, unobtrusively, they slip away from among men. They breathe their last, no one knowing, says Elihu. Jesus had this same withdrawal of conscious life from the incorrigibly impenitent in mind when He exhorted His disciples not to fear men who could only kill the body and after that could do no more, but rather to fear God who is able not only to destroy the body, but also to destroy the soul in Gehenna. (Matt. 10. 28). Gehenna is the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where all the city refuse was burned to ashes – fitting symbol of the utter destruction of the wicked.

Elihu has his own comment on all this; he wants to show that he himself fully endorses that which God has decreed. "*The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he bindeth them*" (36. 13) he says. These are they who deliberately flout the decrees of God; they continue in their own way, storing up wrath against a day of reckoning, taking no heed, or pretending to take no heed, of the constraints (binding) God is putting around their freedom to work the works of evil. So, says Elihu, endorsing and declaiming the inevitable judgment "*Therefore let their soul die in youth, and their life be wounded by messengers of death; because they afflicted the weak and helpless; and He will vindicate the judgment of the meek*" (36. 14-15 LXX). This is a strange expression, the unregenerate soul dying in youth, but it is founded upon the idea that, compared with the everlasting ages of life stretching out before the righteous, the death of the wilfully wicked at the end of the Messianic Age of trial will assuredly seem like a "dying in youth". Isaiah uses a similar expression, speaking of the same thing, when he says (Isa. 65. 20) "*As a child shall one die a hundred years old; the sinner at a hundred years old shall be accursed*". It is noteworthy too, that Elihu attaches

a prominent reason for the condition of heart which leads to the judgment "they afflicted the weak and helpless" which was later to be repeated by our Lord Himself. Reverting again to the parable of the Sheep and Goats, which pictures this same division between righteous and unrighteous in the Last Judgment, the unrighteous question the cause of their condemnation and the King tells them that they failed to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the captive. (Matt. 25. 41-45). The prime fault of those who lose life at the last is their failure to accept and live up to the fact that all men are interdependent, living not unto themselves but unto others, and without thus taking their place in the community of life God has ordained they have left no basis for the continuance of their conscious existence.

There now comes another passage (36. 16-21) which has given the translators a great deal of trouble; several of the best versions render from diametrically opposite standpoints and this largely because it is difficult to discern from the verses themselves whom Elihu is addressing or to whom he is referring. The result is that verse 16 at least is almost unintelligible. The clue to Elihu's meaning comes with the realisation that verse 21 concludes his discourse on the Love of God and verse 22 commences his fourth discourse, that on the Power of God. Since both the previous discourses concluded with a direct warning and injunction to Job himself it would seem reasonable to expect the same climax here, and this assumption opens the door to the understanding of 36. 16-21. Ewald and Cook in their time – a long time ago now – have each played their part in the elucidation of this rather difficult part of the text, and the rendering here adopted is theirs, with the assistance of Leeser, and a partial retrogression to the Authorised Version "*And thou also hast been seduced from listening to the voice of affliction by thy boundless prosperity, and by the ease of thy table which was full of fatness. But if thou art full of the judgment of the wicked, judgment and decree will support each other. Because there is wrath, let it not seduce thee in thine affliction and let not the great riches which thou couldst offer in atonement turn thee aside. Will he esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength. Desire then not eagerly the night, when nations pass away in their place. Take heed, turn not*

thyself to wrongdoing, so that thou wouldst choose this because of thine affliction". (36. 16-21).

Here is Elihu's injunction to Job as he concludes his eulogy on the Love of God. Job, he says, has allowed himself to become oblivious to the presence of sin and suffering in the world by reason of his own prosperity and richness of possessions. The fact that Job is said to have done many good works among the poor and unfortunate during the time of his prosperity need not be thought to deny that fact. Many a man distributes from his store to mitigate the evil in the world with sincerity and true sympathy for the unfortunate without that evil and that distress really cutting him to the heart as an intolerable thing which God Himself abominates and is working to eliminate from His creation. Many of us are like that today, rich in good works and generous with our talents and opportunities but still not sensing the inherent evil of this world order under which such evil things are possible. Now Elihu is trying to point out that this attitude of mind is one which is likely to win a good man over to the side of evil, even though unwittingly. Many an upright Christian, blessed with this world's goods, has used his wealth mightily in the relief of pain, suffering, insufficiency and at the same time has gone on supporting the established institutions of this world which are themselves largely responsible for that pain, suffering and insufficiency. To that extent he is hindering the powers of the world to come. And to that extent also such an one will suffer loss when the kingdoms of this world give place to the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, as they surely will. That is what Elihu meant when he went on to say "*But if thou art full of the judgment of the wicked, judgment and decree will support each other*". The judgment is the Divine expression of condemnation against the institutions and kingdoms of this present evil world; the decree is the Divine command which goes forth to replace this world by the next, under the kingship of Christ. Condemnation; command; the one supports the other and the Divine sentence is put forthwith into execution. Job is warned against finding himself, even in measure, on the side of anti-God – we would say antichrist – when that time comes. Although this condition does now exist in the world, says Elihu, do not allow the thought of the great riches you can expend on

godly works blind your mind to the fact that God will not esteem such gifts to anything like the extent He will esteem an intelligent self-surrender of heart and life to know and do the will of God. "*Hath the Lord as great delight in sacrifices and burnt offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*" asked Samuel scornfully of Saul. Neither gold nor all the forces of strength, all the means of power and influence a man may possess, are of any interest to God, says Elihu. He might have said, as the Psalmist did on a later occasion, that all the silver and gold is God's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. So Job must not turn his thoughts and bend his interests to the affairs of this world of darkness, so soon to pass away. "*Desire not eagerly the night, when nations pass away in their place*". Job's desire, and ours too, must rather be for the new day, the new world of light and life, when the nations will walk in the light of the New Jerusalem and enter, undefiled and clean, through its gates to enjoy the everlasting felicity of the eternal city. "*Take heed*" is Elihu's solemn warning in the face of all this, "*turn not thyself to wrong-doing, so that thou wouldest choose this because of thy affliction*". Job had known prosperity and ease, and served God even if, as Elihu seems to infer, he had not plumbed the depths of God's love for man and appreciated what is involved in the sin of the world. Now he was plunged into affliction and penury himself; take heed, urges the younger man, that you do not forsake your earlier faith because of this adversity, but on the contrary use it as a means of realising, as you never could realise before, the depths of suffering and sin in which this dark world is sunk, and the necessity for stern allegiance to the things of God that you may become an instrument in His hand for the recovery of the world from that sin and that suffering.

Here Elihu rests his case. He has now discoursed on three of the Divine attributes. Wisdom, Justice and Love. Later he takes up his fourth and last thesis, and interprets to Job the philosophy of suffering against the background of the Fourth Divine attribute, God's Power.

(To be continued)

F. A. Shuttleworth

A PEOPLE FOR A PURPOSE*Thoughts on the
Call of the Church***2. Standing Fast**

"Ye are a chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a People for a Purpose, that you may declare the perfections of Him who called you from darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2.9).

Success in any kind of business requires a constant study of ways and means. Self-discipline, training and single-minded devotion in the chosen field of attainment are the means by which victories are won. In all spheres of human activity the dedicated gather to discuss work, methods and ideas, to compare notes, to stimulate effort. They think, talk and live in the atmosphere and language of a consuming purpose. The desire to achieve, to excel in their chosen course dominates thought, speech and action. Their aim is not only to get to the top but to stay there. In the world of sport the athlete must keep himself in top form. In business and the varied trades, arts and sciences the participants must keep abreast of all that is new, constantly setting fresh targets and continually endeavouring to achieve better results.

History is a witness of man's struggle to achieve. All biography is the story of the human will battling against desperate odds, overcoming obstacles and handicaps which have appeared insurmountable and formidable, that a selected purpose might be fulfilled. For the perishing laurels of earth men will endure hardship and discipline. They will sacrifice time, money, comfort and pleasure in a strict training. With concentrated zeal they will keep their eye upon the prize amid the keenest and fiercest competition. For unsubstantial rewards, the fickleness of public favour, the transient light of fame, they will dare all, risk all, solve problems, and overcome difficulties with a courage, tenacity and painstaking diligence which commands admiration. Mistakes and misfortunes can mar or halt any career in mid-stream, turning the finest dreams and ambitions into a barren waste of bitterness and regret.

The crown of life which God offers to those who choose to work with Him upon His purpose is no empty bauble. It is a prize well worth the striving, an honour to be earnestly coveted, a position so enduring that Jesus often concluded

His many parables illustrating its joys with the chagrin of those who would fail to attain the glorious office of permanent association with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. Neither mistakes nor misfortunes can spoil this career for both are, by the power of God, made to serve the purpose.

In any work, confidence is a prime essential to success. The prize must be a certainty and its attainment a possibility. A modicum of self-confidence is necessary, for the prizes of life seldom go to the timid or the wavering. Courage, staying-power, determination and the will to hold on when the less resolute drop off in doubt or despair are valuable assets to any candidate for high office, honours, success or victory.

The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that there is a prize, a high-calling, a lofty position offered and open to those with the heart and courage to *"so run that they may obtain"* (1 Cor. 9.24-25). *"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2.10).

Faith makes reward possible. There is a toughness and strength about faith which enables its possessor to stay the course, to surmount obstacles, to believe the impossible. To the hardy soul, the very hardness of the way is a challenge. Every setback is a call for greater energy and determination. It is easy to give in to difficulties, to allow handicaps to drag back, to be resigned to defeat, to accept that a thing cannot be done, but faith will come up out of every struggle, prepared to go on undeterred, to live and fight the hard way, laying hold upon the promises of God as upon the mighty Rock which endures unmoved all the currents of change and the force of circumstances.

"If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3.29). To be of the lineage of Abraham is to have inherited a mighty faith. This man who was given two great titles, "The Father of the Faithful" and "The Friend of God", holds a high place in the purpose of God because of his unstaggering faith and unwavering loyalty. At the behest of God he forsook all that was familiar and doubtless treasured, going out into the unknown, a wanderer, a pilgrim, an exile, trusting in promises that

seemed impossible of fulfilment. Time and nature were against him. Circumstances tried him but he remained "*strong in faith,*" being, "*fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.*" (Rom. 4.20,21).

The emphasis was upon "He". His was an implicit trust in the power and wisdom of One whose omnipotence he freely acknowledged, whom he worshipped and served with unquestioning devotion. If He said so then He could and would. Events proved that He did, so justifying the faith of this founder of a race, and providing a stout anchor for the hope and courage of those who were to follow on as members of an illustrious household.

Even when his hope was realised, he was asked to give up, by his own hand to slay his heart's treasure, to sacrifice his dream of future blessings. Without question, with intelligent loyalty to him who had made certain rich promises, he prepared to surrender the most cherished fruit of his faith without yielding any of the confidence in Him who had given and who now asked him to give up. It was no impulsive gesture, no spur-of-the-moment decision, but the act of a reasoning courageous faith which led him to the farthest point of renunciation, still believing in the rightness of God's judgment, in His willingness and ability to do the impossible (Gen.22.10-12; Heb. 11.17-19).

The attitude of the three young men cast into the fiery furnace provides another classic example of the tough, unwavering quality of genuine faith "*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ... but if not we will not serve thy gods*" (Dan. 3.16-18). This is not merely faith assured of deliverance from the threat of evil. It is unwavering, unyielding loyalty though the very worst should happen. "But if not" prefaces a steadfast purpose, a strong determination to hold on without doubt or question if the choice be life or death. To such souls the greater calamity was to let go of God. With that other grand hero Job, their language was, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him".

It is this same quality of faith, hard and crystal clear, formed to stand the eternal years, which God seeks to develop in the living stones of His Temple. Life provides the raw material. By willing co-operation with God the power is acquired

which turns it into everlasting use and beauty. To hope against hope, to renounce in silent submission what is most cherished, whether it be wealth, plans or dreams of usefulness, health, home or one dear to the heart, is to show that strong family trait which has marked every member of the household of faith. Should all doors close, all escape routes be stopped, desired blessings tarry until deferred hope clouds the spirit, the healing miracle prayed for with tears never occur, the life appear empty of service, yet the courage and loyalty of a great faith will say as did the Saviour, in his darkest hour, "Thy will be done". Overcoming faith, the faith which, with rock-like hardness, endures all the changes of life with steadfast courage, unwavering loyalty and uncomplaining acceptance, is the quality God seeks in His jewels, those temple stones prepared and perfected by unlikely means for a lofty purpose.

As in every other profession there are failures, so faith is halted by doubts and weakness of the mind and flesh. Such temporary discouragements are common. Those who have made the career of the Spirit their choice have this advantage over the pursuer of the natural ambitions; God stands engaged to help in every need those who work with Him. None can fall below the everlasting arms. However oft they stumble those arms will set them on their feet again with infinite compassion. "*The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand*" (Psa. 37.23-24).

Are any weak or discouraged? "*My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" He gives the work and the strength. To admit weakness, to confess discouragement, is a prelude to the comfort of the rest in God. Do obstacles block the path to progress? There is nothing that divine wisdom and power cannot remove or surmount. "*With God all things are possible*" (Matt. 19.26). His presence goes ahead clearing the path (Prov. 4. 11-12). Faith stepping out finds stones rolled away, waters held back, closed doors miraculously opened and threatening troubles, if not altogether removed, at least deprived of their sting. Do handicaps impede? He sets men free to serve Him. The bondage of sect breaks down before Him. The

chains of creed fall off. He will have men to live for him unhampered by crippling dogmas or party shibboleths. Hindrances to active service are not always handicaps. They may be the very means by which He shapes a living stone for its place. There are infirmities of the mind, deep-rooted prejudices, obstinate private opinions which hinder the free flow of the holy, transforming spirit, which hold some as in a vice, which drag back from that full intercourse with God which fits a soul for His eternal Presence. "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*". (Gal. 5.1). There is no bar to entry for this prize. Do any lack education? He has not chosen the wise but the foolish to confound the wise. Do any lack wealth? He has not chosen the rich, but the poor – rich in faith (Jas. 2.5). Do any lack nobility? He has chosen the base, the despised for His purpose that the glory of the workmanship may be all His. Are any conscious of colour or social caste? The Lord is no respecter of persons. He looks not on the outer man but upon the heart. There is no inferiority before God the Father. There is only the human being with a capacity for learning, a faculty of progressing, of growing, of being moulded and shaped into a stone of spiritual beauty, of the quality which will endure forever. He overrules the mistakes of those who trust him, making their human frailty work within them a more transparent beauty. The misfortunes of life become the means of rubbing off the earthly dross. The weariness of sickness and the feebleness of

old age are but the polishing rags in his hand by which He adds the last bright lustre to his work.

Lest any should doubt or falter the Scriptures are strewn with encouragement. "*Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him.*" "*Consider Him, lest ye grow weary and faint in your minds.*" Moments come to all when it seems impossible that the ordinary life, faulty and frail, should ever be fit enough to share in the same place with the great High Priest. His example seems so far to out-shine all human effort as to defy imitation. It is when we look at others who have fought the good fight, who have left behind them a splendid record of steadfast faith and unwavering, patient endeavour, that the desire grows and the determination hardens, to follow them as they followed Christ.

"*We learn the greatest of all lessons when we mark in a struggling soul the triumph of the grace of God, when we see a man weak like ourselves, erring like ourselves, enabled by the force of a sacred purpose to conquer temptation, to trample on sin and selfishness, to rear even upon mistakes and failures the superstructure of a great and holy life.*"

This was written of the apostle to the Gentiles, who wrote for others "*Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"

(To be continued)

"*And if (thy brother) trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*" (Luke 17.4) That verse has well been called the "gospel of the seventh chance". It enshrines a principle of Divine dealing which has been measurably overshadowed in Christian theology by the zeal of believers for judgment upon sinners. That death is the wages of sin is a firmly established doctrine of Scripture; we do not always realise so clearly as we should that no individual soul will incur that penalty until God has used every weapon in His armoury to reclaim the sinner from the error of his way. Salvation is not a niggardly offer grudgingly held out before men and

quickly withdrawn if not accepted at the first presentation. "*I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live ye*" says God through the prophet (Ezek 18.23, 32) God will coerce no man's will, and one who deliberately refuses the way of life after full opportunity to understand and accept it, places himself beyond the reach of God; but it is true, as Dr Paterson Smyth wrote many years ago ("The Gospel of the hereafter") that "no one will be lost until the Heavenly Father has as it were thrown His arms around him and looked him full in the face with the bright eyes of His love and that of his own deliberate will he would not have him."

T. Holmes

JOINED TO ANOTHER*A study of our
relationship with Christ*

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7. 4)

In the Scriptures there are quite a number of relationships associating the faithful Church with her Lord. They are drawn from several varied spheres of life, and in consequence they set before our minds varied phases and degrees of intimacy and confidence. That of the shepherd and his sheep is quite easy to recall (John 10. 1-16), as is also that of the vine and its branches. (John 15. 1-8). Then there is that of the teacher and his pupils (Matt. 11.29), also that of the captain and his company. (Heb. 2.10) In addition we may cite that of the figure of a man, with its head and body members, as well as that of the high priest, with his associate under-priests. Each of these relationships has its own special lessons to teach.

In our text we have brought before our minds the relationship of a husband and wife; a relationship of the very closest and most intimate kind. The language of the few verses leading up to it may seem to be rather obscure at some points but there is no such obscurity about the words *"Ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead"* (RV).

The precise meaning of the words, *"joined to"* must be gathered from the context immediately preceding; and it is from this that the conclusion must be derived that the "joining to" is precisely that of the marriage bond. In verse 3, the words *"joined to"* cannot represent any other relationship than that of husband and wife bound together in matrimony, and since that is part of the introductory argument, the same two words must be allowed exactly the same shade of meaning when they are repeated again in our text.

In the course of his argument, Paul has been using as an illustration a certain law, which he calls *"The law of the husband"* (v.2). By the terms of that law a *"a woman that hath a husband is bound ... to that husband while he liveth."* This is because they have made an agreement in the presence of the law's representatives, in order to have that agreement rest on a lawful basis. If the

husband dies, the woman is automatically set free, both from the agreement and from that portion of the law that validated the agreement. She may still be subject to other statutes of law for other purposes but the husband's death releases her from the obligations and duties towards him, imposed by that specific feature of the law.

Seeing therefore that the force of the words *"joined to"* in verse 3 means the establishment of the marriage bond, it must also have the same force and meaning allowed to it in our text. In that case the text could read *"Wherefore my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law (exactly as the woman was by the death of her first husband) through the body of Christ that ye should be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead"*. Weymouth translates it, *"that ye should be wedded to another..."*. There can be no question as to what the *"joined to"* relationship really is.

The question might be raised, *"When are we to be married to Him who was raised from the dead?"* Some might say, *"Surely it cannot be before our resurrection days, when, being changed, we shall be like Him and see Him face to face!"* But the context will not allow of that post-dating of our union with the Lord. It indicates most clearly that we must be joined to Him here and now, in these present days and under these present conditions. To take away all uncertainty and equivocation on the point, Paul goes on to show that this marriage tie should result in 'fruit', that is to say there should be such 'issue' as is rightly regarded as the fruit of the marriage tie. There should be, as it were, children of the marriage brought forth as fruit unto God. The fruit which Paul specifically mentions refers only to our present life, as we shall see, there can be no doubt about the fact that the spiritually-minded saint of God is married to the Lord here and now, at this present time.

Perhaps at this point, thoughts about the Marriage of the Lamb in the Revelation symbolism will come to mind, as rebutting evidence. As every attentive student knows, that event is still a future happening, and does not in any way refer to these present days. That is a picture of its own with its own special setting and environment and should not be intermixed with Paul's argument in our text.

We must keep these marriage relationships separate and distinct each in its own place and age, and each will have its own special lessons to teach. Another might say, "But is not the Church spoken of by Paul as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11.2) over whose virginity he was exercised by a godly jealousy?" Is it not the case that the virgin Church is only as yet espoused to Christ, and awaits with ardent expectation the hour when she will be his bride when raised up from the dead? This also is a picture peculiar to itself and like the Revelation picture has lessons all its own to teach. It is the whole Church, en bloc, that will constitute the Bride of Christ, while in our text it is each individual, who already, while in this present world, is a Bride to Christ. Surely there is room in our thoughts just as there is room in the Holy Word, for both these pictures to lie side by side, the one being true of these present days, the other of the better times to come when we shall look on His blessed face!

The underlying foundation of our present marriage union with our Lord is that of the tribe or clan, in which situation a husband or wife not only bring forth children for themselves but at the same time for the clan. Every child added to a family is also an addition to the clan. When the safety and well being of the whole community hinge upon the numbers being sufficient to feed and protect them all, every new-born child added to the community is brought forth as fruit for the clan as well as for the family. In like manner the fruit of which Paul speaks, is not only fruit for ourselves but also 'fruit for God'. It is as though God was the patriarchal chief of the holy clan, and that every item of 'fruit' brought forth for Christ and ourselves, is fruit brought forth for God.

What then is this fruit, which by our union with Christ is brought forth for ourselves and God? Paul's argument begins in chapter 6 verse 1 in the question "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" To emphasise his own brief answer "God forbid" Paul adduces three pointed illustrations drawn from daily experience, of general occurrence and easy to understand. The first is that of a dead man, who, because he is dead can no longer be enticed by sin. No allurements and no artifices presented by sin can have even the slightest effect upon a corpse, for there is nothing left with which it can respond. The footstep

follower of Christ has been united with his Lord in death, united in the likeness of His death; hence being dead - to sin, there is (or should be) nothing left to respond to the enticements of sin. Although the Christian should count himself as dead to sin, he should count himself as alive to God - as having shared in the resurrection with Christ. This is a case, of course, of counting things that are not, as though they were; for though Christ Jesus has actually passed through death to endless life, we have not. We are still living in the realm of sin, yet, because we are so closely linked with Him, His victory is the pledge and token of our own. Hence, though still living in the realm of sin, sin is not to **reign** in our mortal body, that we should **obey** its commands. It is not to have **dominion** over us, but to be ignored because, by covenant relationship with Him, we are dead to this terrestrial world and alive to celestial things.

Paul's next point is that of the slave's relationship to his owner and lord; more particularly that of a man fallen on evil times, who hired himself until the year of jubilee, to a master for the price of his food and home. Hence the argument turns on the 'presentation' (see RV) of themselves either to sin or to God "*Know ye not that to whom ye present yourselves as bond-slaves unto obedience (to obey as slaves obey) his bond-slaves ye are ...*" Having presented themselves to God, it is He whom they should serve and obey, for in their presentation they had surrendered away their right to choose. Hence they could not render service to sin, for that would be like a slave disregarding his master's command in order to serve another man who had no rightful claim upon his services.

Paul's third point is that of our text, the marriage compact with Christ. Here the same theme carries through. It is still a question, "*Shall we continue in sin?*" that is under review. We still have 'God' and 'death' before us as the reigning Chiefs, requiring obedience from their bond-slaves. Hence we read (ch.7. 5) "*For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions ... wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*" When married to sin, we had brought forth our fruit unto death, for sin was to us a husband, while 'death' was as the 'chief of the clan'. Our 'fruits' therefore, were works of unrighteousness, uncleanness and iniquity. (ch.6.19). These wicked

works were as children to the unhappy marital relationship. Now wedded to Christ, the fruits we bring forth to God are works done in righteousness which tend to sanctification and purity (ch.6.19-22). These are as children born from our present relationship to Christ Jesus our Lord, as fruit unto God.

What then does the matrimonial relationship with Him who was raised from the dead mean to us in the present days? Obviously we cannot bring forth fruit unto God without Him. By the same token we cannot bring forth works to righteousness leading to holiness and sanctification without the vitalizing influence of His personality in our lives. As no woman can bring forth off-spring as a result of self-desire or self concentration, so can no Christian bring forth this fruit unto God as the result of self-desire and self-concentration. Christ Jesus our Lord is the first essential to such fruitage, and only as and when He and we come together in close intimate hallowed communion can fruitage result. This communion is not merely that which takes place when we gather together with others in His name. It is in the more private life - in the secret chamber, with the doors shut about us, that this deeper communion must take place. We must leave the throb and stir of our common work-a-day world and go aside with Him, not once, nor twice, but many times a day, if the full enjoyment of our relationship to Him is to be realised. What then does this array of obvious facts of the spiritual life mean to us? Have we ever stopped to realise what this secret contact with our Beloved can mean to us in peace and contentment, in rest of soul? Is not the woman who knows she holds the love of her wedded mate, among the happiest creatures this world can know? Can she not tell her hopes and fears, and find counsel and comfort for her hours of need? In Christ this can be multiplied by infinity and enjoyed without stint or limitation.

That is our side of things. Do we ever think of His? Do we stop to wonder what such communion means to Him? Do we ever think that He is also expecting something from us? Have we ever thought that the long nights Jesus spent in prayer, when here on earth brought pleasure **only** to Himself and **none** to the listening ear above the skies? If there was pleasure for the Father up there in His heavenly home, as the sinless lips poured

out their petitions here on earth, and there surely was, it is unthinkable that the risen One finds no delight or joy in our constant approach to Him? Is not the fervent love of our warm and tender hearts an object of keen desire by Him, exalted though He is? Is He, in His matrimonial relationship, only to give, and not also to receive? Even in the shepherd life, so travellers say, the sheep will sometimes go and lay their heads against the shepherd's knee evincing such affection for their keeper as their lower nature can command! Is there no appreciation awakened in the shepherd's heart by this act of animal affection for himself. If it is so in that rural scene, shall it not be more greatly so in the heavenly fold?

Have we ever thought how much we might pain the Beloved of our soul by our coldness and indifference to His claims? We may become far too busy with our hands to have time for Him in other ways, and so, though loving Him in all sincerity, be denying Him the joy in us He has every right to expect.

Perhaps at this point it may be permissible to touch upon a problem vital to our right relationship to Him. In so doing we may be pardoned if we presume to ask the nature of that response, which He, as the Bridegroom of our hearts has every right to expect from us. Can we say it is His desire that we set **our work for Him** as the prime objective of our Christian life? We stress the point that the work there spoken of is 'work for Him', not for ourselves. Again, we ask, Is it our 'work' that He most desires, or is there something else - a 'something else' which is represented in that exclusive deep relationship which a good man longs for from the only woman in the world whose life is linked up with his own? Does such a man merely want her in his household as a drudge? Or does he seek that deeper sweeter fellowship which constitutes the joys and sanctities of wedded life? Would it give him any satisfaction if he found her taking up the position of a drudge in the household all the time? Is that illustration setting our relationship to Christ on too low a place, or in a too human form? Indeed it is not, for there is nothing on this whole wide earth that can equal the pure human relationship of two hearts linked together by wedded love.

If then, there is that 'something else' on the higher place, which is He more likely to look for

and expect in us; just the mere service of our hands (our tongues and pens), or the warm fusing of our hearts with His in sweet and hallowing communion? There can be not the slightest doubt on that point! He could command the ravens and the winds to do Him service if the need arose; even the very stones would cry out if no other voice was at hand. From none of these could come that deeper satisfaction which a heart of love could expect and appreciate. Only from loving responsive hearts linked up in tender matrimonial relationship with Himself could come that flow of spiritual affection which could satisfy.

Having laid emphasis on that, let us ask ourselves, does this affectionate wife and loving helpmeet ever lose sight of the 'service' side of things? Does she never think of all the 'work' that must be done to keep the home clean and sweet? Indeed she does; it claims a great deal of her time and strength! But there is something much more than the 'slave's' response in the service which she gives: something deeper, sweeter and infinitely more satisfying. So also in the Christian life, the heart that has grown warm towards the Lord will bring hands and feet that are swift to serve at any moment and in any way. If we have been led to think that witnessing or work for God's kingdom or any other form of service for Him is to be accounted as the prime objective of our Christian life, let us think again. The prime essential of our lives is the bringing forth of fruit unto God, and to accomplish that, the close intimacy of the Lord with our inmost souls is imperative.

Fruit unto God will require at least two things. It will require shape and form, and it will require flavour and mellowness. It will require external shape and form in which the service reveals itself. It will require inward mellowness and flavour by which it commends itself. This can come to be only when He whom our souls desire, dwells with us and we with Him in love-linked fellowship. Given this, the fruitage in righteousness that tends

more surely to holiness and sanctification in very deed and truth, is sure to come. Will it take the form of handing out a tract or proclaiming the benefits of God's kingdom to a suffering world? Perhaps, though not essentially so. It can be any form of testifying to the grace of God, even though it be by patient endurance only, on some secluded bed of sickness.

What then should be our attitude to our Lord in our present wedded relationship to Him? Will you try to call to mind loving hands industriously engaged in irksome work yet saying all the while, "It is for Him"? Or picture in your mind the loving thought that scrapes the pocket to find the last penny for some little gift, saying the while, "It is for her!" Here is the gist and germ of the whole thing; the inner tie and the outer act. In other words, *'faith (confidence) working by love'*. That is the right relationship between heart and hand. It makes Mary (with her better part) and Martha one!

It is just that fervent thoughtfulness and intense desire, transplanted to the higher life, sublimated and enriched by the Holy Spirit's influence upon our spiritual affections that we need to feel and experience both in what we give to this marriage tie and in what we receive therefrom. If these are there, all other things will follow in due course and as a consequence. We shall never hesitate or forbear to work and labour for the dear One who is the object of our love, but neither shall we make the sad mistake of thinking more of the 'work' than of Him. Nor shall we forget that the all-essential thing is not what we can do for Him but what He can do for us. For after all, it is He, and He alone, as the husband in our marriage bond, who can induce and provoke in us, in those quieter moments which we spend aside with Him, those impulses and determinations which result in "fruit for God".

Abridged from
'The Herald of Christ's Kingdom.'

The Christian is a traveller, his life is a journey, Heaven is his end, his road lies through a wilderness. How earnestly and devoutly ought he then to pray "*O send out thy light and thy truth that they may lead me and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling!*" For surely "*the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the ways of life.*" The Word of God discovers to us our errors; it shows us where we

lost our way, and how we may find and recover it again. If we take this "lamp" in our hand, it will not only enable us to perceive the right course, but it will also direct us in every step, and guide our feet aright in the path of holiness and peace. Only let us apply our heart to the word of life and walk with God, then we may sing His praises as we pass through every trouble, and we shall sing them for ever.

A. O. Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN*Amos 3.1-15***4. The Devouring Lion**

Chapter 3 commences a new section in the prophecy of Amos. The next four chapters, 3 to 6, comprise a four-fold expression of the national failings and sins of Israel which were leading inevitably to the breakdown of their nationhood and their extinction at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians, which eventually came to pass just as Amos had foretold. Each of these chapters appears to look at one of the four broad sectors into which the structure of the nation could be divided. Thus chapter 3 looks at, and condemns, the nation's military power and its trust in warlike abilities. Chapter 4 looks at the commercial and social structure of the community, chapter 5 its religious organisation and its priesthood, whilst chapter 6 directs stern condemnation against the royalty and nobility, the kings and princes of Israel-Judah. The shortcomings of each are declared and the consequences that will inevitably follow. As a measure of the solemnity and emphasis with which Amos felt he had to invest these declarations he changed his former introduction "Thus saith the Lord" to each of his judgment-messages of chaps. 1 & 2 to "*Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you*" and he reiterates "*Hear this word*" three times as he proceeds with his denunciation.

These chapters are directed against both kingdoms, that of Israel and that of Judah. This is plain from ch. 3.1 "*Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt*". Although the two-tribe kingdom of Judah had remained loyal to the Davidic kingly dynasty and more or less so to the Temple worship of God, whilst the ten-tribe kingdom had frankly and avowedly gone over to self-styled kings and a pagan worship and priesthood, there was in the Divine sight very little to choose between them. They were both, each in its own way, disloyal to God, and the same condemnation was applicable to both. "*You only have I known of all the families of the earth*" He says (ch. 3.2) "*therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*". This was the chosen nation, all twelve tribes, ordained at Sinai to be a set-apart

people having a special commission with corresponding special obligations. They defaulted on the obligations and showed themselves unworthy of the special commission. They had undertaken to be set apart and above the surrounding nations, but proved in the end to be no better morally than those nations, wherefore God allowed them to experience the same vicissitudes of fortune as normally befell those other nations. And in no sphere was this more true than in that of national defence. Their military prowess, in which they prided themselves and trusted, proved to be no more effective than that of the peoples around them. Sometimes they won and sometimes they lost; at the end, when confronted by a vastly superior military power, they lost completely and the whole nation went into hopeless captivity and their land was left desolate. "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (ch. 3.3) demands the Lord. The two, of course, are Israel's God and Israel. How can they walk together when every act of Israel is in direct defiance of the express commands or pleadings of God? For God does not only command, in those things in which He has a right to command; He also pleads, in respect of those things which lie within the realm of man's own free will. In both these respects there was disharmony. It had been said of old time that Enoch "walked with God"; Noah "walked with God"; now Israel no longer walked with God.

So the Lord turns His attention to Israel's lamentable position, at this moment from the point of view of their military power and effectiveness of their defence, relying on their material weapons but without God. The background to His words is the increasing threat of invasion by the Assyrians, to which Israel was quite heedless. "*Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?*" He demands. "*Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?*" (ch. 3.4). The lion is Assyria; if the lion roars, it is because he is in the act of springing upon his prey, in this case helpless Israel. If he cries out of his den, it is because he has taken his prey into it, just as the Assyrians would very shortly now be taking the people of Israel captive to a strange land.

Can a bird be caught in a snare if no snare is set for him, or does a trap spring up unless it has taken something, he went on (ch. 3.5). In all this God was stressing the reality of the Assyrian threat but Israel would not listen. "*Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? Shall evil befall a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*" (3.6 RV). This is a military metaphor. The trumpet is blown in the street of the city to signify the approach of the invading enemy; the people run together in a frantic effort to defend themselves. But here the endeavour is fruitless; the invaders are too strong for them and before long the city is captured and the hapless populace subjected to all the horrors of warfare. This is the "evil in a city" of this verse. The expression is a little ambiguous. The A.V. text puts it that the Lord has done it, i.e., caused the evil, but in the marginal note, that the Lord will do something about it. Moffatt has it that "the Eternal is at work" and the N.E.B. "will not the Lord act?". It is possible to take the Hebrew text either way, but when looked at in the light of the following verse it is more likely that the sense is that the Lord will take action. Ch. 3.7 says "*Surely the Lord God will do nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets*". The Assyrians are on the march and nothing now can save Israel apart from the power of God. The Lord has done something to allow them thus to subjugate Israel and the Lord will do something else later on when the lesson has been learned – He will deliver Israel. That is to come about in a then future day and the only ones who know anything of those future plans of the Almighty are His servants the prophets. Amos was one of those prophets. He knew what the outcome was to be. But he could not proclaim that outcome just yet. He was commissioned now to declare the message of judgment. At the end of his prophecy he was to be permitted to reveal something of the purposes of God at the End Time when repentant and purified Israel is fully reconciled and restored to God and ready to enter upon their destiny of being a light to the nations.

There is much more in that seventh verse. It stands as an expression of a principle. There is never a time in history when no voice is raised to declare the significance of the times and the working of God. God never leaves Himself without a witness. No matter how irreligious the world

may have become, no matter to what low ebb faith in God may have shrunk, no matter how much it may seem that God has deserted mankind, there are always those – "watchers", to use our Lord's term – who are so in tune with the Almighty that they understand in appreciable degree what He is doing and will do. There is never a generation which does not have a witness given to the outworking of the Plan of God. And when, as in our day, the state of the world is one of confusion and disintegration, "men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking to the things which are coming upon the earth", the voice of the prophet is heard more intensively and a louder witness given to "those things which must shortly come to pass". Whenever God makes another move or introduces another factor in the outworking of His redemptive plan for mankind, He tells His prophets and they in turn tell the people, that they might have the knowledge, "whether they hear or whether they forbear".

At this point Amos stops speaking in metaphors and gives his hearers a vivid literal description of the warfare which is soon to afflict their land. History shows that there were three incursions of the Assyrians against the ten-tribe kingdom, the third culminating in the fall of Samaria and the depopulation of the land. All this is forthshown in the remainder of this chapter. Amos turns himself and looks to the south, calling upon the Philistines and the Egyptians to behold the judgment God is going to permit to befall Israel. "*Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, 'Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the tumults and the oppressions in their midst'. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.*" (ch. 3.9-10). The surrounding nations are bidden to take their stand and view the sad state of rebellious Israel.

Each stage of the three-fold judgment, the three incursions of the Assyrians, is solemnly introduced by a "*thus saith the Lord*". These were the Lord's words, not those of Amos. These were the judgments of the Most High, and only repentance, immediate and complete, could lift them. But Israel did not repent.

"*Thus saith the Lord God: an adversary shall surround the land, and he shall reduce thy*

strength, and take spoil from thy palaces” (ch. 3.11). Ten years after Amos uttered the words, when Menahem was king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria came with his army and demanded tribute in token of submission and allegiance. Menahem had no option but to give way; he handed over a thousand talents of silver – nearly a million pounds or two million dollars at to-day’s values – which he extracted from his unwilling subjects. *“Menahem extracted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth.... so the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not in the land”* (2 Kings 15.19-20). Truly, as Amos had prophesied, the adversary reduced his strength and took spoil from his palaces.

Five years later came the second judgment, more warlike and more severe. *“Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken that loll on the corners of divans in Samaria or on the damask cushions of a couch”* (ch. 3.12). 2 Kings 15.29 and 1 Chron. 5.26 tell how, in the reign of Pekah of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser (“Pul” in some texts is an alternative name for the same Assyrian king) came again and this time took half of the nation, chiefly those inhabiting the lands east of Jordan and in Galilee, captive into Assyria. So Pekah lost half of his kingdom at one blow, rescuing only “pieces” from the “mouth of the lion”. And whereas it was only money that was taken on the first occasion, this time it was the fate of many of the wealthy and the noble to be snatched away from their luxurious homes and life-styles and forced to join the dreary march across the desert to Assyria, never to see their homeland again.

But still the remainder did not repent, and so the final blow fell. Thirteen more years passed, and then Shalmaneser V of Assyria invaded Israel, laid siege to the city of Samaria, and after three years captured and destroyed it, taking all that were left of the ten tribes to Assyria to join the earlier captivity. *“Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord, the God of Hosts.”* An especially solemn pronouncement, this, for it betokened the end of the nation. *“In the day that I visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel ... and I will smite the winter house with the summer house, and the marble palaces shall perish, and the great houses have an end, saith the Lord”* (ch. 3.13-15). Bethel was the idolatrous religious centre of the land; that would be destroyed, and so would be the marble palaces of the kings – Ahab was the first to build himself a palace of marble – and the houses of the rich and influential. All was to be swept away and all their occupants transported to serfdom in Assyria.

So the military power of Israel is shown in this chapter to be as ineffective against the armed might of Assyria as would be an unarmed shepherd against a raging lion. Let the trumpet be blown in the city, it has no effect. The enemy will come and he will have his way. Now Amos turns away from the army of Israel, the generals and strategists and all whose profession is armed force, and looks at the merchants and the commercial magnates, the “idle rich” and the socialites. In chapter 4 he has a message for them.

(To be continued)

A. Spain

THE GLORY THAT IS TO COME

The Scriptures abound with pictures portraying God’s holy Temple, that house in which He will ultimately dwell with men. The visions described in Rev. 21 and 22 are the climax of these, but there is a wealth of detail in the O.T. providing many clues as to the building of this symbolic structure and the worship centred therein in days to come. The edifice known as Solomon’s Temple comes first to mind. Although this was built by Solomon, much of the material used, the plans and specifications for its construction and the order of

service, were provided by David. The gold, silver, bronze, precious stones and marble used in its decoration were provided by David and the chiefs and princes of the people. These were all free-will offerings, but David makes it quite clear that all these gifts came from God, and that they were only giving back what was His (1 Chron. 29). This temple was beautiful in every aspect, but its glory was that of the Divine Presence, which filled it with ineffable light.

The temple portrayed in Ezekiel’s visions is

also a picture of the temple of the future, and this too was filled with that same ineffable light. In these same visions the presence of God is seen leaving the city and its temple, to return later. This is a graphic portrayal of the result of Israel's defection and consequent rejection as a nation, but there are many prophecies which foretell their return to favour and the place they will occupy in relation to the future Temple.

The rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the priest give us an insight into this return to favour if it is viewed in the light of other prophecies. The word of the Lord which came to Haggai in the statement in chap. 2.6-9 makes it definitely topical today. God declares that once more He will shake the heavens, the earth, the sea and the dry land, and that He will shake all nations. Who will deny that this is now taking place and that men are trembling at the sights and sounds which indicate the hand of the Lord at work? In the midst of all this students of the Bible look rather at the outcome.

The word of God continues "*the desire of all nations shall come and I will fill this house with glory*". In the minds of many this "desire of all nations" is peace, based apparently on the closing words of vs. 9, but a critical examination of vs. 7 suggests that it is the desirable precious things of all nations that will come to the temple. Another thought is that the things valued by God will come, but other Scriptures seem to favour the first suggestion.

God declares that He will fill the house with glory, and that the silver and the gold is His. This is in line with David's declaration already quoted from 1 Chron. 29, but there are many other "desirable precious things" referred to in this connection. King Solomon is symbolic of the ruler in the New Jerusalem, and when the queen of Sheba visited him she came with a great caravan bearing spices, much gold and precious stones. The navy of Hiram brought eighteen tons of gold from Ophir with a wealth of sandal wood and precious stones. The traders brought tributes from all the kings and governors of Arabia. Every three years Hiram's navy brought gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. All the earth sought Solomon

and every man brought tribute, vessels of silver and gold, garments, armour, spices, horses and mules (1 Kings 10).

When the king's daughter (the glorified Church) is in the king's palace, the daughter of Tyre will be there with a gift, and the rich of the people will bring their treasures (Psa. 45.12).

While darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the people, Zion, prostrate with grief, is called upon to rise to a new life and shine. For her light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon her. Then the kings and nations gather to her light. Riches of the sea flow to her, and the wealth of nations is hers. Foreigners build her walls and kings minister to her. Her gates are never shut and the wealth of the nations will come in, headed by the rulers of the earth.

The word of the Lord continues "*the glory of Lebanon shall come to thee, the cyprus, plane and pine tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious*" (Isa. 60). The "*place of his feet*" makes particular reference to God's dwelling with men upon the earth (Rev. 21.3), but how can such gifts bring glory to God's holy temple? This great structure is not a building embellished with gold and silver, encrusted with precious stones, but a living vital organisation, having the glory of God as its light. Its foundations are the twelve living Apostles, its fabric is made of living stones, the glorified Church, its twelve gates are guarded by the tribes of Israel restored to favour. It is a place of assembly, its gates are always open, ready to receive the kings and the nations of the earth bringing their honour to it. But the glory of God and the Lamb is its light; how then can men's gifts contribute to its glory? Those who brought their most precious gifts to Solomon are symbolic of all that is proud, haughty and selfish in this evil world: none of these will bring glory to God, but men's hearts of stone are to be changed to hearts of flesh, and thus changed they will discern the glory of God shining from the temple in the future, and like the magnetic needle drawn to the pole will flock to this centre of assembly, and will add to the glory of God in the sense that He will be vindicated at last in the minds of men and angels.

Some persons follow the dictates of their conscience only in the same sense in which a

coachman may be said to follow the horse he is driving.

Whateley

John Thompson

THE TRUE VINE*A study in John's Gospel*

The grape vine is one of the oldest plants in the world and one of the most cultivated. Its products are legion and many of them are health promoting if rightly used: from grapes and wines, to raisins, sultanas, lexias, currants, on to grapeseed oil with its medicinal qualities, and grapeseed meal used in animal feeds.

Palestine's hills produced vines prolifically. In Moses' day a cluster of grapes from the valley of Eshcol took two men to carry it. In Psalm 80, Asaph described Israel as a vine planted by God on the mountains of Canaan, which came to cover the land from Jordan to the sea. Our Lord spoke of Himself as the True Vine, in contrast to the failed vine, which bore 'wild grapes' (Isa. 5. 2)

Vines are grown to bear fruit. The flowers are so small and insignificant that they are seldom noticed. They rapidly give place to fruit all along the myriad branches. There is usually a new set each year, as the vine is cut back to the stock each autumn. Christ's fruit is borne by innumerable branches, His disciples: initially the twelve, succeeded in each new generation by those who believed in Him through their word. Their fruit is love, joy, peace, answered prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. All these He stressed on that solemn last night with them. He spoke of fruit that would remain; what did He mean? Certainly lasting qualities of Christlikeness in each believer; but also preserved in each succeeding generation of believers throughout the age. The pruning He said fruitful branches would receive would include the hatred and persecution, which His true followers were to share with Him. This would result in more fruit, e.g. patience, longsuffering, strong character, generosity of spirit, compassion, sympathy and humility.

However a vine produces no fruit unless its branches remain vitally joined to it. It is a tragedy to see a vine 'bleeding' sap because a branch has been cut off in the growing season. Hence Christ's insistence that His disciples stay (abide) in living union with Him. This means both obedience to His teaching and a daily prayer fellowship with Him and the Father at the Throne of Grace.

He said His word had cleansed or pruned them. An example of this would be His call for them to

leave all and follow Him. They obeyed it: the less important things of daily life had been cut out of their lives, so freeing them for sacred service.

He insisted that they produce more and more fruit; and the way to do this was to remain in vital, organic union with Him, such as He had with His Father. This would result in His sayings remaining in them.

It would be a big task to list His Words (directions), His Sayings and His Commands (John 15.3, 7,10,12 and 14). Unless these are remembered and obeyed, the organic link with the Vine is weak and His voice is scarcely heard. It is too easy to say some of His utterances are inapplicable today. Who are we to pick and choose what we will obey? To obey is to please Him. To displease Him is to weaken our relationship with Him. We cannot then expect Him to keep His side of the bargain. "*If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.*"

One way to ensure that we know all the utterances of Jesus would be to read a New Testament with the words of Jesus in red print. Another would be to use a harmony of the four gospels, such as Ponsonby's "The Life and Teaching of Christ". All His words could be underlined, highlighted or marked in the margin, where one could add whether the passage comes under the heading of His Word, His Sayings or His Commands or prophecy. And then the best way to learn them is to practise them. If and when our prayers are not answered, we need to ask ourselves not only whether the prayers were right but also whether we have been keeping His requirements. Our prayers may be right ones but our relationship with the Master may be defective. "*IF ye abide in me, and my words abide in you. Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done for you.*" (John 15. 7). These two conditions must surely be implied when, three times on that memorable night He said that prayers **IN HIS NAME** would be carried out (John 14. 13; 15.16; 16.23) This double abiding would equip us to ask in His Name, on His authority, for we would be 'on His wavelength'. If we're **ABIDING IN** Him, if we're listening to and obeying Him, our prayers will be answered and

others blessed. **His** prayers were always answered. (See John 11. 41,42) What prayers - rather than hopes - have you had answered lately?

How does one become a branch of the Vine? From His side there is His choice. "*Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you ... to go and bring forth fruit.*" From our side, it is for us to believe **into** Him. The words 'to believe in or on' in the New Testament are mostly from the Greek 'to believe into'. Thayer says this means 'to have faith directed unto' or 'in faith to give oneself up to'. The act of faith unites us in a living relationship with Him: we become branches of the Vine or in Paul's figure, members of His Body. Further, Jesus said, "*He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him*" (John 6. 56). So we must feed upon His sacrifice, and obey His call to sacrifice: "*If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" (Luke 9. 23).

If we have done all this and still find that we lack love, joy, peace, if we miss out on the thrill of answered prayer, should we not ask ourselves what instruction, saying or command of His we are overlooking? Else we may find ourselves like the branch that is rejected by the Vine, (John 15.6) Jesus' two sermons, on the mount and on the plain,

comprise a summary of much of His teaching and are thus a good place to begin a spiritual check-up. (Matt. 5 - 7; Luke 6 and 12).

We have probably noticed that most of His exceeding great and precious promises depend upon our obedience. If we want to abide in Christ's love we have surely to keep His rules. "*Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" The command He stressed to His disciples was that they love one another, (John 15. 9-17). The disciples appear to have kept that requirement very well. But how well has it been kept by later generations of disciples? Do we not all fail? What is His solution to the problem? To abide in Him and let His words abide in us, as He insisted in the upper room. And that means more than listing or even memorizing them.

His prayer for us all was "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" (John 17. 2 1). To do what He did and taught must be the surest way of abiding in Him, uniting with fellow believers and making an impact on the world. This will bring much fruit, to the glory of the Great Vinedresser.

Derrick Nadal

GREAT DAVID'S GREATER SON

A study in attitudes

David had many sons. God said in his covenant with David that there would always be one of his descendants on the throne in Jerusalem. The condition of the promise was that they observed his laws (2 Sam.7.11-16; 1 Kings 9.3-9; 2 Chron. 6.7-11). Two of David's 'sons' are specially involved in God's fulfilment of that promise. Solomon, son of Bathsheba, succeeded to Israel's throne a thousand years before Jesus came. He was a man of great promise in his early years when God's hand was upon him. He prospered because he had the right attitude in the service of God and His people. The other 'son' was "Great David's greater son", the Lord Jesus Christ, who accomplished all God's will and never deviated from His purpose. Through Him the Messianic promises made to David have been and will be fulfilled completely.

When Solomon came to the throne he had the

world at his feet. He could have had all he wished for, providing what he did and what he wanted was within the compass of loyalty to God. Israel as a people had never been so united. God had promised that the Temple, His dwelling place should be in their midst. God blessed the young king with wisdom beyond measure in response to his request. From his ability to think and understand and remember there flowed into Israel all the wealth and good fortune that anyone could ever have dreamed about. Surrounding nations were subdued and they brought their tribute to Jerusalem. Monarchs came from afar to visit and admire the King of Israel and all the wonderful things in Jerusalem. His ultimate triumph was the building of the great Temple so that God could be worshipped by everyone in the way He directed.

Solomon's prayer at the opening ceremony and dedication of the Temple marks a development in

the understanding of God and His purpose. God had revealed something of His transcendent glory and of His willingness to bend near to frail mankind to save and restore them. Solomon foresaw that in the days to come, in spite of all that God had given to His people and done for them they would break His law and turn to the worship of idols. The consequences would be horrendous but Solomon saw that God could make provision for that happening and would forgive them if they repented and asked to make a fresh start. In the prayer recorded in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chron. 6 he acknowledged the breadth of God's covenant keeping love, that faithful love which was greater by far than anything man could imagine. Solomon began to look beyond the normal perception of 'God in His Temple', to a Creator who was larger than His creation yet who heard the cries of His people from His dwelling place and when He heard, forgave. Perhaps Solomon began to understand the lesson we are still learning today, that

'There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in His justice, though severe His judgments be.

For the Love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind

And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.'

In spite of his most remarkable insights into the wisdom and worship of the God of Israel, Solomon cast these aside for the trash of the pagan world. It seems impossible after all that he said in the prayer of dedication that he should stoop to the practices of the heathen and espouse their cause. He married many women and built altars for the worship of their gods. He had worshipped the God who heard and saw what was going on yet he honoured the gods who are not gods at all, who cannot see or hear and or know anything.

His Song of Songs reveals the blessing of the love of a beautiful woman. Yet he coveted his neighbouring monarchs' harems. Fulfilment of that desire and his measureless material wealth became a snare and delusion to him. Well might he moan at the end 'all is vanity'. The gifts that God had given to Solomon and all the understanding about his Maker, was as nothing to him compared to the temples of foreign deity which rose in God's

city of Zion. That was his great undoing. He began to treat the people that God had given him to care for as a shepherd in the same manner that foreign kings treated their serfs. His great architectural achievements were built on the forced labour of freedom loving Israelites. He could not escape the consequences of breaking God's laws which were designed to help the poor and oppressed. A life and a reign that began with such promise ended spiritually in tragedy. Outwardly to the eyes of the world, he may have seemed as majestic and successful as ever he was, but in the eyes of God, he failed. Power and wealth corrupt; 'absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Only those who remain close to God and demonstrate in their lives that they really love Him by obeying his commandments, can hope to escape the temptations of God's Adversary. How many of those who have crossed the stage of life as leaders in the national and international drama have kept themselves free from the power of sin? Solomon made himself a competitive leader in this world and suffered the awful consequences, losing the friendship of God and the means to govern in righteousness. The Scriptures are clear that we should pray for governments, authorities and leaders yet the words of the popular song continue to ring true, 'when will they ever learn?' Solomon did not, for had he done so, he might have remembered that God was waiting in His dwelling place to forgive his sin. If he would have only looked back and used the wisdom God had given him in earlier days to perceive his own folly there might have been some record of repentance. Perhaps there comes a time in life when we are so involved with this world, in its ignorance and illogical stupidity, that it is very difficult to recapture the Heavenly vision of earlier days. Those who have grown old in years and in the faith should ponder the attitude of Solomon, David's immediate successor, towards wisdom, worship and wealth (and perhaps women).

What of the attitude of that other Son of David towards the things in which Solomon came so spiritually low? Jesus acknowledged that all He was and all He had came from God and must be used to do His will. His wisdom, that was from above, was "*pure, ... peaceable, ... gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits without uncertainty or insincerity.*" (James 3.17 RSV)

The wisdom He expressed is without parallel and into His teaching is gathered the most wonderful revelation of the 'all wise God'. As we ponder the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels expressed for example in the 'Sermon on the Mount' and His parables, we find condensed into relatively few words the distillation of wisdom of all ages and much more. Their simplicity defies the wisdom of this world yet opens the finest knowledge to 'unlearned and ignorant men'. It is not the 'wise' of this world that perceive the beauty and clarity of His words. Yet He taught us the greatest lesson of all. **how we should live** to please God and to give of the best that is possible to every human being we meet, whether it's someone dear or but a passing acquaintance. His wisdom was so wonderfully revealed in the questions He asked and the answers He gave to other people's questions. He was concerned with the needs of the smallest child and the oldest man or woman. He treated with respect and tenderness those who were regarded as inferior by the clever, the religious and the powerful of this world. His loving wisdom reached out to the poor, the slave, the outcast and criminal, yet it also reached up and touched the lives of the great and powerful. He didn't break a 'bruised reed or quench a smouldering flax'. His wisdom took Him to the cross because He could accept God's will and submit to it. To many His wisdom cuts across the way ordinary people think. He stands human values on their heads but will in the end prove to be right. His moral standards will turn the human race from violence and greed and show them that the only way to receive what is good is to give what is good. He has already demonstrated that heavenly wisdom does not shout down nor destroy, but involves creativity and beauty.

In the Old Testament the wisdom of God is described and many have seen in that description the Son who came to Bethlehem. He grew in wisdom as a child (Luke 2. 40,52). In His ministry His words were seen by men around Him as wisdom unlike anything they had seen before (John 7. 46). Yet true to Hebraic wisdom, Jesus' teaching was intensely practical and at the same time revealed the character of the God He came to proclaim. To those who followed Him, He became their wisdom (1 Cor. 1.30) That wisdom was so ably contrasted by Paul with the wisdom of men.

To Him was given "*power and wealth and wisdom and strength*" (Rev. 5.12).

Jesus did not decry the use of wealth. Did you ever wonder what happened to the 'gold, silver and myrrh, which were the gifts of the magi? We do not hear Him criticising the wealthy homes of people whose hospitality He enjoyed and He must have been very grateful to those women who "*provided for them out of their means*" (Luke 8. 3). Jesus knew that wealth and the cares of the world readily get in the way of serving God and His Kingdom as He showed in the parables about a sower and of rich men. If a Christian has wealth, he has it as a stewardship to be used as God directs for the blessing of others. God does not give it to be hoarded, or used selfishly or even to be flung away uselessly.

Our Lord's first interest was, and still is, in the wealth that doesn't spoil or become stolen. His primary concern was in the treasure that will retain its value in the world to come. This world's wealth rapidly loses its value according to conditions and circumstances prevailing in the Earth. Not so that wealth of character which mellows with keeping because it is constantly being used for others. "*There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet but it tendeth to poverty*" or as in the more familiar language of the REV "*One may spend freely and yet grow richer; another is tight-fisted yet ends in poverty.*" (Prov. 11.4). The action of giving is true wealth and it was the Lord who said, "*Happiness lies more in giving than receiving*" (Acts 20.35).

Jesus made clear in two specific references His attitude to worship. When tempted by the Devil to worship him (Matt. 4.10) He pointed to the words of Moses (Deut.6.13) where the awesome fear of worship can be ascribed to God alone. His second pronouncement about worship was to a woman by a well in Samaria. She wanted to know the correct place to worship God. Jesus gently replied that there is no correct place but only a correct attitude to approach 'the Father'. The God of Israel did not inflict terror upon His people but wants them to approach Him as a child may approach an earthly father. What a revelation! How meaningful! Jesus was teaching the woman that the One whom she wanted to worship as the mighty Creator of the Universe, the friend of Abraham, desires to receive His children as a father, so that they can, in loving

joy, focus all their attention upon Him. This should have been the worship of the hearts of God's people from ancient times. This is the worship of those who place their trust in Him now. This will be the attitude of all who truly want to accept Jesus as their Saviour, now and into the years of eternity.

It is not the terrified reaction of sinners hiding from a God wanting to 'get His own back' but the willing and loving response of those who have discovered how much He has done to make life total bliss. Well did Jesus say to those who sought a sign "*What is here is greater than Solomon.*"

A.O. Hudson

ARISTARCHUS

He is mentioned only five times in the New Testament, casually, as though he was of no particular importance. Yet reading between the lines, and noting how close he seemed to be to the Apostle Paul, it may well be concluded that Aristarchus was a stalwart character who played a relatively significant role in the busy missionary activities of the great Apostle.

He is first mentioned in the story of the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19) when, in company with a fellow-worker, Gaius, he was hurried into the amphitheatre by the irate citizens, angered at the threat posed to their goddess Diana by the faith preached by these men. It is said there that they were Paul's "companions in travel"; from a reference in Acts 20.4 it emerges that Aristarchus hailed from Thessalonica in Greece. It is likely therefore that the two men first met when Paul came to Thessalonica during the course of his second missionary journey (following the dream of the man calling him to "*come over into Macedonia and help us*": (Acts 16.9; 17.1), some five or six years previously. Paul's party at that time included Timothy, Silas, and Luke. It is very possible that before leaving Greece for Ephesus Aristarchus had given up his occupation in Thessalonica and thrown in his lot with the Apostle.

Does this mean that as a completely new convert he was prepared thus to share the itinerant and arduous life of those who travelled with Paul preaching the gospel of the kingdom? It could have been so, but would Paul on the other hand have been likely to accept an untried man, still new in the faith, for so important a duty? In a similar situation he chose and accepted Timothy at Lystra (Acts 16.1) only after the local Christian communities had given him a glowing report as to the young man's qualities, and he had known the faith long enough to have become reasonably mature. It might well have been that something of

the same was the case with Aristarchus. It is true that the church at Thessalonica was founded by Paul on the occasion of his first visit, but the tone of the narrative, "*some of them (the Jews) believed ... a great multitude of the Greeks ... of the chief women not a few*" seems to indicate a readiness to believe and organise into a community separate from the synagogue which could imply that many of them already knew of and had accepted much of the Christian gospel prior to Paul's visit, perhaps without separating from the synagogue, and it only needed the coming of the Apostle and the clearer light he could shed on the elements of the faith to induce the formation of the Thessalonian church. It might well have been that one or more citizens of Thessalonica - perhaps Aristarchus himself - had been at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and heard the Apostles preach, and taken the news back with them. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Aristarchus was already partially instructed in the faith, already a partial believer in Christ, when Paul met him, and that the Apostle, recognising some sterling qualities in this man, invited him a couple of years later to join him. So when the third missionary journey was in progress this stalwart Greek found himself working with Timothy, Silas and Luke.

The next mention of Aristarchus is about a year later. After the riot at Ephesus, Paul had gone back to Greece, revisiting the churches he had founded during his second missionary journey, and after six months or so set out for what was destined to be his last visit to Jerusalem, from where he was sent to Rome. Quite a party accompanied him on this occasion, and Aristarchus was one of the party (Acts 20.4). Most of them left Paul at various points on the ensuing journey, in the interests of various commissions and duties, but when at last Paul arrived at Jerusalem Aristarchus was still with him, together with Luke and Trophimus at

least. He had now been a companion in travel to Paul for something like five years.

There followed Paul's two years imprisonment at Caesarea under Felix and then his voyage to Rome. Aristarchus was still with him. Luke relates in Acts 27.2 that when the ship set sail from Caesarea "*Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us*". Luke's own sterling loyalty to Paul, and his unflinching refusal to leave his friend no matter what vicissitudes or misfortunes may befall, is well known. It is not so easily realised that Aristarchus also displayed much the same characteristics, and was with Paul almost as long as was Luke.

With Luke, he shared Paul's two years imprisonment at Rome. This we know from Paul's letter to the Colossians (ch. 4.10) in which he says "*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus*" (Mark). The latter, it is known, made his own way to Rome and spent some time there with the Apostle during those two years. The reference to "fellow-prisoner" probably means that Aristarchus had voluntarily elected to stay with the Apostle while he was detained in Rome. A round dozen or more, from Greece and Asia, came and went at various times during that two years, but Aristarchus and Luke were there all the time. Another greeting from both these stalwarts appears in the epistle to Philemon (Philem. 24) at about the same time and that is the last that is definitely stated of Aristarchus. Still with the Apostle, still waiting to know what the Roman authorities were going to do, still preaching the gospel in Rome.

When, at the end of the two years, Paul was acquitted and free to go where he liked, what happened to Aristarchus? Of those who visited Rome during this period the subsequent movements of all can be accounted for except those of Aristarchus. All others, except Luke, left Rome for various Greek and Asian churches. Luke accompanied Paul wherever he went during the ensuing five or six years of which nothing is recorded and was with him when we are able to

pick up the thread again. The logical inference is that Aristarchus stayed with him also. If in fact Paul did occupy that silent six years with a missionary tour through Spain, Gaul and Britain, which is the most likely hypothesis, then these two were his companions in that tour. When Paul comes again into sight he is journeying through Dalmatia and Illyricum and Greece, thence across Macedonia to Berea, voyaging to Crete and back to Nicopolis on the west coast for the winter. (1 Tim.1.3; Titus 3.12) then through Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi to Troas, where he was arrested for the second time. From there he was taken to Rome, but now only Luke was with him. The implication is that Aristarchus was left in one of the Greek communities – probably his old home at Thessalonica – at Paul's request, to serve the interests of the faith, and that is as far as logical inference can trace him.

He was a constant companion of and fellow-worker with the Apostle Paul for something like thirteen years, sharing with him the toils and trials of the way, steadfast in his chosen mission of declaring the good tidings of Christ. Luke was the only one who could claim a longer period of companionship with Paul; he joined Paul several years before the other man came on the scene and remained with Paul until the Apostle's death. There must have been a special friendship between these two; they were both Greeks, they both owed their enlightenment to Paul, they both travelled with him more consistently than any others, more so even than Mark or Timothy, both of whom had other pastoral charges to administer at different times in their careers. His biography, had it been written, would surely have been of absorbing interest to all who realise what a debt is owed to these stalwarts of the middle First Century who, with Paul their acknowledged leader, blazed the trail of Christianity for us to follow. As it is, all we can do is raise our hands in salute to that hardy soul whom we only know in Luke's words as "Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica".

The truth of the thing is only one of the tests to which it must be put. We may find a matter to be true and yet not find it to be worthy of our thought, dishonourable. Who does not know that there are dishonourable and dishonouring thoughts, the pondering of which not only wastes valuable time,

but instead of bringing a reward, a blessing for the time spent upon them, entails a loss, a disadvantage, in that it leaves a dishonourable stain in our minds, unworthy of us as "new creatures" in Christ Jesus?



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 5 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1999

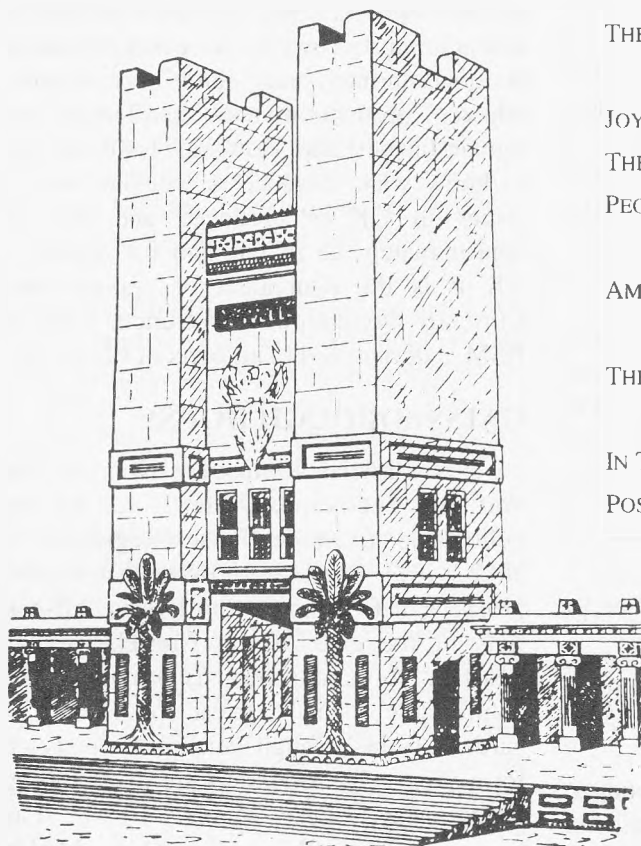
Published September 1st

Next issue November 1st

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.*

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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
(Registered Charity 1064607)
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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NOTICES

'THE EXODUS'

In this issue we re-introduce a series which appeared in the 'Monthly' thirty-six years ago under the general heading of 'Bible School'. It is being completely revised in a simpler and updated style on the suggestion of the original author. It is hoped that it will be interesting to younger readers and we commence with 'The Exodus.' It is planned DV to add other books of the Bible to this series if it proves to be helpful, which may include, as in the original series, 'Genesis'.

INTRODUCE A FRIEND

Your continued interest and support as a reader is greatly valued. Why not introduce the '*Bible Study Monthly*' to a friend? We shall be pleased to send the '*Monthly*' to any name and address that readers submit to us, for a six-month trial. Booklets listed in the March/April issue are sent free - a pleasant addition to your greetings. Please address all such enquiries to: Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham. NG13 9JL.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GIFTS TO BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION.

Postage is a large item in the B.F.U. budget. One way of keeping costs down is to send acknowledgements for gifts with your next issue of the B.S.M. If a receipt is required immediately please make a note of this in your letter or on the renewal form. Please make sure the cheques are made payable to '**Bible Fellowship Union**'. It may be necessary to return cheques that are not so made payable.

COST OF THE MONTHLY

Readers occasionally write concerning subscription to the '*Bible Study Monthly*'. There is no subscription for this magazine, it is sent out free and is supported by gifts for which we are grateful. A good printer and careful economics have allowed production and distribution costs to remain fairly stable. However, for those who wish to know what these costs are, one copy for six issues in UK is produced and sent out for approximately £6 in UK and for readers outside UK it is the equivalent of approximately £8. Currently circulation is just under 1700 and the BSM is despatched to all parts of the world.

GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE

This Christian Retirement Home at Milborne Port near Sherborne, Dorset is run by the Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust (Registered Charity No.273737). There are now eight residents, with prospect of two more, who live in self-contained flats in the care of the Housekeeper and her assistant. A midday meal is provided. There are comfortable lounges, guest rooms and pleasant gardens. Gainsborough welcomes friends who visit for a short stay. Bookings are made through Mrs Gwen May, West Moors, Upton, Langport, Somerset. TA10 9NL (Tel: 01458 241346 early evenings please).

Other enquiries should be addressed to Derrick Nadal, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham. NG13 9JL (Tel: 01949 860416).

Derrick Nadal

LIVING BY FAITH

A practical doctrinal essay

Almost everyone needs to exercise faith in matters of daily living. We all learn to trust other people in all kinds of ways. Living in the modern world would be very difficult if we didn't trust people who affect our lives. An element of trust is needed just to walk along the road. We have to believe that others using the road will behave in such a way that we shall return safely. When we buy food we accept that it will do us no harm because of our past experience. If we did not trust others we would live very isolated lives always struggling to obtain the simplest needs. Our progress in every aspect of life depends to some extent on faith in people, their products and their actions. When people keep their word we develop confidence in them and we lose that assurance if we are let down. There are various forms of trust and some of these are very special, as for example the relationship between parent and child or teacher and student. Happiness in marriage demands trust between husband and wife. Lack of trust, for whatever reason, promotes fear, envy and conflict.

Faith in the biblical sense usually refers to the faith of men and women in God. Although Heb. 11.1 is regarded as a definition of faith, it would be rather abstract and impractical without the examples of faithful people which follow in that chapter. From the records of the lives of men and women whose adventures are mentioned in Hebrews, it is clear that faith is very much a part of the relationship between God and His people. God, in His holiness, is able to accept us and to change us because we trust Him. We believe that when He says He will forgive and renew us. He really means it. He wants us to be His own children but sin and unbelief create barriers that separate us from Him. In Jesus' parable of 'two sons', the younger boy needed to believe that his father might accept him back even as a servant, before he could make the return journey and discover his father's love.

Looking again at Heb. 11, William Barclay, in his commentary, translates v.1 "*Faith means that we are certain of the things we hope for, convinced of the things we do not see.*" If we were to apply those ideas to the weather, our trust might be in the person making a weather forecast. If there is repeated inaccuracy in weather forecasting we may

be led to ignore weather warnings and have no confidence in the science of meteorology. If we were thinking of those words relative to our career prospects, our faith might be based upon the known honesty and generosity of our employer. In each example our confidence for the future would be built upon past experience and in hope for better things to come. Our trust would be in someone's reputation and their fulfilment of promises. Constantly we ought to be looking for evidence that other people can be trusted, because social units however large or small can only operate if there is a measure of trust between the people involved.

Jesus appears to have had some surprises concerning people's belief in Him and about what He was doing and saying. He was shocked by the unbelief of His fellow Jews (Mark 6.6). For many centuries God's people had enjoyed the growing revelation of their Creator. They had inherited the promises made to their Patriarchs who had been great men of faith. These were not abstract ideas but down to earth assurances that could be tested in their own experience. Israel possessed the Law given through Moses and if they obeyed it in the spirit in which it was given they would discover that God's rules really work. The unfolding pattern of God's purpose came through the prophets. Their messages told the people of Israel what God was like and what He was doing. Into that revelation was woven the eternal loving desire of the Almighty Creator to express His friendship to His creation on Earth. That too was something that could be tested by experience. God doesn't expect blind credulity or superstitious hopefulness. As if all that He had given was not enough, God sent His Son to demonstrate His love in flesh and blood. Jesus showed in word and action just how much God cared. Gentiles seemed to notice it more readily than Jews. Perhaps they had not been blinded by their own preconceived ideas as to what God ought to be like and what He ought to be doing. How the Master rejoiced as He said "*O woman, great is your faith!*" (Matt. 15.28; see also Luke 7.9). The simple souls in Israel, whose minds had not been clouded by dogma and ritual reached up in faith to His mighty power and were healed of their diseases. (Luke 7. 50). Those whose hearts

cried out "*I believe, help my unbelief!*" were rewarded by seeing and understanding the signs of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mark 9.24; see also Luke 17.5). Jesus put His finger on the root of the problem when He told the disciples that "*This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.*" (Mk. 9.29). Effective prayer is not intoned in archaic language of a bygone era. Nor is it concerned to lecture God about His own plan and purpose. It is the outpouring of a heart that has a desperate need and that speaks in today's language about today's experiences. It is the most effective way to strengthen faith. People of God who wish to dispel doubts and totally trust in the Lord must live a life of prayer. Faith then becomes a shield (Eph. 6.16) which quenches the darts of doubt and keeps the enemy at bay. We may be busy in serving the Lord and we may give much time to studying the Word, but those activities are only effective when we have continuous personal contact with our Heavenly Father.

The heart of the Gospel is **'to believe'** that Jesus is God's son, sent to Earth to show us that God has a way of mending broken lives – of making men and women whole. Repeatedly Jesus urged the disciples to have faith; to believe Him (Matt. 17. 20; Mark 11.22). He was very concerned about their absence of faith and the fact that they would not trust in the living God for their daily needs (Luke 12.28). Faith to them, as members of the Hebrew race, should not have been a passing incident or localised interest. Faith is the very atmosphere of life, entering into every tiny detail of what it is about. Their faith was not the superficial religion of idol worshippers. Their God was real, with eyes to see and ears to hear. He was the Creator, steadfast and reliable, who made covenants which lasted from century to century, and who could be relied upon to keep promises which He had made two thousand years before. Such eternal love demands the abandonment of self interest and claims our willingness to let God do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. What He gives to us is not a reward for anything we have done for Him but the outpouring of merciful generosity in response to our faith. Nothing is too hard for Him; there is nothing that He cannot do if it is good and right. Therefore Jesus was able to say "... *whatever you ask in prayer you will receive, if you have faith.*" (Matt. 21. 22)

Justification before God, His forgiveness and cleansing from sin, is received as an act of faith. We must be willing to cast ourselves upon the mercy of God and realise that He is more ready to forgive our sin than we are to request that forgiveness. Faith does not stop there. It is grateful for the forgiveness of the wrongs we did yesterday and today. It goes on in thankfulness and responds in obedience to His revealed will. Faith is trust in God and the old hymn rightly exhorts 'trust and obey'. That obedience leads us to action. James wrote that "*faith without works is dead*" or to use the REV "*So faith, if it does not lead to action, it is by itself a lifeless thing*" (Jas.2.17). Faith in Jesus Christ does not promote a lazy religion. It is a living piety which grows into a vigorous relationship with God and His dear Son.

"*Faith comes from what is heard*" (Rom. 10.17); so writes Paul in his discussion about the need for the Gospel to be preached. While there is a constant and urgent need for the Church to preach the Gospel yet a great many of the seeds of faith are sown among the members of our human family or among friends and acquaintances. Nor is communication of the Gospel always in the language of the tongue but in the kindly actions and thoughtful patience of daily life. A life that has real trust in Jesus Christ has its own manner and method for telling the Good News. What is 'told' is referred to in Scripture as 'the Faith'. The content of the preaching of the early Church rapidly became '*that faith which God entrusted to His people once for all*' (Jude 3). That which we believe in, which shapes our daily lives, is that which is spoken of as 'the Faith'. It is not the complex interpretations of the Gospel which form 'the Faith' nor is it the personal opinions of a few faithful souls who persuade themselves that they have the whole truth and nothing but the truth and nobody has it quite like them. That which may be described as 'the Faith' is that which builds us into the likeness of our Master and cements us to Him forever. It is in fact that which will be as important to us in a million years from now as it ought to be today. 'The faith' is that real personal knowledge of God that can be understood by all. It doesn't take a highly academic and intellectual person to understand it. It is that knowledge which enables us to walk with God by faith in Him alone.

Albert. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in Job 32 - 37

8. The Power of God

"Behold, the Mighty One shall prevail by his strength; who is so powerful as he is?" (36. 22. LXX). The commencement of Elihu's fourth discourse marks his final plea on God's behalf. He has already appealed to the wisdom, the justice and the love of God. Now he appeals to His power and shows that no evil thing can stand against that. Wisdom may permit evil to flourish for a span of time unchecked; justice may seem tardy in being executed; love very long suffering and offering every opportunity for repentance; but at the last Divine power operates swiftly and effectually to overcome all resistance to God's righteousness and to institute a new heaven and new earth in place of this present world of sin and death. The unbounded power of God is the ultimate guarantee that at length and in His own predestined time, the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And no man will be able ever to question either the rightness of His words or the effectiveness of His acts. *"Who is he that examines his works"* asks Elihu *"or who can say, He has wrought injustice? Remember that His works are great beyond those which men have attempted."* (36.23-24 LXX). That last declaration is one that ought to come very closely home to us today, for we live in an age when men have attempted many very wonderful things, and are destined in the near future to attempt a great many more. Who would have thought fifty years ago that men would sit before a control panel of human invention and manoeuvre a space craft as it travelled hundreds of miles above the earth. Other devices speed among the planets or into outer space with scientific equipment which tells us so much about the universe. Scientists today receive information from the depths of outer space which started on their long journeys to the earth thousands of millions of years ago. And now Elihu tells us that the works of God are great beyond anything that man has attempted. Of course they are. Men may discover, as they do claim to have discovered, how long ago the universe was created and what were the characteristics of the universe at the moment it was created. What they cannot tell us is how it was created and who created it. That is why the works of God are greater

than anything man has attempted or even imagined. With that knowledge we have confidence that God is omnipotent.

There is a serious word attached to this *"Every man may see it"* proceeds Elihu *"man may behold it afar off."* (36.25). The meaning only emerges after thinking about this a little. Every man may behold these evidences of the power of God; every manifestation of the power of man tells of the far greater power of God which is behind it. The manifest power of man is a shadow of the hidden power of God. But the second clause of the verse has the greater force. Man beholds the power of God only, as it were, afar off. We see as through a glass, darkly, beholding the glory and the power of the Almighty as from a vast distance.

"Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out." (36.26). There seems to be something of reverence and awe in the young man's voice as he utters these words. "God is greater than we can know" is Rotherham's way of putting it. The more that scientists and astronomers delve into the mysteries of Nature the greater and more unknowable does God become. In these our days intense efforts are being made to uncover the hidden secrets of the universe. Radio telescopes probe the distant recesses of space, bringing back evidence of starry clusters which lie far beyond the range of the largest optical telescope. Astronomers exultantly proclaim that they are penetrating to the "edge of space"; but they do not know what lies beyond that edge. They talk of the beginning of the universe at a finite time so many thousands of millions of years ago; but they do not know what was the condition of things before that beginning. They describe atoms coming into existence and fusing together to form mighty stars; but they have no suggestion whatever to offer as to what power created those atoms. Here is a sphere which man cannot penetrate, perhaps will never penetrate. God is greater than we can know. There appears at this point something worth thinking about. Elihu has made this statement regarding the greatness of God's power and the impossibility of knowing or understanding those mighty works of God, but he

does not stop there. He goes on to speak of the mighty works of God which man can see and in measure understand. He does not waste time philosophising on the unknowable; he turns instead to the things that are, in part at least, known. In this field he finds abundant evidence of the power of God and to this field he turns for support in the development of his argument.

"He withdraweth drops from the sea; he filtereth them through as rain from his mist, which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly." (36. 27-28) Driver's rendering is adopted for verse 27 to make the sense plain. The wonderful thing about this passage is Elihu's apparent understanding of the circulation of water by evaporation from the sea, forming clouds which are carried in the upper air until they condense into mist and finally fall as rain upon the earth, so completing the circuit. Did ancient man understand this, or is Elihu here purely an instrument of the Holy Spirit, speaking words he understood only partially or not at all? Solomon seemed to have the same knowledge for he said *"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return to go."* (Ecel. 1.7). Without this ever continuing circulation of water life on earth would be impossible; here, says Elihu, is one evidence of the mighty power of God exerted for human welfare. It is not until we experience a tropical downpour resulting in widespread floods that we realise how that millions of tons of water are floating serenely over our heads a mile or so up; it is by the power of God vested in Nature that these waters remain up there until they are needed for the welfare of all that lives and moves upon the earth.

Now comes a greater and more spectacular demonstration of Divine power in Nature – the thunderstorm. *"Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him, and covers the tops of the mountain."* (36. 29-30 SRV). The Masoretic has "bottom of the sea" instead of "tops of the mountains" in verse 30 and this appears in the Authorised Version, but Driver has shown that "tops of the mountains" is intended. This is a vivid picture of the gathering storm – it is developed to its full fury in chapter 37 – and the storm is seen as a manifestation of

Divine power. God is in the storm. The heavy storm clouds are described as the tabernacle or pavilion of God; He dwells within them, shrouded from mortal sight. Now the clouds spread over the sky, appearing to grow menacingly larger and heavier as they approach. The lightning is seen flashing (*"he scatters his lightning about him"*) and the mountain tops themselves disappear in the gloom and are covered by the lowering clouds. This is something with which man cannot contend. The power in the storm must be left to work its will for no man can resist it or divert its course. Naturally enough then Elihu sees it as an instrument of Divine judgment *"By those things he executeth judgment on people, he giveth food in abundance"* (36.31 Rotherham). There seems at first sight something incongruous in this combination of cursing and blessing, in the coming of judgment at the same time as giving of food, both by the same instrument. It is not really incongruous. The power which executes judgment on the evil-doer is the same power that preserves the righteous. That which is out of accord with the Divine ways is destroyed; that which is in accord is preserved. *"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him"*. Even in the natural order the same thunderstorm which brings fire and death by its lightning stroke is also a means of purifying the air and vivifying the crops that life may be preserved upon earth. On the larger scale of God's dealings with man the same thing is true. Times of judgment always have associated with them times of refreshing and of new life. It was so at the Flood: judgment came upon the world but there was salvation and new life in consequence. Judgment came upon Egypt in the days of Moses but Israel began a new life. Judgment came upon Israel at the First Advent but the Christian Church was born. And in the last great cataclysm with which this age will end, Armageddon will pass and give place to the light and life of the Millennial Kingdom where Christ is King. So it is not surprising that Elihu should picture the storm as bringing both judgment and food in abundance.

Now the approaching storm becomes a symbol of Divine power moving in to the execution of God's judgment. In a sense this is a fitting climax to Elihu's long discourse, the picture of the utter devastation of all that sets itself in opposition to

God. Elihu pictures God as riding the storm clouds and taking the lightning in both His strong hands to hurl it upon the objects of His condemnation. The A.V. translation is not very good and by no means lucid in these two final verses of chapter 36. Rotherham renders it better; "*Upon both hands he putteth a covering of lightning and layeth command upon it against an assailant.*" (36. 32) Then as Driver has it "*The thunder declareth his indignation and the storm proclaimeth his anger.*" (36. 33) That rendering is so plain that it needs no exposition. Perhaps the RSV is worth adding "*Its crashing declares concerning him who is jealous with anger against iniquity*". The prophet Habakkuk saw something very similar in his vision of the End Time. He says that the sun and moon stood still (*Heb.* – were silent, obscured, hidden) in their habitation, the sky, at what he called the light of God's arrows and the shining of His glittering spear. (Rab. 3. 11) And the Psalmist declares that God's lightnings enlightened the world; the earth trembled, "... *the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*" (Psa. 77. 18). Of all the metaphors used by the writers of the Old Testament to represent the power of God none is used more frequently and tellingly than this one of the thunderstorm.

At this point Elihu calls his listeners to reflect. It is unfortunate that the chapter division occurs at this point, for Elihu has not finished speaking. The first four verses of chapter 37 ought by rights to have been included in chapter 36. "*At this*" he says "*my heart trembleth and is moved out of his place*". (37. 1) It is not fear or apprehension which thus moves Elihu; it is awe and reverence. He perceives in this raging storm the power of God in active operation to the destruction of evil and the purification of the earth, and he wants his listeners

to perceive that too. "*Hear attentively the noise of his voice*" he urges, "*and the sound that goes forth out of his mouth*". (37. 2) This rolling thunder is God speaking to man: this flashing lightning is God revealing Himself to man. Give attention, take heed, presses Elihu, that you may be of those who escape judgment and are found able to stand in the light of the Divine Presence. This voice of God and this revelation of God's purpose is universal, for the benefit of whosoever will of men, and "every man that cometh into the world" must sooner or later hear those words and be enlightened by that revelation. We, from our superior viewpoint, can see how truly Elihu's foreview was fulfilled when "*the Word became flesh ... and we beheld his glory, a glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.*" Elihu could only see that wonderful Advent in the terms of this thunderstorm but he is in no doubt as to its world-wide scope. "*He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth; he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard.*" (37. 34). That last half sentence is from the R.S.V. It pin-points the understanding of the whole passage. The voice of God's laws and the revelation of God's purpose, His thunder and lightning, goes out into all the world, first at the instance of the Man Christ Jesus and then at that of His faithful followers all down this Christian Age until at the last He comes again in power and great glory to complete His work. That is what Elihu sees in the thunderstorm, the work of God among men in the world of sin, judging, destroying, enlightening, saving, until at last, the darkness and the storm clouds pass away, and the new earth enters into its "afterward of peace".

h

(To be concluded)

And what does anxiety do? It does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it empties today of its strength. It does not give escape from evil, but it makes us unfit to cope with it when it bursts upon us. It does not bless tomorrow, and it robs today. Every day has its own burden, which is quite heavy

enough for the day's strength. Sufficient for each day is the evil which properly belongs to it. We shall be wise if we do not add tomorrow's weight to today's load, nor drag the future into the present, where there is no place for it. The present has enough to do in looking after its own concerns.

Alf Spain

JOY TRIUMPHANT*In the days of the
Apostolic Church*

"And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke 24. 52-53).

That was the foundation of the Christian Church!

A handful of men and women, quite ordinary men and women, subject to the same failings and weaknesses as are we ourselves, initiated and commenced the building up of the most wonderful society the world has ever known – the Christian society. They discovered a power which enabled them to brave the most intense opposition and endure the most incredible hardships without ever losing the happiness and joy for which they became proverbial among their enemies. They underwent experiences that ought by ordinary standards to have made them the most miserable of people and yet by the testimony of their opponents as well as of themselves they were of all men the most happy. True to the words of their departed Leader, their sorrow had been turned into joy and their joy no man could take from them. Where did they get it from?

It started on that memorable day when a few of them watched their dearly loved Lord ascend before their very eyes into the heavens. The time past had been one of sorrow and grief, doubt and perplexity. They had believed that this Jesus whom they had followed and in whom they had put their trust was indeed He that should deliver Israel. They had been so certain they had found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. Then came a time when they were not so sure, when like John the Baptist, long since laid to rest in his grave, they wanted to ask "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Then there had been that crushing blow, the arrest and death of their Master. That had put an end to everything. All their hopes and all their expectations for the future had been pinned on this gracious figure that had come into their lives, and now those hopes and expectations had all been dashed and shattered, and life no longer held any meaning or offered any purpose. God had forgotten to be gracious and turned His face away from those who served Him; so it had seemed. Then had come that wonderful happening

on the third day that, despite its mystery and the measure of perplexity to which it had given rise, had rekindled their hope and faith and planted their feet once more upon the path which had led them to this position of joy which now they occupied. It was Jesus, their Jesus, back again from the dead, present with them as of old, and yet not in just the same old way. There was a difference, a difference none of them could define or explain, but nothing of that mattered in the light of this glorious realisation that had come to them. Jesus was theirs: He had indeed come as the prophets had promised; nothing could ever happen to alter that one inescapable fact. The days of waiting, of hoping, of expecting, of longing, were all in the past. *Jesus had come!* The powers of evil might rage and manifest their fury as indeed they were doing but that did not matter. *Jesus had come*, and the days of evil were numbered. True, Jesus had gone away again, into the skies, and the magic of His voice and His touch no longer thrilled their earthly senses, but of what consequence was that? *Jesus had come*, and life henceforward held a joy and a confidence that coloured everything in the world with brighter hue than ever before had been known.

They returned to Jerusalem with great joy because they knew that even although Jesus had left this world to return to His Father, His presence was still with them and would always be with them. In the power of that knowledge, and in the inspiration of that abiding presence, this handful of men and women went out in joy and gladness and conquered the world. In less than six generations a thousand years of Roman paganism, backed by all the might and power of a world-wide empire, was crashing to its ruin before them.

We do well to heed the characteristics of this primitive Christian community. There is something here that we need in our own Christian lives and our own Christian fellowship, something that we must have if we are successfully to challenge the new paganism of our day which has so much in common with that of ancient Rome. It must be with more than passing interest that we turn again to the story of those few earnest disciples making their way back to Jerusalem from the slopes of the Mount of Olives. And as we go

once again over the well-known story we are impressed by the fact that the faith by which we live began, on that memorable day, in five things:—blessing, worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving. Those five manifestations of spiritual life in our stand before God are vital. First of all there is blessing; not only the blessing of God coming upon His people just as the blessing of Jesus came upon the few disciples standing before Him on Olivet, but the consecrated, devoted attitude receptive to blessing. On our part we need to be in the condition of heart that has faith in the coming of the blessing, stands ready to receive the blessing, and rightly appreciates and esteems the conferred blessing. The Lord our God will bless us; of that there is no doubt, on the authority of His Holy Word; but we must needs be open and amenable to receive the blessing, apply it to ourselves and make manifest its fruits in our lives.

Secondly comes worship. They worshipped Him after receiving His blessing and before returning to Jerusalem. Worship is a vitally important thing in the life of the Christian. We do not esteem it as we should. God is not pleased with thousands of slain sacrifices and ten thousands of rivers of oil. He asks for our own heart's devotion and that we render to Him in outwardly ceremonial fashion when we come to worship him. It is not necessarily that we must go into some great and ornate building to render our worship, nor join with some mighty congregation and well-drilled choir. *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain,"* said the woman at the well, *"and ye say that in Jerusalem is where men ought to worship"*. *"Believe me,"* said Jesus earnestly, *"the hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem for they that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth; for God seeketh such to worship him"*. Nevertheless, there is much to give strength and encouragement in difficult times in the habit of meeting together for orderly and fervent worship. We are bidden not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and in that assembling we do well to worship Him that made the sea and the dry land, in whose hands is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. Surely it must give pleasure to the heart of the Everlasting Father when His children assemble before Him to yield Him their worship. The Early

Church were in no doubt about the matter; they gathered together often for worship and adoration and their lives were enriched thereby.

Thirdly, we travel the Christian way with joy. As the little group made its way back into the city it did so "with great joy". If that ascent into heaven which they had witnessed a few minutes previously had been construed by them as involving a parting there would hardly have been this atmosphere of outward, ebullient joy, so obvious as to be recorded by the historian many years later. The conclusion is irresistible that they did not picture Jesus as having left them at all: He was still with them, only invisible, and He was going to be with them for the rest of their lives as they went about the the fulfilment of His commission to preach the glorious gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and make disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. No wonder they were joyful.

Joy leads to praise. It can hardly do otherwise. The joyful frame of mind can find its logical outlet only in one way: the giving of praise to God Who has given the cause of joy. So it comes about that the fourth element in this early enthusiasm was praise. They had gratefully received the blessing, they had worshipped, they had returned to Jerusalem with joy. Almost immediately they were found in the Temple, praising God. What more natural place could there be for them? Instinctively they went into the House of God to render praise to Him for their great blessing. And they were there continually; this was not just an isolated act of worship, a formal acknowledgement to God of the privilege and power He had bestowed upon them. This was a condition of mind which could only be satisfied by an actual residence in the courts of God, an instinctive realisation that the outward environment should correspond so far as was possible with the inward thought of the mind. They were continually in the Temple because that was the right place for them, and they were continually praising and blessing God because they could do naught else.

That expression "blessing God" can only mean thanksgiving. The grace of gratitude must surely have some place in this account. Just as the child of joy is praise, so the child of praise is

thanksgiving. After all the experiences, the heartaches, the disappointments and disillusionments of the past the disciples had now been ushered into a condition of conviction and certainty, and although they had been told that life would henceforth be hard for them – pitifully hard – yet they lifted up their voices with one accord and gave thanks to God.

Blessing; worship; joy; praise; thanksgiving. These five are the keynotes of Christianity, the hallmark of the Christian society, the evidences of Christian fellowship. *“The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but joy, righteousness and peace in the Holy Spirit.”* The extent to which we as a fellowship of Christian believers neglect or lose these things is the extent to which we lose our usefulness to God and our standing before God. If Paul, having all knowledge, but without love, could be nothing more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, how much more are we hollow and empty in the Lord’s sight if, despite all our knowledge and all our protestations of loyalty to Him, we have not succeeded in preserving these things in our own communal life? If it was by the power of such things that the early Christians challenged the evil forces of their day, and triumphed, how can we expect to challenge and triumph in our turn without them?

The newly-won converts who gathered around the Apostles after Pentecost quickly found themselves absorbed into the same spirit. The influence of Olivet remained after Pentecost and coloured the whole life and outlook of the infant Church. *“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.”* (Acts 2. 46-47). Here is worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving again, just as on the former occasion. The wonder and the magic of this new fellowship into which they had come was born out of these things – and with the loss of worship, joy, praise and thanksgiving, the wonder and magic goes out of the Christian calling. We must preserve these things and increase these things within us and in our midst if we are to abide a people fully exercising the wonderful privileges that are ours.

This then was the impelling power behind the marvellous achievements of the early Church; this

the faith that enabled them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. It was their certainty, not that Christ will come, but that He *had* come, and that they were now engaged in a work of witness and in the building of a Church that could not have been commenced until He *had* come and could not be continued except by the power of His abiding presence. Their faith was rooted not so much in the promises of the future as in the events of the past. They believed in the coming of the Kingdom and in the Second Advent of their Lord; but the theme which was so often upon their lips and which formed the mainspring of their lives was that which is best defined in the words of Paul *“Remember ye the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said”* They had seen the Lord; He had been with them and set them this commission to fulfil; true, He now was invisible, but they knew that He was with them. *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age”* He had said, and they believed Him. It was because they believed Him that His power, the power of the Holy Spirit, was in them and manifested itself through them. So the early Church grew and multiplied, and men began to take notice of this new force that had come into the world. A small provincial movement became a world-wide community; what had seemed to be but a minor sect of Judaism developed into a universal Church.

That first primal impulse never left the Apostles throughout life. Peter, thirty-five years later, told his brethren *“we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus, but were eye witnesses of his majesty”* (2 Pet. 1.16). Peter saw no reason, at the end of his life, to retract the things he had said or disavow the vision he had seen in earlier days. True, he had progressed in knowledge as well as faith and doubtless there were many relics of his old Judaistic doctrinal beliefs that he had discarded as the years passed by and revealed the truths of the Gospel in clearer light. But he never lost sight of the one central fact that dominated his life; *Jesus had come*; and all that Peter was and hoped to be hinged upon that one inescapable fact.

Paul, at the end of *his* life, avowed to his son-in-the-faith Timothy *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded”* (2 Tim. 1.12). There was no doubt about the matter in Paul’s case

either. He too, knew that Jesus had come, and appeared to him on the Damascus road, had commissioned him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and laid upon him great sufferings for his Name's sake. Paul never wavered; the vision he received at the beginning remained with him and illuminated his course throughout life. The abiding spiritual presence of Jesus was a very real thing to Paul. "Whether we wake or sleep" he said "we live together with Him".

The saintly John, last of all the Apostles, was not one whit behind his fellow-labourer in the constancy of his faith in this central fact. "*Abide in him*" he exhorted his spiritual children "*that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming*" (1 John 2.28). There is a subtle shade of meaning here surely. "When He shall appear (*epiphaneo* – be manifested as it were openly) ye shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (*parousia* – presence). Does this mean that if we abide in Him we may have the joy of being aware of His presence even before His open manifestation? That is the thought of many and it harmonises well with those other Scriptures that tell of His coming for His own silently and unobserved, before the world at large are aware of His Advent. But at any rate there is no doubt in John's mind that in the meantime, while as yet they are to wait for His coming, they may and must "abide in Him". That demands a recognition of His spiritual presence with them "*even unto the end of the Age*" which is quite a different thing from His invisible presence at the end of the Age.

This joy persisted as the first believers spread abroad and converted others "afar off" to the faith. Paul and Barnabas, leaving Antioch of Pisidia and going into Iconium to minister there "*caused great joy unto the brethren*" (Acts 15. 3). When the messengers from the conference of Jerusalem (Acts 15) returned to Antioch of Syria with the considered judgment of the Apostles and elders on the questions that had arisen for discussion, the Antioch brethren "*rejoiced for the exhortation*" (Acts 15.31). This Antioch Church, where the disciples first gained the name "Christians" was evidently the most virile and progressive of the

churches of that day. It was so, because it had the spirit of joy; joy in the Lord, joy in the Truth, joy among the brethren; and one of the outgrowths of that joy was the sponsoring of missionaries to go out into Asia and spread the glad tidings. Missionary zeal has its birth and origin in joy. A sad and miserable community can never summon the zeal to go out and make converts to the Gospel of Christ; and if it did its Church life would probably repel the converts. It is the happiness and the spontaneity of the Christian good news that attracts men and women from a world that in Paul's day, as in ours, has little of either. That ought to be a pointer to us in our own endeavours to witness for the Master.

It was Nehemiah the zealous patriot who coined the immortal phrase "*the joy of the Lord is your strength*" (Neh. 8.10). He was calling his people then, as a certain famous statesman of our own day called our fellow-country-men not so long since, to "blood and toil, tears and sweat", but added something that no statesman of this world, however far-sighted and vigorous, can give, the joy of the Lord – your strength. We need to take that to ourselves also. The discouragements and disappointments and disillusionments of this our day, in this our Christian walk, are so great and forceful that we need a power in our lives able to withstand their assaults. That power is our possession of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of faith and of hope, and too, the Spirit of joy. Our joy in the Lord lightens the severity of our trials and illumines the darkness of the clouds. In that joy lies our strength, the ability to "*endure, as seeing him who is invisible*". In Nehemiah's time it was that spirit of joy, that joy in the Lord, which enabled his people to go forward to the building of a Temple and the creation of a nation. God grant that we realise, as did Nehemiah, that our strength is in our joy in the Lord. God grant that we take to ourselves the lesson of Olivet and create with our fellows an atmosphere of worship, of joy, of praise, of thanksgiving. Only thus shall we be able to go forward in full assurance of faith, a happy band of pilgrims, realising in joyful fellowship together the lightness of the afflictions which, rightly accepted, shall one day win so great a prize.

"In the past we have suffered from theologians who have lacked the spirit of evangelism, and

evangelists who could have done with a little more theology. - Rev. Percy Sowerby in a broadcast talk

Albert Hudson

THE MOABITE STONE

Mesha, king of Moab, was the undistinguished king of an undistinguished people. The nation of the Moabites was never a very powerful or influential one; it had its beginning in the days of Abraham, at the time of the destruction of Sodom, a beginning that was by no means auspicious (Gen. 19. 30-38), and it came to an ignominious end by being absorbed into the surrounding peoples during the times of change that attended the coming of the Persians and the Greeks shortly before the First Advent. But Mesha king of Moab has one claim to enduring fame; he caused to be inscribed a stone tablet which, buried for nearly three thousand years, has appeared in these our days to give witness to the accuracy of Holy Scripture.

Mesha rebelled against the overlordship of Israel. Omri, king of Israel, had reduced Moab to subjection. Ahab, his son, received tribute until the day that Mesha turned against him. Ahab allowed the case to go by default for the time being, but in the days of his son, Jehoram, the Israelites advanced against Moab to re-impose their rule. They entered the land, driving the Moabites before them, until in his extremity Mesha resorted to the terrible act of sacrificing his first-born son in the fire to Chemosh, the god of Moab, in the hope that in face of this offering Chemosh would relent and deliver his people. The Israelites were so horrified at the scene that they raised the siege and returned to their own land, at least for the time being. Doubtless the Moabites exulted in the thought that Chemosh, at the eleventh hour, intervened to save them.

The whole story is told in 2 Kings 3. 4-27. *"And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel; and king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered Israel. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, saying, the king of Moab hath rebelled against me; wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said I will go. . . so the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom ... And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and*

stood on the border... And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them; but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country... And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom; but they could not. Then he took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel, and they departed from him, and returned to their own land."

Up to the latter half of last century the Bible stood alone in this account of the conflicts between Moab and Israel, and the Old Testament historian not unnaturally enlarged upon the times when Israel was victorious, and said little about the periods of Moabite supremacy. But Mesha himself also committed to writing the story of his exploits in those same days. It came about in the year 1868 the Rev. F. A. Klein, of the Church Missionary Society, was taken by a friendly Arab sheik to a spot near the ancient village of Deiban, where the River Arnon rushes down a steep gorge into the Dead Sea, to see a massive black basalt slab, some four feet in length by two feet wide and thick, inscribed with a mysterious writing, that had come to light.

That slab is now known as the Moabite Stone, and a replica of it stands in the British Museum. (The original is in the Louvre at Paris). The local Arabs, learning of the interest their "find" had aroused, superstitiously broke it into pieces before it could be moved, but impressions of the inscription had, happily, been taken; the pieces were for the most part recovered and the monument restored.

It is sometimes said that the Moabite Stone confirms the Bible story of Jehoram's war against Moab, but that is not true. The inscription refers to an earlier period, and recounts the events of a time when Moab rebelled against Israel and was victorious, capturing many Israelite towns and taking many Israelite captives. But it is a striking confirmation of Old Testament history just the same. The first verse of the first chapter of 2 Kings

says, simply and briefly “*Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab*”. Nothing is said as to the success or otherwise of the rebellion and the chapter goes on to tell of the reign of Ahaziah, Ahab’s successor. It is not until we come to the reign of Jehoram in the third chapter, earlier quoted, that we find Moab still independent, and Jehoram advancing against them in order to subdue them. Obviously then, although Scripture says not one word about it, the Moabite rebellion had been successful. And this is what the Moabite Stone declares, giving the fuller details of that revolt that the Old Testament historians had omitted. The inscription commences “I am Mesha, son (worshipper) of Chemosh, king of Moab, the Deibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years and I reigned after my father. I made this high place for Chemosh because he had saved me from my enemies. Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son (Ahab) succeeded him, and he too said ‘I will oppress Moab’. He said so in my days, and I went out against him and his house, and Israel perished utterly And Chemosh said to me ‘Go, seize Nebo from Israel’; and I went by night, and fought against it from dawn until noon, and I took it and slew all ... and I took from thence the vessels of Jehovah, and placed them before Chemosh. . . .”

There is more in the same strain. The Book of Kings, eloquent in what it does not say, merely tells us that Moab rebelled after the death of Ahab. Mesha tells us of the success of that rebellion and

how Israel – as he thought – perished utterly under his onslaught. The Moabite defeat of Israel in the days of Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, must have been a crushing one. Then in the reign of Jehoram, the successor of Ahaziah, came the reversal of fortune which is recorded in 2 Kings 3, when Israel drove the Moabites back into their own land with heavy loss. Taken together, the two accounts, the one in the Scriptures and the other on stone, yield us a complete picture of those stirring events.

2 Chronicles has another sidelight on the story. It is the well-known account of how good king Jehoshaphat of Judah and his people set out to meet the invading Moabites without weapons but trusting in God for defence and singing the high praises of God as they went. “*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle*” was the word of the Lord to them “*for the battle is not yours, but God’s*”. And God delivered with a great deliverance.

Now that, also, was just after the death of Ahab and it must have been the same invasion which is recorded on the Moabite Stone. This time it is Mesha of Moab who is silent. He exults about his victory over the king of Israel; he says nothing at all about the king of Judah. That is Mesha’s unwitting testimony to the truth of 2 Chron. 20. That part of the Moabite army which encountered good king Jehoshaphat’s men, trusting in their God, was routed and dispersed. The part which fought Ahaziah the wicked king was victorious, and that victory was engraved upon Mesha’s stone monument to be a witness against the ten-tribe kingdom for ever.

F. A. Shuttleworth

A PEOPLE FOR A PURPOSE

*Thoughts on the
Call of the Church*

3. Builders at Work

Next to design, tools and material are essential in building, plus skill in their use and a faithful following of the architect’s instructions. Stones and mortar are only stones and mortar until work upon them prepares and fits them to the design. From the same material one may rear a cottage, a bare essential without beauty of form or appearance, while others may labour upon a palace, noble as well as useful.

Natural philosophers are chiefly agreed that the main purpose of life is to become something, to be made something by the variety of its experiences. However noble these philosophies may be, if they

are without God they are without the Master-builder whose pattern and instructions are the true formula for enduring beauty and usefulness. Moses received the admonition “*See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount*”.

It is said that when Michael Angelo was looking for a stone from which to sculpture his renowned statue “The Boy David”, he found one which had been discarded by some unsuccessful artist. With this neglected, soiled slab he did his best and produced a masterpiece. Two things stand out from this venture. First, the unskilled worker

had not been able to produce anything with the material and tools in hand. Second, the masterly touch of genius which laboured lovingly on the cast-off stone and gave to posterity something to prize and admire. Where natural determination fails the Lord saves to the uttermost. Men can ruin the best material but God can take the spoiled castaway and fashion for Himself a vessel of grace.

It might be said that each one receives at birth his bundle of tools. As life unfolds so the bundle opens, revealing the assorted talents, the inherited traits of character which are to play a large part in the building of living stones into the eternal Temple of the Spirit. The stone is separated from its native strata, a shapeless, raw, rough piece, the earthy sediments of many generations still clinging to it. All bear about them and within them particles of ancestry. Environment and circumstances provide some of the material. Natural characteristics and talents the tools, and experience the skill. A life-time of slow, careful work lies ahead. This building of gold, silver and precious stones upon a rock foundation is no child's play. However amateur the apprentice, he will be expected to practise, and at least grow proficient at his business if he does not positively shine. (1 Cor. 3.9-17).

To dig in sand or clay is an easy task but the house of God which is to abide forever must be built into the Rock. How many vaunted tools are broken, how many cherished implements snap when a new Christian meets Christ and realises how poor are all his natural virtues, how unworthy his best endeavours when matched by that excellence of Him who was tempted at all points. "yet without sin". (Heb. 4.14-16). He "poured out his soul unto death" that men might live. St. Paul, taking an inventory of his tools, found it necessary to throw them all away as useless for the great work in hand. Early in the task of building with God he realised that the natural righteousness of man was as filthy rags (Isa. 64.6), that the righteousness of God which comes by faith is a necessary equipment in the preparation of temple stones. (Phil. 3, 3-11). Even experienced builders must be often halted by the comparison of their work with the Chief Corner-stone, knowing themselves to be unprofitable servants, their talents and time, their best endeavours, etching but a feeble imitation of the Great Example of selfless service and amazing love.

How often the most earnest feel the stinging blow of failure, when words and conduct fall short of the inspiring standard. Self-abased they must stagger back from the work, acknowledging its hardness, "*Cast down but not in despair,*" to seek again and again the power of the Holy Spirit which puts a sharper edge to every blade and softer touch to every obtruding angle.

In the family, in the meeting room, in the office, in the busy thoroughfares of life, God's workers, "in the world but not of it", find the grindstones of opposition in the uncongenial, the stubborn and the disagreeable, who rub the wrong way. Here are learned the lessons of forbearance, tolerance, patience, understanding and self-control. Uncharitable feelings, sharp criticisms, unjust suspicions, the tart rejoinders, the peevish complaints, the crabbed intolerance, the narrow views, the sectarian bigotry, the priggish superiority, preening itself with knowledge, all these and much more must be brought to that place where the rough corners and natural excesses must be scoured from the human heart and life, as the building stone must be cleared of its clay and the steel tempered which is to trim it to shape and use.

The love of dear ones, the happy fellowship of kindred minds is the velvet which puts the polish on the well-ground tool or the gleaming surface of a stone but it is the enemy within and without which does the cutting and grinding. It is the rough, rude world, insensitive to feeling, unresponsive to faith, which does the good turn. The sparks and dust fly but while the stone diminishes it grows in beauty. The mind grows more perceptive, the heart larger and kinder with those heavenly virtues freely supplied by the Master-builder to the eager worker.

"Add to your faith" Peter, the man of Rock, knew by hard experience the difficulties of building and what were the best tools to use. He gave the list to his fellow-builders, adding the important rider, "*If ye do these things ye shall never fall, for so an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" (2 Pet. 1.3-11).

The natural heart longs for big things to do, to have something to show which cannot be overlooked, to put its faith into action in some big and convincing way. If opportunity is not afforded for

a shining, public ministry, a demonstration of dedicated services which cannot be hidden, the tendency is to grow fretful, despondent, doubtful, even listless in the performance of those things which do come to hand. Life tends to be humdrum and uneventful. The questing heart allows disappointment to dim its cheerful lustre, the daily round to sink into a profitless mediocrity and its limitations to form a cage for the spirit instead of the charmed circle where the work of God goes on unhindered and unhidden. His Presence can never be hidden or obstructed in the humblest lot or the quietest life. The earth has only one Niagara. God gave to the Church only one St. Paul. The mighty spectacular things are few in number. The great ones of the Christian era, or in any high public office, perform their work at a cost few could pay successfully. The meadows of the countryside are beautified by a thousand flowing brooks whose sparkling waters refresh and please the thirsty and needy.

No Christian can be indifferent to the claims of daily duty. It is here the very means are found to fit and prepare life for its greatest service to humanity, both now and hereafter. Even the chamber of the permanent invalid can become a holy of holies where the light Divine shines through a quiet resignation, through a cheerful unwavering faith, a calm assurance, a wise counsel and a tender consideration, which would make that invalid's departure a genuine loss to society. "The daily round, the common task, will furnish all we need to ask; room to deny ourselves; a road to bring us daily nearer God." Whatever the work or the lot, mental, manual, exciting, humdrum, or enforced helplessness, with God, that daily lot provides the means of perfecting the living stone for its fittest place in His building.

The hand is the symbol of action and God's Word advises that whatever the hand finds to do, it should be done with all the might. Each day presents a task. Sometimes the hands seem too full. There is not enough time to do everything. Yet the consecrated life will do its best with what it has to do, leaving the Master to judge of the effort, to supply the final touches of true beauty. None are to be slack or indolent because the daily lot seems small and simple. True character is revealed in the quality of the work; the character of the stone decides its destiny. Slipshod methods never produce

a masterpiece. That is where the touch of genius comes in, that painstaking attention to detail, which will have a thing as good as it can be done, although it may appear outwardly insignificant.

A painter once talked confidently of the great picture he was going to paint when he got the right conditions. He died with a blank canvas, still waiting for the right conditions. Angelo took the neglected stone and worked into it his vision with will and skill, doing his best with the material and the conditions at hand. And the world is richer for his honest labour.

It takes courage and determination to work with God. It also needs humility. "To hear of high heroic things and yield them reverence due; yet feel life's daily offerings are far more fit for you." This is the expression of human limitation, the realisation that the best endeavours do not seem to amount to much in the average life. Yet there is another aspect, the call to do that best, to venture with God, to dare, to do and by the Lord's grace to succeed in becoming something worth preserving in a future life, something He can use for His own glory and the blessing of others.

One has described successful living as "having something to take with you and something to leave behind you". What better legacy to bequeath to society than those seeds of faith, fruit of a holy, devoted life which shall spring up into other trees of righteousness when the due time arrives for the pouring out upon all flesh of the Spirit of God. Under that benign influence they will spring to life in the hearts of those in whom they were sown by a steadfast ministry, and the glory of such fruitage will be happy and grateful praise to God. What better thing to take out of life than the Christ-like character complete in all its graces, polished, beautiful and prepared for eternal ministries. "*Faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude 24). What does it mean? It cannot now be fully known! What is known is that "The temple stones God now prepares oft cry you hurt me sore. The Sculptor seeks their perfectness and trims them more and more". The disciplined heart will bear His trimming patiently, with cheerful spirit and gratitude, confident that He who has begun a good work will also finish it. One poet pens the reminder that, "We are not here to drift, to dream, to play. We have hard work to do and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle; face it. It is God's

gift; be strong”

Whatever the means He chooses, His builders will work with Him. All the experience, the circumstances, the talents, the means at their disposal will be used with that careful attention to

detail, that inspired employment of the daily round in the perfecting of the spirit until at length in the fulness of His presence all will be satisfied.

To be concluded

Albert Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

Amos 4.1-13

5. Women of Israel

Scornfully the young prophet swept the assembled crowd in the Bethel sanctuary with his burning eyes. Sleek, well-fed, lavishly clothed, they moved forward with their offerings to the idol as the ceremonial proceeded. He looked upon the women folk, their rich garments adorned with ornate jewellery from the markets of Tyre, and as he did so the Holy Spirit came upon him; in those self-centred and self-satisfied apostate daughters of Israel he found the inspiration and the message he needed. So his, by now, well-known voice rang out over the heads of the worshippers.

“Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan, ye women of high Samaria” – the insulting allusion conveyed all the contempt that he felt for them – *“who oppress the poor and crush the needy, and say to your husbands, Bring, and let us drink”* (ch.4.1). This rendering is a little different from the A.V. All translators have had difficulty with vs. 1-5 and 12-13 of this chapter and it is generally agreed that the text is faulty. What appears to be the best and most lucid composite rendering of various translators has therefore been adopted here.

The prophet is still talking to the nation in general but he addresses his message to them through the wealthy “upper class” women – the “cows of Bashan” as he contemptuously describes them. The particular national aspect he is looking at here is the social and commercial. The wealthy women were a symbol of the society which because of material prosperity and a high standard of living was utterly devoted to self interest and totally heedless of the plight of the poor – for where there is an inordinately wealthy element in the community there is always the correspondingly poor one. This is the prophet’s accusation. Amos accused them of oppressing the poor and needy, and spending their time carousing with their husbands – and equally so with their friends in the same position. But retribution was to come; from the heights of ease and affluence they were to be

thrust down to the depths of degradation.

“The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the time is coming when men shall carry you away on their shields and your children in fish baskets. You will be carried straight out through the breaches in the walls, every woman exposed naked to view, and you will be forcibly taken to the high sanctuary of Rimmon, saith the Lord.” (ch. 4.2-3).

These two verses have given a great deal of trouble to translators by reason of the evident corruption of the text at some early time. The principal difficulty is the word here translated “sanctuary of Rimmon”; a number of different interpretations have been offered, of which the A.V. “ye shall cast them into the palace” is the least satisfactory. The most likely to be in keeping with the tenor of Amos’ words is that here given. Rimmon was a Syrian deity in whose honour an annual spring-time feast was held which combined mourning for the slain god with joy at his resurrection, ensuring the coming of spring and the renewing of vegetable and animal life. (See Zech. 12.11 which alludes to this feast.) The feast involved degrading licentious rites and ceremonials and it has been suggested that this is Amos’ meaning here. The opulent and carefree rich women of Israel were to be taken by the enemy soldiery, through the breaches made in the city walls by the invaders, to the sanctuary of Rimmon for this purpose. Thus they were to be swept in a moment from the lap of luxury to the misery of utter and hopeless ruin. Here again is seen the shadow of the Assyrian invasions which were to come as penalty upon Israel and which was to bring all Israel’s prosperity to an end.

From contempt Amos now passes to sarcasm. He looks again at the people passing in front of him with their offerings for the idol. *“Ye come to Bethel, and transgress”* he taunts them bitingly. *“At Gilgal ye multiply transgression. Ye bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes*

every three years. *Ye offer thank-offerings with loaves and proclaim and publish your freewill offerings. Ye love to do what is proper, ye sons of Israel, saith the Lord God*" (ch. 4.4-5). In all of this they were doing the right things, but they were offering to the wrong god. "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" was the commandment given at Sinai. "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God*" cried Elijah. Joshua and Samuel had exhorted the people to remain true to God and the people had responded enthusiastically. But all that was now in the past and the sacred sites of Bethel and Gilgal, once hallowed by being centres at which God was worshipped in spirit and in truth, were now defiled by the presence of idol sanctuaries, devoted to gods which tolerated and approved the unjust and immoral practices of an apostate people. Your religious observances are correct enough, accused Amos, but they are offered to gods which are the creation of men's hands, gods which themselves are the reflection of men's sins and indulgencies, gods which look upon evil and injustice and condone it. As Jeremiah was to say two centuries later "*a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?*" (Jer. 5.30-31). Amos went on to tell the heedless people of Israel just what God would do: but first he reminded them of the judgments they had already endured without being led thereby to reformation.

"I have given you cleanness of teeth in your cities, and want of bread yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (ch. 4.6).

This means famine. "Cleanness of teeth" indicates there was nothing to eat. This was one element of the penalty consequent upon apostasy from the Mosaic Covenant. Whilst loyalty to God was maintained, crops and flocks would be abundant and food assured. Disloyalty involved the reverse; this happened time after time in Israel's history. When the lesson was learned, the formula was always the same. "*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he heard them, and delivered them out of their distresses.*" But this time they had not cried unto the Lord.

"And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it

not to rain upon another city ... so two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water: but they were not satisfied. Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (ch.4.7-8).

Harvest is from April to June. The absence of rain during February and March is calamitous in its effect on the crops. The first infliction was famine; the second one was thirst. There was no water. A striking instance of this was during the time of the prophet Elijah, when the drought endured for three years, and was only ended by the wholesale conversion of the nation at the instance of the prophet. That drought came in consequence of idolatry and was ended when Baal-worship was renounced and the entire nation returned to God. But that was in the past and now Israel had relapsed again into idolatry, and this time had not returned to God.

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your figtrees and your olive trees increased, the locust devoured them. Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (ch.4.9).

This is the logical consequence of the two previous judgments, famine and drought; what crops remained, shrivelled and died. When by reason of returning favourable climatic conditions and much hard work there were signs of new produce from the trees and vines, the locusts came and ate them all up. Something of the same is related by a contemporary prophet, Joel, who fulfilled his mission in the southern kingdom of Judah at a time not very far removed from that at which Amos prophesied in the north. His first chapter seems to allude to an unprecedented plague of locusts, four different species in four successive waves, and when they had passed over there was nothing left. A plague such as this bore most heavily on the poor of the land, and the workers, who depended upon their crops and flocks and herds for sustenance and a living. The wealthy ones – and these are those to whom Amos is directing his denunciation at this moment – were able, when home-produced supplies failed, to obtain their needs from the rich and prosperous merchant nation of Tyre on the sea-coast, a nation with which the kings and leading citizens of Israel maintained close and friendly connections; so they were able to override the worst effects of the plague and they did not repent and turn to the Lord.

"I have sent among you the Egyptian pestilence; your young men have I slain with the sword and have decimated your horses. I have sent the stench of your camps into your nostrils. Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (ch. 4.10).

Egypt was the proverbial source of pestilence and sickness. The hot dry south wind, blowing into Canaan from Sinai and Egypt, was responsible for bringing much of the epidemics which from time to time ravaged Israel. The incident of the destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah is one instance. In the long catalogue of disasters which would come upon Israel if they forsook the covenant, detailed in Deut. 28, the Egyptian figured very prominently *"the Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he hath consumed thee from off the land ... The Lord shall smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed"* (Deut 28.21-27). All these inflictions came upon the pleasure-loving apostates of Israel, but despite all this they did not turn to the Lord.

"I sent you an earthquake, as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord" (ch.4.11).

Some scholars have surmised that this was the earthquake mentioned in chap.1 by which Amos dates his mission. This is improbable, since his mission commenced two years before that earthquake (ch. 1.1) and he is not likely to have spent such a period delivering his message. More probably, since minor earthquakes are fairly common in that land, there had been a preliminary one some years earlier, perhaps forming the culminating infliction of this whole series of five judgments recalled by Amos in his denunciation of the people. In such case the following expression might indicate that even after these five severe judgments the Lord had preserved the national sovereignty of Israel and saved them still from the Assyrian menace. "as a firebrand plucked out of the burning", a last opportunity to repent before the final calamity had to fall. If so, it can well be concluded that during the immediate past, prior to the emergence of Amos as a prophet, Israel had experienced these five calamities in succession – famine, drought, barrenness, pestilence, earthquake. These happenings should have caused them to think, and recall

the prosperity and freedom from such things they had enjoyed in earlier times when they served the Lord in sincerity and truth. But they did not, and continued on their heedless course, until God had no option but to take drastic action. That action is expressed forcefully in the two concluding verses of the chapter. There is a remarkable allusion buried in these verses which may well be the most definite reference in the Old Testament to Christ the Son in His pre-human state, although this is concealed in the A.V. by an inadequate translation. If this meaning of the expression concerned is established it makes Amos noteworthy as being the first in the Scriptures to touch upon that mystic yet vital doctrine, the relation between the Father and the Son.

"Therefore, O Israel, thus will I do unto you. And because this is what I will do to you, O Israel, prepare to call upon thy God. For, behold, I am he that strengthens the thunder, and creates the wind, and reveals his inner mind" (Heb seach, Gk logos) "to man, and forms the morning and the darkness, and marches over the heights of the earth – the Lord, the God of Hosts, is his name" (ch. 4.12-13).

The "thus" in this verse refers back to verses 2 & 3, where one aspect of the Assyrian menace is pictured. Because the five nation-wide judgments were ignored and there was no repentance and no turning from their evil ways, the Lord would invoke His final and irrevocable penalty; the Assyrians would invade their land and take them all away into captivity. For something like two centuries, ever since the division of Judah and Israel after the death of Solomon, Israel had followed this apostate course and the Lord had sent prophets and given repeated opportunities for reform and return; only for a short period following Elijah's triumph over the priests of Baal was there anything like a national return to God and that did not last very long. Now God would act and the action would be final. Twenty five years later the Ten Tribes went into captivity and were dispersed among the nations – and never came back. Not until the days of the Messianic Kingdom yet to be established will Judah and Israel by re-united to become in very truth the people of the Lord (see Ezek 37.16-28) and then only because they will, at last, have learned the lesson and will never again *"defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with any of their detestable things, nor with any of their*

transgressions" (Ezek 37.23).

The expression in the A.V., "*prepare to meet thy God*" although beloved of many fervent street-corner evangelists, is less accurate than "*prepare to call upon thy God*". The point here is that Divine forbearance has come to its end; there will be no more reprieve. The full penalty of the violated covenant will be inflicted and the people expelled from the Promised Land into which their fathers came with rejoicing and enthusiasm but of which their descendants have shown themselves utterly unworthy. From now on it is Israel which will have to call upon God for He will no longer call to them or overlook their transgressions. Until they do that there is no escape and no restoration.

But the most interesting element in this final verse of the chapter is this reference to the "inner mind" of God. Set centrally amidst a recapitulation of Divine attributes, the God of the mountains and the wind, of day and night, who reigns supreme upon high, above the earth, is this word which in the A.V. runs "*and declareth unto man what is His thought*". That does not convey much. The Douay version has it "*and reveals his inner mind to man*" whilst the Septuagint renders "*and proclaims to man His Christ*" – more properly, since this is the O.T., "His anointed": (*christos*). These somewhat divergent expressions have obviously sprung from one original source but no Hebrew manuscripts of so early a date now exist so that a certain amount of deduction is necessary. The people of Israel in pre-Christian times held to the idea of the mind of God, his Word. (Gr *logos*) personalised and becoming the manifestation of God to man, as

John, "*the Word (logos) was made flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*" (John 1.14). In pre-Christian times the *Logos* was the anointed one of the Father, as in Prov. 8.22,23 "*the Lord acquired me in the beginning of his way before his works of old. I was anointed from the ages before the earth was.*" This could account for the "inner mind" of God being equated with "His anointed" in the Septuagint.

The Hebrew word in this text is *seach*, its only occurrence in the O.T. Gesenius defines its meaning as to meditate, from a root signifying to produce or bring forth, from which is derived the idea of speaking or talking with oneself, especially as relating to Divine things. From this it is easy to see how the text pictures the Divine mind manifested in the personality of the Word of God, the *Logos*, who appeared on earth as the Man Christ Jesus, and upon His reunion with the Father after His resurrection was hailed supreme over all things in heaven and earth. It might well be therefore that in this Spirit-guided utterance of this relatively obscure 8th century B.C. Hebrew Prophet we have the first veiled allusion to one of the most important doctrines of the faith – the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ and his relationship to the Father.

But Amos would know little of this. His short paean of praise to the might and majesty of God ended, he turns his attention, in chapter 5, to another section of the nation due for reproof, the idolatrous priests.

To be continued.

Albert Hudson
Derrick Nadal

THE EXODUS

1. Introduction

*A series intended to
help younger readers
discover the Bible*

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, covers the period of early human history. Exodus which follows it relates the events of only about a century during the life time of Moses. It is an account of the way in which God reveals the second phase of His plan to save mankind. The first step had been the selection of Abraham as the father of those who would be 'men of God'. To him was given the promise that through his descendants God would bless all peoples of the Earth. That promise was confirmed and passed to Isaac, Jacob and his

twelve sons, patriarchs of the nation of Israel. Exodus tells how that nation began its life in Egypt and commenced its journey towards the 'Promised Land'. It shows how God made a 'covenant' with Israel which bound them to Him. They became His visible kingdom on Earth, a kingdom that will eventually take in all right thinking men and women. Israel as a nation never measured up to God's ideal. Nevertheless the events described in Exodus were a tremendous step forward in His preparation for the time when Jesus Christ is king.

He alone can bring control to a weary and despairing Earth to make it the place of light and joy it is intended to be.

Genesis closes with the death of Joseph in Egypt. That was about seventy years after Jacob's family had left Canaan because of famine and food shortage. They had lived in the north-eastern province of Egypt protected by the friendly Hyksos Pharaohs of the 15th dynasty. Exodus then begins by telling how Jacob's family had multiplied into a great people of several millions. The friendly Semitic rulers were succeeded by hostile native Pharaohs who oppressed the Israelites until Moses arose among them as a national leader. He led them into the deserts of Sinai where God met them and made them a nation. It describes how they received God's Law and how they promised to become God's people in reality. If they had kept that promise the Book of Exodus might have ended with the story of their triumphant entry into the land of the promise.

It was not to be: unbelief, hardness of heart and rejection of God's law were to delay the people of Israel from entering the Promised Land for forty years. These were to form later books of Moses. So Exodus ends three months after the departure from Egypt, in front of Mount Sinai. The Law had been given and accepted, the ritual of worship laid down and the mobile sanctuary of God, known as the tabernacle, had been erected. There was no hint of the forty years of hardship and heartbreak that lay before the people who so lightly had taken upon themselves the service of God. They had not reflected or realised the self-discipline and devotion that the salvation of God demanded.

Structure of the Book: The book naturally divides itself into four main sections:

Chapters 1-11. Moses, forty years at Pharaoh's court; forty years in exile in Midian.

Chapters 12-19 Moses challenges Pharaoh; 10 plagues; Moses leads Israel to Sinai.

Chapters 20-29 Israel encamped around Sinai; the law given and the covenant made.

Chapters 30-40 Construction of the Tabernacle, centre of Israel's worship.

Origin: The name of the book, 'Exodus' is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word 'exodos', meaning "going out or departure", given as title to the book by the Alexandrian Jews who first translated the Old Testament into Greek some two hundred and fifty years before Christ. The original

Hebrew title was Ve-elah Shernoth, "These are the names", the first words of the book. The ancient Hebrews, like the Babylonians and Sumerians, were accustomed to use the first few words of a literary work as its title. There is every probability that it was originally written on papyrus in the same manner that so many Egyptian documents of the same period were written.

Such documents have survived till our own day. Papyrus was a writing material something like very stiff parchment made from the stems of the papyrus reed that grew in abundance in the River Nile. The stems were dried, split into thin sections, laid close together in two layers crosswise and gummed together to form a hard but flexible sheet. The surface was well rubbed down until perfectly smooth and ready to be used as a writing material with a quill pen and ink.

There is no reason to doubt the accepted tradition that the book was written during the lifetime of Moses and almost certainly by Moses himself. Some modern scholarship has disputed this as it has challenged the traditional authorship of many books in the Bible. Its own claim to be the living Word of God means that it is a careful and accurate record of events with which it deals, compiled by a sincere man of God whose spirit-filled mind made him conscious of the importance of his task. The book is the sacred record of a nation being born and its writer was overruled and guided by the Holy Spirit, so that it should instruct God's people through all ages. It must be accepted as true history including miracles. It must be studied in the light of all that we know of God's ways and power. It reveals wonderful events of three thousand years ago which may be examined in the light of all that has been discovered in the natural world and of the history of mankind.

The evidence that Moses wrote the entire book, from his own knowledge and observation, during his long life, is overwhelmingly great. He was educated and experienced for the first forty years of his life, in all the learning and wisdom of Egypt. (Acts 7.22). He must have been thoroughly acquainted with literature in at least four languages; Egyptian, Babylonian, Hittite, Syrian as well as his native Hebrew. Without doubt he was an accomplished writer and would be well able to produce a work like the Exodus. Some scholars once believed that writing had not been invented in

the days of Moses but with so many examples of written tablets and documents more than a thousand years before his time, now in museums, that theory has been exploded. Careful consideration leads to the conclusion the Exodus was written and compiled by Moses during the forty years in the wilderness. When Joshua led the exultant hosts across Jordan into the Promised Land they carried with them, among their greatest treasures, the original copies of the first two books of the Bible, Genesis and Exodus.

Problems of the Book: Exodus 12.41 states that Israel was in Egypt 430 years. Various Scriptural references and ancient texts may reduce that to just over two centuries. Consideration must be given to the increase in Israel's numbers and recent discoveries in Egyptian history.

Background and principal characters: The scene, is set for the first part in ancient Egypt, in all the magnificence but cruelty of its civilisation. Israel was a nation of slaves, oppressed and downtrodden by their captors. The friendly Pharaohs of the same Semitic race as the Hebrews, who had welcomed Jacob and his family into Egypt had now been expelled. A ruthless native Egyptian was in control. In this unhappy state Israel cried out to heaven and God bent down to intervene and save them. He raised up Moses the deliverer but before he was ready for the almost superhuman task of organising a rabble of slaves into a nation he must be trained in a hard school. First for forty years he had high honour at the Egyptian court educated in their knowledge and wisdom. Moses then had forty years as a nomadic shepherd in the Sinai desert acquiring experience of a very different kind. Only then, as a mature man of eighty years was he ready to approach Pharaoh with the demand for the slaves' freedom. The demand was refused and Divine judgments came upon Egypt until Israel was allowed to leave. They crossed the Red Sea into the deserts and mountains of Sinai expecting within a short time to be in possession of their Promised Land.

Three months later they reached Mount Sinai in the middle of the Sinai peninsula and there they camped. Moses went alone into the mountain to receive the Law by which Israel was required to live. He arranged the Covenant between God and His people which dedicated them as a nation to represent Him on Earth and accept Him as their Guide, Leader and King. They were to become, in

the distant future, the light of God to the nations declaring His salvation to the end of the Earth. They failed to achieve this because of unbelief and in some measure this work has passed to the Christian Church.

God gave them plans for the construction of the Sanctuary and the ordination of a Priesthood. By orderly ritual and ceremony they could express their repentance for their sins and their thanks for the goodness of God.

Thus the Book of Exodus ends, with Israel delivered and their national life begun. They still had no geographical country but they had God, and that was much more important. They were slaves no longer but enjoyed the freedom of those dedicated to God Most High and with that freedom a consciousness of purpose. The watchword from Sinai which electrified all Israel was '**A people for a purpose**'. In their land "*Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.*" (Isa.27.6) In the fervour of that vision they shouted as one man "*All that the Lord has spoken we will do.*" Israel tragically failed to keep that promise and fourteen centuries later Jesus had to say to their descendants, sadly, "*The Kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" (Matt.21.43). Moses and the people of Israel knew nothing of this. Hope ran high on the day of making the covenant and none doubted that all would be well. Before them was a golden vista. Who would have imagined that within a few days, even before they had departed from the sacred mountain, unbelief and apostasy would raise an ugly head among them as the vision of the future faded.

So the actors cross the stage. Moses the clear eyed visionary who led Israel without faltering; Pharaoh whose pride was humbled in the dust; Aaron, the well-meaning brother who became Israel's first high Priest; Joshua the stalwart young soldier who eventually picked up the torch of leadership when at last it fell from the fingers of the aged Moses. Behind them Caleb the rugged man of faith; Bezaleel the craftsman, Miriam, Moses' sister and Zipporah his wife, Pharaoh's daughter who protected him in early life, and Jochebed his mother; and a host of others whose names will live forever, because they played a part in the greatest drama of Israel's history, the Exodus from Egypt.

Tom Watson

IN THE WILDERNESS*A modern lesson from
an ancient story*

“And thou shall remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.” (Deut. 8. 2)

In a very beautiful poem entitled “The Angel of the Presence” the author (The Rt.Rev. Allan Becher Webb D.D.) has shown how God upholds and protects those who trust in Him and faithfully and simply cling to His strength alone –

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

Alas, many ‘fell’ in the wilderness. Why was it that so many failed to reach the ‘goal’? It was not because they were apathetic, or yet because they were not trying. We must remember that the Lord always referred to Israel as “stiff-necked”. They were not easily led, and did not easily fall into the child-like and trustful attitude that alone brings the blessing of God’s love and the guidance of His Wisdom.

There is only one way in which we can come safely through the wilderness, and that is to put ourselves unreservedly in the hand of Him “who alone is able to keep us from falling”. Thus, we see, that those who reach the Promised Land are those who make a full surrender to Christ, and aware of His presence are given strength and courage to go forward. They yield themselves to His transforming work as willing instruments and are “upheld by the power of God”. We may be sure they stumble again and again, but are never completely cast down, for knowing their own wretched weakness and utter inability to do anything of themselves they turn to the Good Shepherd for help. They are humbled therefore in the knowledge of their own helplessness and they learn to lean upon their Leader. They know their sins and weaknesses are covered by the ‘Robe of Righteousness’ and continue their journey in complete reliance upon the Saviour who has promised to bring them to their desired haven.

Let us take particular note of the fact that Moses stressed that Israel had not been promised to possess the land for their own righteousness. In

Deuteronomy 9.4 he tells them - *“Speak not thou in thine heart after that the Lord hath cast them out from before thee, saying For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land...”*

This is the only attitude of mind that can bring us to true humility – this realization that we cannot possess the land by any merits of our own, but only by trusting in the all-sufficient merits of the precious blood of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is a difficult and dangerous journey on which we have started – this journey through the wilderness, so let us be continually on the watch to make sure that we are not discarding any of the helps which have been provided. It is so very important to keep in our hands the ‘Sword of Truth’ - the Word of God, by which to overcome the many enemies of the believer which rise up and confront us. We shall be guided over many a rough patch, or shown the right way at many a cross-roads if we have this Sword ever in our hands, casting down many a hindering obstacle in the way of our progress.

“The people rose up to play” we are told. Pleasures of the senses filled their whole lives. They had lost the ‘spiritual mind’ with which they started on their journey and had lost the zeal and inspiration which they had found with the wonder of coming out of Egypt – symbolising worldly things. They even worshipped the golden calf. Money and wealth began to loom very large in their minds, and as all know, we cannot serve God and mammon. Disobedient, wilful, obstinate and stiff-necked, grumbling and complaining, yes, and pleasure loving. This is the picture that the story of the wilderness presents to us. Moses in utter exasperation smote the rock and called them rebels. In some way he erred. Was it that in his exasperation he forgot to give God the glory and to attribute to Him the power? It was a terrific task which he had undertaken, to bring these people through the ‘terrible wilderness’. Moses loved his people and longed to see them enter into the glorious Land of Promise. In utter self-sacrifice he even prayed to be blotted out of the book of life

that they might be saved to go into the Land, yet they exhausted his patience again and again.

As we enter the Promised Land, therefore, let us pray that God will, by His grace, grant us patience, tolerance and understanding that we may not offend. Let Him lead us by the hand as 'little children', trusting Him implicitly, and not turning from any help that God sends to illuminate the weary journey, and to lighten the trials and difficulties.

They who put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed, and let us keep always in mind that "*the arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own*". The wilderness journey is the trial and testing to prove what is in our hearts and He who knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart is not mocked. The two great commandments should be ever in our minds – to love the Lord our God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. God's

love extends to the whole human race and as we come to know him and understand His boundless love more and more, our hearts will expand and we shall be uplifted to deeper and wider truths.

Jesus rebuked the beloved apostle for a wrong spirit, when he asked the Saviour if they should not call down fire to destroy a certain Samaritan village which would not receive Him. We do well to remember His reply - "*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are, for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them.*" (Luke 9.55-56). As we learn to become more perfect in love, through the grace of God we learn that in loving one another we also love Him. Let us claim His promise that He is able to perfect that which concerneth us and also that promise of our Saviour "*If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.*"

ASTRONOMICAL CALCULATIONS

A reader in U.S.A. Bill Siekman writes:

Some weeks ago I read the summary results of a computer study on the gravitational influence of Mercury and Venus. I am very impressed by the conclusion, which demonstrates the ingenuity of our Creator. He is indeed The Master Engineer! I will quote the news release in its entirety:

"Ever on the prowl for interesting 'what if' scenarios, planetary dynamicists have recently come to appreciate the role Earth plays in stabilising the inner solar system. This new insight came to light almost by accident when Kimmo Innanen (York University, Canada) and Seppo Mikkola (University of Turku, Finland) were testing computer routines that perform long-term simulations of planetary motions. They found that removing the Earth-Moon system from their

calculations caused the orbits of Venus and especially Mercury to gyrate wildly in eccentricity, with the likely outcome being Mercury's ejection by Venus from the inner planet region or an outright collision between the two. Innanen, Mikkola and colleague Paul Wiegert (York University) describe in last October's *Astronomical Journal*, the instability would result from previously unrecognised resonance involving Venus and Jupiter. But having a sizeable object at Earth's heliocentric distance, even one with only 10% of our planet's mass, is enough to damp out the resonance."

Praise our Heavenly Father for preparing us, His children! I am just beginning to appreciate the reciprocity of this, that the planets are placed where they are for Earth's stability. What a wonderful Creator!

SUNDAY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, wrote, "On Sunday all those of us who live in the same town or district assemble together and there is read to us some part of the *Memoirs of the Apostles* which are called *Gospels*, and the writings of the *Prophets* as much as time permits. Then whoever is presiding gives us a sermon, after which we rise for common prayer; afterwards bread and wine are brought."

The allusion to 'rising' for prayers calls to

mind the fact that it was the custom of Christians in the early centuries to **stand** whilst prayer was being made, the one who was offering prayer doing so with arms extended as if in blessing. Engravings in the Catacombs at Rome depict this usage in repeated instances and this in turn explains the words of 1 Tim 2.8, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere **lifting up** holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

POSTSCRIPT

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3.5,6 NIV)

A key word in this text is 'all'. There are times and places when it is easy to trust our Heavenly Father. Sadly there are times and places when trusting Him doesn't enter our reckoning. When Jesus said *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"* (Mark 10. 14) He surely had in mind among other things the quality of trust which children have in a parent. It is fascinating to watch a child build its trust in caring parents. In an ideal situation it begins at birth, possibly even before that, and continues to grow with the child. At first, the child is not very conscious of its needs except when they are not being supplied immediately. As the intelligence buds and blossoms so trust correspondingly begins to mature. The child learns that the moment it feels the need for food may not be the appropriate time to receive it. It learns too that privileges may be the reward of good work or behaviour. There is also a reciprocal trust demonstrated by 'good' parents. How comforting is that mutual, unaffected unselfish trust. How tragic is its absence.

Do we trust our Father when we are lonely: when others seem to have deserted us and when others cannot understand us? He is our constant companion, always ready to hold our hands, always ready to share our joys and sorrows, our successes and disappointments. Loneliness can be very frightening to a young Christian as well as to a tiny child. Those who have been a long time in the 'Way' should testify that God hears us even if He doesn't always answer immediately. We have to learn also that we sometimes get in the way of God's companionship by our own disobedience. In the presence of our Almighty friend there should be no fear.

God allows us to fall into temptation sometimes and then we need to trust Him. Only by so doing and by staying close to Him shall we find that way of escape which He has promised. (1 Cor. 10.7) The Master experienced the way of temptation and it was then that *"He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him..."* (Heb. 5 7). Jesus has been 'there' and He knows what 'it' is like and is able to help us, if we trust. Temptation is not sin, but to

struggle to find our own way through temptation is wrong and hinders the trust building process.

Sometimes we pass through a valley of shadows, or we get worried and upset about many things, as did Martha of Bethany. It is then that we need to cast our care upon the Lord and know that He cares about us. It is not necessarily in times of tragedy or bereavement but just the piling up of problems in the daily events. Some of us carry a huge load of other people's problems; and for doctors and teachers and similar caring professions it may be part of the job. It is vital for such men and women to roll their burdens on the Lord and trust that He will undertake what they find insufficient in themselves. When we feel crushed by the responsibilities and demands of those who depend on us then we must trust that He can carry us and our burdens: He can lift us up and solve our problems. Its not always easy to trust while busy in this world in which we live.

Amid the hundred and one duties we rush and forget and wonder where we are going? Then we need to trust our Saviour to take us aside for a time of quiet, aside with Him and gently to remind us of the real priorities in life. We may trust Him to remind us of others rather than our own needs. We can trust Him to lift our flagging spirits and help us through the moments of depression. There is no problem that He cannot solve, no task that is too hard for Him. The only thing that stops Him is our muddled thinking and clumsy hands. Then we must trust Him to give us the skills of thinking and speaking and doing, so that our stewardship will at the last be assessed as 'Well done!'

D.N

"Trust in the Lord and do good; Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37.3-7).

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, trusting only Thee:
Trusting Thee for full salvation, great and free.

I am trusting Thee to guide me, Thou alone shall
lead
Every day and every hour, supply all my need.

I am trusting Thee for power, Thine can never fail
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me, must
prevail.

I am trusting Thee Lord Jesus, never let me fall,
I am trusting Thee forever, and for all.

F.R.H.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 76, No. 6 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1999

Published November 1st

Next issue January 1st

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

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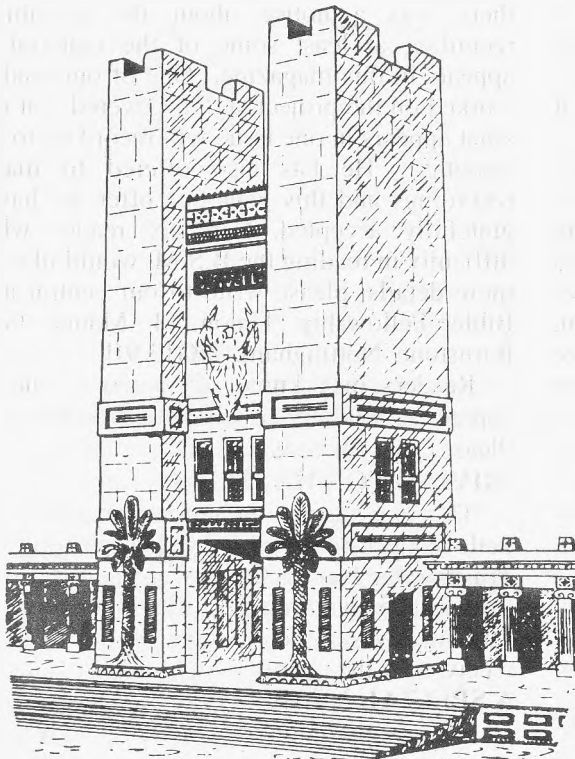
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*Lift up your heads. O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
(Registered Charity 1064607)
4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone,
Nottingham NG13 9JL England

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understanding. It

stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and His reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

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NOTICES

RENEWAL TIME

In this issue of the *Bible Study Monthly* you will find enclosed a 'Renewal Form'. We would be very grateful if you would kindly fill this form in, writing clearly, so that we have a correct record of your name and address, and return it to us. If you send a cheque (check) or postal order please make it payable to Bible Fellowship Union, otherwise it may be necessary to return it to you. We are very grateful for every gift received but no one should hesitate to request the *Bible Study Monthly* because they can't send something. All literature including the magazine is sent out free. We are also concerned about those readers who may have difficulty in sending back the Renewal Form. Those whom we have known a long time and have received the magazine for many years need not worry about its continued 'visit.' Among these readers we do not cancel unless requested. We do not 'lapse' readers until we are sure that they no longer wish to receive the B.S.M. Please let us know of anyone who you think should be receiving it and is not.

MAGAZINE AND BOOKLET CONTENT

In the Lord's providence, we would like to make the *Bible Study Monthly* as useful and helpful as possible to all its readers. They live in many lands with different Christian and cultural backgrounds. We are always pleased to receive observations about B.F.U. literature. Such comments may not make us change anything immediately but we will listen attentively. With the Lord's help we will try to maintain high standards in spiritual values as well as in means of communication. We are aware that younger readers may not always understand the language of previous generations and we therefore use modern translations where appropriate. We have also edited some reprinted material to keep articles to a moderate length and make

language intelligible to all ages. We try to retain original viewpoint and ideas.

TALKING BOOKS

In the May/June issue of *Bible Study Monthly* there was a notice about the possibility of recording at least some of the material which appears in this magazine. One of our readers has worked on the project and discovered that most of what appears in one issue will record on to a '120' cassette. He has also offered to make the recordings and this generous offer we have very gratefully accepted. If any reader who has difficulty in reading the B.S.M. would like to have more details, please write to our central address: Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham. NG13 9JL.

Readers may know of someone who would appreciate this service but cannot read this notice. Please write for details.

'GIVING TO CHARITIES'

This is a suggestion and not an appeal. Bible Fellowship Union and Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust are registered charities. As such they benefit from gifts made through 'Gift Aid' or by covenant. The money on the amount of the gift is then received by the charity.

A SPECIAL YEAR - 1999

We whisper - congratulations! We feel that we cannot let the year pass without some reference to 20 May 1999. On that day a number of friends shared the celebration of Albert Hudson's 100th birthday anniversary. He spoke to those present of his journey through the years but uppermost in his mind was the Master who he has served so well and for so long. Much of that service has been through the pages of this magazine. We say again 'Thank-you' to this veteran 'of the cause we serve'. We wish him and Marjorie the Lord's

A. O. Hudson

AMOS THE HERDSMAN

Amos 5.1-27

6. The Rejected Priesthood

In the picturesque language of the Old Testament, Israel is often described as a virgin, pure and chaste when faithful to God and the Covenant, dishonoured and disgraced when apostate. The symbol is generally used when the religious aspect of Israel's nationhood is the subject, and the priesthood and the national worship is involved. So it is here as Amos turns his attention to the unfaithful priesthood and first of all tells the people of the danger into which they have entered because of their continued toleration of these apostate priests.

Again the stentorian voice of Amos was raised, this time it was the turn of the priests to look uncomfortable. *"Hear this word which I take up against you, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall not rise again, and there is no one to raise her up. For thus saith the Lord God the city that marched out to war a thousand strong shall have but a hundred left, those that marched out a hundred strong shall have but ten left, of the house of Israel"* (ch 5.1-3). This is a preliminary announcement, directed to the people gathered in the court of the idol sanctuary at Bethel. His usage of the expression 'virgin of Israel' was to remind them of their relationship to God and that they were a covenant people, bound to Him in a sacred relationship which they had now repudiated by reason of their acceptance of idol worship. The penalty was that they would go out to fight their enemies, the ever present menacing Assyrians, and would be decimated. Only a hundred out of a thousand, or ten out of a hundred would return to tell the tale. Thus would the nation fall before her enemies and not rise.

There was one hope and it was repentance and reform. This has always been the case in all of God's dealings with man through history. *"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"* was the clarion cry of John the Baptist to a much later generation where the condition of things was very much the same. So in the Christian Age, *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"* has ever been the foundation principle of the Christian gospel. So now the youthful prophet declared to his listeners the way of escape. *"For*

thus saith the Lord unto the House of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. But seek not Bethel nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba: Gilgal shall surely go into captivity and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live, or he will break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there will be no one in Bethel to quench it" (ch. 5.4-6). Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba were all centres of idolatry. They were all sacred places, honoured names in Israel and because of their very sanctity had become places of resort for worship. The worship of God had degenerated into that of idols and God was placed on a level with pagan deities. Bethel was where Jacob had his dwelling when he returned from exile and God re-affirmed the covenant with him. Beersheba was where Abraham established his headquarters when resident in Canaan, and Gilgal where the Tabernacle was erected after the people had crossed Jordan and taken possession of the Promised Land. Famous places in the glorious history of Israel but now centres of idolatry! Forsake them, said the Lord and seek unto me if you would live peacefully in the land. If not, I will come forth to destroy Israel (The "house of Joseph" comprised Ephraim and Manasseh, the two leading tribes of the northern kingdom) and if I do, He went on scornfully, you can look to your idols in Bethel for help, if you will, but there will be none there with power to resist my coming forth.

With this word of exhortation and warning to the people Amos turns to the priesthood which is the main object of his prophecy in this chapter. *"You that turn justice upside down, and bring righteousness to the ground,"* he cries *"Seek him who created the Pleiades and Orion, who turned darkness into morning and day into night, who called for the waters of the sea and poured them out over the face of the earth, the Lord is his name. He dispenses ruin to strength and brings distress to the fortress. But ye hate him that brings the wrong doer to court and loathe him who speaks the whole truth. For as much then because you levy taxes on the poor and exact tribute of grain from them; though ye have built houses of hewn stone, ye shall not dwell in them, and though ye*

have planted pleasant vineyards ye shall not drink wine from them. For I know how many are your crimes, how countless your sins, you who persecute the guiltless, hold men to ransom and thrust the destitute out of court" (ch 5. 7-12). This is His terrible indictment of the men who should have been the shepherds of Israel, pastors and ministers to the people of God. They used their sacred office to enrich themselves and indulge their tastes at the expense of those to whom they should have been ministers and protectors. The same thing has happened many times since in the history of man and all too often the offenders, unlike the pagan priests of Amos' day, have retained the name and nominal worship of the true God while being completely alien from His spirit and principles. Amos reminds all such that they are rejecting the one who is responsible for all creation, who is in complete control of that creation and will not overlook their apostasy. He goes right back to the beginning, to the Book of Genesis. "*Seek him who created Pleiades and Orion,*" he exhorts. The very first verse of the Bible tells that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the heavens came first. The two constellations, Pleiades and Orion are governing signs of spring and winter respectively (see Job 38.31). "*Who turned darkness into morning and day into night,*" the second great creative event was "*let there be light, and there was light, God divided the light from the darkness and the evening and the morning were the first day*". Then as if these two great examples of Divine power were not enough, Amos refers to a later supreme manifestation of Divine judgment, the coming of the flood of Noah's day. "*Who called for the waters of the sea and poured them out over the face of the earth.*" At that dramatic point he breaks off abruptly and declaims "*the LORD is his name*". This is God, the God of Israel, the God who delivered them from Egypt and led them through that waste and terrible desert, safely into the Promised Land. This is the God who defended their forefathers from all their enemies while they trusted in Him and caused them to dwell safely and to prosper in their land. "*This is the God,*" cried Amos vehemently, "*whom you priests have despised and rejected. Therefore you shall lose all your ill-gotten gains, your fine houses and well-laden vineyards, and be left with nothing.*"

It is here in the days of Amos and his Judaeen counterpart, Joel, in this 8th century BC, that there appears the first intimation of a theme that is later expanded in Old Testament theology and onward into the New Testament. It is known generally as the 'doctrine of the remnant'. Throughout history, amid all the vicissitudes of apostasy and unfaithfulness to God that has characterized the waywardness of man, there have always been a few, submerged and unnoticed by people generally, who have kept the faith alive and retained a clear knowledge of the outworking purpose of God. In the days of the First Advent that remnant formed the company which accepted Jesus as Messiah and became the nucleus of the Christian Church. In the days of the Second Advent the remnant comprises those who are alert to the signs of the times and are ready and waiting for the change of sovereignty when the Lord Jesus assumes His power and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ. So in the days of Amos there is a word for 'the remnant'. "*The knowledgeable shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time. Seek good and not evil, that ye may live, and so the Lord the God of hosts, shall be with you. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the courts; it may be that the God of Israel will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph*" (ch 5.13-15). 'Joseph', the Ephraim-Manassesh section of the nation, is here representative of the whole. This remnant is the more or less unknown and certainly a very minor body of Israelites who had maintained their loyalty to God in the midst of the prevailing apostasy. The Divine promise was that by continuing in their loyalty, God would find a way to be gracious unto them when the inevitable judgement of Assyrian invasion came upon their fellows. How this was to be achieved does not readily appear but one can recall the case of Jeremiah, who was involved in the horrors of the Babylonian siege and capture of Jerusalem two centuries later. Whilst his apostate countrymen were either mercilessly slain or carried off into captivity he was preserved from harm by those same Babylonians and given freedom to go where he pleased (Jer. 40). This, then, is the earliest instance in Biblical history of the preservation of the remnant, a feature of the Divine supervision of events which was destined to recur time and again as history unfolded, and will yet recur before the end.

There is not much doubt that this idolatrous worship of Israel was intermingled with a good deal of what we would now call good theology. In other words, much of their former expectations and hopes inherited from their more godly forefathers remained. Nevertheless, they looked to their present false gods for the fulfilment of these promises rather than the true God of Israel. In this next section of Amos' words there seems to be an allusion to one of these expectations, the coming of the day of the Lord which in that day, as in this, was synonymous with the coming of Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth, that which will bring peace and blessing to all. Amos is at pains to show that so far as they are concerned, in their idolatry the day of the Lord is going to bring them something very different. These few verses are evidently addressed not to apostate priests, but to the people who have allowed themselves to be duped by them.

The NEB translation is superior to the AV and is therefore quoted at this point. *"Therefore these are the words of the Lord the God of Hosts. There shall be wailing in every street and in all open places cries of woe. The farmer shall be called to mourning and those skilled in the dirge to wailing; there shall be lamentation in every vineyard, for I will pass through the midst of you, says the Lord. Fools, who long for the day of the Lord! What will the day of the Lord mean to you? It will be darkness not light! It will be as when I will pass through the midst of you, says the Lord. It will be as when a man runs from a lion, and a bear meets him; or turns into a house and leans his hand on the wall and a snake bites him. The day of the Lord is indeed darkness, not light, a day of gloom with no dawn" (ch. 5.16-20).*

Jesus said (John 5. 28-29) that in the day of his Advent and the general resurrection of all men some would come forth to a resurrection of life and some to a resurrection of judgment. The revealing angel who appeared to Daniel told him something of a very similar nature (Dan 12.2). A further slant on the same subject is afforded by our Lord's intimation to the unbelieving cities of His day that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, classical examples of degradation, in the day of judgment, than for them, for had the gospel been preached to the former, they would have repented and reformed

(Matt. 10.15; 11.20-23). These statements illustrate a vital principle embodied in the Divine purpose. When the Messianic kingdom on earth is established and all men return from the grave to face their final opportunity to accept Christ and enter into life, there will be due retribution upon those who have knowingly and deliberately set themselves against God and His holiness. *"What a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* said Paul, and this principle, which holds throughout all Nature and all created things, holds true for man also. It follows therefore that in that future day of Christ's reign over the earth those who have degraded their characters and hardened themselves against right doing in this life will find the going much heavier than those who have led more upright lives. That will continue so unless and until in their turn they reform and come to Christ as Lord and begin to walk in His ways. Thus the day of the Lord, which will be a day of peace and blessing to the upright, will at first, at any rate, be a dark and gloomy one to the unregenerate. It will remain so until they turn *'from idols to serve the living God'* (1 Thess.1.9). Hence Amos' scornful declamation to the idol worshippers of his day, *"Fools who long for the day of the Lord! What will the day of the Lord mean to you? It will be darkness, not light!"* There will be wailing and lamentation over the then present distresses of Assyrian invasion and desolation and captivity. The people will long for the day of the Lord to come to deliver them from all this tribulation, not realizing that in their godless condition the day of the Lord will also have its hardships for them. They will run from the lion and meet a bear; turn into the house for ease and comfort and suffer the bite of a serpent. God will certainly deliver into His "afterward of peace" eventually, but some must certainly go through a "resurrection of judgment" first.

There now appears the most savage indictment of the apostate priesthood in the whole of the Book of Amos. For the first time in this chapter the Lord is speaking in the first person. Up to verse 20, Amos has been declaring the words of the Lord, repeating what the Lord has said to him. Now it is as if God himself interrupts, uttering his own feelings directly to the priests, with Amos as mouthpiece, in such a fashion as to leave no doubt of the revulsion with which He views them. "I

hate, I despise your feast days. And I will not accept the incense of your sacred ceremonies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and meat offerings I will not accept them, neither will I have regard to your thank offerings of choice bulls. Take away the sound of your songs for I will not listen to the music of your harps. Yet justice shall roll down as a river, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream. Ye did offer me sacrifices and gifts those forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel, but now ye carry the shrine of Moloch and the image of Kaiwan your star-god which ye have made for yourselves ... Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of Hosts." (ch 5.21-27).

Here is another evidence of the mixture of religion which characterized Israel at that time. The worship of God was mingled with that of

Moloch the Canaanite deity and Kaiwan (Saturn) an Assyrian deity. The first law given to Moses was "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20.3). The making and worshipping of images was expressly prohibited. "*Hear, O Israel the Lord our God is one God*" was the national watchword for many generations. Now the Lord looked down and saw the original pure worship of Israel adulterated with homage paid to gods which were no gods and all the abuses and degradation which went with that homage. So He rejected them. He spurned their contaminated offerings and closed His ears to their insincere praises. For more than six centuries He had borne with them but now the end had come.

To be continued.

THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Life is no part of God's *works*, no created and therefore *finite substance*; neither is it in any case detached from him, or independent of Him. As the rivers move along their courses only as they are renewed from perennial springs, welling up where no eye can reach, so it is with life. Genuine philosophy knows of no life in the universe but what is momentarily sustained by connection with its source – with him who "alone hath life in himself." The popular notion which sees an image of it in the reservoir of water, filled in the first place from the spring, but afterwards cut off, and holding an independent existence, is countenanced neither by science nor resolution. How can independent vitality pertain even to the most insignificant of created forms, when it is said so expressly that "in him all things live and move and have their being?" Even man has no life of his *own*, though of nothing are people more fully persuaded than that they live by virtue of an inborn vital energy, to maintain which, it needs only that they shall feed and sleep. Not that men deny the general proposition that life is from God, and in the hands of God. Every one is willing to allow that he received his life originally from the Almighty, and that the Almighty takes it away from him when He

pleases. Few, however, are willing to regard themselves as existing only by virtue of His constant influx, which, nevertheless, is the only way in which it can be true that "in him we live and move and have our being." It is wounding to self-love, and to the pride of human nature, to think of ourselves as so wholly and minutely dependent as we are, moment by moment, day and night, the senses all the while insinuating the reverse. Moreover, in the minds of most men there is a strong aversion to recognise physical effects as resulting from spiritual causes. Towards everything, indeed, which involves a spiritual element – which lifts us above the region of the senses – there is a deep-seated dislike, such as mere argument is perhaps incapable of overcoming, and which can only give way, it would seem, under the influence of higher moral feelings. Truly to understand anything of God's government and providence, we must first of all be faithful to His revealed law. We can form no right estimate, either of nature or of life, till we strive, with His Divine blessing, to become in ourselves more truly human.

Leo H. Grindon (19th cent.)

Tom Watson

THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS

*A Meditation in the
Song of Solomon*

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." (Song Sol 2.10)

The song of Solomon is poetry. It is not a treatise on doctrine, neither is it a book on prophecy. It should not be viewed as the visions of the prophets with symbolic pictures each element of which is intended to delineate some aspect of the future outworking of the Divine Plan. It is a poetic drama in which the two central characters sing and act the love that exists between them. Nevertheless their singing and their acting faithfully mirror the relationship which exists between Christ and His Church. There can be little doubt that this idyllic song is intended by the Holy Spirit to present to every lover of the Lord a picture of that relationship which could not be so well expressed in the more prosaic language of doctrine or even in the impassioned symbolism of prophecy. For this reason it is possible to detect behind the poetry a shadowy image of the Church in her waiting time and the coming of her Lord to take her to himself.

Each section of the song is a little cameo, presenting one or another aspect of that mystic relationship. Successive sections do not necessarily connect one with the other. Sometimes a section stands distinct by itself. Verses 8 to 13 of chapter 2 form one such distinct section, and the poetic picture it presents is one that is dear to the hearts of all the Lord's disciples; the union of the Church with the Lord at the end of her experience in the flesh.

It may be nothing more than an analogy. It may only be a reading of already established doctrine into what is perhaps a poetic fantasy. If, however the application fits and if it can thus clothe an expectation already held with the delicate colours of a poetic reverie, then it can in some small measure help to encourage and inspire us in the Christian way. *"The voice of my beloved!"* exclaims the Bride. She does not see him as yet, but she hears the tones of his voice speaking to her, calling to her, from beyond the veil. He is coming, and she knows He is coming, and her heart thrills at the prospect, *"Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, bounding (not skipping) upon the hills."* Here is an intimation not given us in the

more sober prophetic descriptions of His Coming which denotes the eagerness, almost the impatience with which He comes at the Age's end to claim His Bride, *"Behold I come quickly"* He said to John the Revelator. The prophet, watching diligently for His coming cries out *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings ... that saith unto to Zion. Thy God reigneth."* (Isa. 52.7). *"His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives,"* said Zechariah (14.4). This is the Lord on the way to take His Church to Himself.

What is the first intimation of His arrival? Does He come along the broad high road with sound of trumpets and a vast array of attendants? Does He come as in the parable, by night with lanterns and shouting, to the close-shut house where the Bride is waiting? Not in this delicate song does He thus come. *"Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh in (not forth) at the windows, showing himself through the lattice"* (v9). He comes quietly, unobtrusively, not with loud knock on the door, but as it were, semi-hidden behind the house wall, seen only dimly through the curtains which shroud the windows. 'Lattice' the only occurrence of the word in the O.T. means a net or network, and probably refers to a window covering which lets in the light but obscures clear sight. 'Shewing' denotes to glance forth, to look by stealth, as through the holes of a veil. How better can one describe the initial unseen phase of His Advent, that span of time leading up to the full end of the Age, when the 'watchers' realise by the signs of the times that the event is upon them and that the powers of Heaven are already intruding upon the affairs of men and gathering the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty? How better describe the coming of our Lord in His Divine spiritual glory into the world of men, this creation of space and time, to gather His Church silently and unnoticeably to himself? He is standing just out of sight behind the wall; but He is there. His form can just be made out behind curtains, all but invisible; but He is there. Later on He will be fully manifested for "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1.7), but for the present He is unseen, there behind the wall, shrouded by the curtains, but

He is there. *"I come as a thief."* He told John (Rev. 16.15) and a thief comes not through the door, but by means of the windows, as said Joel (2.9).

Though unseen, the Bride hears His voice *"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear in the earth, the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs and the vines are in blossom; they give forth their fragrance. Arise my fair one, and come away."* (vv 10-13). The time has come for the Bride to be joined to her Bridegroom and taken to her new home, for the Church to leave this earthly scene and be 'changed' to the glorious spiritual life and sphere which is her lot throughout eternity. This is the call which all who truly love the Lord are awaiting.

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone." What can the winter be but the whole of human history from the Fall, this dark time of man's subjection to the 'rain', to sin and all its consequences in misery, disease and death. In the days of Noah the wickedness of men was so great that God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil, and that continually. In the days of Abraham, the world was given to idolatry and the Lord could find only one man for His purpose. When Moses met with the Lord on Sinai and made a covenant with God on Israel's behalf, it was not long before Israel had broken and repudiated the covenant. Christ appeared and the nation to whom He appeared rejected Him. So it has been during the whole of this present Age. The rain has been heavy and continuous and the winter has been long, but now the winter is past and the rain is over and gone: the genial days of summer are at hand.

"The flowers appear on the earth." These are the signs of Christ's Kingdom, soon to commence. He takes His church to Himself. The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, says Isaiah. The sunlit beauty of Eden will return and dark days be no more. Both Ezekiel and John saw the vision of the River of Life flowing from the dwelling place of God and the Trees of Life on either side nourished by the waters of the river and yielding fruit for the spiritual sustenance of mankind and leaves for their healing.

"The time of the singing of birds is come."

There are two occasions when the singing of birds is more than usually noticeable. One is in the early dawn when the light of a new day is commencing to overspread the earth and the birds herald it with the well known 'dawn chorus'. The other is in the springtime when the world is entering upon its annual time of the springing up of new life. So it is here, the Dawn of the New Day, the coming of what will be for all mankind the acceptable year of our Lord, is heralded by the singing of birds. What is this singing? There are two Hebrew words used to express the act of singing. One is 'rinnah' which denotes singing in general without the particular kind of song and the other is 'zamir' which means to sing praises. Here in this text it is the word zamir that is used. The singing of praises is here intended. Who are they who sing praises at the dawn of the new age? *"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion"* (Isa. 52. 8). There is a wonderful vision in the 14th chapter of Revelation in which the entire Church in the flesh is pictured as standing on Mount Zion singing a new song which no man could learn save those who are Christ's and have pledged themselves to His service. That song is the prelude to a series of world-wide messages starting with the announcement of the coming Kingdom, and calling on men to believe because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It continues with a declaration of judgment upon the anti-Christian institutions of the world and concludes with the revelation of our Lord at His Second Advent in royal power to conduct the harvest of the Age, the gathering of His saints and the condemnation of all that opposes His Kingdom. The time of the singing of birds has come *"And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land."* The voice of the dove was heard on one memorable occasion in the past. When Jesus left the baptismal waters of Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him *"in bodily shape like a dove"* and there came a voice from heaven *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."* That is the only instance in all the Scriptures of the Holy Spirit being likened to an earthly creature. Nothing at all that the disciples of Christ have proclaimed or achieved in this closing period of the Age could have been done without the underlying inspiring and energizing power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord told

His disciples that He would be with them, even to the end of the Age. He further said that although He must in His personal presence return to His Father He would send them the Holy Spirit which would abide with them until He should again be present at His Second Advent. So the Holy Spirit has been the channel of Divine guidance and revelation through all the centuries of Christian history until now. The knowledge we have of the Divine plans for mankind and of our own place and service in those plans has been given by the Holy Spirit, which our Lord said would guide us into all truth and show us things to come. Truly the voice of the turtle dove has been heard in our land.

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs." For many centuries it has been recognized that in Scripture the fig tree is used in prophetic symbol to represent God's earthly covenant people Israel. Examples of this appear in Jer. 24.1-8; Joel 1.7,12 and Hosea 9.10. Our Lord used the same symbol in His parable of the fruitless fig tree in Luke 13. 6-7 and an obvious prophetic allusion in Matt. 24.32-33. Now this fig tree is putting forth her green figs. Under normal conditions a great many unripe figs remain on the tree throughout the winter and then ripen very early in the following year, becoming large and ready for plucking in March or April just as the new leaves begin to appear and Spring is at hand. These figs were called *paq*, green figs, to distinguish them from the later summer crop. Here it is said that the fig tree "putteth forth" her green figs. This expression "putteth forth" is *chanat* which means to mature or preserve. It is used only four other times in the O.T. and there translated 'embalm'. So we have come to a time in which the fig tree has matured her fruit which has been developing throughout the winter but in an unripe condition. Now it is spring and the fruit is ripe and mature and ready for use. What better picture is there of Israel being regathered and made ready for her future Millennial work. Jesus said that when we saw the fig tree putting forth her leaves we were to know that the time is at hand; this is what He meant. The prophet Habakkuk vowed that even if the fig tree did not blossom and no fruit appeared on the vine he would still believe and expect the Kingdom of Heaven in God's due time. In this our day we see the sign of the fig tree which assures us that his faith was not misplaced. So, now that the singing

of the birds and the voice of the turtle dove have given their testimony to the imminence of the Day of Christ, the maturing of the green figs adds an outwardly perceptible testimony to the truth of all that the Scriptures foretell.

"The vines are in blossom; they give forth their fragrance." Here is something that must come to its fruition in a later season. The fig trees are bearing their fruit but the vines as yet are only in blossom; the time of harvesting the fruit is a little on. The blossom is giving forth its fragrance, an earnest of that which is to come. In Old Testament days the vine was also a symbol of Israel, but a vine that had to be rejected and cast away because it failed to bring forth fruit. (Isa 5.1-6; Jer. 2.21, 22; Hos. 10.1) Our Lord gave this theme a New Testament setting and declared that the highest calling of all, to be joint heirs with Christ in the heavens was denied them because of that failure and the privilege given to the Christian Church of this present Age (Matt. 21.33-41). So the vines that are now in blossom and giving forth their fragrance represent members of the Church, believers in Christ, dedicated to His service and endeavouring in all ways to be conformed to His likeness. The time of fruitage is not yet; the Master Reaper has not yet gathered His own into the heavenly storehouse. We have reached only the flowering stage but that is evidence that the time of harvest is not very far away. It does not take very much imagination to sense that the fragrance can only be the fruits and graces of the Spirit which we, the branches of the Vine (John 15.5) are developing within ourselves and manifesting to others around us while life endures. *"The fruit of the Spirit"*, says our mentor, Paul, *"is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"* (Gal. 5. 22). These things constitute the fragrance which the vine blossoms give forth now; in a later day the fruit of the vine will be the life of all mankind, for the *"Spirit and the Bride say come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"*, (Rev 22. 17). The earnest expectation of the creation, says Paul again, waits for the manifestation of the Sons of God.

So, our beloved One stands there, behind the wall, looking in at the windows, hidden from sight by the curtains, but He is there. He comes to call His own to Himself, to take them and present them

before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, to accompany them into that wonderful but unimaginable experience which the Book of Revelation calls the marriage of the Lamb, preparatory to appearing with them for the world's salvation. He comes, at last, to take His Church to Himself and to set in motion that chain of events

which is to characterize the final end of human probation and culminate in the fulfilment, at last of the Church's age-old prayer "*Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.*" He stands there, behind the wall, and His accent comes, soft and low, but pregnant with meaning, "*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*"

Derrick Nadal

FEAR NOT

*Reflections for Christmas
and the New Year*

"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God." (Luke 1.30 RSV)

There can be few people in the world who would not find being confronted by an angel rather terrifying. Mary, Jesus' mother, seems to have been very disturbed although this may have been caused by what the angel said as well as his actual presence there with her. So came those words used to others in a similar situation "*Fear not*". Zechariah was another who found the words and presence of the celestial visitor very strange and was told to 'fear not'. Joseph responded similarly to Mary and whatever the exact cause of the reaction he was told not to fear. Even after Pentecost, Peter had a feeling of confusion when the angel led him out of the prison. These reactions were not altogether surprising since angels did not assume a physical form very frequently during the history of Israel, and there had been prophetic silence during the past four hundred years. In that period of silence God had not been inactive and there were still godly men and women in Israel. That at least is clear from the presence in the Temple of the aged Anna and Simeon when Jesus was presented with His mother. There were those in Jerusalem who looked for God's deliverance and with whom God had maintained contact. There had just not been any outward dramatic appearances of messengers from heaven. It is a point to ponder that they do not become visible very often in our human world. They were usually sent to those men and women whose hearts and lives demonstrated they were ready to receive and listen to them. Yet the devout followers of the Lord Jesus by and large have missed out on this privilege. Were an angel to appear in our lives, most of us would go into deep shock; terrified like the shepherds out on the Judaeian hill the night Jesus was born. The angel

would say to us as he did to those now famous shepherds, "fear not".

Gabriel was not an ordinary angel. He was one who stood in the presence of God and was therefore one who went on very special missions and this was a special mission! This was the greatest and most extraordinary event in the lives of men and women on the earth. It was the great turning point in history when the Son of God entered the world of men, to begin the long awaited process to eradicate sin from the earth and reconcile all mankind to their Creator. The more we ponder the thought, the more stupendous it becomes. Yet Mary would have been looking forward to a time when God would make Himself known to His people and rescue them from their plight. Perhaps like Simeon, she knew that God would eventually bring light to the nations and remembered the promise to Abraham that his descendants would bless "all families of the earth". Mary was not only a daughter of Abraham, she was also a descendant of David. Through the centuries the believing souls in Israel knew about the messianic promises from God and that some day He would place a king of David's line on the throne. However great the longing for such an event, when faced with the reality, it came as a surprise. Mary was not living in a palace as a princess. She was engaged to a lowly carpenter, a 'tekton' - more likely to have been the local craftsman and builder. They would live in a very small house, flat roofed and with a stairway at the side. Their one room would probably be shared with their few animals and it was quite usual to have a manger in a peasant's home. Was it into such a place that the mighty archangel from the presence of the eternal God greeted Mary? It was rather dark, for there were not many windows and only small, smelly oil lamps. How bright the

heavenly visitor would be: dazzling in fact. Gabriel would speak Hebrew, of course, or would it be Aramaic, the language of the ordinary folk? What really mattered was that the angel had come to Mary, a lass who was little more than a girl and of humble background. Why out of all Israel, of all the people of the Roman world, of all peoples that had ever lived on earth, had the Almighty Creator chosen this honoured servant. What a fantastic privilege! God doesn't make mistakes and nothing is too hard for Him. He had found just the one who could fill a unique place in His purpose and who would not be spoiled by it. That Mary was the one with the right attitude is clear from the wonderful song that she sang to her cousin Elizabeth. She knew that it was God's principle, to select for His work, those who would be obedient and not usually those who had riches and worldly honour. The great ones of the world just haven't enough time to listen to God. They are so busy with their little schemes for running the world.

Mary would never forget that encounter with Gabriel through all the years that were to follow. After the visit to Judaea to see Elizabeth, there would be the long journey to Bethlehem and then on to Egypt. There was the return to Nazareth and the long years of Jesus growing up. He was not like other boys, just as He was not going to be like other men. It's not always easy for a mother to take that kind of thing. There were more of these visits of messengers from the heavenly courts telling Joseph and Mary of their next move. When angels were no longer necessary Mary learned to rely upon her son, just as we have to do. Jesus told his disciples several times not to fear.

The word 'fear' is not in itself a bad word and as William Barclay explains in his book 'New Testament Words', it is a neutral word which can have either a good or a bad meaning depending on its context and the way it is used. There is a fear that is akin to panic and makes us want to run away. This is how the disciples felt in the boat during the storm. They also felt afraid in the presence of the power of God when Jesus did miracles. There is a fear which stands in awe of something wonderful and powerful. Our attitude to water illustrates this. Water is a most wonderful substance in all kinds of ways and makes our planet a suitable home for life. The majority of the Earth's surface is covered with water. It forms the

major part of living organisms and we can't survive long without it. Most children discover early that water is fun, yet it can destroy life very readily and it has immense force when it is moving. An example of attitudes to water can be shown in a child who very capably handles a canoe without fear. That confidence rapidly disappears beneath the fearsome force of Niagara Falls. Yet such fear is not a bad thing but a sensible warning to the child not to take liberties with power beyond its ability. We stand in awe of the mighty forces of nature.

"*Perfect love banishes fear*" (1 John 4.18 REV) wrote the Apostle John because as love develops and matures there is no fear of God's punishment and judgment. What was wrong with Zechariah's attitude and how did he differ from Mary? The priest's problem was unbelief. It wasn't just awe that he expressed as he listened to the angel from heaven. He still needed to take the first steps of faith in spite of his exalted office. Mary's fear was due to the awesome and majestic figure of Gabriel as he stood before her. The happening was outside her previous experience. Nevertheless she believed Gabriel and readily accepted what he told to her. It is easier for some folk to do that than for others. We have such complicated minds and lives that something new from God is sometimes hard to accept.

*"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His Word
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord."*

To remember the coming of the Son of God to earth as a baby, should give us courage. We look forward to meeting Him face to face for the first time. The consequences of that meeting should not make us fearful. He will see to it that we are ready for the meeting. There need be no fear for our own well-being and safety. They are in the hands of the Lord who once was cradled in Mary's arms and while dying was concerned for that mother's welfare. There need be no fear for our loved ones, however hard the parting, because they too are in the hands of Jesus who once stretched out his hands in death to give us life. Christmas has a message of hope and joy and peace. Let us not be afraid as we enter another year however momentous it may prove to be. It will be another year for Him and with Him wherever we spend it.

F. A. Shuttleworth

A PEOPLE FOR A PURPOSE*Thoughts on the
Call of the Church***4. Enthusiasm**

Enthusiasm means a passionate zeal for a person or work, an intense ardour, a keen interest, a deep fervour. It is driving power, the force that moves and keeps moving any person devoted to a selected project. The word is derived from the Latin *enthusiasmus*, to be inspired and from the Greek *entheos*, to be possessed by a god. Literally, it is *en -theos*, *God* in us. Here is something to note, for it is the secret of successful living. When Paul asked a special grant for the Ephesian church, this, was the boon he craved on their behalf, *"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"*. He asked also for the indwelling of Christ and the strengthening with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Eph. 3.14-19).

This filling with God, with Christ, with the strengthening power of the Spirit, comes according to the measure of self-emptying. The self-emptying will be according to the desire to receive the driving force which not only transforms life but fills it with purpose to completion. The purpose for which God separates and works with His living stones is that they shall shine with the light of His holiness, that they shall show His perfection, so declaring His works. They are to be both now and hereafter, a visible evidence of His love and glory.

The temple of Solomon was filled with the glory of God. It was a temple made with hands and a demonstration of the greater Temple yet future. The Spirit of God departed from it when the nation sought other gods and it passed away. The greater Temple will never pass away. It will form a permanent habitation of the Spirit because the love and loyalty of every member of the Temple will have been proven beyond doubt in the working years. God will be its light forever *"For the Lord hath chosen Zion. He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it"* (Psalm 132. 13-14).

God will be its light forever, each stone glowing with individual distinction with the glory received from Him, everyone a temple of the Temple, as every shining leaf is a part of a living tree. A life dedicated to the sacred purpose of God is more than a cleansed and separated life. It must go on to its final destiny. *"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on*

unto perfection" (Heb. 6.1).

It has already been seen that faith, tools, skill, persistent labour and determined effort, with the conditions at hand, form the material and equipment from which a possible future glory may be carved. Now comes the force, the driving power of a Divine energy, an unabated vigour, a passionate zeal for the bringing to perfection of the pattern shown by God in His Son (Heb. 12.3). The same force that fills the life will also empty it; *"God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us."* (Rom 5.5 NEB). The power of this Spirit has been likened to a wind, energizing, quickening and driving all before it. The dead wood, the stagnant vapours, the frail fabric, the worn-out rags of all that previously composed life, must flee, be scattered, before the fresh unsullied vigour. To the heart whose gates are wide open to meet it, willing that all things should be made new, it rushes in with flood-force, sweeping out the silted up channels of thought and feeling, clearing the vision, deepening the capacity to receive and use its living waters (John 7.38-9). The Spirit burns and glows as a living fire, an illuminating flame, presenting to the mind a vision of the invisible, supplying the might that can cast aside hindrances, which can be gloriously ruthless in treading upon natural desires, making them ends by which the eternal vision may be realized. The prophets of old knew this burning force within them, urging them on to speak with courage and clarity the things seen and received by its medium. Jesus receiving of its fulness was utterly consumed with zeal until He had accomplished man's instruction and redemption.

So Paul says, *"Quench not the spirit"*. Do nothing to dim or dampen or obstruct this full, free-flowing force by which God transforms human life, making living stones into a glowing torch of light and life in a dark and dying world. Unless the stones glow now with the radiance of His love they will not glow hereafter. The stones of the old temple were hewn in underground quarries and there shaped and dressed. When the time came for assembling and fitting them together they were moved into place without sound of hammer or any other tool (1 Kings 6.7). The mason's work had

been accomplished. No later touch was added or needed. They were wrought in secret and so beautifully did they fit together, each in its appointed place, that the thinnest blade could not be thrust between them.

The living stones are also wrought in the secret places of the earth. Whatever they will be hereafter they must be now for no alterations will be made on the heavenly site. There will be no cutting, chiselling or polishing there. The environment alone will be changed when the earthly tabernacle is dissolved and the living stone slips silently into place. How important and necessary it is that the fulness of God shall fill, that Christ must dwell, that the powerful energy of the Spirit shall preside over this life-work without let or hindrance! How careful and prayerful must be the life of one who is not disobedient to the heavenly vision! Jesus found it all joy to be about His Father's business, even His meat and drink was to do what the Father required of Him. The life which cannot be full time employed in Christian work can be fully engaged in the Father's business doing His will in daily life, serving Him in the daily round, being conformed to His likeness by daily experience, exhibiting His Spirit in daily contacts. A mind so attuned to the heavenly places will absorb the Spirit's holy influence as the earth drinks in the sun and rain sending them out again in the flower and fruit of life. This filling with the fulness of God through constant association by prayer, study, meditation, fellowship and lofty thought is the fulfilling of the Father's purpose. By such means He is shown forth to the world through His people, even by the imperfect flesh revealing a little of His perfection. All the graces of Divine love, engraved upon the pliant heart, expressing something of the heavenly origin in word, in tone, in look, in deed, glorify God and add to the enduring beauty of His workmanship. How keen, how patient, how intent, should they be who have put their hand to this noble task, who have, by solemn dedication of the will put their hand into His hand that they might be transformed, that He may be shown in such a fashion that others may be won to Him.

No work goes on its way unhindered. Life produces many a snag and the human element experiences many a slump. Bunyan's pilgrim was acquainted with the Slough of Despond.

Enthusiasm is sometimes bogged down in some personal quagmire. A spiritual weariness arises, dissatisfaction with what appears to be a lean period of ineffectual effort. Remembering former pleasures of vigorous faith and action, the impeded worker is apt to sigh like poor, afflicted Job, "*Oh that I were as in months past*". The evidence of a lively Christian experience seems lost. Peace of mind, abounding joy, zealous activity, desire for prayer and study have all died down. There is little taste for spiritual things. Life becomes tiresome and the conduct of others is viewed with a jaundiced eye.

Causes of such a decline are many. A lack of self-discipline, a temporary walking after the flesh, a lack of spiritual exercise may be responsible for the lowering of tone, the languid mind and the dwindling energies. It may be some form of idolatry, the affections being preoccupied with the things of earth. The self-righteousness that exalts a heart in pride instead of bending it at the throne of God is another reason why work is halted when it looks most promising. A wistful sigh for happier days is not a cure. When the fire burns low and life loses its driving power, then is the time to seek an interview with the Master-builder. To Him, the ailing labourer must state his case without reserve, in humility and hope. The contrite are always revived and replenished, for a gracious God is more willing to give the energy of His power than His co-workers are eager to receive its stimulating force.

Then there are those who also feel with Job in their afflictions, "*My purposes are broken off*" (Job 17.11). The bright promise of useful ministry is suddenly smitten and life laid aside. All appears useless and lost. Hopes are dashed. There seems no answer to the strange frustration. When Michael Angelo found the stone for 'The Boy David' statue, it was lying abandoned and spoiled by unskilful cutting. Patiently, the great artist fashioned the stone so that the defects of its early accident are not visible. Mistaken zeal can put all its energies to the work of a system. It can give its allegiance and devotion to men or a movement, when God requires the power of living and loving to be spent upon the Gospel, to Christ as above and beyond all men however talented their ministry. Teaching, preaching and the organized activity of societies are means employed to one great end, the

spiritual perfection of the dedicated mind and will. Even Jesus rejected the commendation of the young man who sought eternal life "*Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God*" (Matt. 19.17).

Throughout His life and ministry it was God He revealed to men, God He honoured and glorified in His work and the presence of God He sought as the crown of His joy (John 17.4- 5). So God-likeness and the fulness of joy in His presence are the ultimate endeavour and end of all labour and experience. "*For while one saith, I am of Paul, another of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building ... All ye are Christ's and Christ is God's*". (1 Cor. 3. 4,9, 21-23).

The natural heart prone to love and admire most what can be seen and heard, needs often the reminder that -

"The letter fails, the system falls and every symbol wanes,

The spirit over-brooding all, eternal love remains". - Whittier

The impetuous eager enthusiasm, that would bind itself to creeds, causes and leaders must sometimes be severed from an activity which would unwittingly separate it from its true goal of repose in God, that His holiness may be etched upon the living stone of a loyal devotion. Though the outward activity may cease, the inner work of the Spirit never ceases until that likeness is wrought which nothing and none can deface or destroy. True Christian enthusiasm is neither parochial in its outlook nor partisan in its adherence to the purpose of God. It sees all issues from the "*breadth and length, the depth and height of His eternal purpose*". They who glow with its life-giving force will make progress. They will go on from 'strength to strength'. In any natural employment the worker tires, going from strength to weakness and weariness. The workers with God, receiving the energy of Him who never wearies, are enabled to go on to the end of life with

freshness of faith and a perennial vigour which adds 'glory to glory' to the Spirit's work.

The frosts of many winters may crown the head, which in youthful ardour, first bowed before God in consecration. There may be slower action. The hot, hasty zeal, the elated daring of earlier days has given place to mature thought, to wise considerations, to the calm courage of deliberate action. But the grasp of truth is keener, the determination set fast, the faith strong and the trust unshakeable. The desire remains, ardent as ever to diffuse the knowledge and love of God, to win souls to Him through the Saviour's love and sacrifice for man. There will be a beauty about the whole person, a glow from within, shining without, which touches word, look and action with "*the wisdom which cometh from above*". There will be compassionate gentleness of Him who called the weary to His side and the healing sanity which freed men from sin and gave to them a right mind. It will be the halo of a holy life unheeded by its wearer but carried away from the long intercourse with the Temple builder. His Spirit will be shown through the people of His purpose, that the perfection of His love may be known among men. On every stone of note the mason leaves a mark. On royal property it is the mark of royal ownership. In his vision, John saw the angel with the seal of the living God. The fabric of society held together until that royal mark had been set upon every living stone (Rev. 7.2-4). Paul also looking upon that royal edifice wrote to Timothy, "*The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his*." (2 Tim. 2.19).

Who would faint while such a prospect urges on to faithfulness

Look not at the things beside thee, those behind thee have no worth,

Let the glorious hope before thee, fill thy heart with rapturous mirth.

The End

If there is one thing which should be quite plain to those who accept the revelation of God in Nature and in the Bible, it is that He is never in a hurry. Long preparation, careful planning and slow growth, would seem to be leading characteristics of spiritual life. Yet there are many

people whose religious tempo is feverish. With a fine disregard for its context they flourish like a banner the text, "The King's business requireth haste" (1 Sam 21.8) and proceed to drive themselves and their followers nearly mad with tension and anxiety!

J B Philips.

T. Holmes

TRUTH'S DEEPER VALUES

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. 3.10).

Paul's letter to the Philippians has been aptly termed "the window of his soul". In no other letter from his hand do we get such a glimpse into his heart, as we do in this. All the strong tides of an unusual personality are to be seen gushing forth from the depth of his soul, voicing the most sacred longings of many generations of faithful men. It was given to Paul, as to the Psalmist of old, to express in compelling language the passionate yearnings of the human soul as they reached up and up beyond this mundane world to make contact with the things of God. So truly did he interpret those longings for "the closer touch" that thousands upon thousands of the saintliest men, in reading those expressive words, have said, 'Yes, that goes for me too'. Thousands have rejoiced to say 'Amen' to his fervent prayer.

The nearest likeness to Philippians in this respect is that delightful letter addressed to Philemon about Onesimus. Here true Christian courtesy finds expression in words of rare charm as he beseeches Philemon to accept, to forgive and to welcome home again his former faithless slave, not now merely as a slave but a brother in the Lord, for the sake of 'Paul the aged'. Only a heart charged with the deepest sympathy could write like that. The next nearest in likeness to Philippians is the caring attention for son Timothy, where, as with a father's heart he yearns over the spiritual and physical welfare of a beloved child in the faith (1 & 2 Timothy). Yet these similar letters were addressed to single individuals, while Philippians was addressed to a whole church, in which there is but one solitary phrase of reproof and entreaty. Two sisters, both beloved by Paul for their work's sake, were at variance on some minor point, and caused some disturbance to the serenity and peace of this exemplary church.

Paul loved the church at Philippi with a fervent love. He thanked God for them frequently. They were at once his joy and crown; his joy because they loved the Lord so ardently; his crown because their warm-heartedness was to him as the laurel

wreath to the successful athlete in the Isthmian games. They were the proof that he had run well in their midst and had won success. Consequently he could open his heart to these as to few others. In opening up the treasure chambers of his heart he knew he could reveal to them things so precious to himself, assured that they could and would understand why he so greatly longed to know and possess his Lord. Men do not open up the holy places of the soul to the scoffing tongue or scornful eye. It was because his love for them was so intense and that he had come to know them so intimately well, he knew he could 'let them in' on the deepest secrets and confidences of his soul. He could confide to them hallowed things which he could not tell to any other church and because of this, both they and we are permitted to catch a passing glimpse of the white-hot fervour of his love for his beloved Lord. Words like those written here would have seemed out of place in his letters to Corinth and to Rome. Even in Ephesus and Colosse, nothing drew forth these deep and tender yearnings in such swelling volume as in Philippi. It speaks much for the saints at Philippi that this unsurpassed 'great-heart' of the early church could unburden himself in words of such beauty and depth. To how many communities of our own day could he thus have written?

There is not time and space to deal with more than the verses of our text and those in the context. From them we shall draw the evidences that Truth has deeper values than those that lie on the surface and show that it was these deeper values which were the objects of Paul's intensely ardent desire. In a life which on its lighter side had been filled so very abundantly with the good things of God, these deeper values were the things he prized more highly than all the rest.

The prime arresting point which grips our minds as we ponder his words is that they were written by one who had known the Truth for many years, more deeply than any other living man. For twenty five years (at least) he had been a chosen vessel to the Lord and had borne the story of His life and death and resurrection, with all that they implied, over most of the wide spaces of the near East. No man had laboured more diligently. None

had plumbed more deeply, features of the Truth pertaining to the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, and its vital place in God's plan. Nor could any other servant of the Lord explain the facts or the groundwork of philosophy which underlie those facts, so ably as he. Other teaching brethren, among them a member of the 'twelve', spoke of these fundamental things as 'difficult to understand'.

To the cultivated mind of Paul, trained in the process of analysis and deduction, the things he taught and wrote were the obvious conclusions to draw from the facts. These facts concerned the reign of sin and death and the ways and means instituted by the Judge of all the earth to release men from the slavery of these evil powers. He had come to see and understand why that supreme law of God had to be invoked, first to condemn humanity and later to offer acquittal to such as could exercise true faith in the Divine purposes. He had come to see that by one man's sin the whole race was involved in the penalty. He also saw, on the obverse side, how by one Man's righteous sacrifice, the Law could be satisfied, and all that sinner's descendants were included in his own release from the guilt of sin.

John and Peter knew something of redemption as Christian truth, but they did not attempt to argue the case as it stood 'in law'. Paul alone, of all the apostles, gives evidence of insight into these redemption facts so as to place them on a legal basis. He was the one who made plain that by the death of the worthy Lamb, the law of heaven and earth had been satisfied. He showed too that the overruling Judge who had decreed that man must die, could now say that man could be presented with an opportunity to live. It is this man who understood so well the legal groundwork of God's plan, who speaks of those deeper longings which all that wider knowledge could never satisfy. Perhaps it is safe to say he knew more **about** his Lord than any living man, yet with all his understanding there was one thing he did not yet know, as he learned to know it, in the hard places of his life. Twenty five years had been spent in telling men, Gentiles and Jews, **about** the Lord and all that He stood for in the purpose of God. He was no mere novice in the faith who sought to know Him so ardently. He had grown old, beyond his years, by the ardour of his service and had told

thousands how to know **about** Him. Yet here we find him ardently desiring to learn the one thing he had hitherto been unable to tell. Already he had written the doctrinal masterpiece, the Epistle to the Romans. Already he had told the Thessalonians and Corinthians about resurrection certainties of their beloved dead; and in that sublime chapter (1 Cor. 15) he had penned the most profound and exquisite outline of the saints' final change into the likeness of their Lord, that Holy Writ affords. Even now as he dictates this script to Philippi, his mind is scaling all the lofty heights of thought and truth which enrich his message to Colosse and Ephesus.

It is because he knew so much about the Lord that he longed and yearned to learn more of His person that make his words so remarkable. Are we entitled on the strength of these two facts to say that there is a tremendous difference between knowing about the Lord (with all it means concerning His plan of redemption), and 'knowing him' for what He is in Himself. That which could be said **about** someone could be vitally different from that which reveals his inner personality. This is because all that may be said about a person need not necessarily be the whole of the inner life's values. An employer may be able to know and say much about a man. However the only one who could know the inner man would be the one closely linked to him by wedded love and then only after many years spent in closest intimacy with him.

During the crowded lifetime of the esteemed Lord Lister, discoverer and advocate of antiseptic surgery, many people came to know much about him. Nevertheless, he was shy and retiring and few apart from his closest relatives and friends, ever knew him as 'the sufferer's friend', which he truly was. Perhaps something like this could be said of nearly every man and woman on earth today. Only those to whom the portals of the heart are opened widely, know and understand the graces of the personality which adorn and enrich the inner sanctum of the soul.

This was exactly what Paul wanted to experience with the person of the Lord. He already knew that he was fully known by the Lord (1 Cor. 13.12). He had long ago won for himself right of entry into the sanctum of Paul's soul. That was in accord with the Divine desire to find a place of rest, which neither temple nor tabernacle could

afford. Finite though he was Paul yearned and longed and prayed that he might find means of entry into the heart of the exalted Master, who loved him and redeemed him at such amazing cost. In all those crucial sufferings which came into his life, Paul longed to know and feel and experience more of that inflow of divine sympathy and succour that could find its source only in the loving heart of his exalted Lord. He wanted to bear in the depths of his own love-linked soul, those words of encouragement from his Master's approving voice.

We might have expected Paul to have said this after the arresting experience on the Damascus road when he first dared to raise a prayer (Acts 9.11), or as he meditated on Arabia's desert sands (Gal. 1.17). In such circumstances it might have seemed just the question to ask the Lord. To find him here, after many active years, unburdening himself of the deepest longing of the soul in these amazing words is another thing. In our own disappointing and trying days it is a matter which needs looking into very carefully. If there is something more in the Christian's present heritage over and above the knowledge of the many wonderful aspects we have of our Lord in His great redemptive work, surely we need to know and profit by it. Especially is this so if in these last days of the Church's pilgrimage here, a Gethsemane experience awaits the remaining followers of the Lord, before they are caught up to see and be with Him.

That we have presented Paul's thought is apparent when we grasp the full scope of his argument. At one time he had considered himself exceedingly rich in life's assets, gained by observance of the Law. Whereas once he was rich, now he was poor, for he had suffered the loss of all things, and now counted them as uneatable refuse from a meal. The waste was usually thrown to the scavengers and dogs. All these assets of birth and accomplishment had been surrendered and discarded for the sake of gaining a present inheritance in Christ. This was in order that he might eventually, when present suffering days are at an end, attain to the resurrection and so be with the Lord. Already he was enjoying participation with the Master, as he received the spirit of anointing. Yet he was not participating with him in the resurrection. Hence in verse 11 his words are of a provisional nature, "*If by any means I may attain*

to the resurrection out of the dead". His consuming desire was to "*Win Christ and be found in him*" at the crucial hour when the 'special dead' were due to be raised from their sleep in death. Who would find those 'first-fruits'? Surely by Him who had raised Jesus from the dead. It would be the Father of our Lord Jesus who would come seeking and finding among the dead all those in whom the spirit of the Christ had matured to the degree of likeness to the character of His beloved Son. To reach that likeness to the Lord, Paul knew that he must share with Jesus in the sufferings of this present time and like Him be made perfect through suffering. He also knew that in order to endure those sufferings patiently he must acquire a clasp upon his Lord. Thus he would become linked with him in confidential knowledge and understanding that no power on earth, nor any pain or loss, could cause the slightest severance with the Master.

To be in Christ now afforded no assurance to Paul that he would "*win Christ and be found in him*" and so participate in the first resurrection. Paul knew that there were two things in his life that could tend towards the certainty of winning such a place in Christ and of being found in Him. The first was to share in the sufferings of Christ now, being made perfect thereby. The other was by gaining a grip upon his Lord by 'knowing Him', that the mighty power of the resurrected Lord could enter his life and give strength to his striving along the way. The key to hope of attainment to that future life with Christ was in the present privilege of 'knowing Him'. We need not wonder that with advancing years we find the yearning desire becoming stronger and more passionate. Only when 'deep calls to deep' can the foundations of life be stirred and the unbreakable attachments be made. Only when 'the perfection' of the Lord reached down to that 'which was being perfected' in Paul, could the unfinished follower hope to ascend to the Lord who had 'finished'. What can these experiences and words of Paul mean to us today? What is the difference between knowing Him and knowing about Him which these words of Paul reveal?

As a main point of difference would it not be right to classify all those things which Paul had known about his Lord, as doctrinal truth? Do not our own doctrinal truths tell us **about** our Lord?

Do they not tell us who He was, what He was, what He did, where He is, why He is where He is, and what He has yet to do before the redemptive work is complete? Is not every point of doctrine essential to our present understanding? It ranges backwards to His exalted pre-human estate. It sees Him who was rich divest Himself of all His wealth to become a man. It sees Him come to baptism and consecration and on to Calvary and the tomb. It witnesses His awakening and exaltation to immortality. It expects His coming forth again to take His glorious Throne, and then all enemies destroyed and man restored. It sees Him give place to God "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15.28).

None of these things show us what He is in Himself! This deeper knowledge must be learned from deeds not words; from experiences in which we must share. It must come from ever present 'tender shepherd care', that meets our need, turns weakness to strength and frailty into energy. It is that which alone must turn blank promise into active realization.

God through His word has made many promises but they all need translating into the facts and experiences of life for us. We are told that God will be our helper and therefore we need not fear what men may do to us (Heb. 13.5,6). We are told that His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12.9), and therefore our weaknesses need not impede us in our activities. We are also told that all things work together for good to them that love Him who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8.28). These are some of the exceeding great and precious promises but the whole range of them is provisional. Their fulfilment to us rests upon certain responses arising from our own hearts and lives. They are not fulfilled automatically or unconditionally apart from the responses on our part. Without the 'asking' in our times of need, there may be no supply of grace for us. Without the constant yielding of our hearts and minds to God, there may be no working together for good, in the 'all things' of our life. Without the oft-repeated daily prayer to be 'kept' there may be no keeping power put forth on our behalf. Thus without our hunger and thirst for their fulfilment, they can remain nothing more than blank promises so far as we are concerned.

This would be a serious situation for us if we were always left to our own resources. Many who

have known these promises have grown cold and insensitive towards them and have relinquished their hold in consequence. This is because they have lost that warm affinity with their Lord, and as a result they are not keenly sensitive to the first impulses 'to ask' which proceed from the 'Head'. The first prompting that precedes the 'asking' must come from the Lord. He initiates the first flickering desire that results in our prayer for help, our petitions to be 'kept' and our constant yielding to the will of God. Without the first impulse from His loving heart, our cold and lethargic nature would be unready to ask. As a result, therefore, if we failed to ask we would also fail to receive. Thus in all our weaknesses, as well as in our sufferings, the power that flows from His resurrection is the essential thing that makes for our safe keeping (our salvation) day by day. This is the thought of Paul in Romans 5.10, "*Being reconciled we shall be saved by his life*". All this rests upon the prior blessedness of 'knowing Him'. The fulfilment of the precious promises lie within the sphere of gentle shepherd care. New and fresh fulfilment comes with every passing day to those who live sensitively to these heavenly influences. This deeper phase of truth is revealed anew every day and in a thousand ways. Its many forms of revelation are not written in any literal text, except in the broad general sense that one blank promise can be translated into a thousand different forms of fulfilment. It is in these thousand forms that the trusting sheep of His pasture learn to know the gentle touch of the watchful Shepherd's hand. It is the only method of learning to 'know Him' more intimately every day. Here is a sphere of truth, as true and certain as the great basic redemption truth of the plan of God.

Paul had reached a point in his experience where there was a measure of uncertainty over-shadowing his pathway. So far as he knew he might shortly stand face to face with death. He had weighed up the situation with calm thought and had reached the point now when his own preference was to die. To live or die were of little consequence to him now. If it pleased the Father that he should die, his one desire was to feel the presence of his Master attending his departure.

Paul was confronted with the same circumstances later when his fickle friends forsook him. He had the blessed realization that the Lord

was with him. As he faced the Roman bar he knew that *"the Lord stood by"* him and in consequence could say *"I know him whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day"*. There was no *"if by any means I might attain"* now. Instead he could write *"There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord ... shall give to me at that day"* (2 Tim. 1.12; 4.8 RV). This

at last was his confident and victorious assurance.

Since his day other great souls have lived and died with the same intense desire; the ardent longing to live that inner life with Him. They were men and women that often faced the stake and other deaths unflinchingly because they always knew that Jesus Himself 'stood by'.

Abridged from 'Herald of Christ's Kingdom'

Albert O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in Job 32 - 37

9. Immortal, Invisible, God only wise

God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. (37. 5).

One waits here to perceive what mighty exhibition of Divine power is now to be adduced by Elihu in further support of his argument for the power of God. It is with a sense of anti-climax that we find that he is going to refer to everyday things such as snow and rain. Not much evidence of the power of God here surely. Yet some years ago at a time of unusually persistent rainfall, a cartoon appeared in a London daily newspaper depicting a rain-drenched and flooded landscape in the midst of which a figure clad in oilskins stood with hands upraised to heaven in an attitude of despairing supplication. The caption read "I can split the atom, I can fly faster than sound and yet ...". With all his wonderful achievement that lonely figure was powerless in the face of Nature's rain. And how true that is! It only needs a blanket of fog or snow and the whole complex of human transport comes to a stop: only a few spots on the sun or a magnetic storm out in space and the world's radio communications resolve into meaningless gibberish. The light and heat of the sun are rightly regarded as the most beneficent influences that bless the human race but it only needs a little too much sun combined with not enough rain and the crops fail and man perishes from the face of the earth. With all man's boasted achievements and his claimed control of the forces of Nature, he is still absolutely and altogether dependent upon the orderly working together of those forces for his continued existence upon earth. The control he claims is no control at all, he is utterly at the mercy of Nature and only God can control Nature.

Elihu saw all this plainly and used this very illustration. *"For he saith to the sun, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength* (the 'former' rains, light, soft showers, came in the spring-time when the seed was growing fast; the 'latter' rains, drenching downpours, *"great rain of his strength"* in the later summer when the crops were ready for harvesting). *"He sealeth up the hand of every man that all men may know his work"* (37. 6-7). Rotherham says *"On the hand of every man he setteth a seal that all men may take note of his doing"*. The power of God manifested in the irresistible forces of Nature has the effect of constraining, binding, limiting man until he realises his own impotence in the face of God's work. *"That every man may know his own weakness"* is the manner in which the LXX renders this last sentence. Sooner or later men will have to realise their own weakness and littleness in the sight of God; all their marvellous inventions and all their wonderful works can be rendered impotent by one little snowstorm which only God can avert.

The lower creation, it would seem, is more sensible than man. In the face of a great snowstorm or persistent rain, says Elihu, *"the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places"* (37.8). Their instinct tells them of the futility of fighting against the way God has ordained the course of Nature. Modern man thinks he knows better. He thinks he can bend Nature to his will and do things even better than Nature can do them. He fails to realise that he is thus defying God and the ordinance of God and will surely fail. Only by co-operating with Nature, and so with God, will man come into his

inheritance; but that time is not yet.

Elihu continues his theme. "*Out of the chamber cometh the whirlwind and out of the storehouses the cold. By the breath of God ice is given and the broad waters become solid*" (37. 9-10). Driver has shown that 'south' and 'north' in the Authorised Version should be rendered 'chamber' and 'storehouses' respectively. The allusion is to the ancient belief that the winds are stored in great chambers and store-places above the sky and that portals were opened to allow them to blow upon the earth. The entire picture is that these things are held in Divine power to be let loose in the earth at God's pleasure and in God's time. So it is with the clouds that float above the earth and Elihu knew that these clouds were the rain carriers. "*Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud, he disperseth his lightning cloud. It is turned round about by his counsels; that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth*" or as Driver again has it "*upon the face of his habitable world*". The close connection of all these powers with the race of men is constantly stressed. These forces of Nature and natural functions of rain, snow, ice, storm, lightning and sunlight, are not just casual happenings in an inanimate creation, the outward manifestation of the operation of some blind law. They are not even merely an essential part of the economy of a world of unreasoning vegetable and animal life. They are devised to have a direct effect upon man and profoundly concern the very basis of his being. Elihu knows that too. In a wonderfully eloquent and far-sighted remark he sums up the whole truth of God's power in Nature's phenomena, "*He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy*" (37. 13). These are three purposes for which rain, snow, storm, sunshine are sent upon the earth. Sometimes they are for man's correction. to warn and chastise him and turn his mind, if he will, to a better way. Sometimes it is simply and plainly for the good of the earth that it might be fertilised and freshened, to bring forth its fruits that man might continue to live before God. Sometimes it is in mercy, particularly the Messianic Age of Christ's reign upon the earth. In that glad day all the forces of Nature will combine to make the wilderness and desert place blossom as the rose (Isaiah 35.1) and the earth will yield its increase to the glory of God.

This verse is just one of the many instances in the Bible where this dual aspect of God's dealings with his children is expressed. 'Correction' is *shebet* – a rod of chastisement and of guidance. In Psalm 2.9 the victorious Messiah is to break the rebellious of the earth with *a shebet* – a rod of iron, whilst in Ezek. 20.37, backsliding Israel is to pass under the *shebet*, the rod of iron, the rod of iron and into the bond of God's covenant. New Testament references to Christ ruling all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2.27 and 19.15) come from the same root, translated into Greek. A firm, strong and just rule in which evil and wickedness meets with instant retribution is indicated by this rule of the iron rod. That is one aspect of God's dealings. The other is characterized by mercy *chesed* (Heb) a word which means loving-kindness. "*Because thy loving kindness (chesed) is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee*". (Psalm 63.3) "*Who crowneth thee with loving kindness (chesed) and tender mercies*" (Psalm 103.4). The writer to the Hebrews very aptly shows the combination of these two aspects. "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*" (Heb 12.6). In our Father's providence the outward circumstances sometimes bring to us the rod of correction and sometimes the sunshine of His approval, but always it is to the end that we may be fashioned and conformed into His likeness which is, after all, the original meaning of the word "chastening". So then the strong power of God is exercised toward men, sometimes in correction, sometimes in loving-kindness, sometimes in the general progress of His plans for the earth and man upon it but always does it bear the impress of a God of love.

Now with an arresting and a peremptory demand for attention, Elihu comes to the end of his long series of orations. For the last time he calls the attention of Job to the inescapable logic of his words. "*Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God. We know that God has disposed his works, having made light out of darkness*" (this latter sentence is from the LXX 37.14, 15). This is a reference back to the beginning to what might be regarded as the most momentous thing that happened at the time God moved to the creation of things that exist "*Let there be light, and there was light*". That is the sublime introduction to the story of the Divine

purpose. Men do not know, even now, what light really is, only that it is fundamental, not only to life, but to matter. The narrow band of vibrations which register on the human optic nerves as light, does not by any means exhaust all the vibrations there are; perhaps there is light, more widespread, more penetrating, more lovely, visible to other intelligent created beings which is quite outside the range of human comprehension. Somehow we think of the condition of unformed chaos which existed before God commenced to create, as an impenetrable and universal darkness. Somewhere in that darkness God dwelt, immortal, invisible, the only wise and omnipotent Deity, inhabiting timeless eternity. Somewhere in that darkness He decreed light, and light began. With light time began and from then onwards this creation of radiation and matter which scientific men claim to resolve back into a magnificent and almost incomprehensible system of vibrations, had its existence and began its ordered development. Many, many years later Paul, his spirit-filled mind illumined with this same understanding recalled Elihu's words and gave them a new meaning as he talked of an even more wonderful creation which God was even then bringing into being. *"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God..."* (2 Cor 4.6). The whole story of the developing plan of God is the coming of light where there was formerly darkness and of the victory whereby the light eventually dispels the darkness and takes its place. So Elihu, as he draws his long discourse to its close, and makes his final plea for the power of God manifested in His wondrous works, puts the creation of light out of darkness as the first and most noteworthy.

"Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge, you whose garments are hot when the earth is still because of the south wind?" (37. 16-18 RSV). From the unknowable to the known, the unseen things to those that are seen, Elihu leads his argument. No man saw the dawn of the first light to shine in God's creation. No man witnessed the mighty cataclysms which gave birth to the first stars but every man including Job himself, could clearly perceive the clouds sailing majestically over their heads without ever understanding how

they maintained their position up there in the sky and never falling down. Everyone, including Job experienced the heat of the south wind blowing from the sun-scorched deserts of Arabia. Yet they never knew what it was that gave the south wind its heat while the north, west and east winds brought snow, rain and cold, as Elihu had just been reminding them in the earlier part of this chapter. Every man, and Job himself could look up into the heavens on those days when there were no visible clouds. There was just a shimmering field of azure tinged with a slight haze through which the sun shone in his strength, for that is the kind of sky indicated by the Hebrew word here. Then they could ponder, as men did in those days), how God stretched out that mighty veil that divided the earth, which is man's domain, from that far-off realm which is the abode of God. Strong as a molten mirror (mirrors were made of burnished copper in those days, the shimmering sun-filled sky could well be likened to a polished mirror. No man, not even Job himself, could hope to understand how the sky maintained its position and distributed the light and heat of the sun over all the earth to the joy and comfort of man.

So Elihu finishes his appeal. He has no more to say. His arguments have rested all along upon two inescapable facts. Firstly, that God is inherently right in all His decrees. Secondly, that God is supremely powerful in all His works. Even though man cannot discern all His ways he can trust, because of these two facts. In those truths lie Job's condemnation and that of his three friends for every word they have spoken against the absolute wisdom, justice, love and power of God. Elihu throws down the challenge, his final challenge, before he ceases to speak. From here to the end of the discourse the Septuagint translation rises to heights which cannot be approached by the Authorised Version and with little variation that rendering is adopted here. *"Wherefore teach me, what shall we say to him; and let us cease from saying much"* (and then Rotherham) *"were any man to say aught he might be destroyed"* (37. 20). It is not a challenge he expected to be taken up. These men had already shown their inability to answer Elihu; his own personal faith in God and knowledge of God had carried him to a height they had not yet attained. Even Job, approved as he was by God after the discourses were ended, had these

things to learn of Elihu before he could say, as he did say at the end of his story *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I repent, and abhor myself in dust and ashes"* (Job 42.5,6). And it was the closing word of Elihu's discourse, magnificently sublime, which brought Job to that position at last *"But the light is not visible to all, it shines afar off in the heavens as that which is from him in the clouds. From the north came the clouds shining like gold. In these, great are the glory and honour of the Almighty. We do not find another his equal in strength; as for him that judges justly, dost thou not think that he listens? Wherefore man shall be in awe of him and the wise in heart shall reverence him"* (37.21-24).

That is the conclusion. The light is there, shining in the far distance, where God dwells but all men do not see it. The light is there, but it has not yet penetrated all the darkness and many of the people who sit in darkness have not yet seen the great light. All that is to be remedied in God's good time. *"From the north come the clouds shining like gold."* The light of God comes to men in measured stateliness and nothing can hinder its advance. It was in *"the fulness of time"* that Jesus came, a great light in the world, a light that can never be put out. *"We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father"* (John 1.14). Truly did Elihu foresee this when he saw the clouds coming from the north shining like gold and exclaimed *"in these, great are the glory and honour of the Almighty."* How true to say we do not find another His equal in strength. As the hymn puts it *"None other could compare, among the sons of men; He's fairer too than all the fair, who*

fill the heavenly train." Of course Elihu spoke these words of God who is forever invisible to man but in Jesus Christ, God becomes manifest to man and these words then become true of *"the Word made flesh"* who men could see and with whom they could converse. So the Son manifests the Father's glory and exercises His power, executing the provisions of His purpose and commanding obedience to His decrees. Naturally and obviously, then, *"men shall be in awe of him and the wise in heart shall reverence him"*.

It seems so simple a word with which to conclude this long exposition of the wisdom, the justice, the love and power of God. Elihu has taken us to the very mountain tops of spiritual pilgrimage in his endeavour to show us the revelation he himself sees so clearly. He has urged us through depths of heart-searching and self-examination and turned our eyes to great manifestations of Divine power and goodness. At last he leaves us in a quiet meadow with this simple conclusion that because of all these things, we should reverence God *"Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12.13) and we who live another three thousand years later can still do no more than repeat the injunction uttered by that zealous young advocate of utter and unyielding faith in God and His righteousness. Nearly four thousand years have passed since Elihu was laid to sleep with his fathers; his words live on and because they are words full of the Divine glory and because they look forward to the One who himself manifested the Divine glory, they are words which will never die.

THE END

Derrick Nadal

METAMORPHOSIS

When Jesus told Nicodemus that no one could see the kingdom unless he is born again, Nicodemus replied, *"But how is it possible ... for a man to be born again when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"* (John 3.4 NEB). Taken literally this idea was beyond human understanding. Yet Jesus infers that Nicodemus should have known about it and indeed the Old Testament finds echoes of it in texts such as Ezek. 36.26. Even today this spirit-birth is much misunderstood because it is equated with concep-

tion and birth in the physical sense. Both words, 'born' and 'again' are translated from Greek which has no direct equivalent in English but the ideas which they represent are full of meaning.

However, there are other natural pictures which may be used to illustrate this change and this new birth involves a fundamental change. One of these pictures is used in John 12. 24. *"... unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds"* (NIV). Our Lord's death upon the cross was

the climax of a daily dying, involving a ministry and preaching such as was never seen before or since but the process began even before His coming to earth. This is made clear in Phil. 2.5-9 *"Take to heart among yourselves what you find in Christ Jesus, He was in the form of God, yet he laid no claim to equality with God but made himself nothing, assuming the form of a slave. Bearing human likeness, sharing the human lot, he humbled himself and was obedient even to the point of death. Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names"* (REV). Pondering this statement will bring at least some idea of the profound change which led to the birth of the firstborn of a new creation.

Change is seen in another natural process known to zoologists as metamorphosis. There are many variations of this, but two examples come to mind which can be used to illustrate spiritual birth referred to earlier. Firstly, the dragonfly's egg develops into an ugly, brown sluggish but greedy larva, moving about at the bottom of a freshwater pond, seizing its food with its curious jaw-like appendages. In time it climbs up the stem of a water-plant, a rather ugly, bulbous creature. Its skin cracks open and the winged imago emerges, dries its wings in the warm sunshine and in all its beauty begins its fascinating flight. Similarly, the egg of an emperor moth becomes a caterpillar and eats its way to the next stage of a larva. It is enveloped by a cocoon shaped like a flask with a narrow neck. After a while the insect forces its way out of this restricting neck and becomes a beautiful moth. The struggle to escape creates a pressure which forces the vital fluids into the vessels of the wings. It has been demonstrated that if given help by cutting the neck of the cocoon to make escape easier, the result is the emergence of an ugly swollen body with shrivelled wings. In each case the final stages of change involve the shedding of the drab unlovely skin that for a while has hidden the developing beautiful creature.

The Greek word *metamorphosis* occurs several times in the New Testament. It is used in the description of the scene on the mount of transfiguration in Matt. 17. Jesus was "transformed" before three of His disciples. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white as light. This may have been an instantaneous and fleeting change, but it was an indication of a phase

in the process of change which took place between our Lord's descent from heaven and His return to receive that Name which is above every name. Metamorphosis is translated "transformed" in Rom. 12.2. Philip's translation reads *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within ..."* We must all be conscious of the pressure of the worldly spirit around us and we need to take positive thought and action to overcome it. Our efforts to do this are like the struggles of the larva of the moth that brings about its change into a beautiful moth. Metamorphosis occurs again in 2 Cor. 3.18 where the Amplified New Testament reads *"And all of us, as with unveiled face because we continue to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are constantly being transfigured into his very own image in ever increasing splendour, and from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."*

In Phil. 3.21 Paul writes of the change of our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body but this is not a good translation. The human body itself is not vile, but we have no illusions concerning the fallen state of the human heart or spirit which controls it. Other translations refer to "the body of humiliation." The Amplified Bible reads, *"Jesus Christ ... will transform and fashion anew the body of our humiliation to conform to and be like the body of His glory and majesty by exerting that power which enables even him to subject everything to Himself."* In 2 Cor. 4.7 (GNB) Paul declares *"we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots."* This is reminiscent of the grey skin which covers the ugly bulbous creature which becomes the graceful dragonfly. True it is, as Jesus declared, that this new birth comes through water and the spirit but we are to be workers together with God; we have to climb up out of the "pond" of this life. We need to struggle out of the restricting cocoon of this body of our humiliation then one day we shall be free of all human limitations and wing our way triumphantly into the presence of God, there to live a new life on a higher plane, giving glory to the Creator of all that is beautiful.

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

